





Experimental Practice

practice,
mental questions of architecture all over again.
role of an architect
today towards a sustainable future.

ME
19101

The Skirt of *Periphery* and *Center*.

AN EMBODIED PARTICIPATORY PLAYGROUND

AAR4690 / *CIRCULAR STUDIO*

alexis lugaz ana ruiz cecilie lind hanes

The Skirt of Periphery and Center - An Embodied Participatory Playground was pivoted from a position of asking questions about how we all are interconnected with each other in this world as part of a much bigger circular system that we might think of.

Questions about how architects have been, and still are, a part of making tremendous harm to the planet - the environment, other species, to indigenous people - and how it have contributed to the poly-crises we are in, have been discussed through a feminist lens. We have reflected on how we are in a profession that has potentially great power in the transformation of our surroundings, and that the positions we choose to take, as future artist and/or architects, matters greatly.

Among the questions we have asked, are:

Which stories have we been told about ourselves and the society, and what that is the truth about much practice of architecture in the past, and today?
Why is it important to acknowledge and talk more about the white colonization, the patriarchy, and the system with capitalistic economy?

How can interventions and interspecies projects in the intersection of art and science, but also acts of the everyday, promote responsible use of natural resources and environmental sustainability in the future?

A large part of change is working towards becoming more conscious. Both of our relationships with fellow humans, but also with our surrounding living critters, as well as with our objects and things, and all of these together. However, change is also emphasizing practicing and working towards having better skills. Especially of care, of inclusion and of repair. It is both about how we tell our stories, and about how we talk, and it is about the ways we are operating, about the ways of doing, and about how we are practicing our relationships and habits in the everyday life.

It is also about accepting that the road ahead might be messy, might be consisting of a lot of trial and error, might be more challenging than we like, but that that is part of the journey, of the unperfect reality. It is also about accepting that some harm and damage made on the planet are irreversible. And about the fact that doing small acts of care and repair where we are, matters greatly, and about the dialogue we can create. We need great changes on our planet and in our societies, but a lot might happen in small acts amongst the many, not just in vast singular actions of the few.

Working towards *change*.

Sometimes maybe the acts will be of a rather invisible and humble character.

The ethical values we practice with as future artists and/or architects are important. What should be our considerations in both this, and our future projects? What does it mean becoming-with? Which practices are about the ethics of care? About inclusion? About repair? About becoming just a little bit gentler every day, in all parts of life?

As **Donna Haraway** put it in her book in the chapter Playing string figures with companion species:

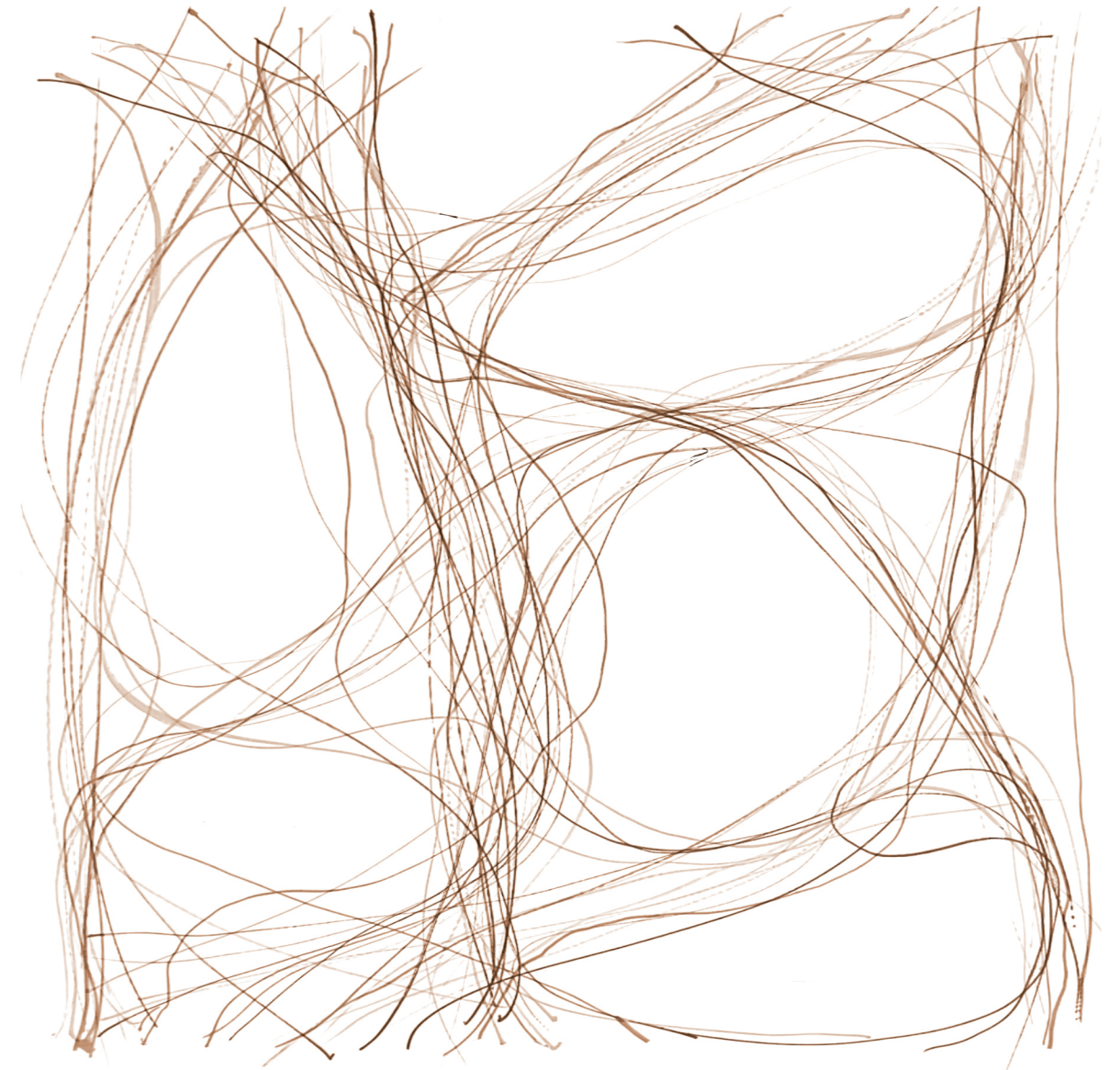
«In the face of unrelenting historically specific surplus suffering in companion species knottings, I am not interested in reconciliation or restoration, but I am deeply committed to the more modest possibilities of partial recuperation and getting on together.»

Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, 2016.

Thinking with *hands*, reading with *care*.

To challenge past methodologies, we aimed to connect theory and practice from our respective specializations, Experimental Theory and Tectonics. The process was often guided by intuition, through a continuous movement of trial, error, and redefinition. This project became an opportunity to weave a dialogue between contemporary feminist thought and the materiality of artistic creation, and becoming-with.

Reading text by feminist writers like among others **bell hooks**, **Jane Rendell**, **Donna Haraway**, **María Puig de la Bellacasa**, **Karen A. Franck**, and others, provided a fertile intellectual foundation. These voices acted as underlying currents that shaped our decisions, our gestures, and even our hesitations. They encouraged us to question the conventional hierarchies between the conceptual and the sensory, between object and narrative, about what is feminine and what is masculine, and about what is conventional and standardized, and what is more unique rich and alive.



The materials, tools, and techniques we engaged with, including metal, wood, textiles, and digital modeling served as mediums for thinking as much as for making. Working at a one-to-one scale, involving the body, and repeating gestures that were sometimes imperfect gradually gave form to a piece where hand and mind were no longer in opposition. The process did not follow a linear path but rather unfolded as a fluid space of

experimentation, where every detour and attempt carried its own meaning. It was within this porous space between the individual and the collective, between research and practice, that our true exploration emerged.

Throughout the course local artist, **Hanna Ryggen** has been a major inspiration and part of our reflections. Ryggen lived at Ørlandet outside of Trondheim, breaking barriers through her pioneering and independent practice as an artist. Ryggen developed her own artistic language in the intersection of many techniques, and was never concerned with making her art perfect. All her artistic life she was conveying a message of a political, social, moral or religious nature. She was a rebel and peacemaker, and the loom was her way to attack the injustice and human degradation she experienced.

Despite experiencing great success being asked for tapestries for the National Government Quarter in 1958, selected as the first textile artist at Høstutstillingen in Norway in 1964, and thereafter as the first Norwegian female artist for the Venezia biennale the same year, she wasn't widely acknowledged after her death in Norway.

Due to hegemonic masculine values in society, her place in Norwegian art history and art education was downgraded until recent years. It is interesting to ask what if she had been a man. Had he been more

acknowledged? The story of **Hannah Ryggen**, today now known as one of Norway's national treasures, and the country's most valued tapestry maker, tells the story of an incredibly powerful and important Norwegian artist and feminist. How she lived and practiced, and how she for years worked alone in her own way, and then was left out or in the fringes, of people's collective memory as a society, have become part of her legacy. And how we can learn from her, have now become part of ours.

Hannah Ryggen (1894-1970).

Ryggen's interpretations or tapestry stories are circling around her own life, her own personal interests, and the cruelty that happened in the world when she lived.

