

# **the orange in my stomach**

**marijke annema**

Master thesis  
Material Utopias  
Sandberg Instituut  
Amsterdam  
2015

Course director:	Louise Schouwenberg
Mentor:	Agata Jaworska

## CONTENTS

Prologue	6
Sink	10 / 14 / 18 / 22 / 28
Dwelling	12
Poetry	16
Presence	20
Place and space	24
Door	30 / 34
Epilogue	32

## PROLOGUE

Last summer I spent a week with my family in law on the small island Klovharun in the Finnish archipelago. For almost thirty summers this was home to the Finnish-Swedish author Tove Jansson and the artist Tuulikki Pietilä. The island is a group of bare rocks with a lagoon in the middle. It has been the territory of all kinds of birds since long before the two women decided to build their wooden house there. Soon after we had landed on the island, we began to adjust to the practical conditions of the place. Food and drinking water were stored under the floor, in the cave inside the rock. The table by the rosebushes became a dishwashing station. On our way to the toilet, we held a broom above our heads to protect ourselves against the seagulls' attack.

I had never read a book by Tove Jansson and this seemed to be the best time to do so. 'The Summerbook'<sup>1</sup> and a notebook were the only books I brought to the island. Hannah, my sister in law, would read out loud in Swedish from 'Anteckningar från en ö', 'Notes from an Island'.<sup>2</sup> I immersed myself in Jansson's world through her words and the presence of the place. Surrounded by screaming birds, on warm polished rocks, in nights that wouldn't get dark, I learned about life in the small world of an island.

---

1           A novel about an elderly artist and her six-year-old granddaughter who together spend the summer on a small island in the Finnish archipelago.

The Summer Book, Tove Jansson, Sort Of Books (2003), translated from Swedish by Thomas Teal, originally published as *Sommerboken* (1972).

2           This book precisely reports the process of building the house on Klovharun.

Anteckningar från en ö (Notes from an Island), Tove Jansson, Schildt (1996), translated from Swedish by David McDuff, <http://halldor2.blogspot.nl/2004/05/notes-from-island.html>

Not right away, but little by little and incidentally, things begin to shift position in order to follow the progress of the seasons.[...]

Buckets and garden tools move in towards the house, ornamental pots disappear, Grandmother's parasol and other transitory and attractive objects all change places. The fire extinguisher and the axe, the pick and the snow shovel, appear on the veranda.

And at the same time the whole landscape is transformed. Grandmother had always liked this great change in August, most of all, perhaps, because of the way it never varied: a place for everything and everything in its place.<sup>3</sup>

Tove Jansson

The clear voice in Jansson's writings narrated the things around me. I came to know that the heavy roof beam was made from a boat mast. The sign on the stovepipe, written in the likelihood of strangers landing on the island, said: "Don't close the damper. It might rust shut." The tiny peg on the wall was carved with great attention out of a found piece of juniper. There was an ongoing dialogue between the house I experienced and the house in the books. They became the same place.

---

3      The Summer Book.

In this paper I will try to lay bare the core of my work. The house is both the object of study and a practical reality to place my work in. I reference several writers who have been relevant for my thinking about the house and my practice as a designer. I write about my ways of thinking and making, the ways I make sense of the world. Writing is not only a translation of thoughts into written language, it is also a way of learning. In the cycle of interpretation, reflection and production, I hope to gain insight in my subject and mark out my territory.



## **SINK**

It happened more than a year ago in the Happy Bazaar.

I fell in love with a pink plastic tub.

It was standing there in a tower of tubs on the floor.

In between the blue and green. I dismantled the tower, separated the pink from the rest and took it out.

I had not foreseen its lightness.

The stretched plastic surface was shining at me. The stiff curved rims kept the thin walls in tension. It had a distinctly refined figure. As far as I could judge, its identity was Chinese.

I placed it on my bathroom floor, where it would stay for months. One morning at dawn, half asleep, I went to the bathroom. While washing my hands in the ordinary sink I looked down at the still shining tub.

I picked it up and woke up in an instance.

I had elevated the plastic tub to the level of sink.





