



UNIVERSITY OF
GOTHENBURG

HDK – Valand

Academy of Design and Craft

Perceive

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Abstract

English.

Perceive is a project that explores my aim to challenge the perceptions of Materiality and Craft by means of the vessel. In connection to that, it is also reflection on my journey to this point and the conflicts off my identity.

Keywords.

Blacksmith. Forge. Materiality. Vessel. Perceptions. Challenge. Philosophy. Craft. Art. Applied Art. Contemporary Craft. Ceramics. Ancient. Identity. Steel. Iron.

Background.

Pre Steneby.

I started working with metal aged six-teen. From the first hammer strike, there was this instinctive drive that fuelled my need to create.

My journey started with an apprenticeship in a local blacksmith company called 'Ratho Byres Forge' within Edinburgh, Scotland. Whilst there, I began to learn the ins and outs of the craft. Over a five-year period, my skills and knowledge progressed. I learned the tradition, yet, I was also taught the values of using modern equipment to achieve contemporary designs within architectural metal work.

During that time, I was also introduced to the blacksmithing community. This vast network of craftspeople who desired to share knowledge encouraged me to attend Blacksmith Festivals around the world to create and discuss with likeminded people. I drew inspiration from this community, and I decided to embark on a journeymanship to improve my craft. This entailed traveling from workshop to workshop, where I learned a diverse range of metal working techniques from other master Blacksmiths. I worked in countries such as France, Germany, Ukraine and Italy.

Whilst on this journeymanship, I went to a Blacksmith festival in Ypres, Belgium. It was there I met Professor Heiner Zimmermann whom described to me the course at HDK Steneby, 'Metal Art'. The prospect of studying for three years excited me, as I wanted to develop my own style of work and understood the advantages that the BFA could offer me. Opting to go down that route to complement the experience I had gained from my journeymanship, I officially started in the Autumn semester of 2017.

Steneby.

Once I had arrived at Steneby, everything flipped. It became apparent that I was now enrolled in an Art degree. My knowledge and experience within Craft had only got me so far. I was now required to think of ‘why’ I was going to make metal work, and not necessary the ‘how’ I was going to make it. At first, I was uncomfortable. I felt I had no deliberate experience within Art, only a basic understanding of aesthetics from what I had gathered from other Blacksmiths and numerous projects across my career to date.

Despite this feeling of inexperience, I started to thrive in the uncomfortableness, as the correlation between Art and Craft started to become the building blocks of my identity as an Artist. I always questioned the relation; do they belong together? Are they separated? Or simply, what is Art? And what is Craft? More importantly, where was my place in all of this?

Before Steneby, I had these preconceived notions regarding Art, these notions were derived from hearing stories from other Blacksmiths. Stories describing Blacksmiths as being regarded as ‘outcasts’ in the art community or that they cannot be regarded seriously from galleries or exhibitors. That the Art ‘world’ was far too pretentious and that there was a hierarchy, and if the Blacksmith belonged there, it was definitely at the bottom.

This naïve understanding of Art led to a conflict. I lacked experience and knowledge of Contemporary Craft and it started to manifest against my title of Blacksmith. I believed it came down to two reasons. First, I was bored of these invisible ‘restraints’ that most craftspeople are governed by. So, head strong as I am, I believed I was going to start a movement, that being to “Challenge the traditional values of Craft”. Secondly, I resented these preconceived notions that the viewer has of the Blacksmith.

Perceived notions.

Generally speaking, the vast majority of people will automatically categorise the Blacksmith. The pre-conceived notions that people may have of blacksmiths, in my opinion, are a consequence of the following three aspects; image, job title and romanticised notions. To elaborate;

Image: The Blacksmith is typically associated with the craftsman, a highly skilled individual that creates everlasting functional objects; gates, railings, latches, tools, nails, etc...

Job title (metal trade): The Blacksmith falls into the category of traditional craft; Architectural blacksmithing, Farrier, Armourer, Tool maker, Sword maker, Knife maker, etc...

Romanticised notions: The Blacksmith is loved. This timeless craft that evokes a raw sense of traditionalism, a natural manifestation against these industrialised times that we live in.

In my pursuit to become an artist, I believed that these three aspects would all be viewed negatively and that I would automatically be stereotyped. Therefore, I made the decision to drop my title of Blacksmith. A title that I had been proud of, a title that I had worked hard for the last seven year to achieve. All meant nothing, as I planned on becoming an 'Artist'.

This thought process led me to becoming one of the founders of the metal art collective 'SCALE'. Alongside Janne Peltokangas and Jack Waygood. This collective was formed to be used as a platform to make exhibitions that celebrate contemporary forge work. Our aim was to "Challenge the traditional values of the craft".

It was an extremely exciting time, lots of late nights that involved drinking way too much. Discussions that regarded what "Challenging the traditional values" actually meant? What is the meaning of our work? and how do we make a name in Art world?

This passion we all felt led us on to make an exhibition at a nearby Artist collective/gallery called 'NotQuite'. We are allowed access to one of the rooms next to the main gallery called the Engine Room. The show was a relative success, we received lots of comment regarding the works on display. In particular, there were numerous remarks on how different our displayed metal work was in comparison to other blacksmithing work. This gave us confidence that there can be a place for forge work within an Art context.