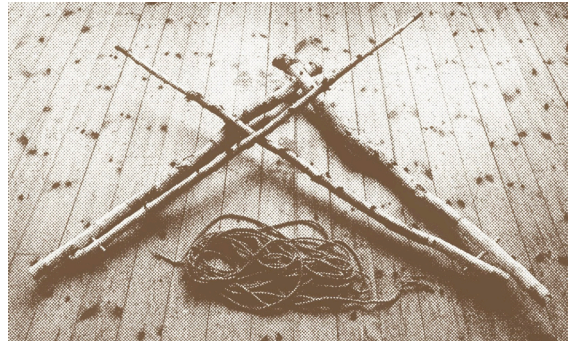
Her tapestries tell the stories of many powerful women, the strong connections and feelings she had in her life, and of love. It tells the stories of oppression and of crime. The tapestries are poetic expressions of her asking the greater questions. She wasn't afraid to challenge.

One of her tapestries, *Vi lever på en stjerne* (1958), makes us reflect about two people, but also about time and our place in the greater whole, too. Not just on perhaps the earth only, but also regarding our place in our greater universe.

Through her tireless practice, independent thinking and bodily manifested art, and her interests and motifs regarding injustice in society, her feminist approach in the art becomes evident.

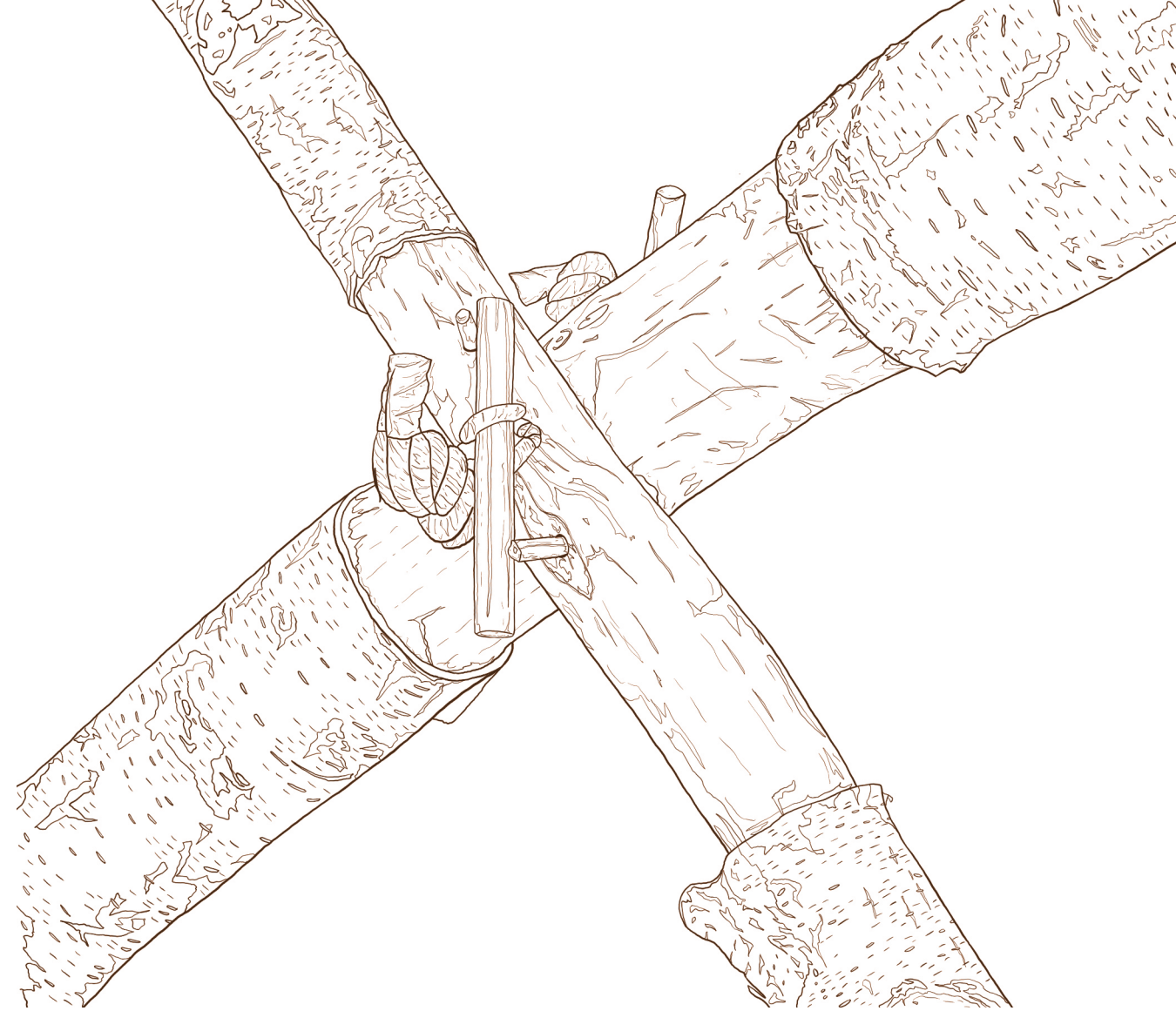
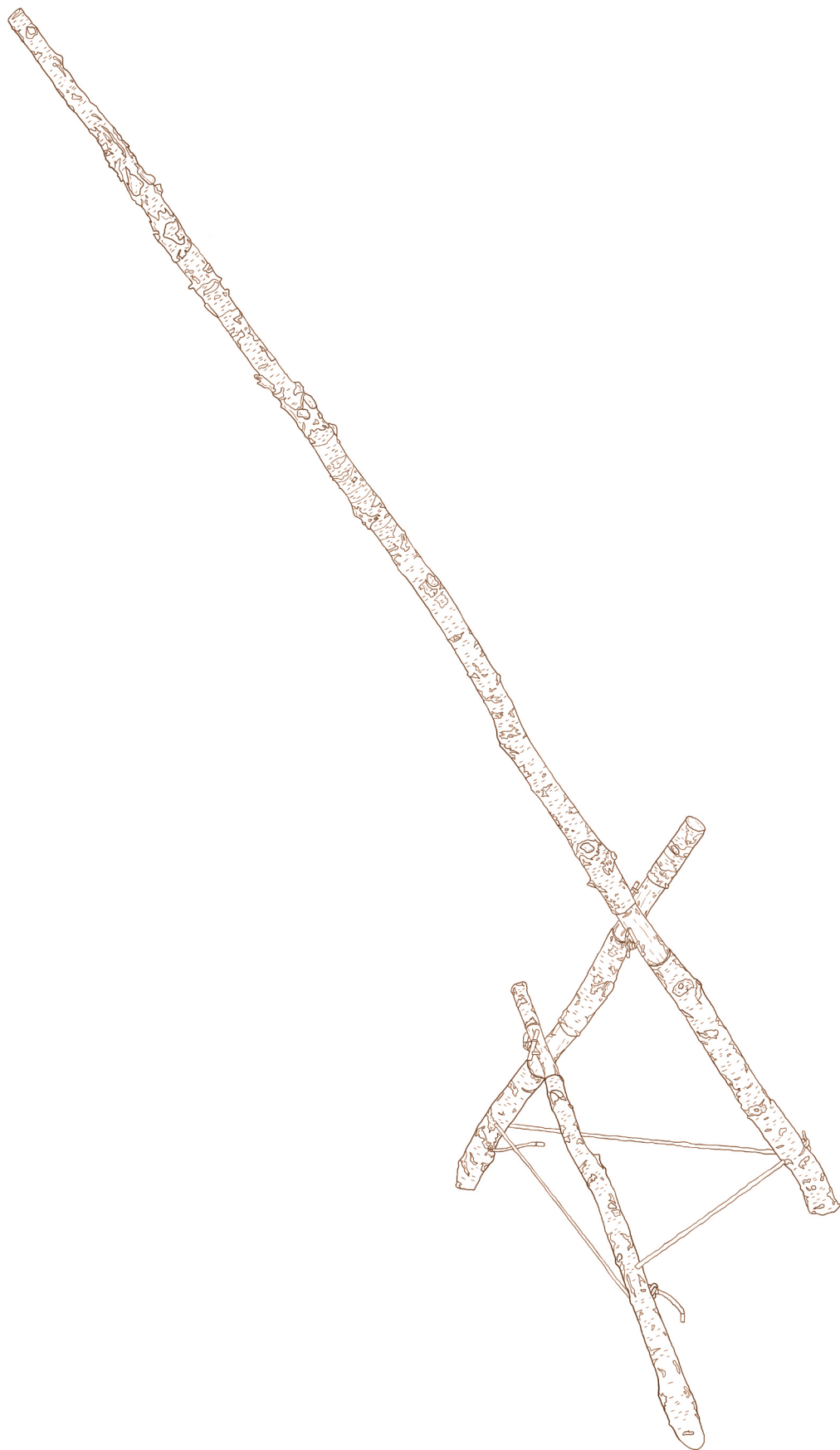
Though her own way of working with the materials, she made both subjects of horror and love into something beautiful and timeless.

H. Danbolt & G. Alfsen, *Hannah Ryggen*, 2023.



Collective *threads*.

