Photos by Sophie Dars,
Annee Grøtte Viken, Carlo Menon,
Maximiliaan Royakkers and
Galaad Van Daele

Sitterwerk in situ

From 11 to 15 April 2019 we visited the Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen in Switzerland. This art foundry specializes in the production of artworks, from casting bronze and other alloys to milling synthetic materials, using both traditional and high-tech methods.

Created in the early 2000s right next to the foundry, the Sitterwerk Foundation is composed of an art library, where books are stored in no particular order and freely accessible; a material archive, compiling the alloys used by the foundry and many other kinds of materials, from gypsum crystals to surgical silicon and hair tufts; two guest studios for artists and researchers; and an exhibition gallery accommodating a large selection of works by Swiss sculptor Hans Josephsohn.

The art library was initiated when Felix Lehner, founder of the Kunstgiesserei, merged his book collection – most of which deals with metallurgy and techniques – to the much larger collection assembled by Daniel Rohner, a trained carpenter who dedicated most of his time to obsessively collecting art books. No fewer than 25,000 books are now available to artists and researchers who come to St. Gallen. In the spirit of the foundry, where metal can become anything, the library treats art publications as a raw material: categories are brought to their melting point, fluctuating between mind and matter, in a constant composition and re-composition of books and materials.

Despite its connections to the long-distant ramifications of the art market and of metal extraction, the small territory of the Sitterwerk and Kunstgiesserei complex configures a world in itself, a territory onto which one could project one's entire existence. It presents an extended image of manual and intellectual production, made of encounters between prints and metals, visitors and workers, machines and ideas, the organic and the inorganic.

Kunstgiesserei

FELIX LEHNER

Annaïk Lou Pitteloud, a Swiss artist living in Brussels, did a work with us for the Swiss Parliament Building in Bern, a crazy project with different metals [*Consensus*, 2018]. You often see these institutional buildings full of cast metal inscriptions about democratic values and so on. In response, she substituted the message for the medium, casting five metallic titles, one per continent, like 'HELVETICA CAST IN 850G OF GOLD FROM SOUTH AFRICA'. Silver came from China, nickel from Australia, copper from Chile and platinum from the US. It took more than two years to prepare the project, because it actually proved very difficult to retrieve the origins of the raw metals.

> The Kunstgiesserei is anchored here and it has quite a Swiss feeling, but it is indeed completely global as a result of the materials you use.

DAVID ANDERMATT

Trying to find someone who could prove or who had any idea about where the materials they were selling came from was one of the most difficult types of research we have ever done. Most resellers don't know: metals are bought on the marketplace depending on price fluctuations, with no link to their place of extraction. For example, there is a lot of platinum in the US, but even if you call the US Mint, where they cast the American Platinum Eagle [the official platinum bullion coin of the US], not even they know where it's coming from. They just say, 'We buy it on the open market'. I think it was possible to trace copper from Chile because they have a state mine somewhere (a mine that once belonged to Pinochet), and they sell it directly to Europe. All the rest was impossible. For example, you can buy ecological gold, 'green gold' or whatever it's called, but all they can prove is that it's recycled, that it wasn't mined somewhere.

> In the other direction, in the afterlife of the pieces, do you have a record of where the pieces you've produced are?

No … but it would be nice. We know about some pieces that we helped to install, like the large, complicated ones. For some other pieces we only have the name of the shipping company, and then they disappears. But we regularly bump into some works during visits to art fairs and exhibition. It's like meeting good old friends. And some pieces return to us for questions of conservation.

> Is there a signature identifying the Kunstgiesserei?

Yes, normally all the cast pieces have a logo, a little square in different sizes. It is hidden inside, so you have to turn a piece over to see the marking with the edition number, cast number (e.g. 3 of 6) and then the little mark of the Kunstgiesserei. In the past there were people like this guy who cast for Rodin, Alexis Rudier, who was famous for making his signature bigger than Rodin's!

> In the casting process there are a lot of by-products. We saw a red clay and plaster mix and black sand used to keep the moulds tight during casting. Are most of these materials reuseable, or are there some that go to waste?

Probably a third of the materials go to waste, like the chamotte (the red mix you mentioned) and some of the sand we use for casting; if the grains are too fine or too coarse, then we cannot reuse it for we only use a certain size. It's the same for the wax: we're able to recollect some of it, but a part is just burnt by the heat of the metal; we smell it in the air. We keep the plaster moulds in case the artists need to produce more copies in the future, but in the end they are usually destroyed. For casting, we normally use new metals and add some scrap material—not everything can be recycled because it changes the composition of the cast, as some substances have already evaporated. But even the 'new' raw materials have usually been recycled, casted and melted several times over decades and centuries.