Peter Voulkos

During my time in the collective, I discovered an important inspiration of mine in ceramic Artist called Peter Voulkos. I first came across him when reading an extremely intriguing book called “Thinking Through Craft” by Glen Adamson. It discusses the relevance of Craft within Art and highlights the opposing arguments as well. I was particularly excited when reading the chapter called ‘Materiality’ here Adamson states…

“Voulkos had helped to initiate an endgame in which the only way to be an avant garde potter would be to deny one’s status as a potter entirely.”
(Addamson, 2007, P.47)

What drew me to be inspired by Peter Voulkos was of his mentality to go against the grain of traditional pottery. He would deliberately over pack the clay, deliberately fire his sculptures for hours and hours creating these cracks and fissures. Basically, he challenged the traditional values of Craft by creating imperfections in pottery, a medium that is typically associated with idealised form.

The problem was, I took that quote too literally, it really fuelled my decision to drop my title of Blacksmith. I believed that because Voulkos dropped his title of Potter to be ‘avant garde’, that my decision was necessary.



However, that was mainly derived from my lack of understanding. What I had failed to gather was that Voulkos started this progressive approach with clay in the late fifties. At that time, there was no platform for this type of artwork. He had to drop his title of potter so that he could be accepted by the Art 'world' out of necessity. What I failed to realise, was that he was a pioneer who helped pave the way for this type of Art; Such as Studio Craft, Applied Arts or Contemporary Craft, call it what you will. Once this had dawned on me, I then had to reevaluate, if there was a platform for Craft within Art, then why had other Blacksmiths not been accepted with the Arts? Perhaps, it's the fault of the Craftsperson?

Challenge the Tradition.

As I have mentioned before, during my time in the collective and from my inspiration from Voulkos, I was extremely passionate about challenging the traditional values of the blacksmithing craft. So, what exactly do I mean by this? And why is it important within my work?

In my opinion, traditional craft has some 'barriers' and I feel that within these barriers the Craftsperson is governed by invisible restraints. These include things such as what not to do, and what you should do. For example, I was always taught that burning the material was wrong, that working the material to cold was incorrect and that if cracks and fissures appeared that would mean you were not working within good craft. The problem I had with this mentality is that it becomes quite stagnant, I see the same 'blacksmithing' details all the time, over and over again, only slight differences in the design that set others apart. Basically, there is not much progression.

This dawned on me once I had arrived at Steneby, where I was introduced to a more progressive approach. I started to become obsessed with experimenting. I wanted to take the material to the absolute limits, to really break the steel, to deliberately create these cracks and fissures with the intentions of trying to alter the way people perceive the material. Normally, the typical viewer associates steel as being solid and everlasting. I challenged these notions by experimenting and going outside these invisible 'barriers'. I suppose, at the beginning this mentality was merely a retaliation to the rules I was previously governed by, but with time, I started to question everything. That research led me on to find Contemporary Craft.

I was slightly confused when I first came across this term, that was mainly due to my belief that I was previously working within Contemporary Craft.

I always believed that I was a contemporary Blacksmith, I worked with modern equipment to a relatively modern design. To an extent, I was, if you were to compare that to a Blacksmith one hundred years ago. What wasn't contemporary was the approach to the material, not much was different in the way we worked with it, just the difference in the machinery that we used.

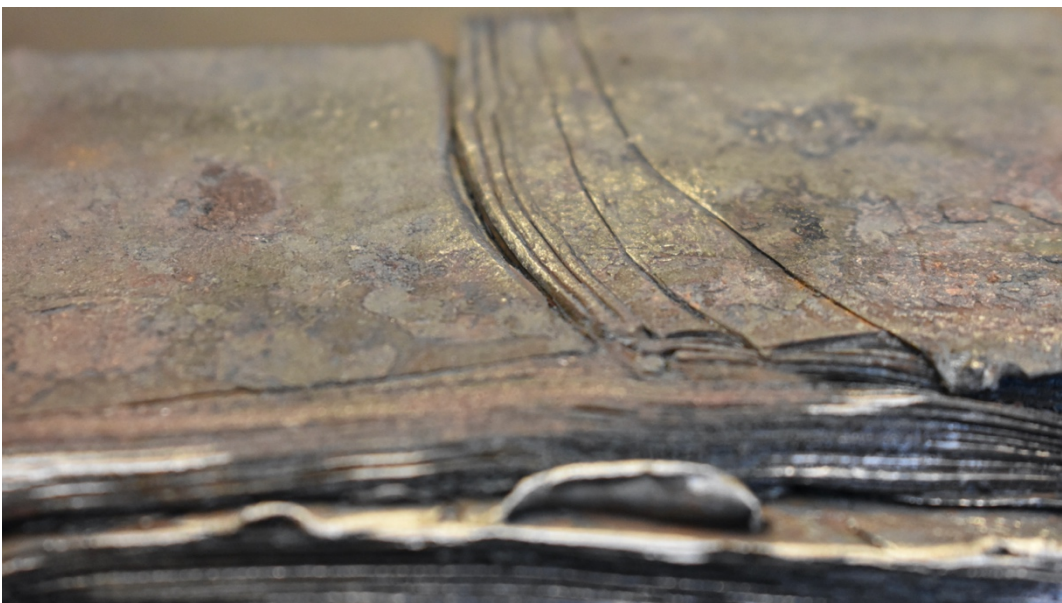
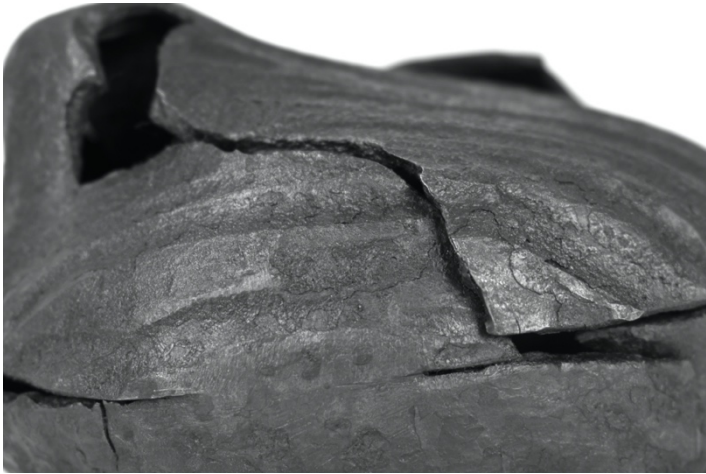
I extracted the definition of Contemporary Craft from the "Alabama Craft: Tradition and innovation" from Harmonyarts.com