## DWELLING

Bauen originally means to dwell. Where the word bauen still speaks in its original sense it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, bauen, buan bhu, beo are our word bin in the versions: ich bin, I am, du bist, you are, the imperative form bis, be. What then does ich bin mean? The old word bauen, to which the bin belongs, answers: ich bin, du bist mean: I dwell, you dwell.<sup>4</sup>

Martin Heidegger

*I am a dweller and therefore I make. I am also a designer, perhaps a specialized kind of dweller. The house is absorbing me. When I am cleaning it, it is in my hands, and when I am travelling, I carry it in my thoughts. I see it everywhere around. No matter where I go or how hard I close my eyes.*

*When I think about the house, I imagine a layout where everything is in the right place. The knife is in the kitchen, on the cutting board that is next to a bowl of oranges. Next to the front door, with the doorknob and the window, is the toilet with the sink and the soap. The book is lying next to the bed in the bedroom. In my thoughts, the house is an orderly arrangement of things, clean and perfectly lit. It is as pretty as a picture in an interior magazine. An ideal.*

*When I am in my house, I experience something entirely different. I sit on the toilet, trying to read the book in poor light, with the orange in my stomach. I can affect the objects and they affect me. Here things that*

---

<sup>4</sup> Here we find that originally building is not just a means toward dwelling – to build is in itself already to dwell. And dwelling is the basic character of being human. We are dwellers. Building in the sense of dwelling is accomplished through two modes of building: one is building in the sense of taking care and letting grow – cultivating, the other is building in the sense of making – constructing. The commonly used definition of building as making is rooted in building as dwelling.

Building Dwelling Thinking, Martin Heidegger, from Poetry, Language, Thought (1951), translated by Albert Hofstadter, Harper Colophon Books, New York (1971), <http://mysite.pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html>

were unrelated to each other in the ideal house interact with each other and with me. I come face to face with my own mess. An actual house is not a static ideal. It is imperfect and changing all the time. A work that is never finished.

I don't design for a picture in an interior magazine. I am not chasing an ideal house. I want to base my work in the actual, by giving an account of what I find in the house. This starts with confronting myself with my environment. Not by projecting my desires, but by registering what I sense in a moment.

## **SINK continued**

I am holding a ball of cool and humid grey clay.

Two-hands-full.

I toss the ball from one hand into the other. This must be about the same weight as my foot.

I whirl the ball around in my palm. The fresh old smell of earth.

I pull a metal thread through its core. Sschwh.

Two halves.

Once more. Sschwh.

Four chunks.

I put them in the corner of the table.



## POETRY

We humans officially pass as ‘intelligent’, but that absolutely doesn’t mean that we are non-stop intelligent, on the contrary: we only are by exception, when we are facing unusual situations. In the humdrum of daily life we perceive in the same manner as chimpanzees, we don’t see things, but instruments, things-to.<sup>5</sup>

Paul Rodenko

Dwelling is habitual, it is a habit – we inhabit it.<sup>6</sup> In this habit we don’t see a doorknob but a thing-to-open-the door-with. The window is not a window, but a thing-to-look-through.<sup>7</sup> Every now and then there is a pause in my automatic interaction with things. In an unpredictable moment I can find a surprise, an accident, a coincidence and wonder – a chance for poetry. Poetry can detach us from the ‘-to’ perspective and this allows us to see the things as they are, it makes things discrete. It forces us to stand still, wake up and let things touch us.<sup>8</sup>

Poetry is happening in the here and now, it lives in the actual, but it is hard to catch. The question is *how* to catch something.

Are things to be known through experience or through reason?<sup>9</sup>

---

5 Tussen de regels. Wandelen en spoorzoeken in de moderne poëzie. (Between the Lines, Wandering and tracking in modern poetry.), Paul Rodenko, Bert Bakker/ Daamen (1956).

