

Matti Sumari

Malmö, Sweden

Exhibitions

2018/2019

„Platter Guides“

2018 – ongoing – Various Venues

„Residuals/ Age of Shiny“

2018 – Skånes konstförening, Malmö, Sweden
& 8.Salon, Hamburg, Germany

„Non-Human Itch“

2019 – IKOLONI, Malmö, Sweden

About

– **Matti Sumari**
is an Artist and coordinator at the non-commercial artist-run exhibition space Alta Art Space in Malmö, Sweden. Working and living also in Malmö since 2014, after having finished my Master studies in the art academy of Umeå in Northern Sweden.



„Platter Guides“

The work consists of a series of reliefs, made with plastic from vegetable crates for transporting strawberry, parsley, grapes, avocado and champignon mushrooms.

The reliefs are accompanied by a text piece:

guiding us where

exercise court for least possible life
forms fungi, strawberry,
avocado and parsley admin plastic
eating
bacteria vs. gut bacteria

vs: not versus but voluntary symbiosis
fermenters pandemonium or unhealthy
future organism (U.F.O.)

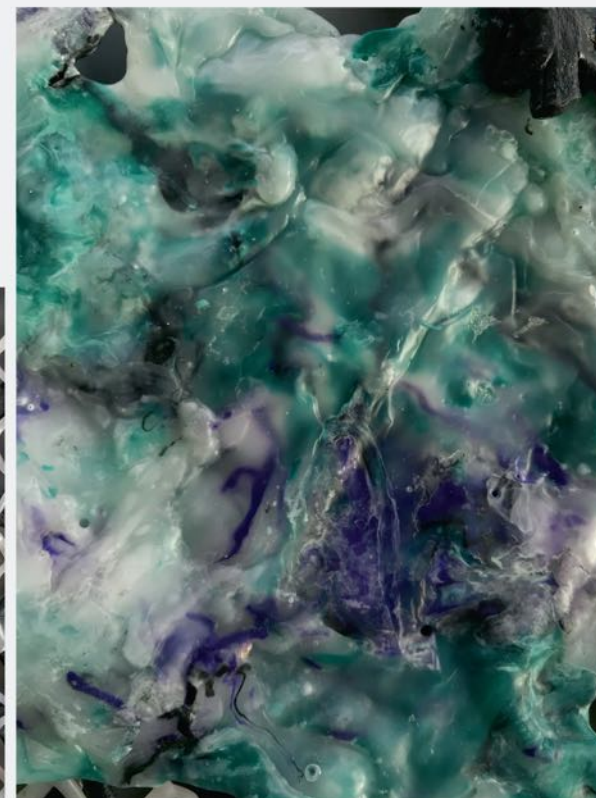
dressed in Polypropylene



Thoughts

— I was born in Helsinki, Finland, where I also grew up. I've been somewhat interested in art from an early age and was taken to exhibitions as a kid. When going to high school I chose one with emphasis on the arts and after that wanted to go to art school as well. Although having studied art quite a lot I didn't consciously decide to work with art professionally until recently after getting my MFA diploma. Of course I need to do work outside the art realm for my income but for a long time I've seen myself primarily as an artist.

Now I'm living in Malmö, Sweden since 2014, after having finished my Master studies in the art academy of Umeå in Northern Sweden. I'm working as an artist and also organizing a non-commercial artist-run exhibition space called Alta Art Space here in Malmö. This space in an old industrial building that also houses studios for around 20 artists, me included.





Thoughts

I'm on a humoristic-melancholic quest to come to terms with our use of public space and the materials in it. Last three years this ingredient has mainly been plastic. Working mostly with sculpture and installation I am concentrating on poetic interrogations of our terms of use regarding the public space and the concept of *Res nullius*: right to utilize ungoverned goods. I reuse debris of the industrial landscape, imagining a futuristic trash-animism, applying a pre modern mindsets of hunting/gathering to the man-made and controlled environment of today. Through picking up my materials from the flow of waste and leftovers from the metabolism of a city, I engage in a relationship with my surroundings.

