

That which comes into view here begins with a piece of paper being torn to a particular size and placed on a table at a certain distance within reach. A rectangular form is insinuated in pencil on the sheet, in accordance with a sense of proportion. Then the drawing is clarified. This decision is for the most part about the possibilities of its consequence and not about whether it is “correct” or bears within it some rule. But that it is “correct” there, locally in the event, is in no way a chance occurrence. There is the sensation of doing something sensible, made perceptibly there on the paper.

Next, these proportions are cut in sheets of wood veneer. Format, grain and the emergence of patterns lend the sheets a textural scale. Some of the sheets are chosen with consideration and others not. They are assembled into volumes. Then several volumes are made, several members in the same scale. These are placed on a table of the same material. Then they are moved around, combined within the delimitations of the table, shifted in relation to each other such that they reveal a set of combinations. This is done in front of a studio camera, which tracks the combinations. Some are more interesting than others. Now and then this distinction is lost. There is a distance between the set and the camera, the film has a certain grain and the pictures are digitally scanned with a certain resolution. Then the images are digitally processed, cropped and retouched. Some are copied straight from the negative. They are photo-chemically printed in the “correct” size to establish a scale, hung on a wall, in a room, to be seen by an eye that exists in a body in the relevant space. The work becomes a series of contacts that together create a chain and establish a scale, a combination of several proportions.

The photographic recording is made with high tolerance for noise, mixed lighting, imprecise solutions, different film formats, etc. Only one exposure is made of each configuration. The editing of the images is extensive considering that the rough starting point is, in the end, to be accepted by a “natural/conditioned” eye. The negatives may suffer from color cast, they can be over or underexposed, and they must be retouched in order to adhere to such a standard. This provides a malleable resource, and they become drawings derived from a place with its own local color.

In addition to the irrevocable moment in time, there is also another disruption in photography. This is where a situation in a particular time/space continuum allows it-self to be transported through light in order to reappear as a trace on a surface. There is a tracing of an event in three-dimensional space through a non-dimensional moment onto a two-dimensional surface. There is a concrete spatial and topologic disruption.

Information passes through a channel and a breach, but this channel is also a “continuity” of contacts in a plastic chain of events. The contact’s law is that of discontinuity. A series of breaks is a chain. A chain seen in a certain resolution or scale is also perceived as a continuity. The procedure here is to extend a sequence of breaks, which are points of contact, touches, in a chain, in a picture.

The trace is a gradient of more or less light. The point in time is not one moment, but rather an expanse of time, containing that quantity of light it takes to get the trace going. Such a “timeframe” is also a question of scale. In one proportion an image appears clearly, in another nothing appears, depending on how much and how long the exposure is in relation to the sensitivity of the film and paper. Either too much or too little, more or less.

The photograph’s skeleton is symmetrical, and there is something here that resembles a homonym: the same name for two different things. The total process consists of two situations; that which exists in space before the exposure in the optical transport, and that which exists afterward, on the wall. The same designation (the total process) is the name of two different things, something inside a space containing a surface and something in a surface surrounded by a space. It is about the similarity and the difference between premise and effect, between two situations that have the same name in the realization of the whole.

The medium affirms the modern. It displays something by showing that it has already become part of the past. It is a dark rite in the cult where the minute differentiations of all things, are all processes supreme objective. In Lacan’s perspective, where the symbolic action is the closest one comes to the object of desire’s permanent absence, photography is the perfect agent because the absence is already inherent in the medium. Photography always comes precisely too late. It is the priesthood in the ideological machine that produces the past, and it is now entangled in this intrigue for its own sake as well. Photography has become history – about photography as auto-analysis. To engage in photography today is to engage in something that already repeats itself, and there is no limit to its rhetorical-ornamental resources. It is in the process of ceasing to be a contributor to the new, whose defender it is according to its own constitution, and as with everything else in decline, it absorbs other values. Unclear values containing distortions of, among other things, what it once was. Thus photography becomes an image of the photograph, and it reawakens ghosts of what has disappeared precisely because of photography. Its nascent or archetypal images are aroused.

I believe that these images are a reawakening of that kind of photography or image that “merely” sees. Not the kind of image that seeks the new in photography, nor the self-referential. But such a straight photography is also marked by the fact that it has been photography. It cannot escape being about the new, and it cannot escape being about itself.

I consider this a profanation of photography from its sacred modernity-affirming function. I believe that this is possible by doing something with how one does what one does – through photography – and that a way to establish a freer play in photography is by working the spatial values through the whole chain. Not by emphasizing the break’s slightly worn pathos, but by emphasizing the continuity’s question of scale. The event here concerns the hand’s connection to the eye: when one sees oneself touch something for the first time one becomes attentive to the fact that there is a correspondence between the hand in one place and the eye in another. In the making of a work this correspondence is connected to actions, actions which by reiteration become patterns, rhythms. This rhythm or this pattern binds the breaks in a perpetual figure of contacts where the eye and the hand interact in one experience as a singular entity in the one body they both are parts of.

It also has something to do with an image based on a contact between sculpture, which is traditionally the guarantor of continuity, and photography, which is traditionally the guarantor of discontinuity.

It relates to a bigger picture, where photography and works of art are images among other images, and just some of several ways of doing things. Perhaps in a more general shift from emphasizing the optical to having to emphasize the non-visual in the image.