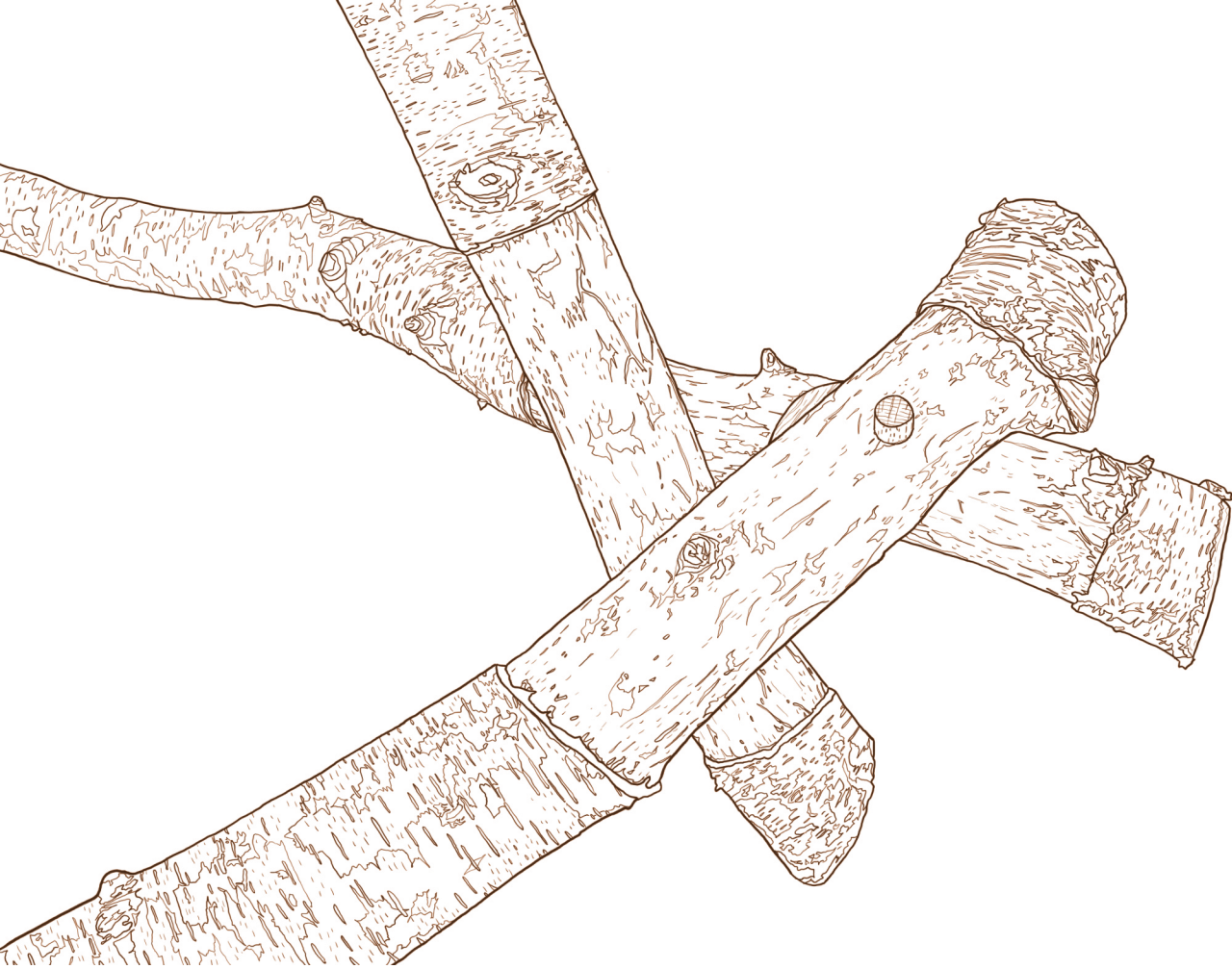
In the beginning of this course we got the opportunity to weave, felt and saw. We got hands-on experiences with soft materials like textiles, ropes and thinner fibres of cotton, hemp and wool, and synthetic leftover pieces of cloth. These were valuable bodily experiences that we translated into our project. In this process we were learning-with Hannah Ryggen, and each other, doing the same process as her, regarding everything from rinsing the wool, to washing and carving, to spinning and weaving, while reflecting, combining theory and practice. The tapestry we made commonly in class on the looms, became a main element in our concept. What we made in common, is maybe the greatest piece in the sculpture. It is a landscape of all of our bodies and experiences with the looms, and it carries the stories, for many of the members of the class, their own way of weaving, of their first meeting with textiles and of tapestry making. This becomes visible in the many different colors, even small mistakes, and the different ways of weaving throughout the piece.



We designed a series of structures made from birch branches, each with a unique joint system, yet sharing a common formal language. The rope, visually discreet, plays both a functional and expressive role: it supports, stabilizes, creates tension, and balances volumes. It becomes a connection, both literally and metaphorically. These were to support the textile. The act of making was deeply nourished by our readings and the

feminist thinking that runs through them. In particular, feminist theory allowed us to think differently, by considering practice not as a mere application of ideas, but as an active site of knowledge production. Making thus becomes a way of thinking in itself, an intellectual and sensitive form of engagement.

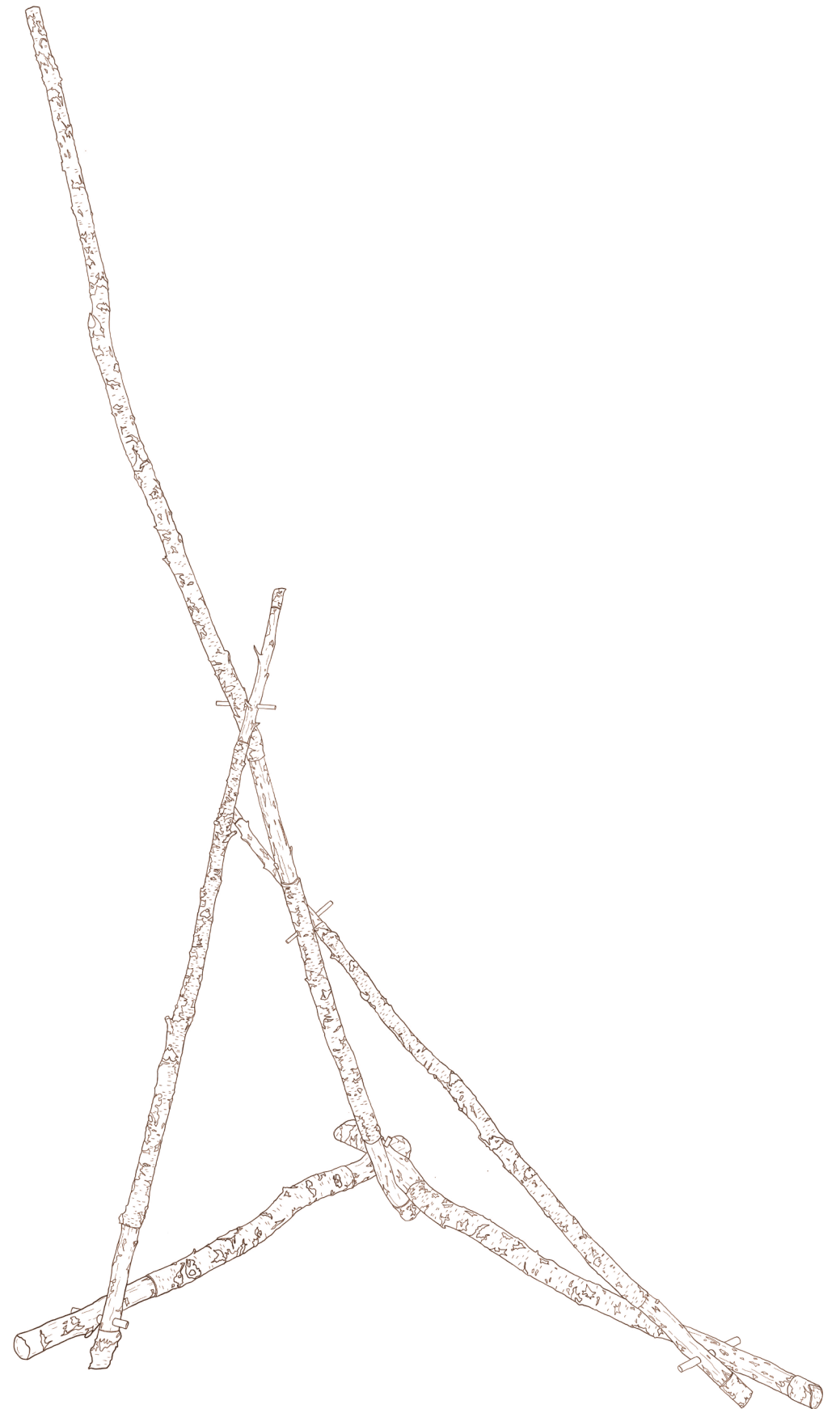
Throughout this creative process, there was no instruction manual,



no fixed plan to follow. It was within this space of uncertainty that the project found its meaning. To make, in this context, means to invent while acting. Each gesture, each attempt, reshapes the initial idea, pushes it elsewhere, forces it to evolve. This back-and-forth between intention and material, between reading and manipulation, allowed us to create objects that are not simply forms, but embodied responses to an ongoing reflection.