This relationship can best be described as commensalism, which in ecology is a relationship between two organisms where one benefits from the other without damaging it. My raw-materials are mainly sourced from trash thus I'm interested in the character of the waste container also in a philosophical sense: I find an intriguing similarity in the mechanisms of transformation in the concepts of both art and trash: As any kind of "art space", a gallery or a museum, has the transformative ability to make art appear – an object placed in the white cube instantly becomes art. In a similar manner anything placed in a garbage-container, trashcan or waste bin can not possibly be anything else than trash.



Both of these transformations are mental constructions linked to the concepts of art and trash, taking place in the subjective mind of the viewer. Plastic consuming species of fungi and bacteria have recently been discovered. These life forms and the related biological processes are something I'm very much inspired by and interested in. Two new strains of plastic eating bacteria have been discovered in the Greater Noida wetlands near New Delhi, India. These bacteria have adapted to the polystyrene plastic in their surroundings and are decomposing it. A few years ago plastic eating fungus

Aspergillus tubingensis was discovered in Islamabad, Pakistan and the plastic decomposing bacteria *Ideonella Sakaiensis* was found in Sakai, Japan. Both discoveries were made on garbage dumping sites. None of these species were unknown to science before but all of them have apparently mutated, changing their diet due to the plastic fragments present in their surroundings... Let us see what the future holds!

„Although each project is based around certain ideas and interests from the start the pieces often surprise me once finished.“

Thoughts

— I find a lot of humour in these mental, conceptual loops in my work: building a garbage can from trash materials, sculpting plastic consuming organisms out of plastic... or even the use of disposed plastic in itself: the least valued material is reshaped and presented as sculpture – a highly valued artefact.



— As an artist my work is based around topics and themes of my interest. But when I'm researching on these subjects I'm usually not planning a specific project or artwork, this comes later on in the process, it may take even years sometimes. I'm curious about a lot of things. I tend to work in series. This means the artworks evolve further both in technique and form as new versions are made. Although each project is based around certain ideas and interests from the start the pieces often surprise me once finished. My themes and interests are side-effects and by-products that stem from and relate to the contemporary consumerist society of market economy in which we are embedded into.

Instead of always producing a large amount of new "products": artworks for new projects I often end up reusing earlier works. So the artworks aren't truly finished but may continue their processes and mutate further in the future. I do this in two ways. Either through adding new parts to the artworks or in case of plastics: melting and resculpting. This can happen several times since these plastic materials are essentially endlessly reusable. In my sculptural series 'the ones who got away ate their way out' one of the pieces has the undertitle '(24 gender mom)'. This title refers to the nearly endless amount of genders in the fungal kingdom, as the sculpture borrows its shapes from the plastic eating fungus *Aspergillus tubingensis*.



„Residuals/ Age of Shiny“

Residuals / Age of Shiny are the residues – or mutant relatives – of the sculptures depicting two sisters called Cementa and Toyota. That project a site specific sculptural work in the industrial harbor of Malmö, Sweden. What unifies the sculptures in series Residuals / Age of Shiny is their ingredients, most of which were collected on site – from the waterfront on an artificial stretch of land, built from demolition waste in Malmö harbor. Using both organic and synthetic materials these are diffuse portraits are made for our current man-made age – the Age of Shiny.



Thoughts

— Ever since I was a kid growing up finding things on the streets has been a big exciting hunt for me. It is like discovering small souvenirs from some unknown lives and histories of others. I'm picking up these findings for both use in my own daily life as well as artwork. I enjoy digging through garbage containers, finding for example glasses for use in kitchen. Or discovering interesting clothes from the streets, especially if travelling. When it comes to using raw-materials in artwork I want to refine and craft the found subjects into my work, instead of showing it as a readymade or objet trouvé without any alteration.

