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Islands

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ISLANDS

extended abstract

Architects, writers and artists have always liked to dream of islands and used them as working material for imagining new futures. Recently the topic of islands has been brought to the center of stage in Denmark. Islands have been proposed as solutions to the challenges of our time as clean beginnings. New-built islands have been presented as solutions to our ever-increasing need for urban housing, but also an embankment to resist rising water levels. Paul Virilio's warning that technology is predisposed with its own potential accident¹ is turned inside out: The solution is attempted built into the problem. This project acknowledges the need to find such solutions, but suggests to go one step back in doing so. It simply asks, 'what is an island' if understood as an artistic problem of combining technology and accident, intent and force.

Throughout history, islands have been used for isolation, political separation and quarantine, but at the same time, they are cannot be understood as isolated, binary phenomena. Structures, also islands, are in a constant state of flux, in an ever-changing symbiosis between accumulation and deterioration. Raimund Abraham has it "While you build the wall, you shall destroy the stones"² and Willy Ørskov³ reminds us that building up and breaking down are not just opposites but also necessary forces of creation. It seems ever-more relevant that architects work within these opposing, yet productive forces. As our climate changes and people need (or desire) to live more densely, fruitful ways of imagining new habitats could very well be to explore this condition.

Colonizing outer space is the focus of much research and investment currently. Large investments are made into getting there first, and making uninhabitable places livable. But we have large, unexplored potentials much closer by. Imagine that we could find sustainable ways of inhabiting the spaces of oceans, seas and harbors, making good living conditions for people. Islands of inhabitation, which produce energy, nurture civilization, culture and produce alternative forms of inhabitation.

To address these questions of islands as non-binary phenomena, as amalgamations of intent and contingency, we use artistic research methods. The project is an artistic symbiosis between additive and subtractive fabrication logics, between solid casts and perforated structures. It combines digital fabrication with material craft. The process of making and negotiation is inseparable from its form and intent. As we see an urgent need to find models for how architecture and urban developments can grow