Each piece stands on its own, with its own character, while still belonging to a coherent whole. These are foldable, disassemblable

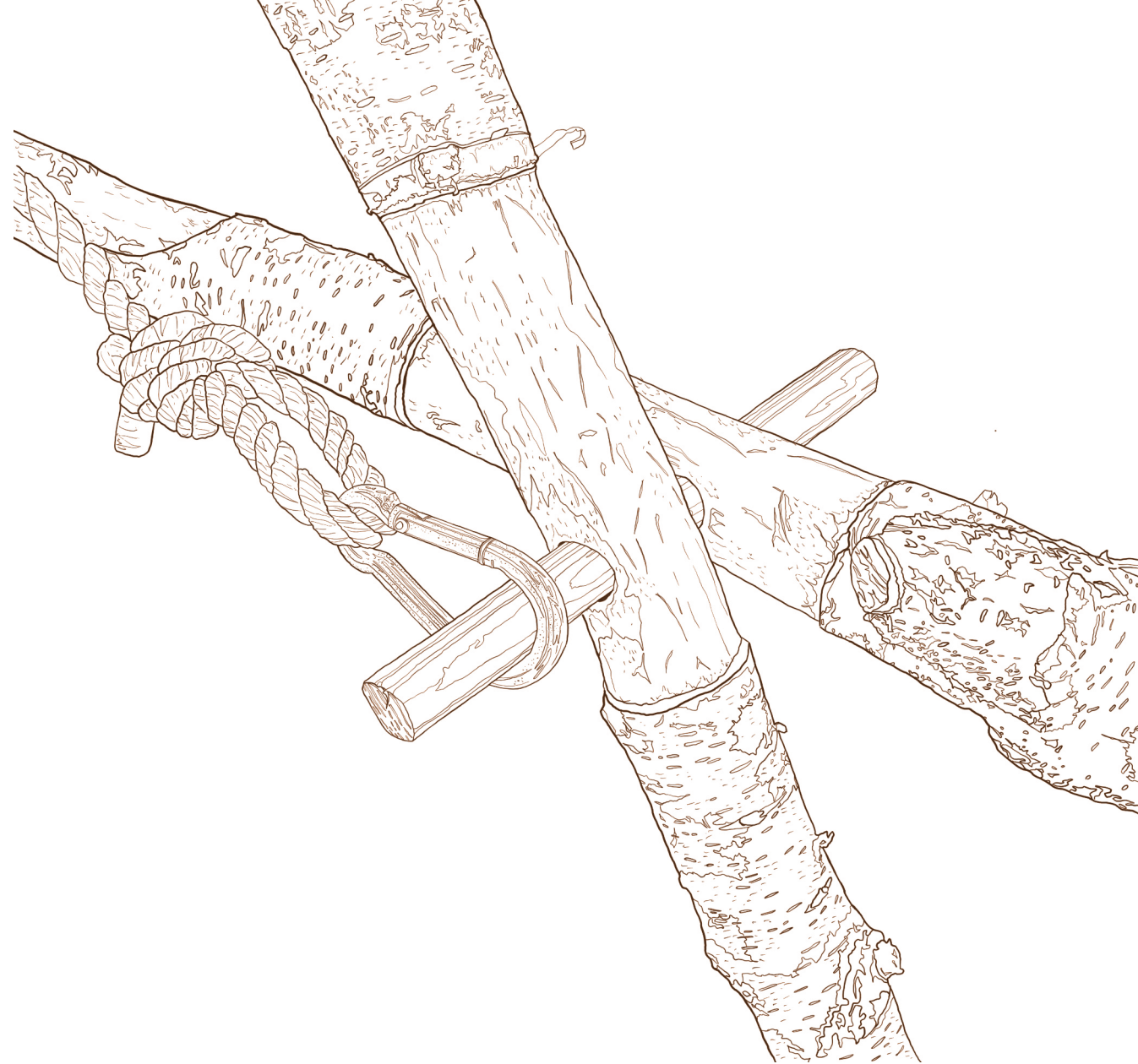
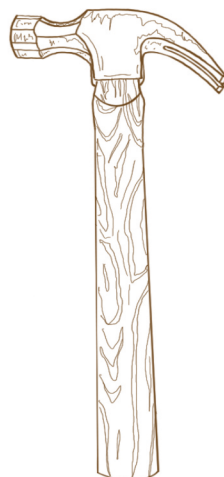
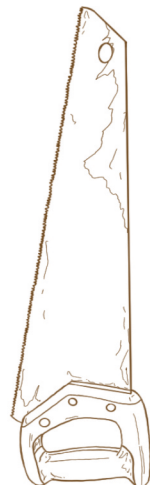
sculptures, designed for easy transport and to adapt to different contexts. Their physical mobility mirrors our own intellectual mobility: a refusal of fixed forms, an openness to what transforms and reinvents itself.



As a continuation of this exploration, we chose to work with wood without using any nails or screws, focusing exclusively on dry joint techniques. This voluntary constraint pushed us to deepen our understanding of the material, to read its tensions and weaknesses, to observe how it reacts, bends, and resists.

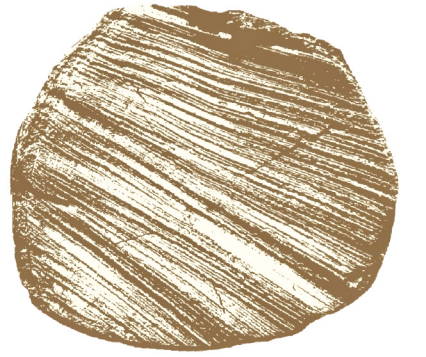
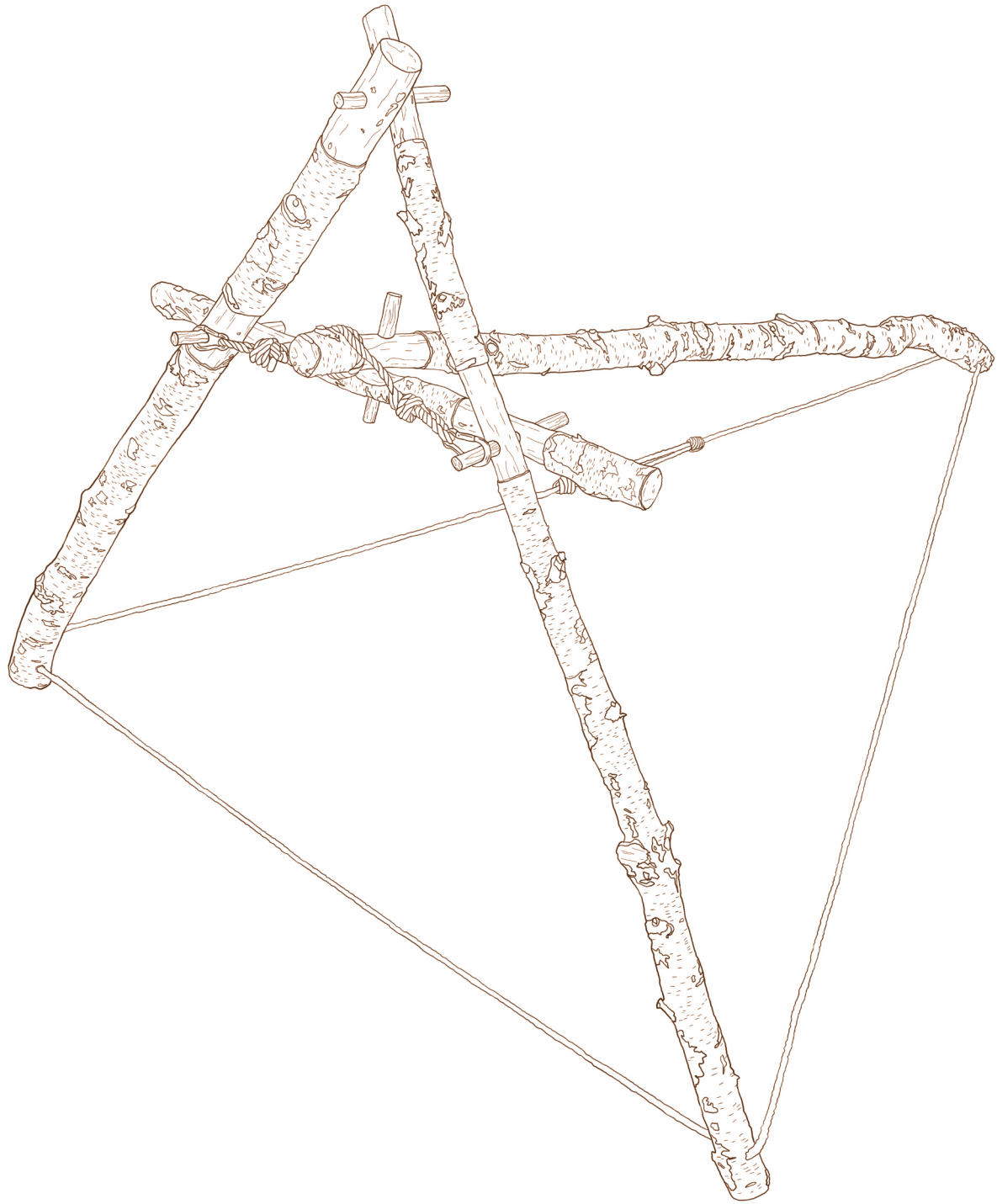
Understanding force relationships became central: how to block rotation, how to prevent slipping, how to create a stable balance with a material as living and irregular as birch wood. The joint no longer serves a purely structural function, it becomes a language, a way to let the wood speak without forcing it.

The hand tools became important devices, becoming elegant extensions of the human hand, a way to connect to the materials.