[http://dbnl.nl/tekst/rode006tuss01\\_01/rode006tuss01\\_01.pdf](http://dbnl.nl/tekst/rode006tuss01_01/rode006tuss01_01.pdf)

Tussen de regels’ is Rodenko’s first collection of essays about poetry in general, and in particular dealing with the Dutch avant-garde poetry of a group of experimental poets called ‘Vijftigers’ (Fifty-ers).

6 Building Dwelling Thinking, Martin Heidegger.

7 Tussen de regels, Paul Rodenko.

8 Tussen de regels, Paul Rodenko.

The fact of an orange in my stomach is logically not very unusual, but I did recognize it as something worthy to write down.

Tove Jansson's writing proves that our habits, customs and routines are a rich source of creativity and intelligence. It is precisely there, in our usual relating to things, where we can find poetry. We only have to be open for it. Only? Yes only, but that does not mean it is easy. It is a challenge to unveil the poetry of the habitual. A challenge that I welcome.

The title of Rodenko's collection of essays about poetry 'Tussen de regels', in English 'Between the Lines', points out that the sense of a poem does not lie *in* but *between* the lines. As the reader you can make sense of a poem by using your creativity. That is what I was looking for! I want to engage the user creatively in my work. It has to stimulate one's ability to feel and associate. Design must titillate and rebel against numbness.

---

9 Referring to the dispute between Rationalism and Empiricism.

Empiricism is the view that all concepts originate in experience, that all concepts are about or applicable to things that can be experienced, or that all rationally acceptable beliefs or propositions are justifiable or knowable only through experience.

Rationalism has long been the rival of empiricism. Rationalism is the view that regards reason as the principle source and test of knowledge. Holding that reality itself has an inherently logical structure, the rationalist asserts that a class of truths exists that the intellect can grasp directly. There are, according to the rationalists, certain rational principles – especially in logic and mathematics, and even in ethics and metaphysics – that are so fundamental that to deny them is to fall into contradiction.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186146/empiricism>

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/492034/rationalism>

## **SINK continued**

I grab a chunk of clay from the corner of the table.  
I fold my hands around it.  
I Squeeeee-ueeee-ueeze it into a chubby oblong.  
Unfold.  
Plump. On the table.  
My hands set in a rolling pulse.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
From the middle. Outwards.  
It leaves a sticky trace on the table.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
Light pressure. Rroll-roll. Inwards.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
Outwards.  
Under my hands the clay finds direction.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
I stretched it enough.  
I pick up the slender oblong.  
Plop. Out of the way.

I grab a chunk of clay from the corner of the table.  
I fold my hands around it.  
Squeeeeeee-ueeeeeeeze. Oblong.  
Unfold.  
Plump. On the trace on the table.  
My hands set in a rolling pulse.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
Light pressure. From the middle. Outwards.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
Rroll-roll. Inwards.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.  
Outwards.  
It is getting longer and firmer.  
Rroll-roll Rroll-roll Rroll-roll.



I pick up the slender oblong.  
Plop. Out of the way.

I grab a chunk of clay from the corner of the table.  
I fold my hands around it.  
Squeeee-ueeze Squeeze.  
Unfold.  
Plump.  
Rrroll-roll.  
Light pressure.  
From the middle. Rrroll-roll. Outwards.  
Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll.  
Inwards.  
Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll.  
Outwards. Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll.  
Elongating.  
The trace grows thicker, stickier.  
Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll Rrroll-roll.  
I pick up the slender oblong.  
Plop. Out of the way.

## PRESENCE

Presence is always a matter of the sensual and it is this, the sensual presence of a thing that anyone can feel.<sup>10</sup>

Roni Horn

To titillate, in the sense of arousing someone's interest, comes from the Latin *tittulare*, which means to tickle. Like Roni Horn, I am particularly occupied with the sensual presence of things.

The things in my house are really there, I can experience them, they affect me and I can get to know them. From the presence of things I develop ideas. My learning from things is *a posteriori* – based in experience rather than reason.<sup>11</sup>

This must be why I prefer to work in full scale. It allows me as designer to *feel* proportion and material in relation to my body rather than to *imagine* them. Instead of calculating I can actually feel the size of the door. By making the doorknob in full scale and real material I find out if it has a pleasant touch. And only through first-hand experience I can get to know the behavior of clay in the ceramic process.