The moss container

FELIX LEHNER

This container has been here for six or seven years. We installed it for a project by Paul Chan, who needed to grow moss on sculptures in less than 11 weeks from production to exhibition. To do this we had to make a special climate chamber, with enough light and humidity. But in fact, the experimentations with moss started 20 or 25 years ago with Fischli & Weiss's *Concrete Landscapes*, where the question was how to grow moss on a concrete surface. Because concrete is alkaline, with a very high pH, it takes a lot of time because moss needs an acidic climate. Fischli & Weiss were the first artists we worked with whose work is exhibited internationally. From then on, we started getting a lot of work, and people started visiting the foundry, like Hans Ulrich Obrist. What's really great about this container is that as soon as you enter, you're in a good mood. People come here to smoke, as it helps the moss to grow. A woman who worked here for a while used to water it every day. We stopped when she left, but two months ago we reactivated the project; a few weeks ago it was still yellowish, but now the moss has started to grow again. Moss doesn't reproduce through seeds but with spores, like mushrooms. The capsules containing the spores burst and generate unicellular organisms that begin as a slimy surface and from there grow more geometric figures. Those samples are tests for Raiffeisen Bank, a bank building here in the centre of St. Gallen designed by Günther Vogt and Bruno Clerici in 2002. There is a huge stone cube outside the building, and a machine blows mist on it every ten minutes … It's an intervention vaguely related to the 2002 national exhibition in Yverdon and the famous Blur Building by Diller, Scofidio & Renfro. The cube is situated on a red square created by Pippilotti Rist [*Stadtlounge*, with architect Carlos Martinez, 2005] and the idea was that moss would turn the block green, in contrast with the red. Despite constant water-spraying, it never worked. They asked if we could help and so we analysed some samples of the stone: the pH of the tuff stone is too high. We came up with a solution and it has now started to grow.

Moss and clay gardens

FELIX LEHNER

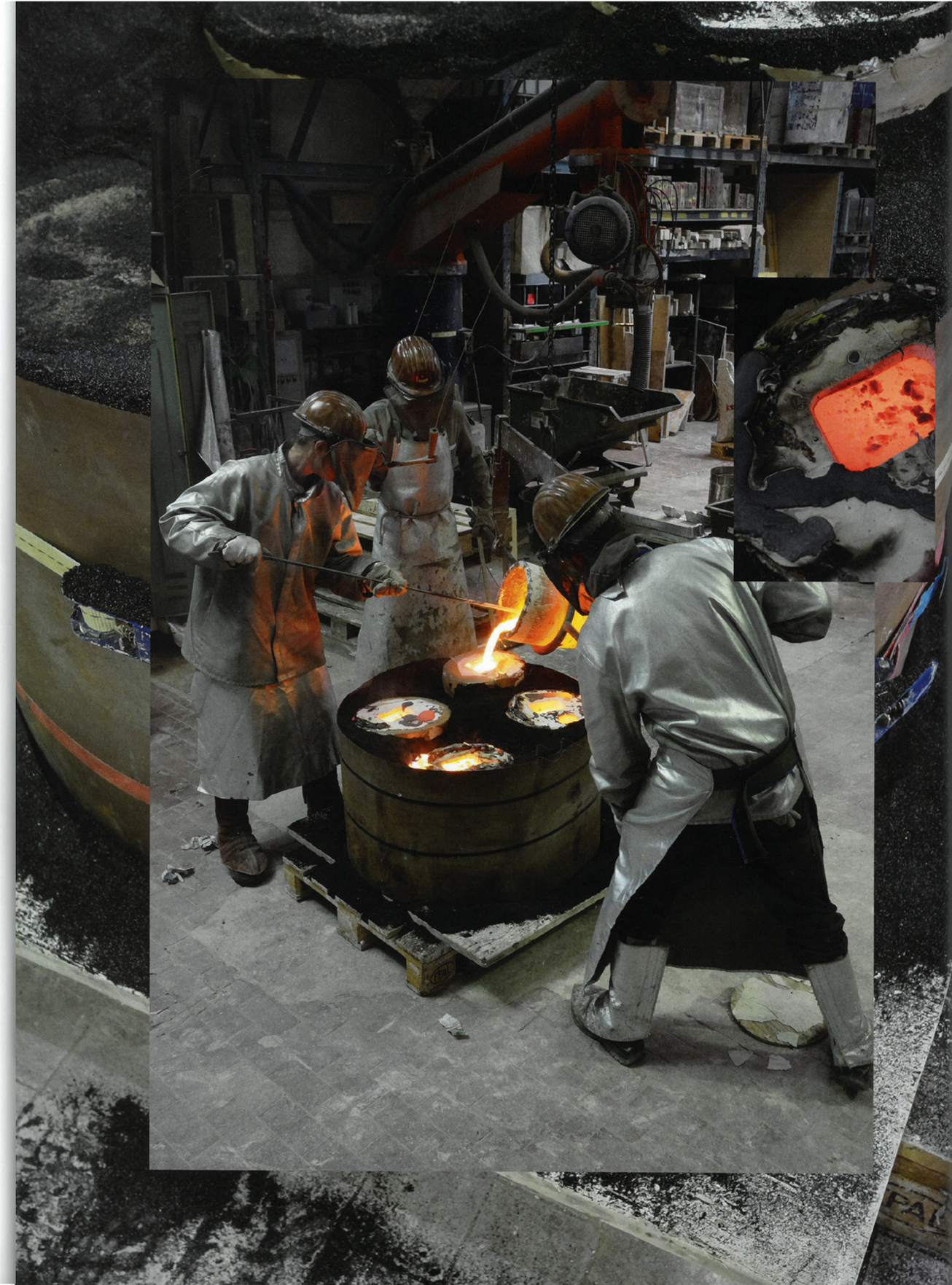
Ueli Torgler, an old friend of mine who lives in Hamburg, built all these platforms here to create landscapes in clay, as a starting point for exploring the idea of how to create a garden without soil and plants, but by making hills. He is both an artist and a gardener. Through these experiments he wanted to test the structures you need to make such a garden. He is dedicated to slow processes and visits this place regularly to observe and intervene. He changes most of it every time and shuffles material around, but when working with clay you don't destroy, you assist. The platforms here are for performances of nature taking over once the gardener leaves. There are clay gardens and moss gardens.