We paid close attention to the bark: its varying thicknesses, its texture, its capacity to reveal or conceal. Working with the bark meant engaging with what wraps, protects, and ages. We chose to remove it only partially, in specific areas, to highlight the details of the joints, while keeping the wood as pure as possible, and easily reusable without alteration. This technical and material framework did not limit

creativity. It allowed three different approaches to emerge, each with its own logic of assembly, its gestures, its intuitions. Yet these variations coexist within a shared aesthetic, born from the coherence of the material, the attention to detail, tools and a mutual respect for what takes shape slowly, in dialogue with the wood.



The importance of the *everyday situations*, the *unfinished* and the *unrefined*.

The British art and architecture collective, **MUF**, asks:

What does it take to make relationships make a thing? This office emphasizes processes of relationships and how planning can be left open to include the voices of others than the architects. Like Henri Lefebvre amongst others, they find qualities in everyday situations, the unfinished, and the unrefined, conditions. They work with the real conditions, both critically and creatively. They have certain values for what they choose to do at a place.

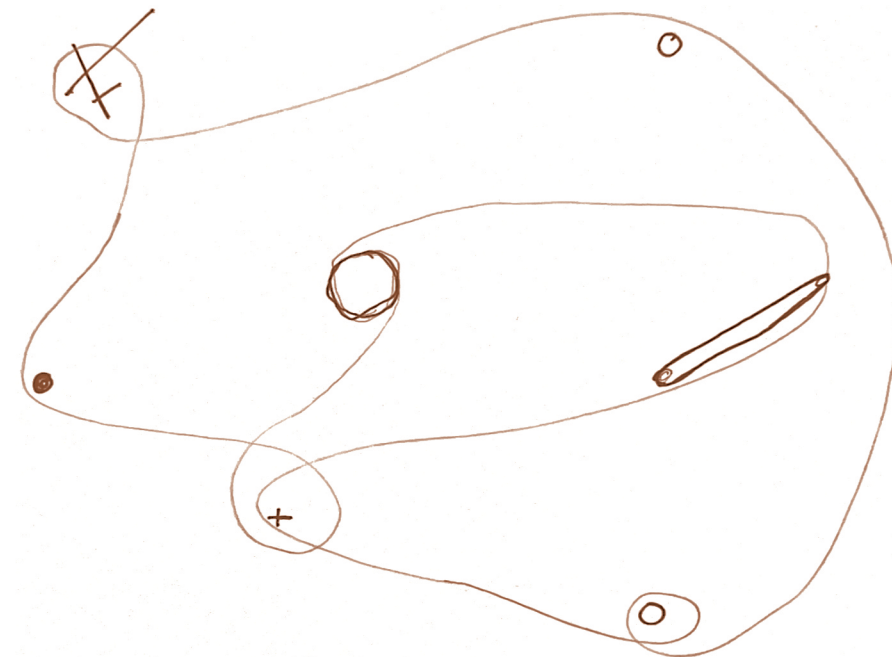
Muf architecture/art, (n.d.), *more than one (fragile) thing at a time*.

The body, space and time are all components that are important to take in consideration at a deeper level in the production of projects. The body are bearers of needs and stories, as spaces and time are, too, and part of a larger circular natureculture ecosystem. It is a question about treating a place out of it's existing qualities, connections and relationships that find place there. It is also a question about decay. About time that eternally passes. About receiving and passing on processes.

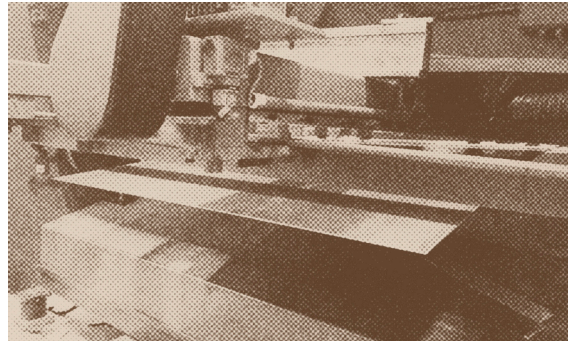
If we think of how we use our bodies in everyday situations, what is the truth about what our bodies needs to live, to function, for all genders and

all people? What is the truth about the conditions of the spaces around us? What is the truth about the time after the project is "finished"? Who will use it, who will take care of it, who will maintain it, not only now, but a long time from now? What happens if we don't eradicate everything that exists, but rather try to "stay with the trouble" of the bodies, the space, the time that passes? What if a project is never really ever "finished", but just one small step in an infinite timeline? The goal should not be domination, but well being. Not only of us humans, but soil, tree and bird.

Spatial agency, (n.d.), *muf architecture/art*.



The drawing of a project, the continuity of a process

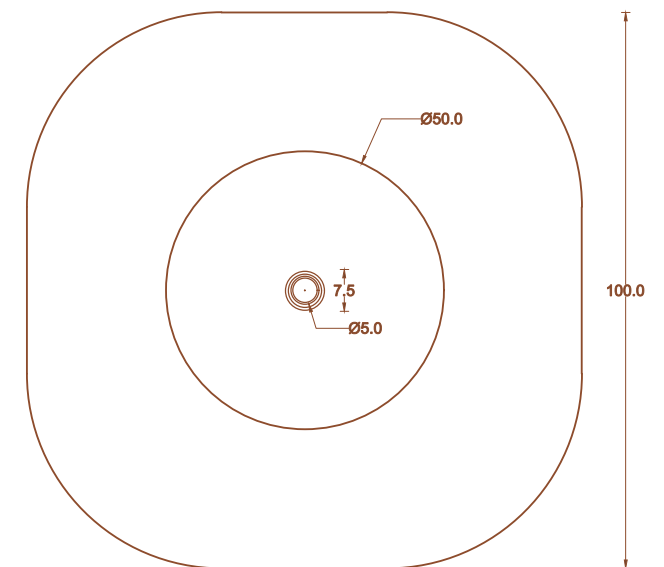
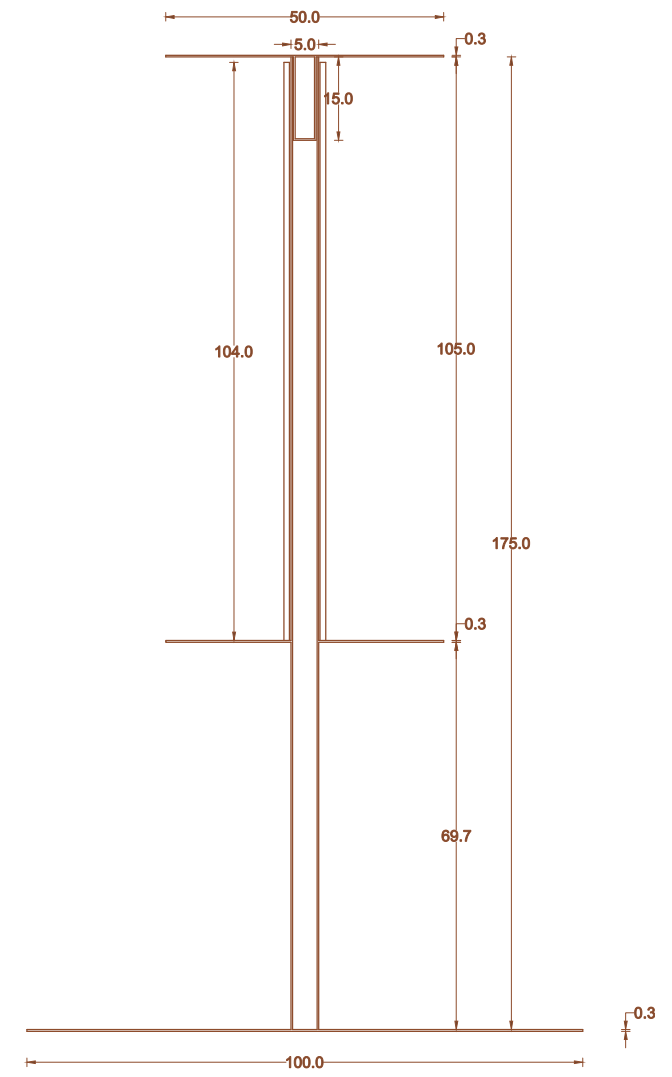


