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AN INTERVIEW WITH ANE CHRISTENSEN

Ane Christensen is an artist and maker working in metal. Raised in Scandinavia, light has become a central theme in her work. Creating intricate sculptures with metal, Ane reflects a cultural anticipation of light through optical illusion and negative space.

CG: Could you walk us through your creative process? How does an initial idea begin to materialise into a physical form in your studio?

AC: It is rare for an idea to be entirely 'new' in my practice, no idea comes out of the blue. Ideas are the result of a continuously evolving practice where each piece is an iteration of previous work. Everything is connected and though the work might look very different, there is a thread running through all my work spanning the last 25 years.

My ideas often materialise during the making process. My processes are quite slow and repetitive and offers plenty of thinking time. I either work directly into my chosen metal, or I test and further develop the idea through paper and metal prototypes. Sometimes it doesn't quite work or I get stuck. Then I leave it and it might get resolved weeks or years later. My head and my studio are full of these half resolved ideas and pieces which I can tap into and continue to evolve when the time is right.

CG: What originally drew you to three-dimensional, structural forms and what do you feel your sculptures gain by existing multidimensionally in space rather than on a flat surface?

AC: It was never a conscious decision, it is just how my brain works. I prefer to work straight in 3D models and test pieces. What I specifically enjoy about working in 3D is how an object relates to the body or a space. You can walk around an object, light can travel through it, it casts shadows, it has a sense of weight and presence in a space.



CG: Having studied Jewellery Design and worked alongside silversmiths earlier in your career, how has that background in fine scale and precision metalwork influenced the larger sculptural works that you create today?

AC: Training first as a jeweller has definitely shaped how I think and work to this day. Even though the scale I work in is more akin to silversmithing and sculpture, I continue to use jewellery techniques. I am very interested in scale and how changing the scale of a piece (from a brooch to a wall sculpture for example) hugely alters the atmosphere in a piece though it is fundamentally the same idea.

CG: With over 25 years of experience, how have you developed and refined your technical methods over time to achieve the structural balance that is required of your free-standing forms?

AC: There has been a lot of trial and error over the span of my career so far. I think makers and artists are very good at learning from things going wrong. As a maker, certain techniques suit what I want to express best and are the most enjoyable, like hand piercing and soldering, so I keep using and refining those techniques. With regards to developing the fading series, they are not technically different from previous work, but the idea and process have been pushed in a new direction.

CG: Your new Fading Vessel series sees a



shift in your work to free-standing and base-less forms. How did you find the process of constructing these unsupported structures, and how might this influence your future works?

AC: My work is always exploring the theme of light and shadow. Having made pieces which includes both solid sheet metal and delicate wire, I wanted to push that idea further and see how much light a piece could hold and still work as a physical structure. I started looking at fire pits as a base for soldering the more delicate structures. Eventually, I found some German made ceramic fire bowls, which are extremely heat resistant. The base of each fading vessel is constructed inside such a bowl form, which gives a perfectly geometric starting point. The remaining is constructed free hand, guided by the shape given by the bowl. There is a lot of pausing and tweaking the outline throughout the making process. I feel I am only at the beginning of this new direction of work and now I have solved the initial form, I am looking forward to exploring more complex forms as well as colour and larger scale in this series.

CG: You often cite your Scandinavian heritage as a primary influence in your work. What specific qualities or aesthetic values do you find yourself continuously drawn back to?

AC: When you grow up in a country which is dark half the year you notice the light. There is a deep shared cultural experience of waiting and longing for the light and then, when it finally comes, enjoying every moment and trying to

absorb it to last through another winter.

It took me years to realise that despite working in a dense, solid material, every piece I make has an opening or an area which allows the light in. I did it subconsciously. I now know that certain light holds strong memories and sense of belonging to me. The older I get, the more significant this connection is becoming. I am now very consciously making work to capture and represent this light, which makes it a lot more personal and meaningful. Funny how long it can take to notice what's right in front of you.

CG: While series like the *Fading Vessel* and *Ghost* rely primarily on a monochrome palette and other works like the *Crumbling* series introduce a wider range of colours, what drives your decisions regarding colour and finish for each collection?

AC: It is only in the last couple of years that I have braved black and Verdigris patinas. Colour is partly a result of experiments and discoveries rather than a conscious choice to only work with the monochrome. I still tend to apply more colour for pieces which have larger areas of solid surface, as colour can get lost or look patchy on very open wire pieces. Those pieces generally work better in black, as the eye can read the form better. As a general rule, the simpler the piece, the more colour it can afford without distracting from the form.

CG: You work across a wide array of metals, such as copper, lead, steel, silver, and brass. Do you have a preferred material, or does each metal offer a distinct physical dialogue to each piece?

