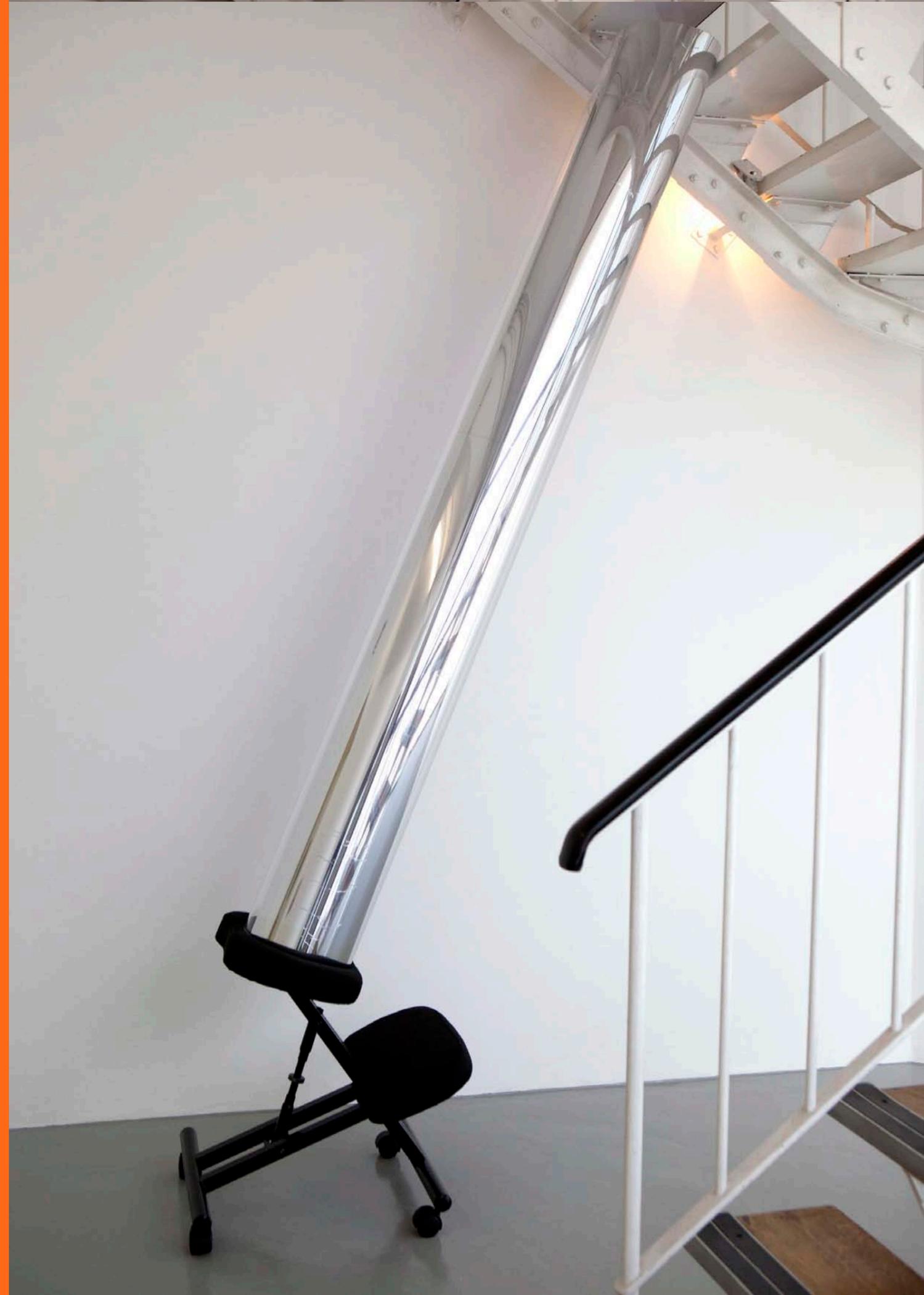


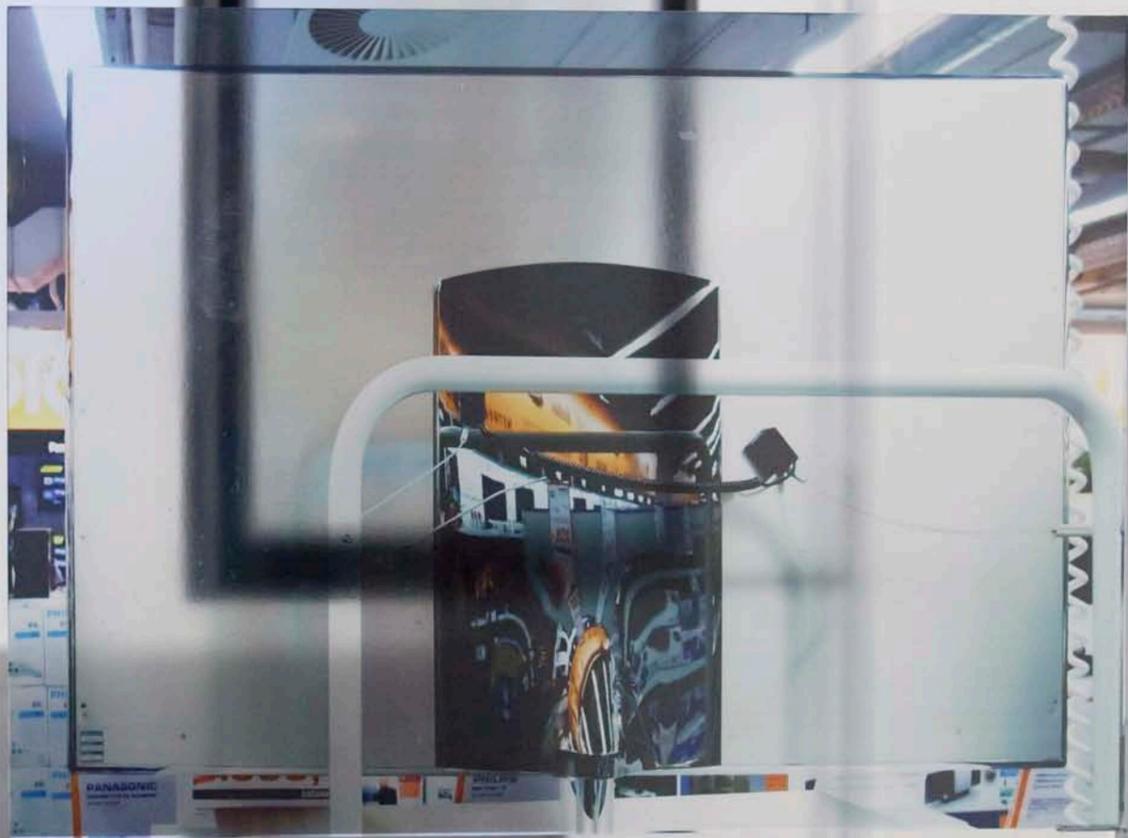
MARTE EKNØS

by måg





/EKNOS/



1) måg:

You often refer to the spaces we surround ourselves with but are not always conscious of. You put them into a new setting and we see them- we become aware of their existence and their communication within the space. It seems that such detailed and sensitive discoveries are integral to your work and to your explorations into new forms. Tell us how this communication with the 'unnoticeable' develops.

ME:

I often think of observation as my main tool. I spend a lot of time observing the urban landscape and I try to be very conscious of the situations I experience in my everyday life in order to make use of this in my work. I photograph a lot, and often discover interesting things later when looking at the pictures. I look for details and fragments that I find give a heightened meaning. And when I'm in a new place I connect what I see to previous experiences. I absorb found ideas into my work process in a continuous development. In this way it is not about site specificity in the sense of a 'locality'. Instead it's about the connections, and the possibility of a subjective understanding of urban environments that are often generic and imposed.

2) måg:

As part of your process in making new work, constructing a manifesto seems to be vital to you. Do you still work to this model, and what role do these manifestos play in the overall process of making and understanding your own work

and practice?

ME:

These Temporary Manifestos are an ongoing project. There are five of them now, and the series continues. They are infrequent and have an irregular presence in my working process, but I still consider them a significant part of it. They are a tool in my production, with rules and guidelines I set for myself, at the same time as they are pieces formally related to my sculptures. It's a combination of monumental and assertive language with subjective interpretation and overt corruption. They are temporary and contradictory. And even though I think they are kind of funny, there is no irony. I believe what I say, but I also see that it's not always realistic, so I break my own rules.