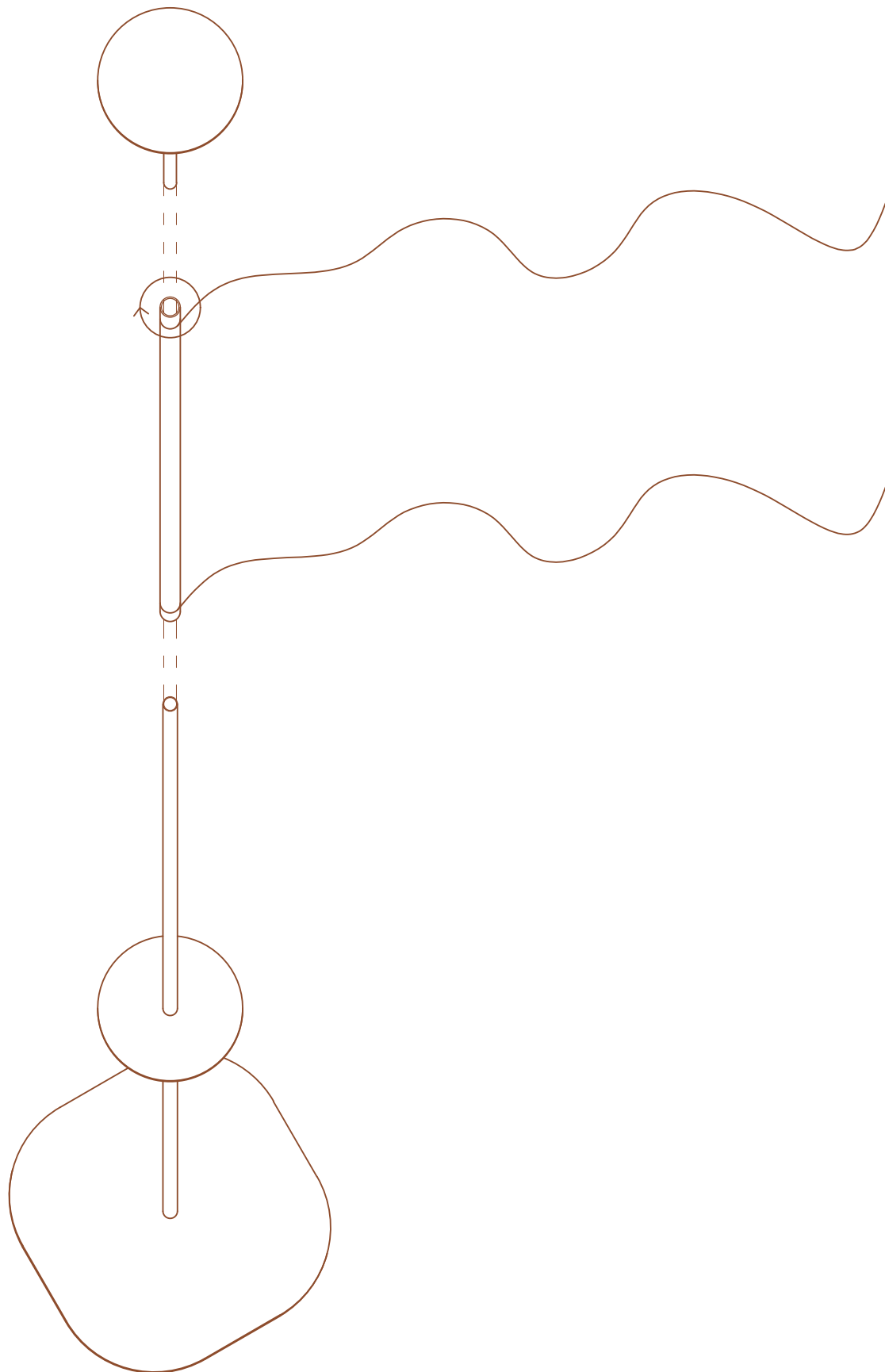
Material as *memory*.

The use of different materials is a deliberate choice, aiming to show that projects and architectural projects in particular are destined to diversify their construction methods and make use of what already exists, by creating from the existing.

We searched through the leftover materials from the workshop in order to build this support structure, which allows the 35 meters of textile to be held and unrolled. This metal structure is a key element of the project: it embodies centrality and reinforces it through its materiality.

The underlying reflection is about creating an object from something that already exists, in order to produce a functional and intriguing sculpture one that is also on a human scale, allowing us to feel in harmony with this cold material.





This structure was born from scraps of steel, a plate of 1.15 by 1.65 meters, and a round tube, 5 cm wide and 1.90 m long. Remnants, once forgotten, became the foundation.

From these fixed dimensions, we sketched out a form, one that could stand firm, serve a function, and still carry a certain grace. The process unfolded slowly, through pauses and returns, letting thought and making intertwine. Each day offered a new layer of reflection, and with it, a new possibility for the design to evolve.

This element became an antithesis, the one that changed the most. Once outside, it began to rust, to catch the shifting light, to echo the sky. The metal, cold and industrial at first, started to soften, not in texture, but in presence. It held the textile gently, and in return, was made warmer by its colors.

Then came the rain. The first test revealed a sound we hadn't expected, deep, resonant, like a breath through the frame. It grounded the performance in something raw and elemental. A quiet poetry emerged, born from steel, water, fabric, and time.

Unrolling *knowledge*, stitching *community*.



Experimenta Practice

practice,
repeatedly combined in a collection of new items
view or to be published
at least practice a subcategory class.



What the process *taught us to see.*

Our concept name «Skirt of Periphery and Center» comes from the perspective of feminists like **Hanna Ryggen**, **Donna Haraway**, **bell hooks**, **Jane Rendell** et al, **Kratzny** et al and **Silvia Federici**, among others, and discussing movement, participation and subjectivity in relation to architecture. As well as asking questions regarding gender and oppression, we found it interesting how we can ask questions about how art and architecture can be tools for conveying feminist values, like care, repair and inclusion. How can art and architecture even be a form of resistance, a protest? A device for standing up against oppression, a way of advocating for the right values? For justice?

In relation to the name of our concept, we were especially inspired and fascinated by how **bell hooks** claims that the feminist movement can end the war between the sexes, and how it can transform relationships so that “the alienation, competition, and de-humanization

bell hooks, *The significance of the feminist movement*, 1984.

that characterize human interaction can be replaced with feelings of intimacy, mutuality and camaraderie” (Rendell et al, 2000: p. 42). She also points out how the feminist movement is “vital both in its power to liberate us from the terrible bonds of sexist oppression and in its potential to radicalize and renew other liberation struggles”. (ibid)

Feminism, this it is interesting to ask how art and architecture can be a place of transformation have transformative powers.

Which invisible bonds are holding us back in architecture, and which bonds are bringing us forward? Which practices in the field can create a more just world, and what do they look like?

We think a lot begin with more care, more consideration, larger inclusion, more openness and more tolerance, for example.

Performance as a means of *reflection.*

Our performance is about experimenting with how act of movement can make something that captures an essence of care, inclusion and repair. It is a story about our bodies, our spaces, and of time. It tries to tell a story of networks of relationships around us throughout our lives, everyday. Which relationships are we in, and which are we not in? Who do we care about, who don't we care enough about? Which invisible strings and bonds hold us back, and which strings and bonds pushes us forward?

Through the soft bond of textile and tapestry, we wanted to wrap people, trees and sculptures in. Through embarking a large roll of soft material on to a metal holder, the idea was to wrap our own bodies, the wooden sculptures, and potentially participants watching, in a gentle act of participation and care.

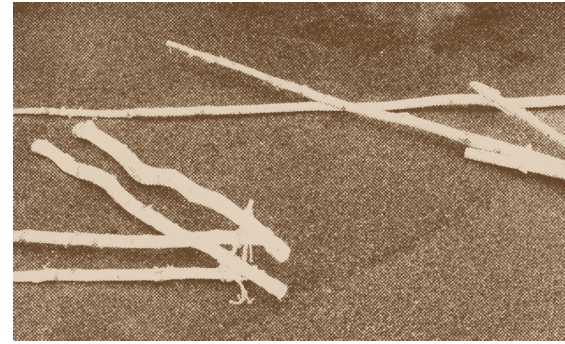
We all take positions. Can we involve people one the ground more in art and architecture? In which way?

What happens if we let go of control, of the regular process of a project, of the outcome? If we experiment? What happens if we are attentively listening? And how do we tackle things that don't go after the plan?

Summarized the concept is about reflecting on positioning, networks, circularity, which stories we tell ourselves, and of who has power in society. It is about time, body and space.