"[...] contemporary craft is marked by innovation in design and materials. Accepted as a very important variety, contemporary craft is marked by new interpretations of traditional technique and elegance. Studio craft artists continue to make objects by hand, beautiful pieces that can be utilitarian and are frequently sold in galleries and at art fairs. These people have usually learned their skills in additional formal academic settings – as well as learning, researching, and experimenting". (Harmony Arts, 2017)

It was an enlightening time once I had found this definition, as it seemed like everything was coming together. I had unconsciously worked within the definition of Contemporary Craft, I understood that it was not just the machinery that was used, but the mentality towards the material that deemed it to be.

(Experimental samples that I worked on during 1st & 2nd year)





Perceptions.

The first series of work that I made is called 'Perceptions'. I developed this series during the Body of Work course where we had to make a series that would be fitting for a gallery setting.

Going into the course I had a vague idea, or certainly an interest to create a series of vessels as inspired by Voulkos. Once I had created my mood board for the course I realised that I was inspired by what looked to be contemporary ceramics. The board was completely filled with ceramic vessels that evoked this brutal expression, cracks and fissures that were very similar to my previous experiments that I discussed in the last section 'Challenge the Tradition'.



This connection between metal work and pottery led to me deciding to create a series of vessels that mimicked archetypal ceramics. Furthermore, I planned to create a dialog between materiality and form. Basically, I wanted to try to make metal pots that looked like ceramics but uniquely carry the cracks and fissures from my previous experiments.

This design idea was further inspired when I read an article called "The New Ceramic Presence" by Rose Slivka, where she says...

"There are three extensions of clay as paint in contemporary pottery: 1) the pot form is used as a "canvas;"

2) the clay itself is used as paint three-dimensionally— with tactility, colour, and actual form;" ... (Slivka, 1961, P34)

In this article Slivka is describing some of Peter Voulkos's work from the prestigious ceramic exhibition 'Abstract Expressionist Ceramics'. I was inspired by that prospect, perhaps the vessel could be my 'canvas' and I could use my forging techniques as 'paint'?

Throughout this design process, there was this shift that started to occur. Whilst making these pots, I started to fall in love with the sheer simplicity of them. Consequently, I then decided to drop that idea to create a dialog for the time being, with full intentions of returning a later date.

Perception Pictures





Thankfully, I managed to exhibit this series of work during a month-long Contemporary Craft show back home in Edinburgh, Scotland. It was during that show that something started to become apparent. There was a unique aspect of this work that seemed to grab the attention of the viewer. It was the fact these seemingly ceramic-like vessels had been crafted by a Blacksmith. Nearly every first comment was something that went like this “A Blacksmith!?, wow! I didn’t know Blacksmiths made such things.” Furthermore, they would always confirm the socially perceived notions of the

black smith craft that I have previously discussed. Even the gallery owner and curators loved the fact that they had been made by a Blacksmith. It was never seen as a negative aspect that I had thought it would have been. The opposite in fact, in my opinion, it added merit due to its uniqueness.

My final Artist statement for 'Perceptions' was...

'This body of work 'Perceptions' seeks to challenge the viewers understandings of materiality and craftsmanship. It aims to trigger the viewers inquisition, purposefully generating questions like: "What material are they made from" and "How are they made?"

The allusions of the archetypal form embody a likeness to ceramics. However, through personal knowledge, combined with methodologies and experimentation, there are mannerisms in the works that aren't specific to steel. The vessels capture a delicateness. A factor commonly found in ceramics, however platforms the overtly raw and ruggedness accosted with iron. This body of work intentionally treads on our understanding of Craft and ways of seeing."

I was extremely happy with this series of work. However, as I have mentioned, I wanted to apply my previous experiments from 'Challenge the Tradition' and create vessels from these details. With these intentions still in my mind I would eventually return to this during the 5th semester.

Pre-exam.

The vessel

Before discussing my exam project, I will first give an insight as to what a vessel is, as it has started to become the core of my work. Also, I want to explore what I have previously mentioned in 'Perceptions' regarding archetypal ceramics, as this subject will have great importance within my exam.

