

THE COLLECTION

Working in a series

Jacob Sebastian Bang

Department 4, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture

Philip de Langes Allé 10 - 1435 Copenhagen K, Denmark

<http://www.jacob-bang.dk>

Jacob.bang@kadk.dk

Abstract

The work in a series ensures a dynamic workflow and desire to explore. As an artist and architect, I am interested in having an extensive production to study, something to choose from in order to create a personal expression, works of art, or a personal working method. To invent techniques, themes, ways of drawing the objects - and - finally being able to recreate procedures in relation to teaching at the School of Architecture. Therefore documentation is important during the process. In my practice as an artist and architect, there are 2 tracks that run parallel as part of the same practice - and thus methodical approach. One is the original work of art and the process of artistic creation. The second is the reflection of this work and subsequent development of rules and methods - such as working in a series: the material is analysed and identified as potential creators of architectural processes and transformational potential. I have established an extensive collection of 1001 plaster models for further exploration. I am highly fascinated by collections – to work with several different models simultaneously. Hereby, the process is optimized, your instincts are sharpened and choices are made quicker.

Keywords

Collection; to work in a series; rules; models

I have established an extensive collection of 1,001 plaster models; accumulations of individual objects, fragments in their own right, for further exploration. I am highly fascinated by collections – to work with several different models simultaneously.

In my practice as an artist and architect, there are two tracks that run parallel as part of the same practice - and thus methodical approach. One is the original work of art and the process of artistic creation. The second is the reflection of this work and subsequent development of rules and methods (such as working in a series) and an evaluation of the effects and reproducibility in relation to the creation of coming works of art. In other words it is in the artistic practice I experiment with architectural model and drawing in a quest for operational material. The material is analyzed and identified as potential creators of architectural processes. These two sides are a symbiotic process and it is difficult to separate them in precise phases since the reflection takes place during the process - when decisions are made through the artistic creations. In the following overview the work is divided hierarchical showing the creation of the

Conference topics

Aspects of improving the artist's "own" awareness of his/her own practice and the knowledge it incorporates;

Aspects of insight, understanding and knowing in the work;

Discussion of the processes of making the work/design/music in the context of own and other practices;

Discovery/definition of values in the process of designing/making/doing/performing;

Implications of uncovering the aspects considered as tacit;

Exploration of the tension between the understanding and emotional experience of the work of art or design;

Forms and frames relevant to represent knowledge based on creative practice;

Investigation of the relation between the creative work and its description – interpretation – explanation;

Inwards and outwards communication in designing/music/arts.

collection (the artistic work) containing both exploration and reflection - my focus and interests during the process. Here in roughly descending order of importance:

Shape: The production of shape and the joy of creating shapes.

Models: The joy of working in models making molds and casting in plaster. Thinking with models and with the negative/positive interplay.

The Collection: The creation of a personal and original work of art and the challenge of creating something new in the world - in its own right. With punch and potency.

To work in a series: Provides a dynamic and extensive production with a broad investigative and analytical process that expands the field of interest. It is imperative to optimize the process when producing such a huge amount of models. You have to be prepared concerning logistics, the ways of doing the work but also to pay attention to how the preparations and the ways a strategically planned process influences the final work of art. A daily production is both very fascinating but also tiresome after a while. The production will affect you and your family's daily life – it is comprehensive work. The strategy is to develop a minor production to begin with to analyze how to plan or devise the future work in terms of casting, molding, wrapping, transportation, storage and so on. After these initial considerations you can speed up the production. All options are reviewed again and again so that everything is done with ease afterwards. Production must ultimately be so simple as possible.

Obstruction or resistance: The way of working by setting up rules. Obstructions, errors (it is important to be good at making errors and to use the experience gained from these errors) and coincidences and how to make use of them; different techniques; making rules and setting up rules; how to think analytical with the material.

Objects to study: To create objects for exploration, objects with future possibilities and potentials (operational material). Decoding into maneuvers and rules.