> Is this garden supposed to be a model of a garden? A miniature? Or maybe there's no scale at all?

In some ways he works around *the possibility of making* such a garden. It's kind of both: a site for experiments and performances. Look at the flooded platform here, frogs have laid their eggs.

> Is this part of the experiment?

Yes. Sometimes he mixes clay and water so as to create clouds in the water. Super nice.



melting, casting and cutting-edge CNC
as the age-old collapse into a high-tech
meteorite recreated from outer space

Workshops

FELIX LEHNER

For an upcoming show at Galerie Kamel Mennour, Douglas Gordon wants to relate to the 1956 movie *The Red Balloon*. It's the story of a lonely kid who finds a balloon in the street; when he comes home he is told to throw it away, so he lets go, but the balloon remains suspended outside his window … and the story begins. Douglas Gordon really wants a perfectly round balloon, like the one in the movie, but industrial moulds for plastic balloons are flat, not round, so we built a mould ourselves and conceived a special alloy. Gordon will come here for a working session in a couple of weeks. This is the centrifugal casting machine we used to test the making of the balloon knot, in sterling silver. The centrifugal force means all the metal is scattered very quickly everywhere in the mould–using vacuum and movement you can make very precise and thin elements. We also have traditional jewellery equipment purchased from a liquidation auction.
At the moment we are struggling with these pieces for Thomas Houseago. He likes the specific colour of his plaster models so much that he wasn't entirely satisfied with the cement casts we created for the pieces to resist outdoor weather. The idea is to make the casts look like the models, imitating the quality of plaster. We've mixed white cement with marble sand, after many tests we have now found the right recipe.

ANDREA RINALDI

Olaf Nicolai, a German artist living in Berlin, came here with a real meteorite, the Sikhote-Alin meteorite, that had crashed in Siberia in the early twentieth century. He asked to perform a 3D scan, then digitally 'break' it into 20 smaller pieces as if it had actually broken. There was a lot of data work to replicate the outer surfaces of the little pieces, looking like meteorites themselves and that could be joined together again, like a jigsaw puzzle. Everything had to fit nicely together again. I'm not a very spiritual guy, but the aura of the meteorite made me a bit uncomfortable. Here's an intermediary test. The piece is small, but it was very heavy, or at least it felt heavy.

What kind of metal did you use?

This is one of the rare occasions in which we used iron, because the original meteorite consists mostly of iron. The meteorite had been analysed in the lab and we tried to reproduce something similar; beyond iron it also contains cobalt, nickel, phosphorus, sulfur, but also some very rare materials like traces of germanium, iridium and, who knows, stardust; so finally we ended up using mostly iron. Iridium is so volatile that it would have been chemically irrelevant to use it in the alloy. But symbolically, a small flacon was opened nearby, during the cast. A few atoms might actually have made it into the sculpture.

Disco mezzanine

FELIX LEHNER

This space used to be a disco, a super ugly disco. It was all black, yellow and orange. Possibly one of the worst pieces of disco-interior I've ever seen, even though the building itself was an interesting piece of architecture. You can still see parts of it in the toilets here. It was just horrible. It was a mix between students in economics from St. Gallen University, a very famous department, with basically rich kids getting very drunk – not so nice – and a Balkan disco. When they ran out of business, we started renting it. With just a few cuts in the mezzanine, architect Lukas Furrer created a larger space that fits our needs. He removed the tiled floor and added the staircase.
On the mezzanine we set this laser-cutting machine donated by Jakob Schlaepfer, a textile manufacturer who works with a lot of stylists. The creative director Martin Leuthold, now retired, is the new president of the Sitterwerk Foundation, and a close friend. Two years ago the company moved and they had no space for this machine, so it was installed here. Look how it fits perfectly in the niche! St. Gallen is famous for its textile industry even though several companies have now gone out of business.

Have you used it yet?

Yes, we have started to look into it. At Schlaepfer they are unhappy at having lost this machine, so they come and use it as well. The idea for us is to look at how to combine digital information and design on materials–for instance, to create reliefs. We can laser negatives and use them to cast concrete. We can use it on wood, rubber, cardboard, aluminium, reflective materials, glass …

Do you also buy machines even if you don't know exactly what to do with them?