3) måg:

Many well-established artists have emerged from the Environmental Art department at Glasgow School of Art, where you studied from 1998-2001. What do you consider unique about this department and how has your time there influenced you?

ME:

The fact that it is not medium specific, but sees the context of the work as a material in itself was definitely important to me. It also conveyed that art has an importance in society at large, and deserves a place out there. However, I felt their approach to public art had become prescriptive, and the theoretical foundation wasn't being reviewed in relation to the contemporary context. I have had a very critical view of public art in general since,

and have therefore regarded my time at CalArts as a bigger influence on my work. But looking at it now, it's obviously a combination; my understanding and use of materials are derived from ideas taught in the Environmental Art department, and my insistence that the work should be critical comes from what I was taught at CalArts. And at the moment I am finding my way back to an interest in public art on my own terms, after years of investigating the urban environment.

4) måg:

When you approach a space and work site, what is the first element you look for?

ME:

I don't have a set strategy for this. It depends on a lot of factors - what kind of space it is, how it features in the overall project. But generally I try to spend as much time as I can in the space or on the site, as every place seems to reveal different aspects over time. If I find interesting details in the gallery space, I capitalise on them. Other times, it's the environment around the space that is more interesting to me.

But this also follows my logic of absorbing what I see into an ongoing development, so sometimes the installation is its own environment, with no direct relationship to the site. The gallery can also be a frame, inside which our awareness is heightened and the way we look at things is slightly different.