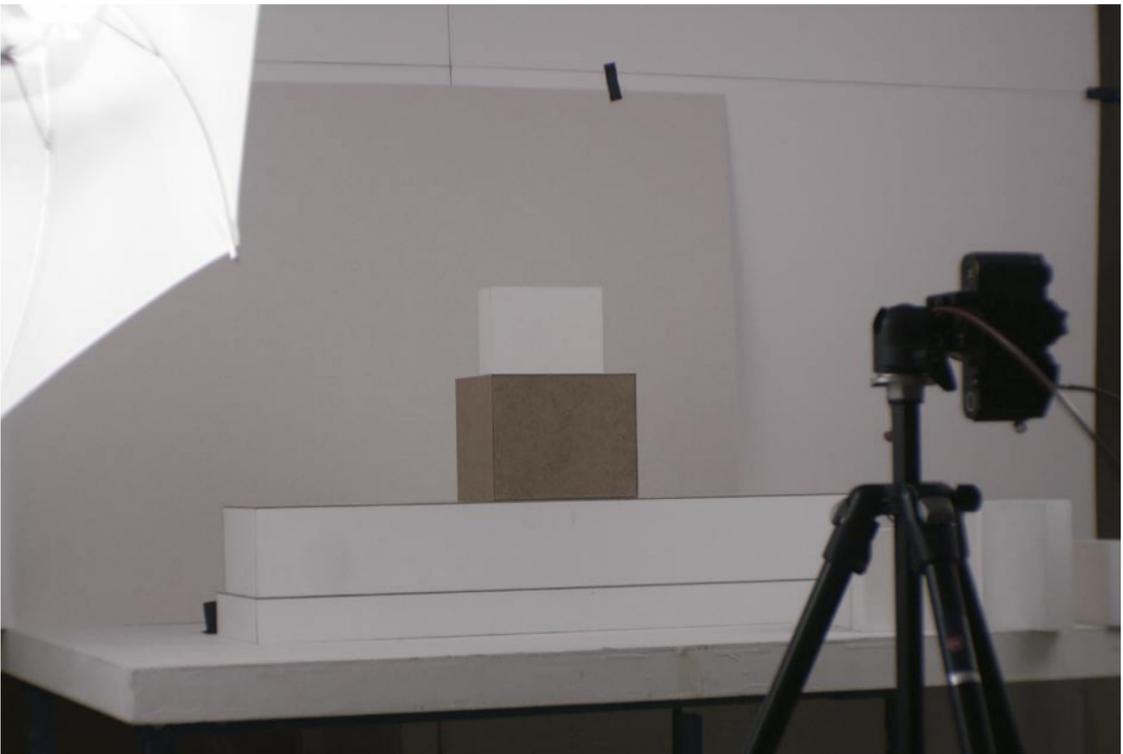
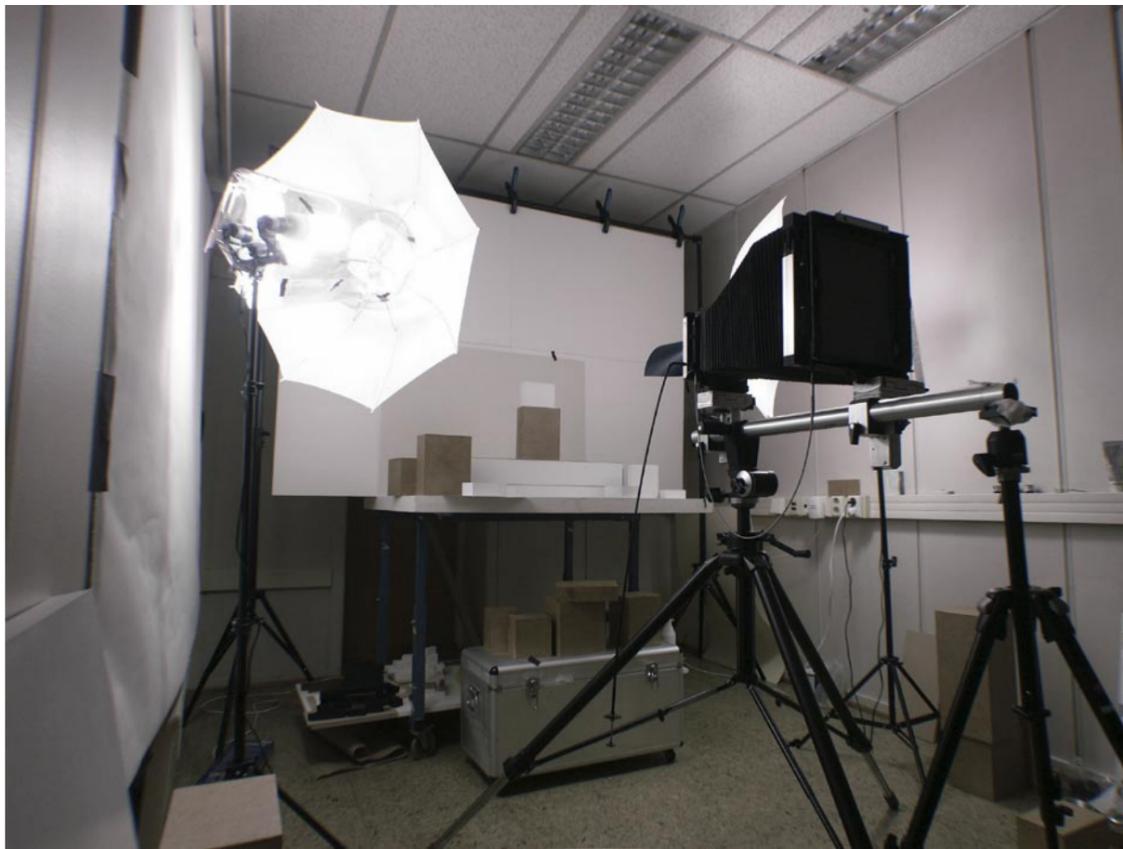
Some entirely concrete and some entirely general reflections on a selection of work for an exhibition at Trondhjems Kunstforening in January 2008.

Stein Rønning, Dec '07

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studio Oslo 2012



studio Umbertide 2009