Diagrams: Calculations, numbers and figures. Thinking with diagrams.

Transformation: The transformation of plaster-models into new models and drawings.

Drawing: The imaginative drawing and the more analytically constructed drawing.

Public exhibition: Exhibition showing the work in public - to receive comments.

Documentation: Documenting the entire process during the creation and exhibition.

Method: Generalization of knowledge, awareness about procedures, making choices, translations of models into concepts, maneuvers and rules, the development of a method.

Lectures: To create lectures in text and pictures is to reflect on your work.

Teaching: To develop assignments and workshops for students is to reflect on your work. Which parts of the studies are suitable and therefore subject to optimization in relation to my teaching – and which parts are left unexplored in that same connection.

Publications: Writing articles as this paper is to reflect on your work.

Figure 1



Relief in lacquer, 20x20 mm.



Figure 2

From the exhibition "1001 Models", 1001 models in plaster. Photo: Michael Dam

I have established an extensive collection of 1,001 plaster models; accumulations of individual objects, fragments in their own right, for further exploration. I am highly fascinated by collections – to work with several different models simultaneously. Hereby, the process is optimized, instincts are sharpened and choices are made quicker than when you wallow in too many details of a single model. The amount of models and the repetitive aspect of the process make it easier to reduce the material, less painful. The detailing can happen at a later stage when maneuvers and rules have become clearer.

To begin with I have chosen to work with randomly selected models from my large collection of form studies. Overall, I start with a few models, that I examine thoroughly to have an initial set of rules and a kind of matrix as a basis. Subsequently, a further number of models can be examined in a similar manner. The 1,001 models are homogenous in expression, approximately the same size, have the same degree of detail, no extremities and are all cast in plaster. They are therefore comparable to a certain extent and may be subjected to the same process and set of rules. They are a kind of transitional models perhaps a kind of compensation for something more complicated, simple approximations which should be further transformed into new models in other materials, scaling and expression as well as in drawn material. The exploration of the model is done by working in a series - from several drawings with few variations to a series of increasing complexity and hence greater variation. Notations which seek to identify the model and its inner idea so to speak. There is much to be gained by working in a series when all of the models are based on the same basic substance and thus comparable. By transforming the models I want to establish a comprehensive study material through a series of dissections that sheds light and opens up the model by letting it through different techniques and forms of representation and thus a translation of the model into idea (and maneuvers and rules). To explore the idea, develop the project and the direction it should take. To test the object's resistance or lack of cooperation and examine it thoroughly thus achieving an increased awareness of the model's specific characteristics and inherent opportunities. To work in a series is to prepare oneself thoroughly in creating opportunities in the future work.

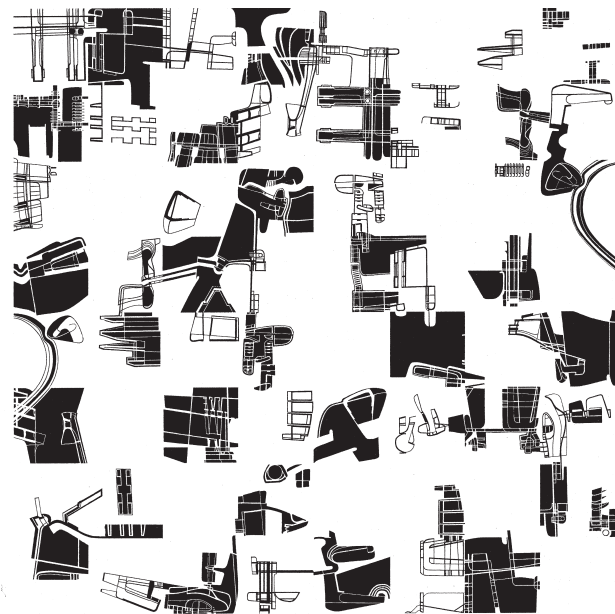


Figure 3
Field. Drawing, ink on paper.