So, first of all, what is a vessel? I extracted the definition from 'Dictionary Definition' on vocabulary.com...

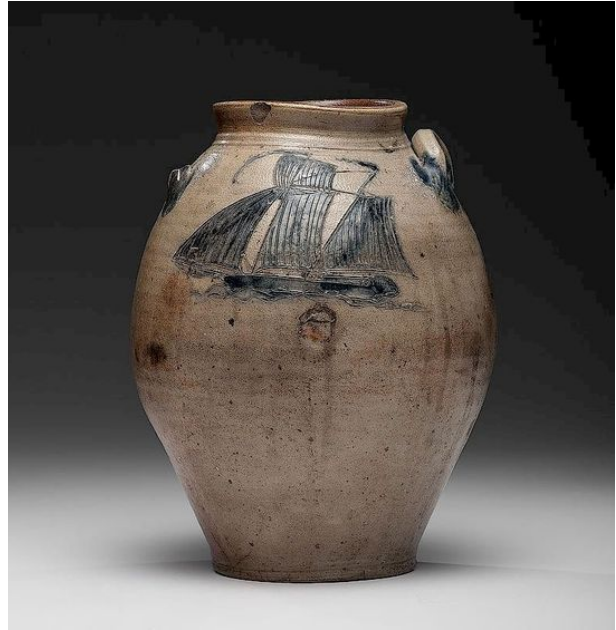
"Vessel has a number of different meanings, yet all of them relate in some way to liquids and transportation. This relationship in meaning has existed in language for a long time; the word vessel comes from the Latin word, vascellum, which also means both "vase" and "ship." The use of the word vessel in reference to "blood vessels" came about in English during the 14th century." (Vocabulary.com 2020)

This definition implies that anything can be a vessel if it holds liquid or transports something. A bowl, a cup, a vase, a bucket, even a spoon can be classified as a vessel because they hold liquid. On the contrary, a plane, a boat even a car can also be classified as a vessel as they transport something. Whilst speaking to my external tutor Pravu Mazumdar, he explained to me that we can look further into that definition. For example, the body, our body, is a vessel. It holds liquid doesn't it? Our lungs, liver and stomach are vessels. Our hands could well be the oldest functioning vessels that we used, since if you cup your hand, it then becomes a container for liquid.

Archetypal Ceramic Form.

My starting point for furthering my understanding of archetypal ceramic form was from a discussion with the Master teacher Jeff Kaller. Jeff has an extensive repertoire of knowledge within the field of ceramics. Here, we discussed traditional ceramics, and where the forms that interested me could have been originally inspired from.

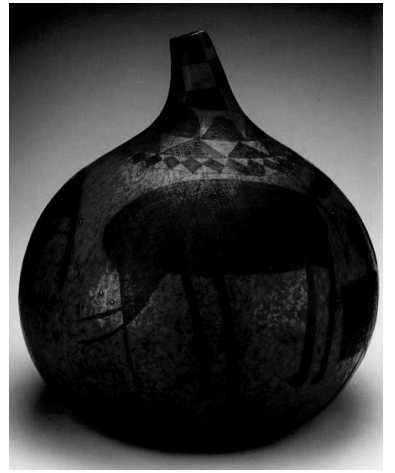
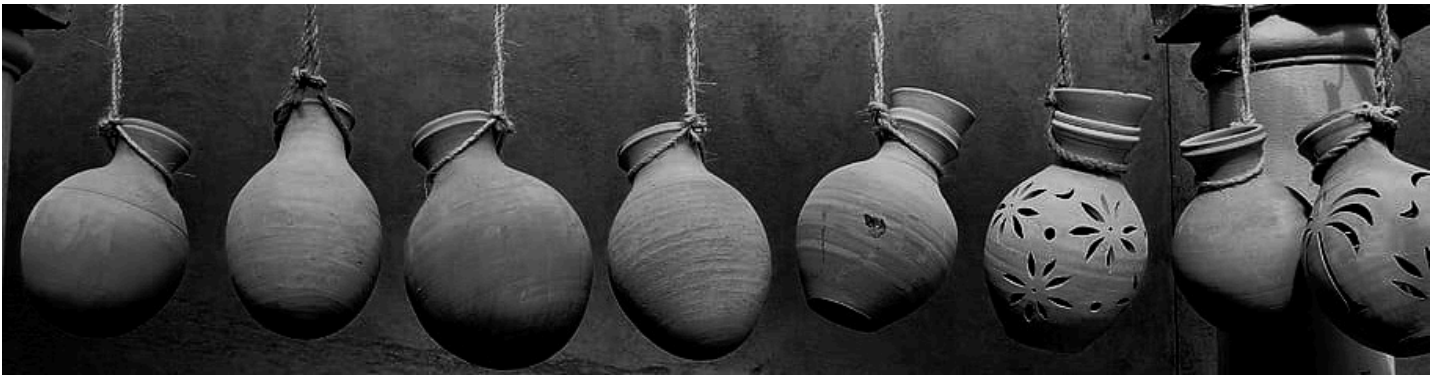
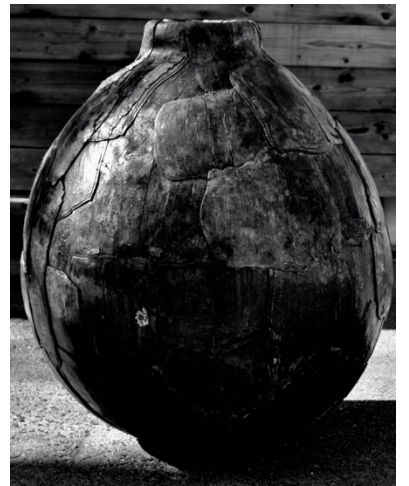
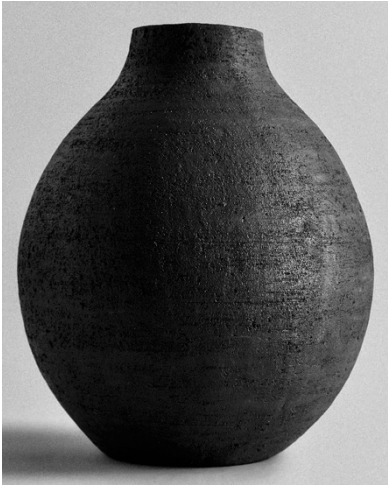
For me to have a better understand of traditional ceramics I first had to identify what comes to my mind when I mention ‘archetypal’ ceramics. It seemed that most of my inspiration, or certainly what I was referring to where these rounder fuller forms that carry this ancient quality. Perhaps a better way of explaining it would be something that has been plucked out of the ground, something very similar to the picture on the right. It was then that Jeff showed me the connection between these types of forms and nature.