Yes … When I was young, I was very interested in making things and much less in school. My father was a teacher, a very authoritarian, traditional person, but he let us kids have one room in the basement where no adults would come. We could have anything in there: objects, animals, rubbish … That was the biggest part of my education. I collected a lot of machines from the scrapyard, trying to understand how they worked. For artists this is an important ability to have. Now, with all these digital machines coming out – which is all very interesting – I like to keep a balance: if I add a digital tool, I compensate with an analogue one.

Where do you find all these machines?

Before the Internet I mostly bought them at auctions, it was an interesting environment. Here we have a vapour machine, originally meant as a steaming system for garden companies to sterilize earth. We use it to melt wax moulds instead. At the last Christmas party we cooked with it: we had a huge dumpling party!

The Basement

After almost an hour spent in the basement, walking down dark corridors past boxes, moulds and machines, Felix opens a large metallic door at the bottom of a long, dead-end corridor, revealing a wide refrigerating chamber. The smell of lemons bursts into the damp basement space. 'Do you have a kitchen at your place here in St. Gallen?' On top of various species of lemons and citrons, he adds onions and two beer bottles of tomato sauce from his garden in Amalfi. 'The white part of the citrons can be eaten raw, as a salad – just add oil and salt.'

So, tell us the story about the lemons!

FELIX LEHNER
It all happened by chance. In 2003 Katalin Deérs and I went to Amalfi and found an abandoned garden for sale along the 1,400 steps that connect Amalfi to Porgeola. An old guy told us that all the young people were leaving Amalfi and didn't care about the gardens. We were able to buy it, together with the adjacent house, and we started renovating both, gradually and simply. Parts of the garden had been abandoned for more than 50 years and it wasn't even possible to enter, it was so overgrown that we only discovered the different parts by cutting through the vegetation. It was an adventure—like a forest, all of it! The garden rises through the mountains, it has seven terraces with different climatic zones; on one side we have the lemons, and on the other we planted 200 fruit trees alongside pines and agaves, so now the vegetation is really rich. The idea was not to have a holiday garden, but to have an agricultural one. We talked with Ueli Torgler, who has experience with Mediterranean gardens. We started researching local species and in the first couple of years we planted 90 lemon trees of six or seven different species; we understood later that we don't need that many. After a few years, Salvatore, an old man from Porgeola, agreed to work on the garden. He is the expert at growing fruit there: no one else remembers how to do things anymore, all the knowledge is almost lost! Besides being paid, Salvatore can take all the fruit he wants. He is inspired by the work, he learns and he teaches us a lot. In winter you have to protect the trees from the icy rain with polyester nets mounted on a system of pergolas. There is an old documentary shot in the 1950s in Sorrento, the village on the other side of the promontory. It is called *Orangen und Zitronen aus Sorrent*, you can watch it online. It shows how the culture and the way they dealt with lemons was very different. They made really large structures, five to six metres high, called *pagliarelle*, with branches cut in the *macchia* [scrubland vegetation of the Mediterranean region] where the trees grew freely inside.

The original structures were high and very beautiful. The really nice thing with these gardens, terraces and structures is that it is truly architecture; the height of the terraces varies between two and a half and five metres and the inside-outside effect made up by the ground and these walls is beautiful. Besides citrus we have plums, pomegranates and four different kinds of kaki, as well as quince and heirloom pears. What's nice when you have these old terraces is that you can always have a view over the garden, which helps you understand the different groups you have and discover that you perhaps have three, four or five of the same kind of tree.

Where do you find these old varieties for the garden?

In Toscana, near Pistoia, they grow plants for the whole of Europe. Oscar Tintori has all these ornamental and rare citruses, like the cedro. And we've begun to learn how to do grafting to reproduce plants. If you don't, they are pollinated by bees, but this way you keep the genetics and you get stronger roots. It was nice to learn how to grow citrus fruits. Before, every time we came back a tree was dying; now we know that it's perfectly normal and that you just have to plant it again and it will be ok. Each tree has a number and we have started making an inventory to keep track of the varieties, because you forget so many things over the years and then you're not sure any longer.

Is the story of placing RFID chips on the lemon trees actually true? To create a 'Sitterwerk library' of lemon trees in Amalfi?