The material that I am mostly using is plastic from commercial crates for shipping and transporting groceries & other consumer items. The source for my plastic material is these vessels of food transportation. This is an important aspect to me: these are the very instruments that make life so luxurious and comfortable. Simultaneously, both these boxes specifically and plastic products in general are considered to be of very low value, almost worthless. For me this is especially interesting in the context of the art world where the raw materials of artworks have an inherent hierarchy and tradition resulting in a strict system of status. This system is of course partly responsible for creating the perceived value of the artworks themselves.



Thoughts

— For its relatively small size of a town Malmö has an energetic mix of people and cultures from all over the world. Compared to the other Nordic capitals it's the cheapest place to live. The closeness to Copenhagen and further connections to continental Europe is of course nice and also something that has made me aware of the transportation routes for both people and things that pass through this geographical bottleneck. Although very tidy in its urban appearance Malmö is one of the trashiest places judged by the standards of the Nordic countries. As I'm using found materials from my surroundings this place of somewhat careless atmosphere is good for me.

I've also been fishing up plastic objects from the harbour to use in my work. Another source for both inspiration and physical places of creation are the central diminishing industrial areas. The transformation to post-industrial age in Malmö has left a lot of central areas unoccupied, for example opening up space for cheap artist studios. Since 2014 I'm organizing Alta Art Space, an artist-run exhibition space and a studio collective in an old ketchup factory. This process of change is of course well known in most urban industrial areas, leading to development and gentrification and perhaps in the future we will be kicked out if we are unlucky. At the moment though the situation is great and the city of Malmö wants to help & take care of us artists.



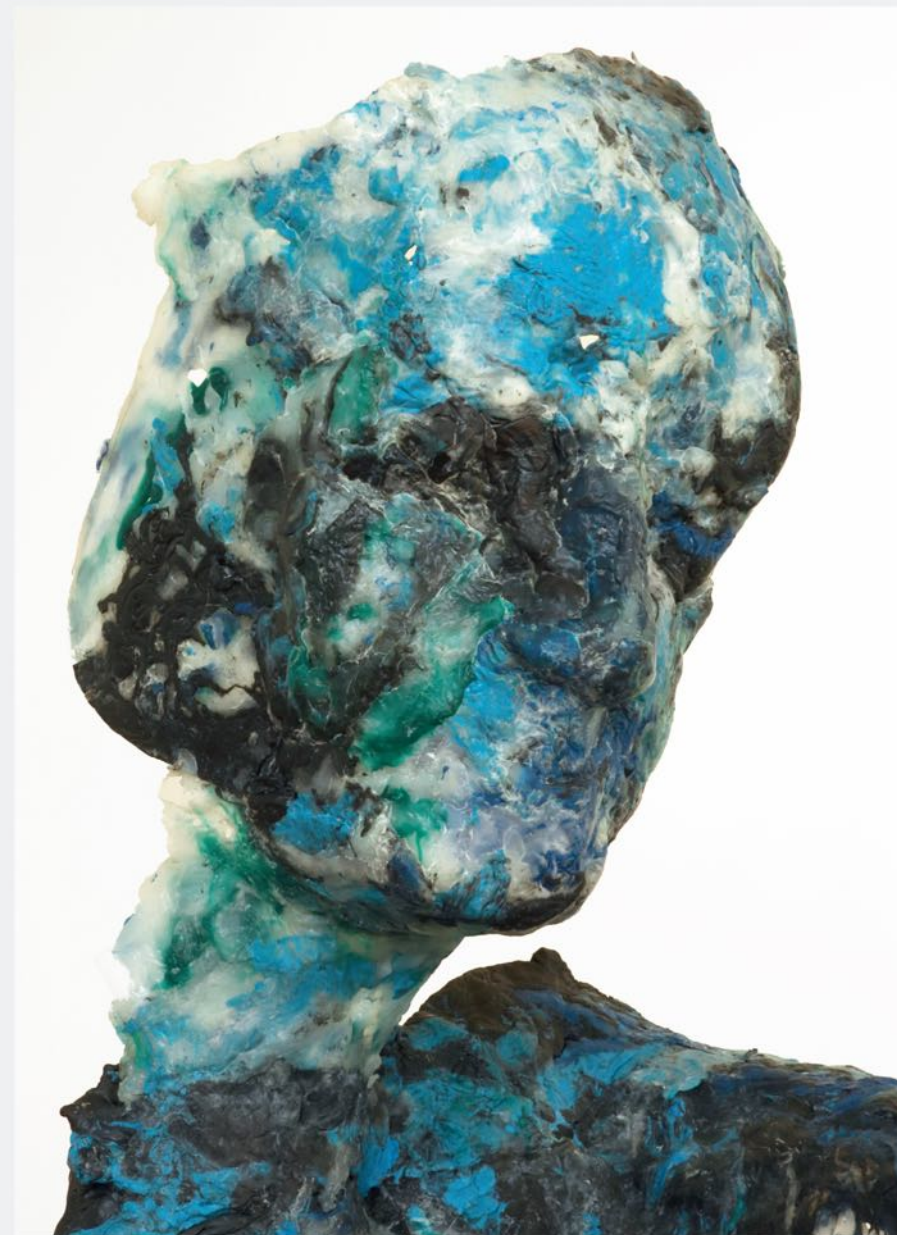
„As I'm using found materials from my surroundings, this place of somewhat careless atmosphere in Malmö is good for me.“



