Anna Lovisa Holmquist is a founder of the art and design studio Folkform, and a PhD candidate at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm and researcher at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and design. Her practice-based thesis project focuses both on design and on materials and the last Masonite factory in Sweden. Folkform first entered the public spotlight with their experimental work with Masonite boards. Flowers and plants were pressed into the material, providing it with a brand new expression. Folkform is now an international name and has received several prestigious design awards. Among other venues, their work can be found in the permanent design collection at the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and the National Museum in Oslo

KEYWORDS: Craft research, design, furniture, Masonite, memories, photographs, Production Novella.

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The Production Novella as a Textual and Visual Narrative Method in Craft-Based Design

By Anna Lovisa Holmquist

INTRODUCTION

For many years I have been working as a designer at Folkform, the design studio I co-founded with my design partner Chandra Ahlsell in 2005 after graduating from industrial design at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, in Stockholm. Folkform first entered the public spotlight with the experimental work with materials, especially Masonite boards into which flowers and plants have been pressed. Folkform have also been working with other small-scale local industries in Sweden and Europe. The design work at Folkform in connection to this research is focused on communicating our experiences working as designers collaborating with different manufacturers, meeting the skilled workers with knowledge of traditional methods of making both materials and objects, and manufacturing techniques that in some cases are threatening to disappear.

I have personally engaged in research as a doctoral candidate, and in this process I utilise my practice to inform my research. I see myself as a practitioner-researcher. Through my work as both designer and researcher I have developed a method for collecting, documenting, and representing my research data which I have entitled 'Production Novellas.' The novellas are written records of my memories during the design and manufacturing process which are supplemented with images taken at the sites where I worked. In writing these novellas in this context, my aim is to create an appropriate form to talk about and communicate local industrial production processes in the intersection between arts, crafts, and design. The Production Novella, in combination with an exhibition presenting the furniture or other objects, becomes a documentary research strategy through which writing and visualising of a design process which is close to

the manufacturing behind artefacts can introduce an alternative academic discourse through narrative investigation. It has been developed in the context of design research, but also has the potential to address the field of industrial heritage research and practice. Local manufacturing cultures and materials, such as the Masonite board and the furniture made from this kind of hardboard material, are disappearing in Sweden due to the globalisation of production following the so-called third industrial revolution. This transformation has resulted in an increasing number of industrial remains, also providing the expansion of industrial heritage as an academic field (Storm 2008; Avango and Houltz 2013; Douet 2016; Geijerstam 2013). However, according to Wedin (2013), the research field of heritage studies lacks methods capturing processes from manufacturing cultures, such as industrial processes and the use of technical tools and machines, since the holders of the traditional skills and knowledge are lost.

Through my design work at Folkform and practice-led research, I journey into Swedish industrial heritage and aim to uncover new possibilities and to highlight local manufacturing cultures, people, and industrial processes behind the manufacture of our objects and furniture. At Folkform we have focused on exploring traditional industrial manufacturing techniques not only by embracing the value of tradition itself, but also by creating new meaning of materials through unexpected combination with novel components (for further reading on this work and the concept of *Innovation Through Tradition*, see Holmquist, Magnusson and Livholts 2019). The main focus of my doctoral research was the wallboard wooden material Masonite and the last Masonite factory, which was built in 1929 and located in Rundvik in the north of Sweden. For seven years, Folkform made furniture, new material, and interiors from the original Masonite boards produced in the factory in Rundvik, but we could not "salvage" the material made at the factory before its closure in April 2011 and the old machinery was sold to Metroply, a fibreboard manufacturer in Thailand.

The Masonite wallboards have a long tradition in Sweden, but the manufacturing process originated from the United States, where it was invented by Henry Mason in the early twentieth century. Sawdust, which was considered worthless, was converted into a new wallboard material. The Masonite process was revolutionary because instead of reducing the wood structure by chemical means, the chips were exploded under a seam press (Boehm 1930). The boards manufactured in Rundvik originated from the American patent by Henry Mason and therefore the term is spelt with an "e" at the end. In Sweden, Masonite wallboards became a popular building material during the 1930s. It was used, for example, as insulation panels during the winter and to build small cabins where families could spend their holidays during the summer (Fröberg 2004).

Since the closure of the factory, Folkform has been tracing the material and the reconstruction of the new fibreboard factory in Asia that is now being built utilising the previous Swedish machinery in Branchinburi, outside of Bangkok. While the new fibreboard material manufactured in Thailand will be using the machinery from the Swedish factory, it will not be branded "Masonite"; the new hardboard material will be called Metroply Fibreboards.

In many ways, the Masonite material symbolises a change in the Swedish manufacturing industry on a larger scale. This is something I have been exploring as a designer at Folkform and something

I'm trying to capture in my research by writing down my memories from different sites of production. For more than ten years, I have brought a documentary photographer to almost every factory Folkform has been working with and in this chapter I present an example of this documentation from a Masonite factory through the form of a Production Novella.