1 Virilio, Paul, *The Original Accident*, Cambridge: Polity, 2007

2 Abraham Raimund, *[Un]built*, Wien, 1996

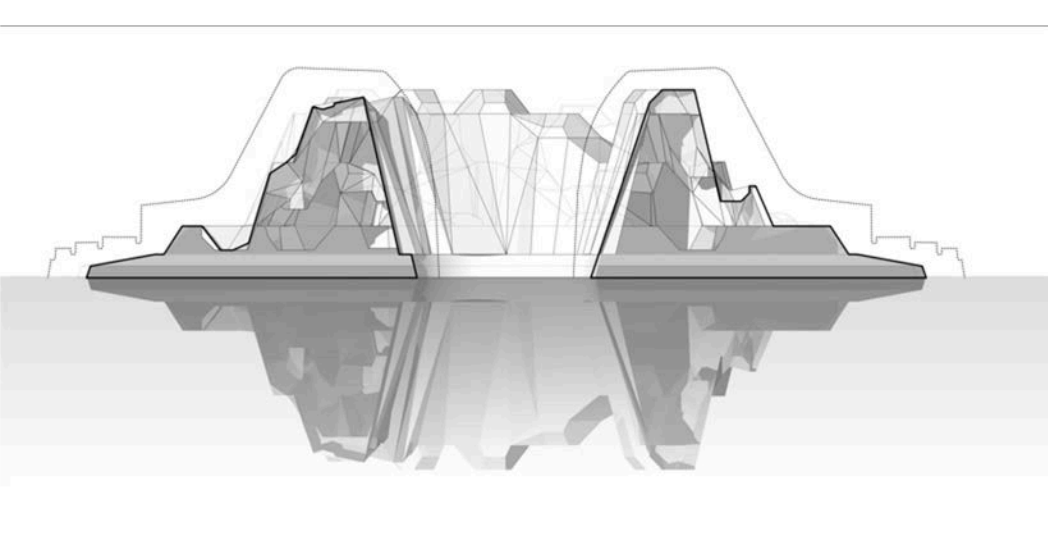
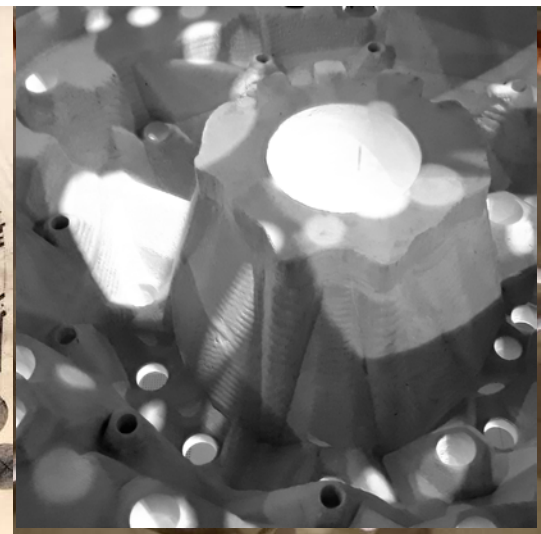
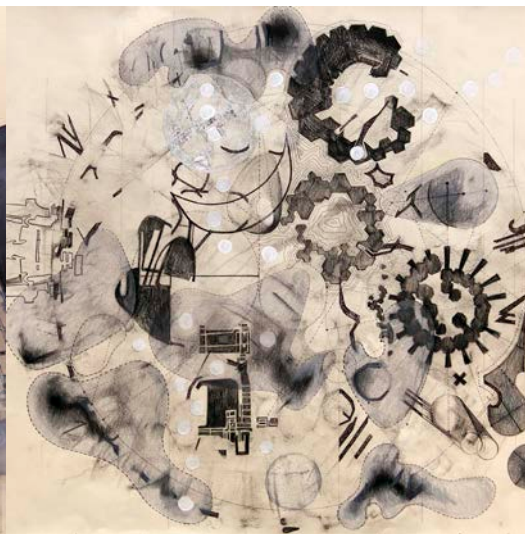
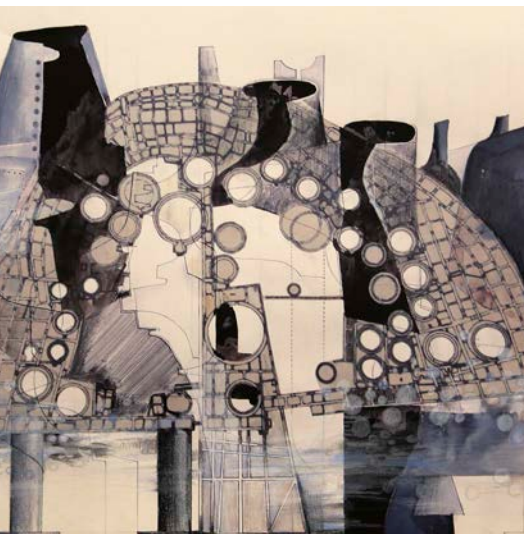
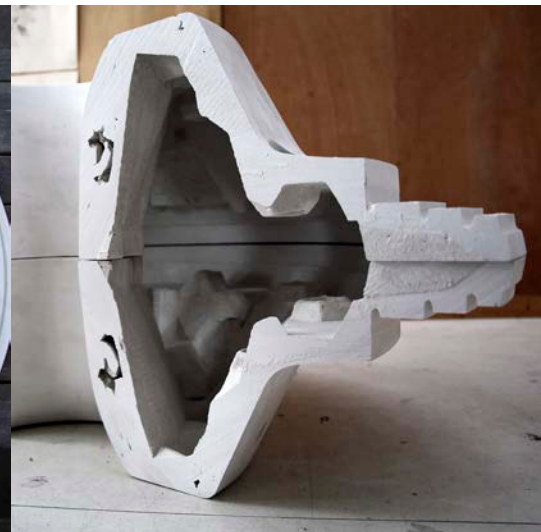
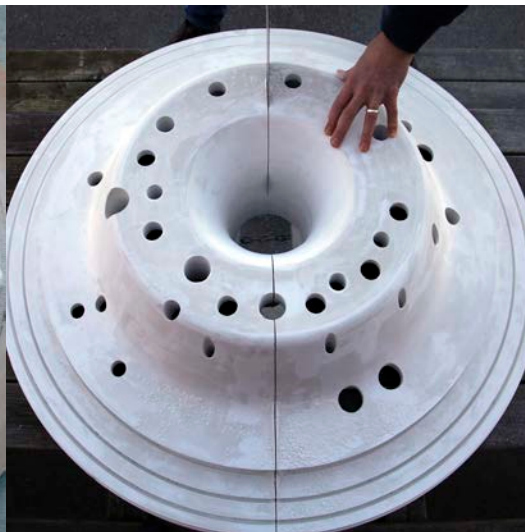
3 Ørskov, Willy, "Aflæsning af objekter", Copenhagen, 1966