5) måg:

One gets a sense of balance

6)
måg:
Tell us about your work and its relationship to architecture and public interiors.

ME:
These are areas of research for me, as well as spatial considerations when installing work. Architecture and interiors are 'total' experiences that we often don't think critically about. By isolating elements, highlighting connections and changing things around in different ways, I want to facilitate reflection and critical thinking around our environment. And if the gallery has interesting details, I activate these by making connections in the installation.

7)
måg:
The objects you use within your sculptures, often found objects from public places - how do you source them and how do you incorporate them into a work?

ME:
Depending on what it is and what role it will have in the final work, I find the supplier and buy what I have seen, or I get my own version of it fabricated. Sometimes, if it's significant, I remove the original from the site and use that. This was the case with Bollard (2011). I had kept an eye on this particular dented bollard for months before I decided to take it. Since it was damaged, removing it unlawfully was a combined act of theft and maintenance.

On the other hand, if it is impossible or not practical to use the object itself, like the escalator, I use photography (my own or found online). Panic Bar (2011) is a found

image I decided was more economical to use than to actually make a sculpture of a panic bar. And Escalate (2011) is a photograph which is conceived as a new kind of object. I have taken it out of its context, decreased the scale (although enlarged the photograph) and mounted it on metallic Dibond cut to shape. Even though the thing itself is intact as an image, I see these as acts of abstraction that work as a way of clarifying, yet opening up the situation to form new connections. Better furnished, more fortunate (2011) is another abstraction from the escalator. I started noticing these bristles on escalators and revolving doors, and found that taken out of their functional context, these objects open themselves up to different readings through their formal qualities.

8)
måg:
Do you have a relationship to Formalism?

ME:
I relate to the early concept of Formalism, in the sense that form and content are two sides of the same thing in an art work, and not separable. But this concept has changed so much, and today it suggests to me a purity of form which I don't agree with. So I think at this point I'm more interested in how the meaning of the concept has developed, and can now be said to put forward almost the opposite idea of what it originally referred to.

I don't separate between form and ideas of function and meaning in my work. I think of all aspects of the work as elements that are



and imbalance when experiencing your work; often one wonders if the structure will stay up or fall down, and the fragility of their construction expresses a vulnerability but at the same time, strength. How do you work with these elements of balance, strength and vulnerability?

ME:
My aim is to try to make something that is formally imbalanced, but structurally sound. This is a bit of a contradiction, and repeatedly the imbalanced form has led to structural failures. Which in turn causes me anxiety, especially when I'm working with glass and other fragile materials. There is a human quality to all the sculptures I make - manifest in their scale, my less than perfect attempts at handling industrial materials, inclusion of objects that have been designed to our body proportions (shoe, water dispenser, wii balance board etc.) So most connections and tensions in the work are both structural and human.

I want to push materials out of their regular range of performance - both in their meaning and physical qualities - to show different sides of the same thing and the problems that come with this. It is an ongoing process which is sometimes more in balance than others, at times more personal, then more technical/mechanical.



connected in multiple ways,
the decisions are never purely
formal.

9)
måg:
Are you completing new work
right now?

ME:
I spent two months this
spring in Detroit mostly
gathering information and
rethinking a lot of my ideas
within this context, which is so
different from my daily
environment in Berlin. Having
been in a state of steady
decline since the late 1960s
with obvious corruption and
layers of conflict, this city has
taken on a very
particular form. Strangely,
I recognised a lot of formal
qualities on a large scale here,
which I have been
employing in an attempt to
disclose what's under the
surface or on the other side of
the urban environments I'm
more familiar with. It therefore
feels like I have been able to
crystallise some of these ideas
in my thinking, and now I'm
starting new bodies of work
based on this. It is an
ongoing process of
integrating new ideas into the
thought process, and then
distilling them to keep it
economical. Since the places
I arrive at are always
temporary, every work along
the way is a temporary
proposed solution and
automatically solicits another
one.

IMAGES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Verticalia (II)
2011
Plexiglas tube, anti dazzle strips,
knee stool
267 x 100 x 46.5cm
Photo by Between Bridges

Installation view Statoil Art Award,
Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo
2011
Photo by Laila Meyrick

Tranquilizer II
2011
Glass door unit, inkjet print on
Plexiglas, magnets
101 x 53 x 50cm
Photo by Laila Meyrick

Escalate
2011
Inkjet print on Dibond
90 x 61cm
Photo by Between Bridges

Repetition II
2011
Plexiglas frame, TV stand, Perspex,
magnets, table top, 78 x 60 x 60cm
&

Visions (Bollard)
2011
video installation
1min 19sec looped
Photo by the artist

Enhancement I
2011
Plexiglas shelf, plexiglas frame, TV
stand, MBT shoe, cock rings
89 x 90 x 38cm
Photo by Between Bridges

LINK:
<http://marteeeknaes.info>