I had not previously thought of nature when thinking of the vessel or traditional pottery. Typically, when thinking of nature, I would think of plants, trees, flowers etc... However, what I had failed to notice, was the connection between these traditional pottery and dried gourds. Underneath is a picture of a dried gourd.

As shown on the right, the gourd has a distinct resemblance to some traditional pottery. To show a better representation of this comparison I have made a black and white gallery made up of three materials, ceramics, gourds and my metal vessels.





Based on this analysis, to summarise what type of archetypal ceramic form that I will be mentioning, I think it's a mix of two things. The first being this very natural form, like that of which the gourds have, these soft plump curves that almost sink at the juxtaposition. Secondly, it's this type of quality to them, this raw earthy feeling that I mentioned. Almost like they are plucked from the ground.

Untitled vessel.

During the 5th semester, I wanted to return to the goal I had when making 'Perceptions'; I wanted to apply my experimental samples from 'Challenge the Tradition' and create a series of vessels.

Once again, what I wanted to capture were these cracks and fissures that appear through the forging process. The issue I had was that these samples proved to be difficult to apply to a hollowed-out form. This was predominately due to that fact in the manner which they were made. That they had been crushed from two opposing sides and that resulted in a solid block of steel. So, what I had to figure out was how I could take these details and create a three-dimensional hollowed out form.



Through trial and error, I started to achieve what I was aiming for. By adapting a new approach, I figured out that the best way I could get these details and create form was to assemble them in patches. This process involved stacking layers of sheet metal together and forge welding them down incorrectly. Forge welding is a traditional technique, done correctly, it involves heating pieces of metal to the perfect temperature with the intentions of seamlessly connecting them together. My variation of this involved doing the process at a lower temperature and then using the power hammer to forcefully connect them together. This resulted in patches of metal that carried these cracks and fissures.

one of the patches dished into a bowl



With patches made, I then experimented to see how I could assemble them.

Gallery of the assembling process



Below is the finished 'Untitled Vessel', in the end, this proved to be an experiment that led into my exam project. Whilst in the process of making this piece, I allowed a certain amount of spontaneity to determine the finalised form. However, I realised that I wanted to control that outcome. So, my next step was to take this approach and apply it to an archetypal ceramic form.

Untitled Vessel



Purpose.

My purpose is to create a project that both challenges perceptions of Materiality and Craft, and in connection to that, I want to have a better understanding of what the vessel can convey.

Objective

My objective for this project is to finally apply my experimental samples; This will be done by creating series of vessels that mimic archetypal ceramics. Each vessel will be assembled from individually forged patches to create the overall form.

Questions

1. How does my identity play a role in my artistic practice?
2. What can my series of vessels convey to the viewer?
3. What happens in the transition, when changing the material from ceramic into metal?

Approach

My approach for this project will come in two parts. The first, will be the practical work. As previously talked about in the 'Untitled vessel' I will forge billets of sheet metal together then try applying this to an archetypal ceramic form.

Secondly, I want to try and understand what my series of work can communicate to the viewer on a philosophical level. This will be done through research and conversations with my external tutors.

Result of Process.

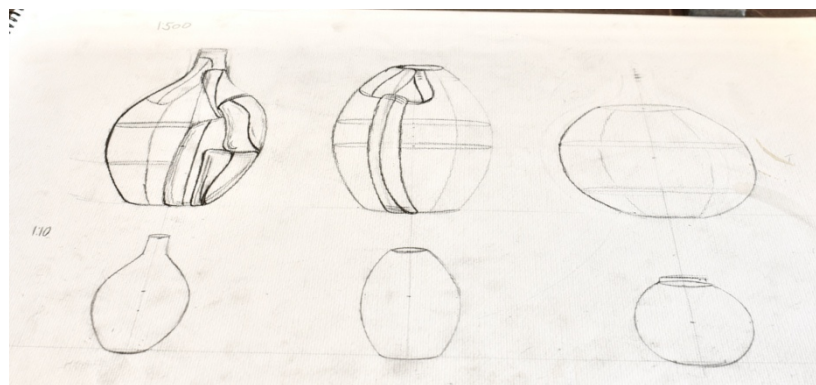
As talked about in my Objective, my goal is to create a new series of vessels. Very similar to my 'Perceptions' series, I will continue to mimic archetypal ceramics. Yet, this time I will create the 'skin' of the vessels in a very similar fashion as the 'Untitled Vessel' that I wrote about in the Background section.