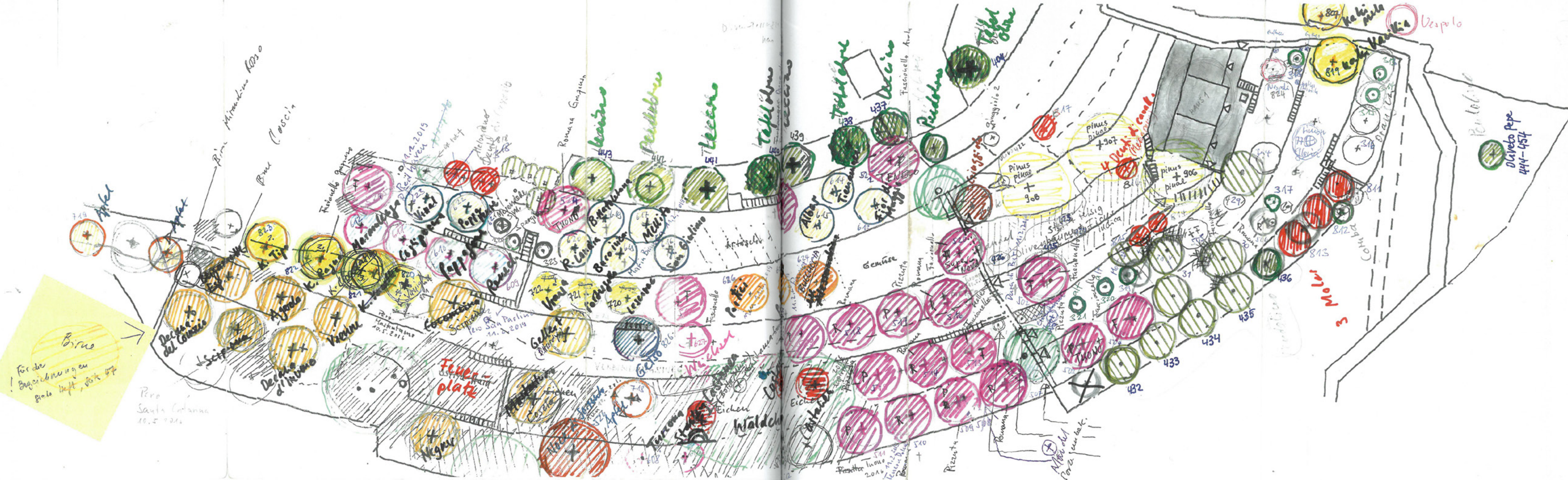
Indeed, we have so many pictures of the trees and we never sort them, so the idea was to use RFID chips to keep track of the history of each tree, to have a diary that would keep itself in order … But we still haven't actually done it. The Amalfi garden is very important to us. Also, at the foundry I don't work in the workshop anymore, I take care of the organization rather. I accept it, but I miss it, so the garden is now my place for physical work.

The farm

So, you've gone from bronze to citrus plants. Has your hunch about collecting materials, machines and knowledge on casting, good patinas, etc. been passed over to lemons?

Yes, sure, it's not that different. Recently we also had the chance to rent a farm here, right next to the foundry. It's all for our pleasure. In the Appenzeller hills it's horrible, all the land is used to grow grass to feed the cattle. Everything is green, with just dandelions and buttercups. Now we're trying to restore some other cultivations, teaching the cows not to go on those terrains. Fertilized grass doesn't work for bees because after June it's over with the flowers. It's a slow process, but we're trying to restore a wildflower meadow, and in combination with the bees we're keeping for Pierre Huyghe's sculptures, it'll be very nice. In front of the barn you can see these fig trees. Some years ago, I visited Geta Brătescu, a really important artist who died last year. I cut a branch of a fig tree from her garden. We have a whole new collection of figs from places or people we visit.

inv. 5917
Lemon drawing courtesy of Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Centro Museale Musei delle Scienze Agrarie – MUSA, Portici (Naples).