To have an eye for coincidences that can occur in a large production - the fruitful errors that may occur - but to maintain control over the process. In the beginning it is more interesting for me not knowing what to do - but to do a lot. It is about utilizing the material optimally, to have a big production where nothing is wasted - where everything is tested. The material deserves a proper treatment. It is interesting to observe what happens when nothing is thrown away, when everything has to be used. Also the things I don't like. It must be determined how the material fits into a further exploration and what I should do about it to reestablish my enthusiasm. The study is to find out what can go the distance. It is not always the obvious but the more complex and quirky versions that fascinates me.

There are infinitely many possible representation options, both digital and analogue - in my case it is about how I transform a number of models into the form of drawn material. It's about on the one hand to create a close relationship to the representation of the model and on the other hand to establish a distance between you and the model, a kind of alienation, unfamiliar, mystical, a higher level of abstraction, perhaps via a technique; reverse drawing to negative; scale the drawing up; drawing the model from memory; "fragmenting it" - in the sense of a cut or a slice - as a detail in its own right. A photo of the model can be investigated with the same zeal as X-ray pictures. Both photo and X-ray are based on the same model. By working in a series the models are analyzed in numerous glances and forms of representation. Proposals for how the model may be decoded. How its specific nature is evoked. I stick to black / white pictures to reduce noise from the use of color. The use of black / white is for me the objective truth. More concentrated. The color can be included later. The model photo (or other representations - such as X-ray) is exposed to various techniques in drawing: hatchings, reversed from positive to negative, cropped (fragmented), hollowed, repeated, the spatial fixation of the drawing (via generators), a detail or a fragment is scaled up and can be treated more independently than working with the drawing as a whole. And so on. The question is in what manner does the object "draw itself" so to speak, which technique is the right one? You have to be in the mental space of the drawing. You have to be aware of what is straightforward and obvious. You have to follow your intuition and instincts. What should emerge from the drawing and thus be mapped and what should disappear from the drawing. It is a process. I am using the classic analytic measuring of an object and further exploration in more personal suggestions (more imaginative and inventive sketches in drawing) via numerous series of drawings based on the same starting point - for instance a photo of the model to begin with. The drawing must not only be a faithful translation of the model both traces must go hand in hand and complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

Genesis / notes from the process: The first thing to do is to produce what I call first generation plaster: a lot of plaster castings based on packaging items from daily life. Pure shape so to speak. Hundreds and hundreds of these castings are produced in two copies of each casting that are glued together in pairs. Then I cut away pieces of plaster from the castings to "alienate" them or simply to cut away too recognizable features. I

evaluate proportions, size and details. I make them into my personal models. After the cutting there is a lot of sanding to do to make the cut surface clean and prepared (as a base for the making of molds). These new first generation plaster models, hundreds and hundreds, are placed up to four models at a time in a vacuum machine where the heated plastic material is sucked down until it covers the plaster models. The plastic is very suitable as a mold. This process of making molds is repeated several times (up to 300). When producing the models I combine different molds so that the 1,001 models are all different but with some common features according to how many times the mold has been used. Every plastic mold has to be used a few times combined with other plastic molds as a result of the desired number of plaster models. Some of them will be used four to five times each. Others will only be used two or three times. Some of them will be too difficult or tiresome to demount (the plaster should slip out of the mould as easy as possible). These molds will be left out during the process. The plastic molds are then put together in pairs, surface against surface, and then taped together before casting. This process of putting together in pairs is intuitive and dynamic (both asymmetric and symmetric compositions are made). I put together at least ten different molds (taped together) before casting, in order to optimize the process. This is the number of molds I can control without too many mishaps. The new plaster models are treated lightly with a knife and sandpaper. My intuition and any smaller defects in the castings gives me a hint about where to cut or to use sandpaper. Afterwards I cut, with a handsaw, a larger slice so that the model have a cut surface for future use - for instance in the making of drawings. The cut is placed intuitive and done quickly. I do this 1,001 times and finally I have my collection. The Collection was a part of an exhibition where I did four different distributions or compositions going from organized to disorganized structures: the grid, the negative circle, the circle and finally the totally dissolved version laid out by students. All four were made in relation to the size and extent of the exhibition space. The models can be exhibited in any exhibition space: the distance between the models will change in accordance with the size of the room. The further exploration of the plaster models is done by transforming the models in several different ways: for instance as a relief model in magnesium, into a kind of "mummified models" wrapped with tape, into structures or frameworks and also as "deconstructed" volumes separated in minor parts among others. Every model is photographed on film and subsequently put together in layers as a sort of X-ray (six layers, top, bottom and sides). X-ray pictures are translated into drawings: I draw the outline, the first thing that I can recognize or decode without any particular interpretation. I subdivide drawings into primary fields. I "dig" myself into "the mass" by drawing, hatching or painting over with white color. I may deconstruct the figuration into smaller parts or draw it as a kind of sectional view. I reduce. I cut or trim the figuration to a fragment as this makes the drawing more operational in the further process. Another way to examine the model, in drawing, is by studying a simple photograph of the model: The same photo addressed in different ways in a series that begins with inscribing the photographed model in a grid, reversing it into a negative image (from black to white), selecting a detail and enlarging it and so forth. The work