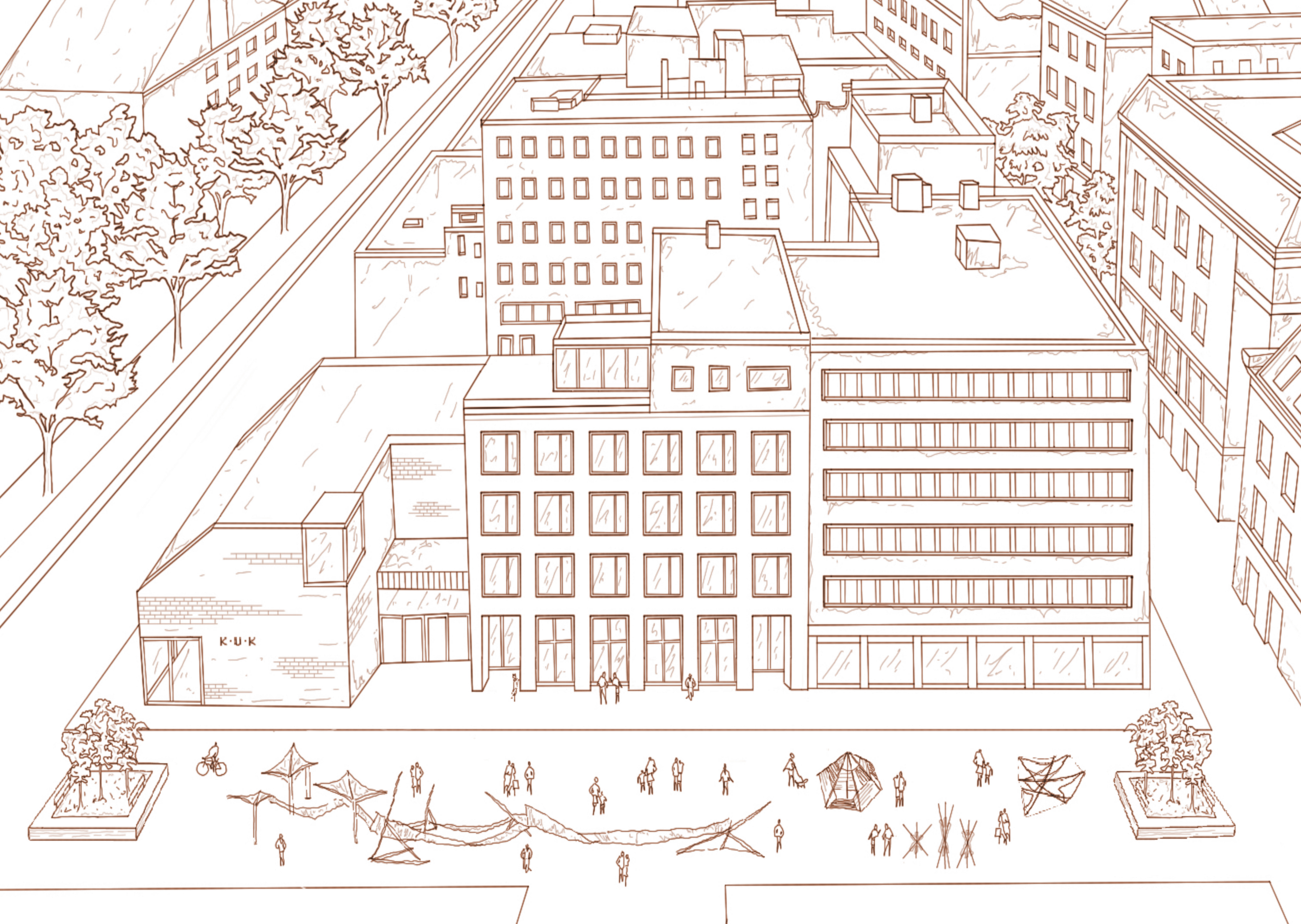
Who is in the periphery, and who is in the center, who participates, and who is left out, will always be important to ask questions about. Not only in the general society, but just as much, if not even more, in art and architecture.

When space
becomes *moment*.



What is architecture about other than the obvious construction of buildings? Is it about constructing situations, too, or, events?

Events can sometimes last 15 minutes, sometimes 30 minutes, sometimes a day, or sometimes a whole century or beyond. When there is movement involved, there is also a question of decay. What will happen after the event, after "everything is over"? Maybe there is no "final project", but just a series of events in time?



Macarena Dusant, Bernard Tschumi, Guy Debord and Helen Stratford are known for reevaluating architecture's role in relation to personal and political freedom, as well as the relationship between fixed buildings or physical environments, and events/performances.

Tschumi argues that there is no fixed situation. He emphasize the establishment of a proactive architecture "which non-hierarchially engages balances of power through programmatic and spacial devices". He argues that our role as architects are not to express an extant social structure, but to use architecture as a tool for questioning social structures, and to revise it. (1)

Stratford describes a feminist performative practice as something that "examines critiques and develop tools that make visible and counter how power in the form of political hegemonies and social injustice, has been resisted and reconstructed through spatial practice". (2) (p.14)

She asks if "feminist performative architectures" can generate alternative public spaces, where one open up 'other' possibilities. Possibilities formerly repressed, through layers of sedimented social practices and material presence. (3)

Dusant discusses "artistic strategies, masked explorations and embodied displacements", and asks: what is allowed, and why, in the city?

This is interesting in relation with e.g. masks in our performance in front of K.U.K. Dusant and The New Beauty Council point out that :

«the act of disguise does something to the idea of taste in formal situations, as it creates confusion and a sense of absurdity in a more formal space. [...] we believe the physical environment is developed through decisions based on opinions on what can pass as acceptable, normal and desirable, or inappropriate, unbecoming, unsuited, and unwanted, which is tied to a system of capitalist pathriarchy maintaining gender, class and race hierarchies».

M. Dusant, *Artistic strategies, masked explorations and embodied displacements - the new beauty council*, 2017.

Through a non-standardized temporal installation and the use of odd masks, where speculative thoughts and worlds have been intertwined both in the making and in the performance, acceptable tastes and aesthetics, as well as methods for investigation in architecture, have been challenged.

We have researched how public spaces are performed, and how performance-based participatory methods influences public space.

Which prejudices do we have towards our environments, in the intersection of spaces and their social, cultural, economic and political relations?

Though challenging norms, we have touched upon topics like circularity, ecology, participation, inclusion, exclusion, margins, relational, discrimination, oppression, power, and positioning. This has also become visible in the act of using non-standardized materials. In addition to the use of masks and performing something unusual, unrefined wood and unfinished textile, also make up new situations that is not controlled, not foreseen, richer and less standardized and less acceptable. Through these strategies we question dominant practices and

challenge society's norms in a public space.

As Stratford points out, "performativity is both research method: practice – a way of working, and research methodology: theory – a way of thinking about or through the place of public space".

She says, that in performances «there is a reviewing of the position of the researcher as practitioner, exploring how this position changes and occupies multiple sites that influence spatial production, and a reviewing of public space, exploring how public spaces might be equally multiple. Rather than designing solutions, these spaces are found in emergent outcomes, developed through interaction, dialogue and provocation, to deepen, complexify or broaden questions; exerting a performative force on existing notions of public space». (4)

(1) **Bernard Tschumi**, *Architecture and Disjunction*, 1999.

(2) **M. Schalk, T. Kristiansson & R. Mazé**, *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice*, 2021.

(3) **H. Stratford**, *Feminist Performative Architectures*, 2021.

(4) **Ralph Mackinder**, *Feminist performative architectures*, 2020.



Factsplat

K-U-K

K-U-K
GUBALARI
KULTURIMETRI
ERITIMLERI VE BIRLIKLERI

Woman in white coat

Man in yellow jacket

When space becomes moment, on *circularity and care.*



Circularity is perhaps not only what we think of when we picture it first, maybe it also has to do with a shift of the whole system and of how we think about our relationships and the networks around us.

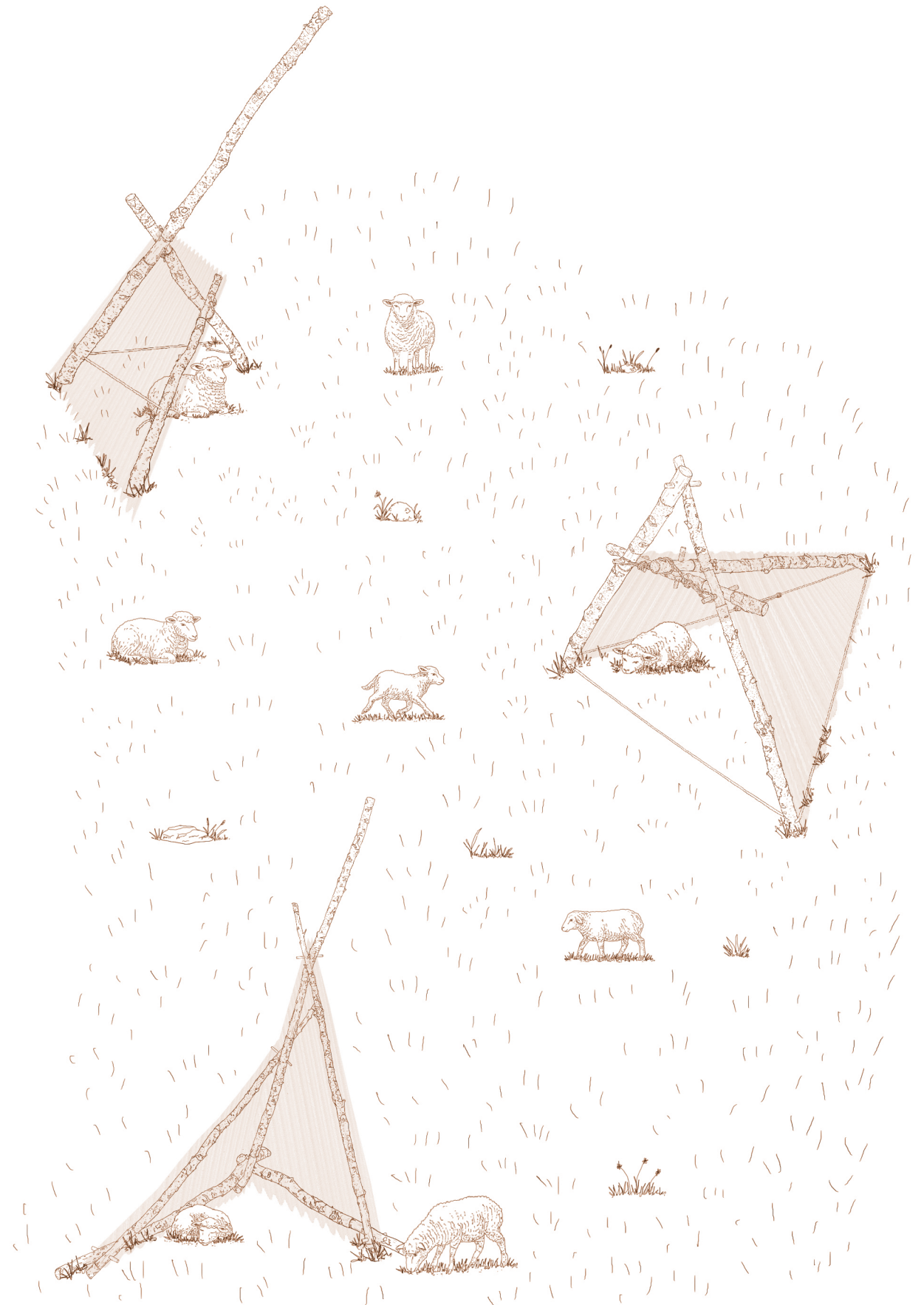
Care is another central anchor point in how we can meet the future in a world that is facing polycrisis and environmental collapse. Shifting from extractive, violent practices as architects, towards a practice of care and consideration, are vital to turn the boat.