Apfel
Birne Mirandino Rosso
Birne Coscia
Birne
Für die Bezeichnungen siehe Heft, Seite 07
Decana del Comizio
Agorda
Vicuna
Decana d'Inverno
Feuerplatz
Negra
Eichen
Wäldchen
Gemüse
Artischok
Pinus pinae
907
906
908
HAUS 1
Olivenbaum
Ficus indica
Kaki mela
Vespolo
819
Oliveto Pepe 444–454
3 Melas
Nespoli 824
Pizzuta
Romana
Fasciouello
Gelso
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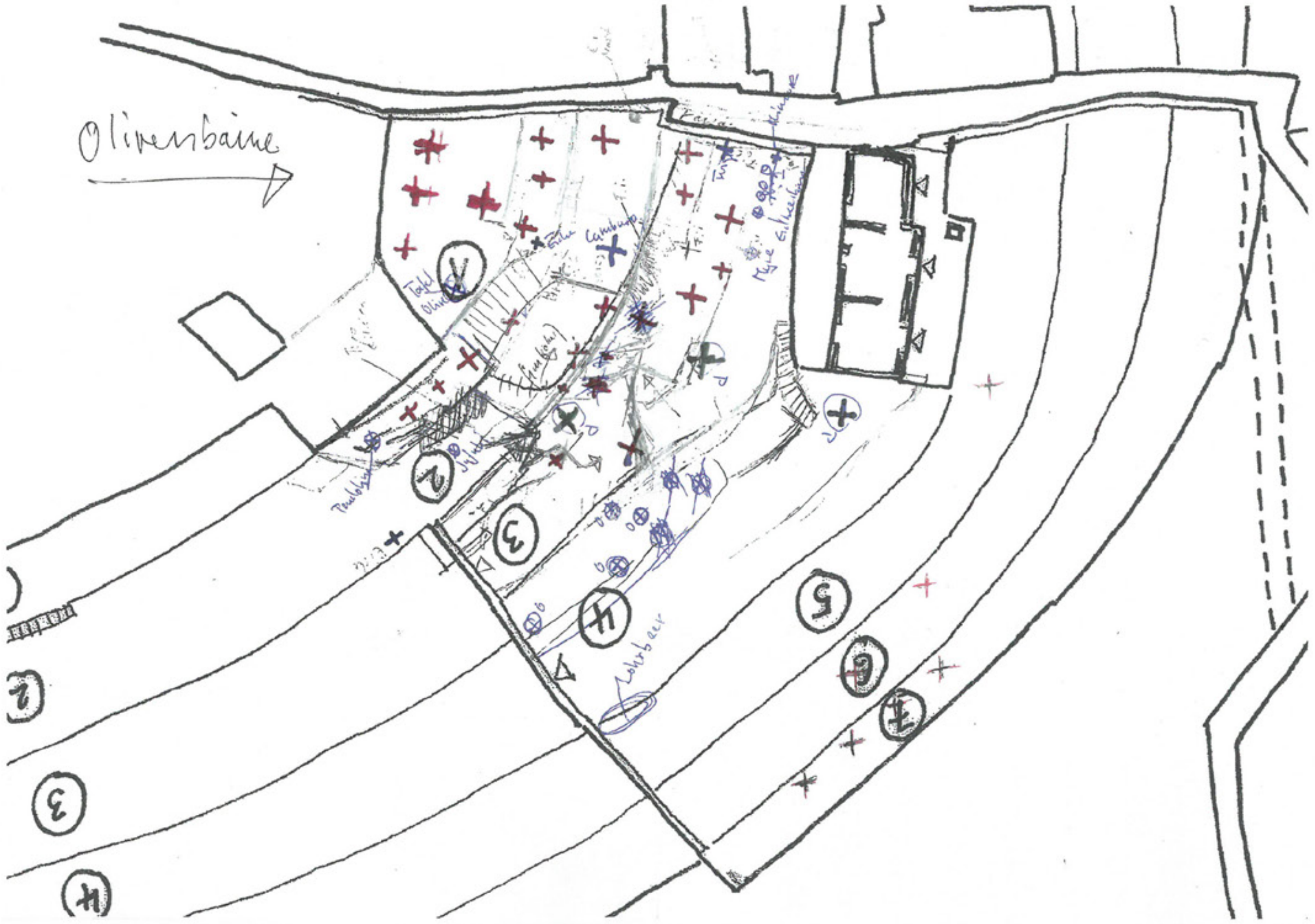
Tuono
Tenero


Olivenbäume


März 2018
Hoi Felix
Schau, hier der erste Anlauf für den Baumkataster.
Lass uns mal bei Gelegenheit sprechen
Bis bald + Liebe Grüsse
Myrtha
572
Medici Salò 3.1.2019
Kaki Chocolatino
neu 2018 Febr.
Angelo amato
001-200 Limone
201-300 Cedro
301-400 Arancio
401-500 Olivo
501-570 Mandorlo/Noce
571-600 Fico
601-700 Steinobst (frutta a nòcciolo)
701-800 Pero/Melo
801-900 Vite, melograno, caco, giuggiolo, schwarze Maulbeere, Nespolo
901-1000 Bäume, Sträuche, Lieblinge, Citrus

Material archive

JULIA LÜTHOF

The material library started about 12 years ago. Various representatives of Sitterwerk, the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHDK), the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur and the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts (HSLU T&A) sat down to ponder the possibility of creating a tool in which information is conveyed by physical samples. They came up with the idea of setting up a network consisting of a database and an archive. In the beginning the goal was rather utopic – the library was to describe all the materials in the world – but they had the courage to start and began with the database. So it all started with this big idea about collaborating, then came the discussions on how to do it, how materials can be described and who we wanted to collect them for. This was a very big discussion, as each institution had their specific audience and vision, so in the end we came to the conclusion that it would be better if each institution were free to collect in whichever way they wanted, while feeding information into the collective database. Now we see each other quarterly to discuss. By now we are eight institutions, but we are all in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, so all the entries in the database are currently in German only. [Picks up a book we pulled out of the library: *Lessons on Objects, Designed for Children Between the Ages of Six and Fourteen Years* by Elisabeth Mayo, 1830] This was a project based on gathering objects for children, to introduce them to new ideas and give them a better understanding of the world. She made collections of materials together with this schoolbook, as an educational tool. It is interesting that we belong to a tradition of making collections that have always faced the same challenges—how to document and subsequently how to communicate it in the best way.

> You not only collect materials, but also gather information about the techniques associated with them. Is that right?

Yes. For example, at the moment I am researching metallic surfaces and artificial patinas. Our idea is that it should not only be a collection of products, but rather a collection that opens up knowledge about how materials can be used, while giving people the opportunity to find their own solutions—not to shut it down and say this can only be used for this or that.

> There is a kind of magic to opening a drawer and discovering samples that have not been given a standardized presentation: cast or 3D printed objects like lemons, bottles, and so on. How do you decide what enters the collection?