First of all, I had to identify the forms and scale that I want the vessels to be. I began this research by searching online for examples of 'traditional ceramics' and 'traditional vases'. This research gave me a founding basis of what types of form these vessels would have and allowed me to begin sketching ideas.



Originally, my plan was to make three different vessels. Therefore, I designed everything in the scale of 1:50 and drew them beside each other to get a visual representation of how they would look in relation to one another.

In the picture besides, you can vaguely see the three forms that I planned on using, the drawing of the details was to give me an indication of how the patch work might look for the 'skin'.



One of the main decisions I had to make at this stage was the scale, going into this project I intended on making them much bigger than 'Perceptions'.

This choice predominately came from the fact that I want to have a wide variety of work, and also, I wanted to exaggerate the overall purpose of my project, which is to challenge the viewers perspective of Materiality and Craft. Hopefully, by choosing to create them bigger, it would trigger a sense of inquiry.

The first vessel that I was going to make is approximately 800mm in height and 600mm in diameter.

I realized that this scale would have some challenges to make though, because I intended to make the surface in a similar fashion as the 'Untitled Vessel'. That process would involve using forged patches and then welding them securely to create the overall form. However, knowing that if I failed to make the form similar to that of a ceramic pot, then my overall objective for this project would not be a success. So, I had to come up with a way I can control the outcome of the form and still have access to assemble the patches.

I then decided that I would make a frame for each vessel. This would act as a type of template or guide. This would then allow me to individually place each patch on the frame, with the intentions of MIG welding the pieces from the back. The plan would be to make the frame as a half, allowing me access to the back. Ultimately, this meant I would be making the vessel in two sections, then welding the two halves together to create the finished vessel.

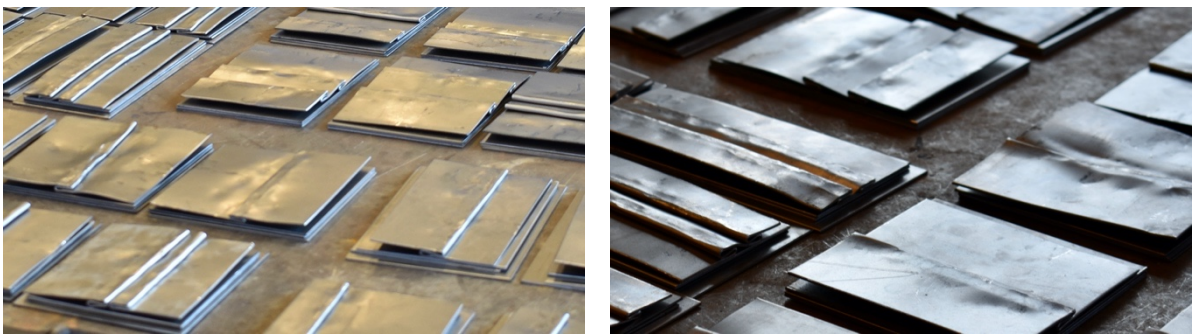
With a plan made, I started by drafting the vessel form two-dimensionally. This method meant that I had the line work for the form, I then needed to create three-dimensionally. This was done by using 12mm round stock shaped to the outline of the vessel, then welded onto a centre bar. Creating this half vessel frame that allowed me to place the patch work on without interfering.



Patch work.

Returning to the patch work approach from the 'Untitled Vessel' was an exciting prospect as I vividly remember having a lot of enjoyment out of the process. Its everything that I appreciate in forge work. In my opinion, this process challenges the traditional values of the Craft.

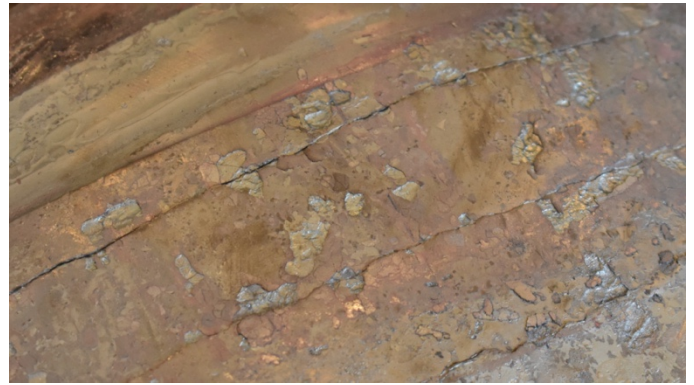
However, before I fully went with this, I first had to do some experiments to determine the size and thickness of the patches that would be most appropriate to use. Some of the previous patches I made proved to be extremely thick making them difficult to shape.



The above pictures are the billets pre-forged, by trial and error, my end size result was four stacks of 1.5mm sheet and no bigger than 160mm x 110mm.