The Production Novella is an auto-ethnographic research approach based on the researcher's own experiences. Through writing and visualising the practice, the researcher seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2011). The field of visual anthropology has also developed approaches to visual representation to communicate research (Pink 2013).

The research strategy of writing Production Novellas is developed through the design practice at Folkform by Holmquist (Holmquist 2017). In the field of design research, Kristina Niedderer has pointed out the importance of individual methods. In her research, Niedderer has been exploring how different types of methods can be used within the flow of research (Niedderer 2009). The memory writing of Mona Livholts (2015a; 2015b) and her "untimely" academic novellas have also influenced my research approach. Livholts's interest is within narrative methods and reflective writing. Photographs are also used to capture the manufacturing process. This research approach is related to the field of visual ethnography developed by Sarah Pink (2013). The concept of a research diary has also been presented by professor of Industrial Design Owain Pedgley, co-editor of the Elsevier book series *Materials Experience*. In his research he suggests that the diary is effective in capturing design activity, is amenable to the verbal articulation of materials and manufacturing, and is suitable for practice-led research (Pedgley 2007). He further argues that practice-led research has significance because it empowers designers to utilise their design expertise and assert ownership of design research.

In my research, I too suggest the use of a form of diary. I use narrative methodologies, memory writing, and photography to enter and communicate the process of the production of artefacts, and to document and reflect on the complexity of materialities, artefacts, people, local environments, specific events, and interactions. *Folkform Production Novellas* is also the title of an exhibition at Vandalorum art gallery in Värnamo in Sweden. In the context of my PhD, the dissertation constitutes both a text-based part and the exhibition at Vandalorum, which was examined as part of the dissertation by the opponent professor Andreas Nobel.

Through the texts and images in the Production Novellas I invite the readers of my research—and also sometimes exhibition audiences—into the manufacturing process behind the objects and furniture we design at Folkform, and its industrial heritage and cultural context.

Later, the Production Novellas have also been used as a textual and visual narrative research method for collecting, documenting, and representing my research data through a combination of multifaceted genres, such as memories, notes, and photographs. Through these I explore how processes of change and globalisation have transformed cultural heritage. Through the Production Novellas and related ethnographic research such as visual ethnography, I aim to communicate our design process and the manufacturing behind objects.

Combined with an auto-ethnographic approach I am also able to visualise the collaborative process between the craftspeople and me, the desig-

ner, from an insider's perspective. Simultaneously, I also share knowledge and attitudes from the practice field while collaborating with the local manufacturers and their personnel, who are not pursuing research and thus do not document their everyday working environment. I thus wish to communicate the spirit and history of the places where the objects are produced, how the products were made, and by whom. In this way, this particular industrial cultural heritage—which is on its way to becoming extinct—is documented in a multimodal way that can be reflected upon and which shows more than words alone can. The text also makes clear how an exploration of the unexpected events and turning points that appear during the design and form-giving process through communication, correspondences, and photographs are key to the interpretation of the narrative and the told story.

This chapter will present one Production Novella from the process of producing Masonite hardboards. I will be explaining how the industrial heritage behind the furniture made at a particular site was visible. The materials were also tangible through the design of new objects and by highlighting the sites of production and the collaborative process between the craftspeople involved in the making. I have narrated the manufacturing processes and the context using photography as a documentary process to show the environment of the sites, the people, the machines, and the inventive co-creation processes behind the making of almost every object we designed. The diverse forms of written narratives and photographic images invite the readers into the manufacturing processes of different artefacts such as, in this case, a series of Masonite cabinets and the making of a new "Flowermasonite" material.

As a designer, I have personally experienced a time when design is becoming increasingly globalised, with local products being imported from countries where labour is cheap, the production process is anonymised, and it is often difficult for the consumer to trace the manufacturing process of a product. The distance between the designer and the location of production also increasingly distances the designers from gaining an embodied understanding of the production processes, the materials, and their properties as well as the manufacturer's intrinsic motivations or unwillingness to make unexpected changes to the normal manufacturing. When the designer is not familiar with the material or the procedures used in manufacture, the value carried through the special materials or contexts of the product is not visible in the outcome and is thus lost for the consumer too.

In contrast, when sensitive cultural heritage is carried along into the outcome of the product, it also carries additional potential for monetary value that could feed back into the preservation of the cultural heritage context. A transparent history of product origins and cultural heritage becomes especially important from an ethical perspective. How do we, as researchers, find a new language for practice without getting lost in translations between experiences, (material) knowledge, and theory, in a context of academic research?

The Production Novellas highlight a different perspective of the collaborative process between the craftspeople in the industry and the designer, who is also a maker and a craftsperson of sorts. The Production Novellas expand the sketch or drawing as they address the importance of other forms of language, such as images, but also the presence of frequent phone calls, working nightshifts, collaborative mistakes, etc. I suggest that this way of creating research data contributes to methodological development in the field of craft research as it offers a multimodal view of the

contexts and the experiences of dealing with making and co-creation, and shows how and why the Production Novella can be a tool for creative and reflexive writing and visual narrative. Short stories based on written memories and photographs have an ability to capture fragments from the collaborative design process behind manufacturing and invite the academic researcher into this process. Through the Production Novella, I explore new ways of writing that may challenge the more traditional ways of writing academic texts.