AC: I always gravitate towards base metals such as brass, copper, and steel. I love the option for colour through patination, oxidation, and weathering, but silver has an ability to reflect the light quite unlike any other metal, so it is close to my heart too. I choose the specific metal for each piece based on its qualities such as strength, weight, and resilience. I used to work almost entirely in sterling silver, but the cost

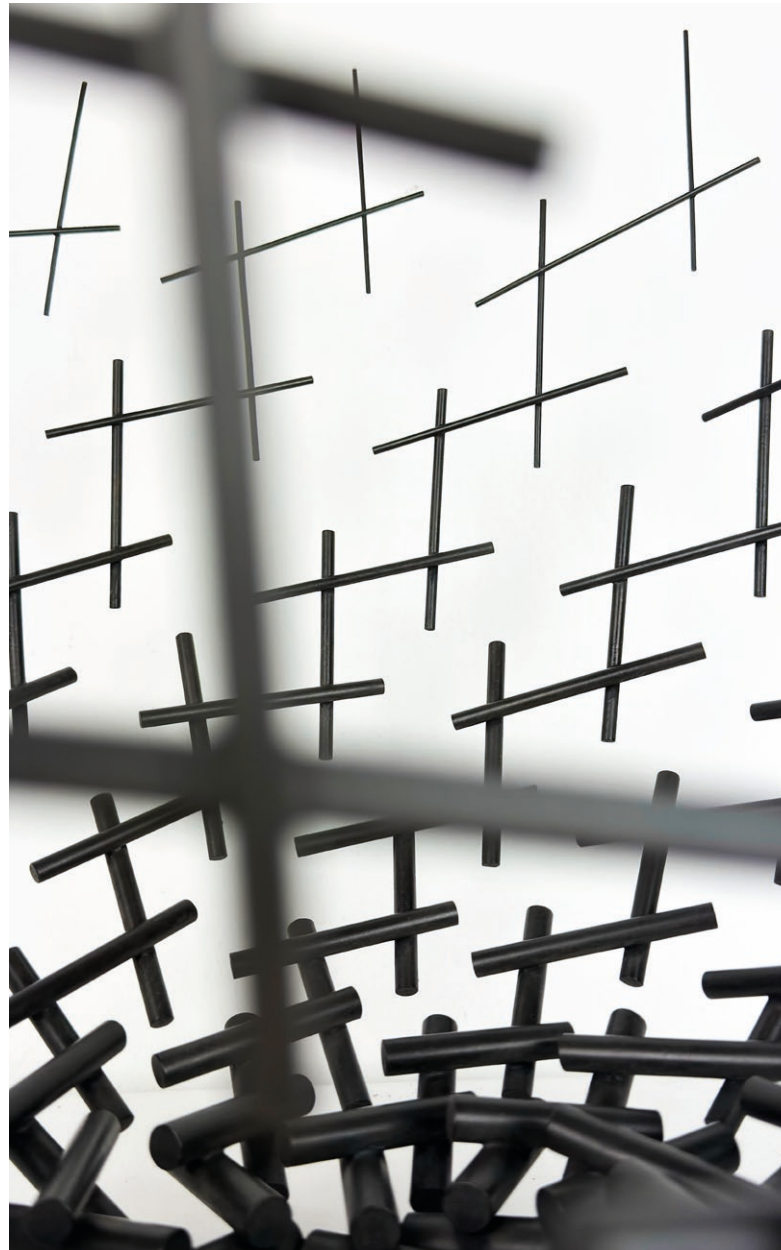


and traditionally perceived value of silver became quite limiting. Making the shift to base metals has felt hugely liberating in terms of the ability to experiment, take more risk, and work on a larger scale. Now I use silver mostly as an accent to catch the light or highlight a detail in a piece.

CG: A central theme in your practice is the relationship between light and dark. Could you expand on how your sculptures encapsulate both a longing for light and an embrace of winter's darkness?

AC: Scandinavians are experts at getting through the dark months. I think there is an unspoken cultural acceptance that you can only truly enjoy the light if you also experience the dark. To me, there is a lot of truth in that from a making perspective - an idea becomes stronger and more intentional if placed next to its opposite. I apply this theory throughout my practice as most of the pieces I make consist of contrasting elements meeting in a form. This could be delicate meeting heavy, dull meeting shiny or open meeting solid within a piece.

I can only try to show the light through a gradual absence of dark. The fading vessels start at the base with very chunky, dense rods, which when soldered together, almost become a solid mass, representing the winter. The difficult thing is to convincingly show the shift from dark to light through a very gradual decrease in material. Right at the top, where the material is so delicate and takes up so little space, the form becomes almost just light.



CG: What are you currently working on in the studio, and are there any projects that you are particularly excited about?

AC: My bench is currently full of boxes with brass rods of various lengths and thicknesses. All prepped for new fading vessels for autumn shows. I have just finished the first fading vessel with a Verdigris patina, which feels exciting, and I am encouraged to explore more colour for this series. I am also working on a wall-hung fading sculpture, which is the first of its kind made entirely from rods and wires with no solid element.

CG: As viewers experience the Fading Vessel series for themselves and witness the negative space and shadows cast from the free-standing structures, what do you hope they take away from this series?

AC: I hope viewers will enjoy the way these forms capture light and frame space. The pieces are rooted in a craft tradition and are relatively technically complex, but I don't want people to focus on how they are made. I would rather viewers are left with a sense of wonder and joy at the meeting of ancient process and contemporary idea.



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