We have two ways of collecting. First, we have a lot of materials and items that come directly from the foundry next door. When I started, most of the materials came from there and I still get a lot of samples, sometimes without even knowing what it is. But many are so beautiful that I keep them. The other way is research-based: after some time in the library I started my own research projects and looked for funding to expand the collection. For example, one of these projects was on wax. It was very systematic, looking at what kinds of wax exist and relating it to the foundry. As it is a very important material for them and a material we don't see that often in other collections, in terms of research it was very helpful as I could tap into the knowledge that is already here. Other times, a specific collection or research can be based on chance encounters, someone who becomes interested in something. This makes our collection very specific in certain areas, but with blind spots or nothing at all in others. We share knowledge and research with the other institutions too, and a lot of materials have come into the library in this way, by means of exchange. At the moment we have around 2,000 material samples, and around 1,000 of these have descriptions on our shared database [www.materialarchiv.ch]. Some descriptions can be very vast while others are quite precise. I find the vastness very interesting; if, for example, an architect comes here to look for a specific material and I know an artist that has worked with it, I can put them in touch and something new can emerge.

> Quite a lot of drawers are still empty. This piece of furniture here is quite specific. What is your relationship to it?

Maybe this is the actual reason the material library started … Felix would be the one to ask because he found these drawers in a truck repair workshop, but I don't know whether the idea of the library came before or after [Felix: the shelves came first]. They are very sturdy, so I can put heavy objects in them. It's perfect. Many are still empty because I work slowly: I need time to do research and choose specific things. Otherwise I could have filled them up quite fast: at a certain point everything from the foundry came in here and it was necessary to become more selective, so I decided that it was better to keep a separate archive to store all the materials and techniques directly related to their projects. It was important to make a distinction between the two: this library is public, while the foundry's archive in the basement is private and stores specific and sometimes sensitive information for each project. I used to work at the foundry, which made the exchange easier; now things are more organized and in addition to collective meetings once a week, everyone has lunch together every day, which helps keep an overview of what everybody is working on and what could be interesting for my research. Sharing knowledge is important. We also do a lot of tests ourselves: an assistant is now busy doing some surface tests in our back room for a presentation on patinas.

> The collection also contains some rather surprising elements, like feathers, skins, shells … How did they end up in the collection?

They belonged to Daniel Rohner. A woman called me one day, saying her son had been in contact with him and that he had stored Rohner's collection of shells. I decided to add them to the library because I think they belong in here and resonate with a lot of his books. They were very important to Daniel Rohner, but also in relation to art and architecture: as nature is the basis of so many things, they provide curious connections and opportunities to generate new ideas.

> Object descriptions are not always very clear or noticeable: is this deliberate?

It depends. Some materials are easier to mark than others. For example, some come from a product archive, so they have a standardized way of being presented; but it is almost impossible to properly label certain materials we have, like waxes. I find touching them more important, so I don't wrap them in an archival plastic bag. Sometimes we only put numbers, to distract as little as possible from the materials, as the description is sometimes bigger than the object. In this way we can liberate the materials from their description. All the materials that carry an RFID also integrate with the books, so you can place them on the magnetic table, combine them with books and have everything registered and visible in the digital workspace.

> It's quite intriguing, this attempt at 'non-classified classification' used in the library to echo Daniel Rohner's very personal and organic way of organizing his books. Are you defending a specific vision of knowledge with this absence of classification?

ROLAND FRÜH

Well, we believe that no book only has a spot on one shelf, or in one exact position. That's how we work with books, but it's also because we have all those technical books about metallurgy, crafts, handiwork, and all kinds of 'grey literature' you normally don't have in libraries; and on the other hand we have all these art books. In a normal library they would be separated. But we don't do that, our system proposes something else. With Google Search, for instance, we're used to only looking at the top results because we think that's what we want to know. We never think we mightn't know what we're looking for. Our system gives you the chance to find something you don't know, something you're not looking for, something that is next to what you're looking for. But I guess we could argue that we have both. We do catalogue our books, using WorldCat, so the whole collection is referenced and can be searched from any library catalogue connected to this database. Things are never steady here: we could suddenly choose to order our collection according to common library systematics, or we could order it following very subjective and personal interests.

> Aby Warburg had this idea of *Gute Nachbarschaft*, 'the law of good neighbourliness' which he implemented in his own library: a very personal way of organizing his collection, where books were grouped by analogy, based on relations he perceived instead of chronology or subject. Did his approach have an influence on your library?

Very much, even if we only took it as a reference on a rather theoretical level. But we've had conferences on the topic of the library ordering system. We try to connect to 'real libraries' and the way they work, to see how we could bring something to that world—but it's still a difficult encounter. After five years of working here I have the impression that our approach and the typical library can never really meet. Libraries are very conventional, traditional institutions. What we have managed to do more successfully is to organize guided tours for artists, researchers and the general public to show our peculiar approach. It blows their minds every time. There is some kind of magic to this chaotic order.

Around here we have the Alpenhof, Andreas Züst's library, another private library. Unlike ours, it is a finished project, so it's not growing. It is very beautiful: he organized the books into fixed, weird categories like astronomy, sky, cloud, mushrooms … It's much trippier than we are: I always feel that we are a bit more like the practical ones. We have a lot of books in common, though, as he and Daniel Rohner were in the same artistic scene in the 1970s and 1980s. It's just fantastic, we always say that it's almost like the yin and yang of libraries: we're down in the valley with our feet on the ground and he's up in the mountain with his head in the clouds.