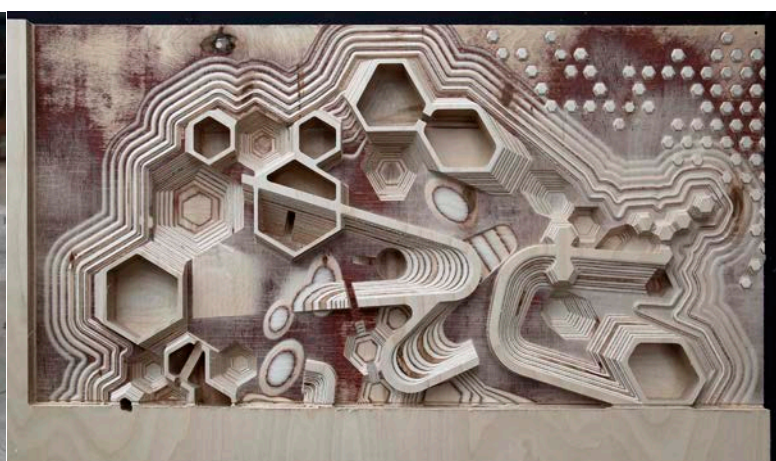
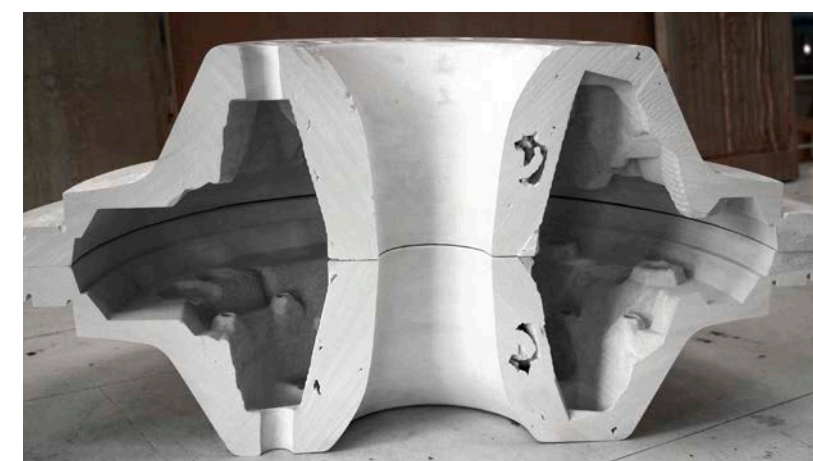
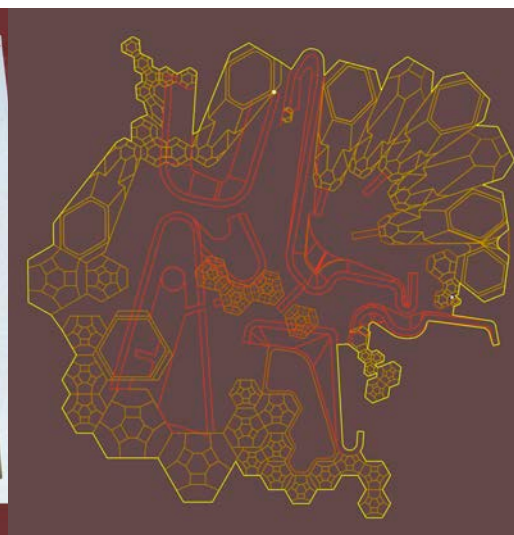
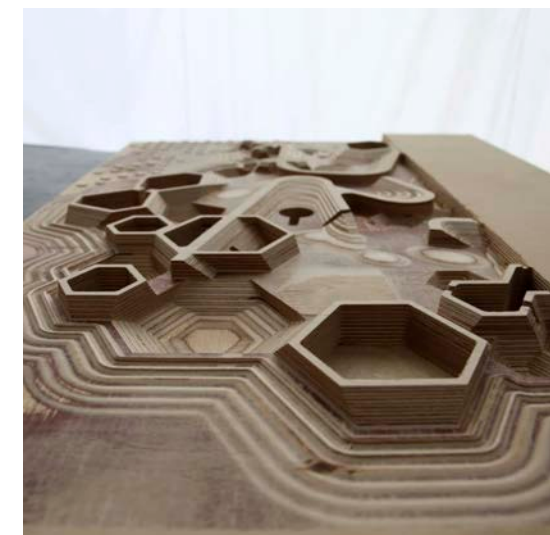
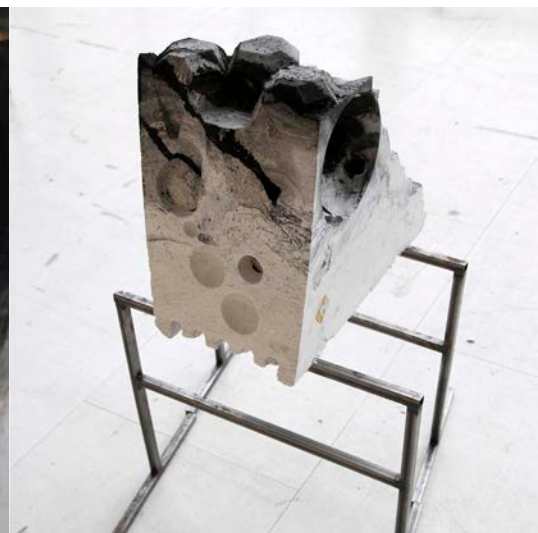
organically, little by little, we engage directly in a process which does exactly that. Every piece of work (sketches, drawings, models, installations) pass between the two of us numerous times, as well as between digital and analogue tools and methods.