---

10 Roni Horn is an American artist. In her Dickinson works the poetry of Emily Dickinson obtains a sensual presence. Lines from poems are literally quoted into three-dimensional text bars made from solid plastic and aluminum. The bars are leaning against the wall, taking up space. This change in form enables a different manner of perception while the content of the poem remains untouched. The bars do not represent the poems; they are them. This new way of being present allows the poem to be experienced outside the book, among other physical things, like a coat rack or couch. It can now function in the practical context of a house. The poem becomes an essential domestic furnishing.

Among Essential Furnishings, Roni Horn, from Interiors, CCS Readers, Sternberg Press (2012), originally published in Earths Grow Thick, Wexner Center for the Arts (1996)

11 Concepts are said to be *a posteriori* (Latin: from the latter) if they can be applied only on the basis of experience, and they are called *a priori* (from the former) if they can be applied independently of experience.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186146/empiricism>

Scaling introduces a certain abstraction in the work, like a model, a representation belonging to the domain of the imagination. Just like the house that is never finished but full of possibilities, a model is a potential. However, a 1:1 model has the peculiar ability to function on the equilibrium between the potential and the actual. When I place it in my house it directly relates to the domestic environment, without losing its openness for interpretation. A 1:1 model is an object of study and *at the same time* a sensual thing that can interact with other things. It makes creative engagement easily accessible.

## **SINK continued**

I am sitting with a turning stool between my legs.  
On the stool a round wooden board and some newspapers.  
I take a slender oblong of clay from the table and lay it on the  
paper. One end first.  
The rest of the oblong follows in a circle. With one finger  
I firmly press it down.

pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf

The other end spirals around the circle. From the middle outwards.  
I am slowly turning the stool with my free hand.  
Pressing the clay at the same time.

pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf  
pf pf

Another line follows. The circle grows bigger.

pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf  
pf pf pf pf

And so on.

pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf  
pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf

pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf  
pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf pf

Growing in upward spirals.



## PLACE AND SPACE

We had pitched our tent too close to the Great Stone, which is so great that it has become a landmark, at least for people who are finding their way more or less from hearsay. The Stone was estimated to weigh approximately fifty tons. It lies in an enormous frog pond in the only place where one could think of building beyond the reach of the sea.

It rained all week, and the frog pond overflowed and trickled down the hill, past our tent and stank horribly. We dreamt of what the cottage would look like. It would have four windows, one in each wall. In the southeast we made room for the great storms that rage in across the island, in the east the moon would be able to reflect itself in the lagoon, and in the west there would be a rocky wall with moss and polyps. To the north one had to be able to keep a lookout for anything that might come along, and have time to get used to it.

We thought that if we built a cottage it ought to be quite high up the hill, but not right at the top, as that was the place for the beacon – perhaps just below the brow of the hill, so that the chimney would be visible from the sea. Against the light, in other words, and to those boats that stray past for no reason.<sup>12</sup>

Tove Jansson

How does one make a place? The *act of placing* begins from experience, a personal relating to the world. The two women think about how they want to live with the elements of nature and other humans. The house has to be placed beyond the reach of the sea, quite high up the hill, but not in the place for the beacon and a bit hidden from people at sea. *Because of the house*, the Great Stone proves to be the only suitable place for the house.<sup>13</sup>

---

12 Anteckningar från en ö (Notes from an Island).

13 Heidegger says that a place – as a location, comes into existence only by virtue of a thing. The relation between place and space lies in the nature of things *qua* locations, but so does the relation of the place to the one who lives in that place.

A house, as a place for dwelling, comes into existence because of all the things that one gathers and makes for dwelling. Place happens in the interaction between things and people.

Space is the emptiness that surrounds us. There are different methods of trying to capture space. A rationalist approach like geometry, is an intellectual attempt of understanding space. By making formulas with dimensions of height, width and depth one can measure space indirectly. Making is a sensual relating to space. In making one can use geometry as a tool in order to capture space in the actual. By moving matter, for instance coiling a pot or vacuuming the staircase, one interacts with space physically. It is a direct measuring through experience. It is in dwelling, the human state of being with things, where we actually relate to space.