> On the contrary, you defend fluctuation and chance encounters as a way of provoking new knowledge: the collection can combine in a certain way, but then it can also dissolve and recombine differently, telling new stories.

My predecessor, Marina Schütz, who directed the library for seven or eight years before me, took much better care of the collection (I haven't been able to catalogue as much), but I'm more interested in inviting people to come, stay, research, use the collections. Several times a year we invite someone to go through the collection, as a way of activating it. For instance, we invited Roland Brauchli, an artist and book designer who took out all the books about Picasso, and we realized that we have 17 metres of books only about Picasso, and we noticed that you could explain the whole world just by looking at Picasso. Because there is Picasso in Spain, Picasso in France, Picasso in Britain, Picasso and women, Picasso and cats, Picasso and dogs, Picasso and the First World War, Picasso and the Second World War … You can put everything in context with Picasso. I would not repeat this now with Braque, but it was a good exercise.

From right to left:

BOOK
Isamu Noguchi - master sculptor
Scala (2004)

BOOK
"Projekt Schweiz"
Kunsthalle

MATERIAL
Polyamid 66

BOOK
Arp
The Museum of Modern Art (1958)

BOOK
Brunnen
Kommissionsverlag Berichthaus (1975)

BOOK
Natürliche Ressourcen
Container Goods Edition (1998)

BOOK
Gerda Steiner & Jörg Lenzlinger Nationalpark
Lars Müller Publishers (2014)

BOOK
Gerhard Richter Landschaften
Hatje Cantz (2002)

BOOK
Guillaume Bijl
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Germain Boffrand

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Edward Ruscha, Peter Schjeldahl, John Cheim

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Christa Steinle, Peter Weibel, Oswald Oberhuber

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Maria Vogel, Ursula Stalder

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Elisabeth Sussman, Fred Wasserman, Yves-Alain Bois, Mark Godfrey, Eva Hesse

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Nancy Graves

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Magritte.
Harry Torczyner, Bella Bessard, René Magritte

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Heidi Bucher,
Heidi Bucher

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André Masson

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A Sculptor's World,
Isamu Noguchi

BOOK
Museum Wormanium,
Ole Worm

'This was a piece by Paul McCarthy.
It's his old dog's shit. We scanned it and made it huge.'

How come Hans Josephsohn's sculptures ended up here?

FELIX LEHNER

I saw this film about Josephsohn in the 1970s. I was 17 and I was very impressed. In a way, that is how the foundry came about; I wanted to do something with him, he was a big hero for me. In 1981 he visited the co-housing where I lived in at the time, I was 20 and he was 60, I told him that I wanted to start a foundry. He was quite amused and said, 'Come to me when you have it.' Four years later we cast the first piece. He didn't have much money, so in the beginning we did many smaller things, step by step. Since relocating to St. Gallen we have cast all his pieces.

As for the Kesselhaus Josephsohn: Hans Josephsohn used to keep some of his original plasters in the huge courtyard of his studio in Zurich. It was clear that we needed to move these pieces inside and so first they were placed in the basement of a schoolhouse. In the 1970s he had a big personal crisis when all his girlfriends and wives left him. He was very depressed at the time and all the works in the schoolhouse reminded him of that, so they were left there for more than 25 years, until he asked me to help him to move them out. That is when some of his original pieces entered the basement here in St. Gallen. I told him that we would build some shelves and decide together what to put away. It can be quite problematic when you have these really large, fragile works. For me it was never a question of whether or not these works were all good: I was sure that they were.

Photography Katalin Deér, 2019

Does the light in the fridge stay on,
when I close the door?

On Tuesday 16th April 2019, when we returned to our place of work – the library, the material archive, the guest studio, the Kesselhaus Josephsohn, the workshops of the Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen – Accattone had already driven back to Belgium, but they left some conspicuous traces. The tables at the library were bending under the weight of what they had collected, the books and stones, sea shells, lemons and plastics, and the air was still heavy with 'ideas' (if that's a state air can take). During five days Accattone had gently but persistently roamed around the spaces and underneaths of the Sitterwerk and Kunstgiesserei St.Gallen and all of us were taken by their genuine curiosity. Felix Lehner and Katalin Deér who not only work but live and look after 'the gardens' here opened as many doors as there are, Patricia Hartmann, Ulrich Meinherz, Julia Lütolf, Bettina Zimmermann, Elena Grignoli, Roland Früh from the Sitterwerk opened drawers, files and handed stairs for bookshelves, and David Andermatt, Mara Meerwein, Andrea Rinaldi, Samuel Bischof and many others from the Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen explained the workshops and their peculiarities. As we fondly remember, Accattone's visit was not a visit, but a meeting of shared interests, questions and curiosities that also sparked quite a few new ideas here, which we only have to pick from the tables, or the air now.

(Sitterwerk and Kunstgiesserei St. Gallen, 26. August 2019)