in a series ensures a dynamic workflow and desire to explore. Courage is greater when there is an extensive material, which can be damaged or destroyed but still leaving some treasures behind. The risks seem smaller. As an artist and architect, I am interested in having an extensive production: something to study, something to choose from in order to create a personal expression and a personal working method, to invent techniques, themes, ways of drawing the objects - and - finally being able to recreate procedures in relation to my teaching at the School of Architecture in Copenhagen. I have learned that working in a series is also a win win situation for the students who are forced to have a large production in the initial stages, a kind of initial shoot from the hip exercise so to speak. It is imperative for the students to have something to investigate instead of too much unproductive thinking. Documentation is important during the process and the analysis should be reflected in the final work that should radiate both analysis and independent work in its own right. The process must be reflected in the final work.

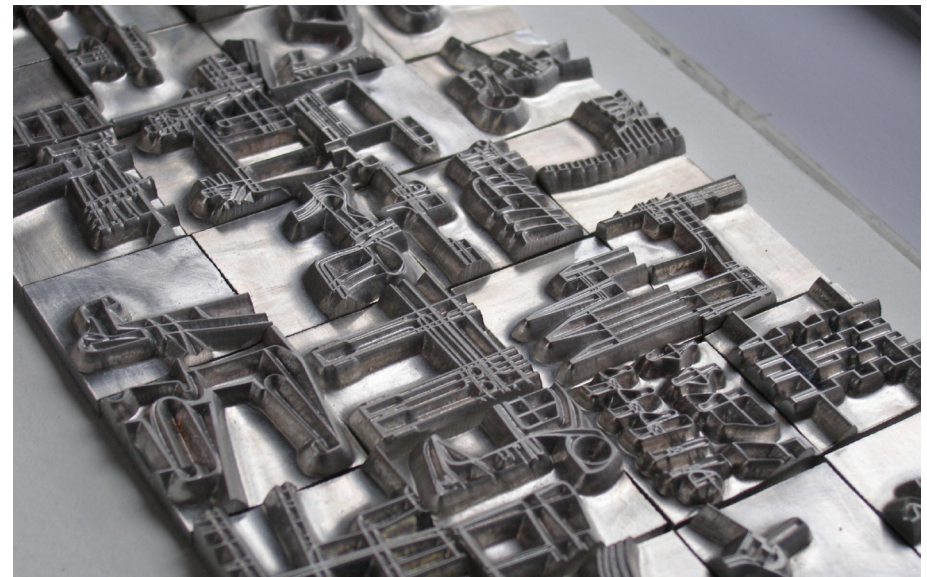


Figure 4
Reliefs, magnesium, 20x20 mm.