What the word for space, *Raum*, *Rum*, designates is said by its ancient meaning. *Raum* means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, namely within a boundary, Greek *peras*. A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.<sup>14</sup>  
Martin Heidegger

A space begins its presencing from a boundary. The walls of a house give presence to space, they transform abstract into sensual. But edges of space can also be less hard, like the fringe of a carpet. A house, as a built thing, is a place that makes room for space. Building as an act of placing and as a giving presence to space, gives form to dwelling.

---

Building Dwelling Thinking.

14 Building Dwelling Thinking.

The designer, who gives form to dwelling, plays with the boundaries of space. It is space on which use depends. My foot uses the hollowness of a sock. It is not the door through which I enter, but the opening in the wall. We recognize function in the empty space in and around things. Function takes place in-between matter. It co-exists with poetry, which, as I found out before, also happens in the in-between. In the habit of dwelling we can find poetry and assign function. It is up to the designer to shape matter in such a way that it creates an entrance for the user to make sense of the in-between.





## **SINK continued**

I am standing beside the turning stool. The clay is wrapped in a transparent blue plastic bag. Small drops of water are hanging on the surface of the inside.

I untie the knot of the string around the bottom and remove the plastic. A faint smell of mould.

With my fingertips I palpate the rim of the wall. Still supple.

I lay a flat hand on the outside. Cool, stiff and slightly humid.

The wall of clay has reached the height of my hip. The belly touches my upper leg.

I start turning. Slowly.

One hand on the inside guards the wall.

I slap the outside with a piece of wood.

Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum  
Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum

The wall curves to the inside.

Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum

From the inside I force the wall outwards with my knuckles.  
The shape bulges out.

Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum  
Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum Dumdumdum  
Dumdumdum Dumdumdum

Dumdum Dumdum Dumdum Dumdum

Dum  
Dum  
Dum



## DOOR

I am standing in front of the expansive flat surface of the door.  
I push it open. It turns toward the inside of the house.  
It hits something. The trash bin. I push harder.  
The bin slides over the floor. Pivoting.  
It turns around the edge of the door and stops.  
The door sweeps open freely.  
The flat surface makes room.

**What is the space of a door?**

*The Building Code 2012 says:*

*The first section demands measurements of the free width (at least 85 cm) and of the free height (230 cm or 210 cm, see table 4.21) of a number specifically mentioned passageways. Previously was stated an entrance of a space with a free passageway with a width and a height. From now on will be stated a passageway with a free width and a free height. The meaning however remains unchanged.*

**This is nonsense! What a difficult language.**

**How big does that feel? Too big for me.**



## EPILOGUE

In a house full of function, it is of great value to discover poetry in the things that are already there. My aim is to transform those moments into a work, to let things step out of their usual '-to' perspective and make them discrete. A door that has shaken off the walls. A plastic tub that has become a sink. Every work comes with its own intrinsic rules that determine its physical presence. The rigidity of wood gives the door its dooriness, the plasticity of clay gives the sink its sinkness. In the doing of making I get to know a thing from within. Each action contributes to the work up to the point where I recognize it as the thing I have been searching for. Through making I develop my own language that fuses form and content. When a work has reached its final presence, it can move back to the house. There it can function among other things and potentially heighten the user's sensibility to the poetic.



## DOOR continued

The board is made of two layers of horizontal wood strips glued on a core of vertical wood strips. It is too big and too heavy to lift by myself.

The workshop assistant and I place the board on the vertical board sawing machine.

She walks with the saw to starting position: Left-Up.  
She sets the machine at X 2300, Y 850.  
Check.

She pushes the button and the saw begins to run.  
A low ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ Slowly she pushes  
the saw to the right.  
Into the wood.

A high ZZZ  
ZZZZZZZ

I am walking behind her to keep the cut-off from falling.  
A sweet smell of dry sap. ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

**We carry the cut-off away.  
Back to start**



[illegible]