„Non-Human Itch“

The work consists of a sculpture series of hands with coins and a sitting human figure. The sculptures are accompanied by a text piece. The text is aimed as an inner monolog for this fragmented sculptural character. Material for the artwork is reclaimed polypropylene plastic from vegetable crates that serve us our food via supermarkets and catering. These vessels have been used in transportation of vegetables, again a crucial but clandestine function in infrastructure supporting society. The plastic boxes are melted together forming a hollow new being, resembling the figures in classical sculpture. Dimensions of this larger human figure are work are 90 x 50 x 50 cm. All parts of this sculptural series are made in natural human size, scale 1:1. The amount of bacteria covering your body is greater than all the thoughts we'll ever think.

We live together, humans and microorganisms, they inside and atop of us. But they don't care about us... Maybe the meaning of our life is to be a habitat for them? While interested in this topic of beneficial bacteria my research led me to the 'oligodynamic effect' of wishing wells: People may have unknowingly discovered the biocidal properties of copper and silver; the two metals traditionally used in coins. Throwing coins made of these metals could help make well water safer to drink. Wells that were frequented by those that threw coins in may have been less affected by a range of bacterial infections making them seem more fortunate and may have even appeared to have cured people suffering from repeated infections.



Thoughts

— At the moment I'm working on a permanent public sculpture commission for the city of Stockholm. This is a sculptural installation with several parts, both bronze and plastic sculptures placed inside and outside a new 18-storey building with student housing. The theme for this work is methods of decay in nature. Motifs in the pieces are a mixture of various decomposing organisms, including plastic eating fungi and bacteria, snails, polypore mushrooms and bark beetle patterns. The project will be inaugurated in the Autumn of 2020.



— When working with plastic I'm using a hot air gun and silicone gloves, sculpting the material freely by hand or using a mold for shape.



Thoughts

— I have too many ideas to be put into works so I'm happy just to be able to work further and develop & learn new techniques and materials. Using found stone, like marble, and carving it is something I've been planning for a long time. Also doing aluminum casting by myself using found trash resources is a future project that has been waiting its turn for a couple of years now.



— Aside from the obvious of exhibiting work and presenting my ideas internationally I have one dream: Building a house. Or at least renovating and remaking something in the countryside somewhere for a total utopian artwork environment: making art, gardening and living the dream. This is on my 10-year dream plan but we'll see what happens. I'm also quite contempt where I am at the moment so let's see.