The next stage was the forging, as mentioned in the 'Untitled Vessel' section I would deliberately fire weld the billets incorrectly. Thus, creating these cracks and fissures that I want. To heat the billets up to my correct temperature, I used the gas forge. This allowed me to work several billets at the one and not melt them. Once the billets have reached the correct temperature I would use the power hammer to flatten them down. After two/three reheats, the billets would be forged down to about 2mm thick patches.

Below is a gallery of some of the patches



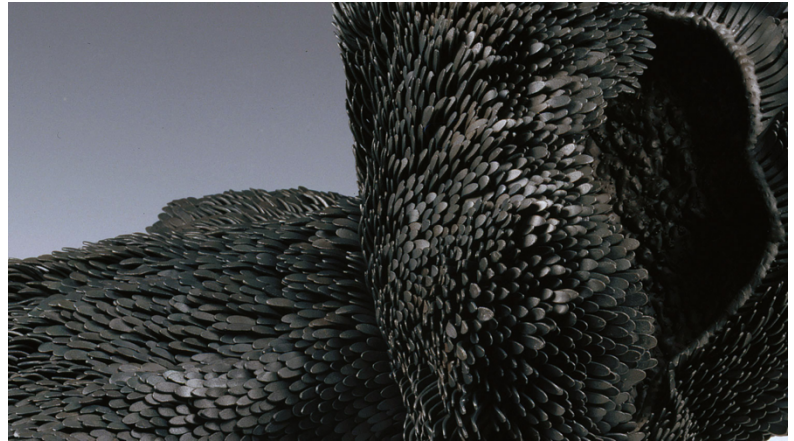
Junko Mori

One Artist that works in a very similar fashion to this patch work approach is Junko Mori. I have always been fascinated by the way in which the artist applies her practice. I extracted a quote from her biography...

“My work consists of multiples of individually forged steel or other metals, and the subtle difference of each piece results from hand hammering. No piece is individually planned but becomes fully formed within the making and thinking process”. (Junko Mori.com 2020)

Quite similar to myself, Mori uses multiply forged components to create an overall form. Although, for me, her works beauty is not in the forging at all. It's the way she applies it. Her techniques are extremely simple, not something that I'm particularly interested in. However, the overall form is spectacular.

Junko Mori work

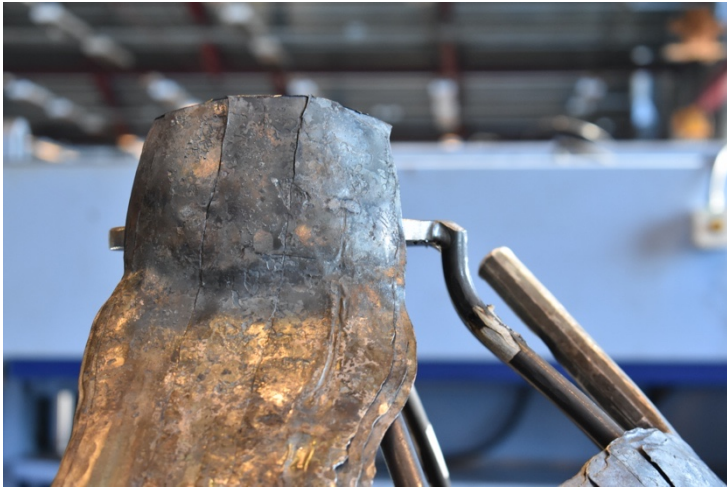


Application.

The next stage of the process involved taking the already made patches and shaping them to the frame that I had made. They would then be welded from behind, so as the way they are assembled cannot be seen. Please see below for the step by step gallery.









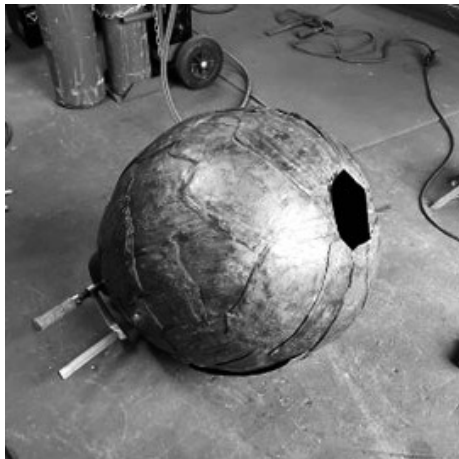
The process of making this was relatively seamless, with the biggest challenge being the working out where to place the patches. The process was felt quite spontaneous, although, you could argue that it was quite regimented as I have to follow the frame work as a template.

One of the more important aspect of the assembly was the top section, that being the spout. Here, it was crucial that I welded close to the frame, if I was to veer to far, it would result in something that doesn't resemble a ceramic pot. Also, I had to be practically careful as it's a much tighter double curve compared to the other sections. Once the first half was finished the 'skin' was easily popped off from the frame.

Unfortunately, due to restrictions put in place with COVID-19, that was as far as I got with the perfect conditions in the 'Metal Art' workshop. Due to the unprecedented situation the workshop was closed because Gothenburg university had decided that it was unsafe for the students to continue working. This was a huge blow for my moral and motivation. Fortunately, I managed to rent a workshop from a friend to finish of the second half of the vessel.