In our project we have used deposited textiles and threads, woods from a farm, and metal that can be used over again. We are picturing that these materials can be used over again, or on display in the textile lab. They will be used in the future, they are continuing on their journey in the future as something useful for other than us.

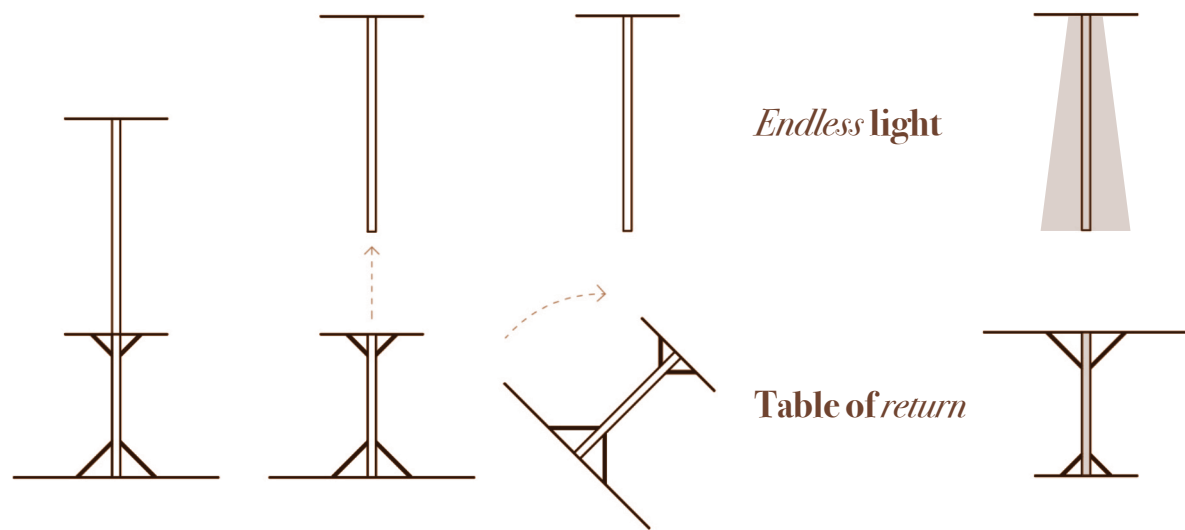
Hannah Ryggen loved the animals at the farm, as well as the wild animals in the area, and she nurtured a close relationship with them, something which is also visible in many of her tapestries. We were inspired by her, as well as the act of care towards the sheep at Arnstein Gilbergs farm, that gave us the wool for our tapestries. We wanted to give something back.

As Donna Haraway puts it: "Anything we do as craftspeople — as writers, as engineers, as workers with each other — has to be about thickening relationality for and with the Earth."

D.Endry & D.Haraway, *Tools for multispecies futures*, 2019.



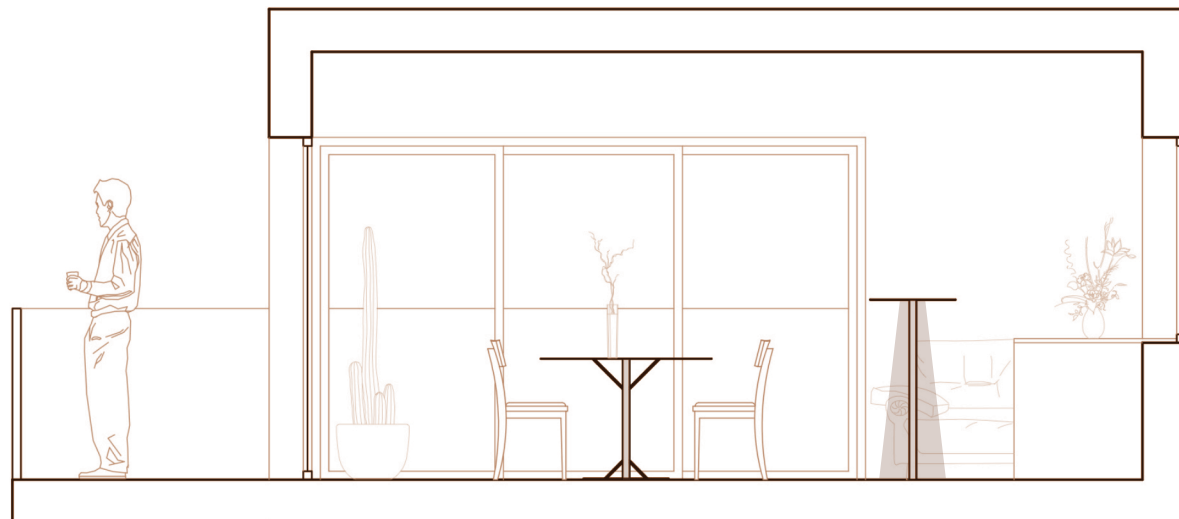
What if ?



What if we realized that the future of design doesn't lie in constant creation or the endless quest for new feats and fresh concepts to feed fleeting trends but rather in becoming the key to circular, ecological living? A design where every object has value and potential. This way of thinking is already being put into practice by design studios such as **Maximum**, which creates furniture using industrial production surplus. This approach should no longer be the exception, but the norm. We are convinced that waste and materials destined for the landfill must be rethought in order to reinvent the production system itself.

Here, the steel structure we built will have completed its first life as part of an architectural performance, and will be handed over to a design agency to be reimagined and integrated into a project they are currently working on.

Both unique and functional, this version meets real needs, as furniture, but also as a way of restoring value to the object without compromising its structural essence.





«Relays, string figures, passing patterns back and forth, giving and receiving, patterning, holding the unasked-for pattern in one's hands, responsibility; that is core to what I mean by staying with the trouble in serious multispecies worlds. Becoming-with, not becoming, is the name of the game; becoming-with is how partners are [...] rendered capable.»(p.12)

Donna Haraway, *Playing String Figures with Companion Species*, 2016.

How can architecture make up our physical environments in the future? What can be the next step of our pieces? New materialist theorists like Ursula K. Heise thinks we need to look at our surroundings in a totally different way. That we have to think of human beings and matter as the same common substance and as a flat ontology. At nature as something that continuously transforms, and not as something that is constant.

«The Anthropocene idea tends to under-emphasize not only those dimensions of nature that remain outside human influence, but also

the ways that humans themselves are shaped by ecological processes and interspecies relations.” (Heise, 2016: 21-31, 26)

In Donna Haraway's words, relations and becoming-with should be much more a part of our everyday discourses. This should also be a much bigger part of planning and the shaping of our physical environments and strategies for making up our architecture in the future. We need to practice imagining. New stories, and new type of worlds.

(1) **U. K. Heise**, *The Environmental Humanities and the Futures of the Human*, 2016.

Imagining these new beginnings could become a start of a philosophy or a methodology for a softer future architectural practice where animals, plants and humans are thought of as something that is on the same level. A world where fluidity, softness and adaptability would play a great role. The future is not as we know it, but consists of spatial practices beyond current architectural responses, beyond, self-defined, often technocratic categories and boundaries. The things we have made in common this spring could be transformed into a curtain in the teacher's room, textile room dividers, several woven curtains and textile pieces in a whole University, several universities and many other institutions and homes. It could become a textile or fibre revolution all around us in the homes, the city, the world.

We all take positions. Can we involve people on the ground more in art and architecture? In which way? What happens if we let go of control, of the regular process of a project, of the outcome? If we experiment? What happens if we are attentively listening? And how do we tackle things that don't go after the plan?

Though both theoretical and practical work in the intersection between different fields of soft and solid approaches, and experimenting with their interaction, we have been working towards our own form of methodology and knowledge production this semester, challenging standard norms and methods in architecture.

Driven by the history of patriarchal norms and values, and with a backdrop of a world in polycrisis, we have researched how time, body and space are intertwined, and closely connected while reflecting on positioning, networks, circularity, which stories we tell ourselves, and of who has power in society. In search of new ways of ethics of care and inclusion

Who is in the periphery, and who is in the center, who participates, and who is left out, will always be important to ask questions about. Not only in the general society, but just as much, if not even more, in art and architecture.

*the movement makes
education the
praction of freedom
critical awareness
convictions
active
liberatory
labour
a practice of
conjunction with
contemplation*

Through reading and reflecting, glossary work has also been a part of the process. It has been a part of becoming more aware, conscious, reflective and able to articulate ourselves in new ways.

*transgression
spontaneity
flexibility
enhancing
ways of doing
engaging
encouraging
constant change
a place for learning
strategies
re-conceptualized ideas
key
each time is different
inventing
performative work
a space for change,
invention and
spontaneous shifts
a cathyst drawing out
the unique sessions and
learning each time*