For example, an analogue sketch is translated into a computer drawing, which is then cnc-milled into a high-density foam model. On top of - and integrated into this model, a plaster model is made, using old plaster work techniques. The plaster model, once removed from its foam mold, is then subject to subtractive methods, perforated and fragmented. There is no final result, as such. Sometimes the final object becomes so perforated that it disintegrates. Other times, it merges with other islands to become an archipelago, or becomes its own double by being placed in relationship to a large mirror.

Just like Theo van Doesburg's series of cow paintings from circa 1917 – 20, we see these many stages as a series of translations, in which it becomes difficult to separate media from content. It is our intention to push our methods and materials towards boundaries, where the unexpected – and sometimes undesirable – happens. We intentionally undermine the idea of the single author – the artist genius. We 'destroy' and erase parts of each other's drawings, and allow for misinterpretations, faults and mistakes. This has proved to be a productive principle, which forces us beyond reproduction of the already known.

As we continue to reflect on the possible impact of our work on the contemporary discourse, we hope to apply our artistic research methods to experiments with phenomena which grows organically, are in continuous flux and which allow for plural voices. It is in particular this question of the organic growth that we hope to discuss with peers at the ca2re conference. Just as most existing islands are the results of continuous geological, biological and climatic transformations, we hope to further qualify our work towards contributing to the making of new islands, real and/or imaginary.





The Role of DDr methodologies/techniques/instruments employed in the project

All of the shown pieces are results of a close collaboration between two architecture researchers.

The project is an artistic symbiosis between additive and subtractive fabrication logics, between solid casts and perforated structures. It combines digital fabrication with material craft. The process of making and negotiation is inseparable from its form and intent.

As we see an urgent need to find models for how architecture and urban developments can grow organically, little by little, we engage directly in a process which does exactly that. Every piece of work (sketches, drawings, models, installations) pass between the two of us numerous times, as well as between digital and analogue tools and methods.

Just like Theo van Doesburg's series of cow paintings from circa 1917 – 20, we work on series of iterations of every piece. We see these many stages as a series of translations, in which it becomes difficult to separate media from content. There is no final result, as such. Sometimes the final object becomes so perforated or fragmented that it disintegrates. Other times, it merges with other islands to become an archipelago, or becomes its own double by being placed in relationship to a large mirror:

It is our intention to push our methods and materials towards boundaries, where the unexpected – and sometimes undesirable – happens. We intentionally undermine the idea of the single author – the artist genius. We 'destroy' and erase parts of each other's drawings, and allow for misinterpretations, faults and mistakes.