

Diploma Autumn 2019

Brenden III

Abstract

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Dear reader, this book contains many of the things I made in the past year. I made the things primarily for myself, and none it is meant to impress anybody. The work is naïve and banal, but I mean that in a good sense. To me it is deeply meaningful, and therefore I trust that it has relevance to others, so here I share it with you.

At the outset of this project there was a very straightforward impulse. I wrote:

My family owns a place,
a small cluster of houses,
an old husmannsplass,
in a meadow
on the steep hillside of a mountain.

I want to go there,
approach it,
engage it,
get to know it,
learn from it,
care for it,
let it care for me,
take part in it,
be a part of it

And also:

I want to claim it as my own (at least in part),
and take a part of it with me back to Oslo.

Brenden is very small tun in Gudbrandsdalen that has been in my family since long before I was born as a family cabin. On a personal level I have a deep-rooted but somewhat distanced connection to the place. To me as an architect it offers a great affordance: It's a phenomenal place, it's surrounded by fantastically beautiful nature, it's an environment with rich cultural and architectural traditions. I have the keys and a

curiosity and a fascination and a longing, and that constitutes a beginning

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But a beginning is never really a beginning. Before Brenden occurred as an initiative, there was already a small body of work on my desk that grew out of a wish to rediscover joy and meaning in simple acts of making. This work is aimless, it has no program, no imposed idea, no specific purpose, other than it drives further making and makes new connections. Brenden ties into this work and weaves a whole web of connections.

One Brenden belonged to the struggling farmers that cleared the forest and built stone walls and fences and houses hundreds of years ago. That Brenden now belongs to the national cultural heritage. Another Brenden belongs to my family. I want to find my place for myself. So, in a sense, it's Brenden III I pursue.

I get closer to Brenden by spending time there, by myself and with others, many weeks in total over a year's time. Contrary to what some might expect, I don't go there looking for flaws to improve on. And it's not a scientific survey I do. I don't hope to fully understand the place. I go looking for something but nothing in particular. It is a meeting. I bring myself and all my things. Brenden waits for me there with all of its things. Between me and Brenden there opens a space of imagination and inspiration.

Back in Oslo I try to stay in this space. I didn't build or buy Brenden; so, to gain a sense of ownership I emulate the act of tun building. To build a tun involves clearing a space for yourself, your tools and your belongings and using the materials on and around your land to build what you need. (The name Brenden stems from the act of burning the forest to make a clearing. The people who settled there, used the trees they chopped and the rocks they dug out to build their houses and their stone walls.) In my work I pretend, I reenact, I

reiterate, I reverse engineer. What I do can be likened to experiential archaeology, except it's not interpretation I do. Things and episodes I find in Brenden reoccur in my drawings and models, and take on new forms. Drawings inspire new drawings. A friend suggests that what I'm doing is starting from the fundamentals and slowly working myself back to the current state of Brenden. That doesn't seem to be the case. The work branches out widely, and it seems to reveal as much about me as it does about Brenden.

I cultivate a type of calm controlled obsession. Things accumulate slowly on and around my desk. Accidentally, arbitrarily, surprisingly, intentionally. They are found, stolen, made, willed. And at this point work drives itself. My things and tools work for me. The work often moves sideways instead of forward, but the totality of the body of work weaves a web that gets more and more tight knit.

Imagine how it must feel to be Isak at Sellanrå, overlooking his own tun and thinking I built all of this with my own hands! The other Isak in literature is the biblical Isaac, who is dragged up a mountain against his will. I don't want to be that guy!

I don't think I can get to the core of Brenden's essence, instead I try to faithfully record the sparks that fly about as Brenden and I collide. As many as possible of my things are included in this book. Each item is depicted individually, in isolation. But it's not the intention to freeze them in their current state. They are still very much active, and it's an on-going work. The things are not ordered chronologically, by value, or size or any other attributes. Instead, I would say that they appear in the book in the order that they appear to me as I sit at my desk. Similarly, the book can be browsed back-to-back, middle-out, backwards or in other way it presents itself to the reader.

(Oslo, 191212)



115

House VIII (Butterfly House), October, pine wood, 41×33×35 cm