For the second half of the vessel I followed the exact same process as the first and didn't necessarily encounter too many difficulties. Once I had finished I popped the 'skin' from the frame then started to assemble the two halves together.

There was two parts in assembling the halves together. The first included making a 185mm ring out of some 25mm round bar. This would act as a type of mould for the 'skin' to rap around and also secure the two sections together. The second part involved making a base plate for there to be a secure bottom of the vessel.



I made the bottom plate out of 8mm gauge and approximately 200mm diameter. To the right you can see where the place would go to connect both sections.

Once the two sections were secured together by the top ring and the bottom plate the final stage was to wrap the 'skin' around the top ring. This was done by using an acetylene torch and carefully wrapped round step by step.



This was the only part that was not fully up to my expectations, the whole point of using a piece of round bar for the spout was to create this soft ceramic like look. As you can see in the results, it's a little on the rough side. However, it does not look at all out of place as a whole as the vessel carries this ruff sort of ascetical quality.

Pictures of the finished vessel



Finished Vessel



Convey.

As mentioned in my Purpose, I wanted to have a better understanding of what the vessel can convey. Originally, my intentions for that were from the viewers perspective, in that I wanted to have a better understanding of what my vessel can communicate. However, I have come to realise that this question is too vague, and that there are too many endless possibilities. I realised that throughout this project, there has been an internal shift in what I want to articulate. This dawned on me whilst speaking to my external tutor Pravu Mazumdar.

I had chosen Pravu Mazumdar as my external tutor as I've always been intrigued about how he writes about Art & Craft within his book 'Answering Pravu' & his extracts in 'Abece Darium'. He also holds a doctorate in Philosophy, and hopefully, he can possibly help me find my 'voice'.

Whilst in conversation with Pravu, we discussed two aspects. First, he gave me an insight into how he sees my practice, his thought on my decisions that have brought me here. Secondly, he gave me an insight in to what these vessels could communicate to the viewer, discussions that regarded the relevance of the Makers hand, and the relation to industrialization.

This was the point that I really noticed this shift, although it wasn't the first time I had spoken to someone regarding such topics. I understood that within this project, it was not what I wanted to try and figure out. With this understanding, I now want to focus on what this could mean for me, my journey to this point, and what is this vessel means on a personal level.

During the first part of our conversation, what really grabbed my attention was that Pravu pointed out that I kept mentioning that I want to "mimic" ceramics and "challenge" the viewer. It became apparent through discussions of my work that although I was trying to imitate ceramics, the work took on its own nature and although it had a resemblance, it had its own unique character. I suppose another way to look at it, is that it's this in-between zone. As I'm trying to mimic ceramics, the vessels aren't quite ceramics, yet, neither are they trying to retain their true being, metal. Or perhaps, to delve further into this realisation maybe I was not being myself, yet, neither was I the other thing I was trying to imitate. It's a conflict of emotions. An unconscious existence that has placed me between two aspects, Art & Craft?

I can never fully acknowledge myself as a Blacksmith, yet, I never fully accepted the title of Artist.

Similarly related to me mentioning “mimic” I also mention that I want to “challenge”. However, what does that fully mean? My first intentions for this were that I wanted to confront the viewer on how they perceive the material and of craft. For example, the uncertainty of cracks and fissures that appear on the surface of the vessel and these perceived notions that I previously wrote about in the Background. However, do I really need to try and challenge this? Perhaps I am an embodiment of everything I aim to challenge? For example, I challenged the material by just doing what I have come to love throughout my journey. I have always mentioned that I take the material its absolute limits. With craft, do I not challenge that by also doing what I have mentioned before, “to challenge the traditional values of craft’ and also, whilst discussing my work, it normally breaches the subject of what a Blacksmith is and is not.

So why then, would I need to try and challenge further than this? Maybe its related to this in-between zone again, a conflict of emotions. Is it coincidence that my first series of work ‘Perceptions’ was built on the bases of challenging? I’m starting to wonder if by saying I want to challenge, it’s a type of safety net. Once again, relating to my uncertainty of my identity, torn between Art & Craft. Perhaps it was an unconscious claustrophobia that determined my decision to further challenge, so I could feel some sort of control in this uncertainty.

So, what does this mean? I realise it might be a bit much to take in, and I will still be trying to articulate all of this in ten years to come. The relevance is what does this mean now, and how will it shape my future work? I think, myself examination has lifted a slight weight of my shoulders. I am really starting to understand that all my choices up to this point have meant something. That my identity that I have been fighting with as all along played a role with my artistic practice. That I no longer need to base my work on these aspects ‘mimic’ and ‘challenge’ because I am naturally doing this by just making. This new understanding of the conflicts of my identity has given me a new confidence to now focus my artist practise on different intentions.

However, that doesn't necessarily answer my question regarding what this vessel conveys. For me this vessel carries something, it carries my acquired knowledge, my experiences within Craft, my conflict of my artistic identity, it's symbolic of everything that has brought me here. It is far more than a vessel that is meant to "challenge the viewers perceptions of Materiality and Craft".

With my project, I can honestly say that going into this I wanted to understand what the viewer perceives. However, things changed along the way and I feel the way I have perceived my initial objective may have also been a preconceived notion. I want to end my report with one last quote. I extracted the official definition of perceive...

"become aware or conscious of (something); come to realize or understand"
(google dictionary 2020)