CRAFT-BASED DESIGN AND VISUAL/ TEXTUAL RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, I will make use of my own experiences working as a practitioner-researcher to discuss methodological challenges in the academic field of craft and design. My experience is that it is a challenge for many designers to write about practice. In this anthology, Gunnar Almevik and Jonathan Westin discuss the "academic artefact" and suggest that technologies such as photography and video could be used for methodological purposes. They question the fact that despite the presence of new forms of media, the research that is successful in reaching formal examination or scholarly peer review is still that which is embedded in the authoritative frameworks expected of academic texts (Almevik and Westin, in this anthology).

As the American sociologist Laurel Richardson writes, how we are expected to write affects what we can write about (Richardson 1994, 927), which indicates that there is a risk that if we do not invent and shape writing that can communicate our work in a meaningful way, then the specific practice-based knowledge is silenced.

In the literature on design research, we see the distinction between research *into* design, research *for* design, and research *through* design (Frayling 1993). The foundation for the Production Novella is an approach grounded in the concept of research *through* design, where the artefact itself is viewed as a way to communicate knowledge. Design and craft have both evolved considerably since their nineteenth-century definitions (Cardoso 2010). In recent years, contemporary designers have become more aware of the presence of craft in factories and large-scale production settings and have used this as a source of inspiration (Holmquist, Magnusson and Livholts 2019). This craft-based design approach is relevant in the field of heritage studies and craft research since designers working in the fields are looking back through history to discover old traditions and manufacturing as an important investigative tool in the design process.

Social anthropologist Trevor Marchand is interested in the actual making of artefacts in his research. Marchand says in an interview that

> Craft as an idea, or a concept, could not exist without mass production and industrialisation. Its identity comes in the distinction it makes for itself as against industrialisation and mass production. In fact, I would say that there has been a really strong and steady interest in handicraft, and it's not just for handmade things but it's the politics that go along with it, and, increasingly so in the last few decades, there has also been the question of environment and sustainability. (Social Science Bites 2015, interview with Trevor Marchand)

In the craft-based design process, the practitioner is inspired by craft as a concept or idea and works with materials in the design process that possess rich histories, as well as small-scale local industries boasting long traditions. Craft-based design explores the combination of craft and mass production, and aims to move beyond the old dichotomy of craft versus design.

THE PRODUCTION NOVELLA AS TEXTUAL AND VISUAL METHOD IN PRACTITIONER-RESEARCH

Through a practice-led methodology I combine both auto-ethnographic and visual- ethnographic methods via the Production Novellas. By using this combination, I aim to communicate craft-design practices from a particular standpoint, attending to the voices from inside the practice of manufacturing. Through participating in the co-creation process of the furniture and objects with the practitioners I meet in the research context, our creative practice also accumulates research data for the study. The memory fragments from my Production Novellas were created during my PhD project and were written by me between 2011 and 2021 (only one of the texts on the design work at a Masonite factory is published in this anthology). They describe design work and the collaboration between me and my design partner and skilled craftspeople from inside different manufacturing facilities in Sweden.

Working with visual material like photography is an important part in my process of remembering and communicating my research from different sites of production. In "Working with Memories and Images" (2015b), Mona Livholts argues that photographic images extend the analytical creativity and reflexivity and open up spaces for dialogue. Photographs act as triggers for my memories and become a way to tell a broader audience about the people and techniques involved in manufacture. I am also inspired by the writer John Berger and the photographer Jean Mohr and their book *Another Way of Telling: A Possible Theory of Photography* (1982) and the writings by Berger on the relationship between image and text. Berger (1972, 15) argues that seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world. In my Production Novellas I use images to remember, to notice the details, and to communicate with other readers and practitioners. A long-standing phenomenon, according to craft researcher Gunnar Almevik and his co-author and research partner Jonathan Westin based at the Craft Laboratory at the University of Gothenburg, is that the academic system is very much reliant on textual output, while craft research has a particular need to substantiate the process of making - its motion, sensation, vision, and haptic experience – through multimodal means of communication (see Almevik and Westin in this anthology). The more practically oriented disciplines, however, rely on images to illustrate and evidence the arguments made in the text. This could be contrasted with visual methodologies such as visual ethnography, time-geography, and the photographic essay, where the production of the image is central to the thought-process and the argumentation. In this anthology, Almevik and Westin question the "academic artefact" and suggest new research possibilities which are less focused on written research descriptions. They argue that craft research needs to substantiate the process of making, and mention as an example the first doctoral candidate of craft in Sweden: Mårten Medbo. Medbo's PhD dissertation (2016) is a hybrid, with a clay-based part and a text-based part. Almevik and Westin discuss the tradition of scientific visualisation (see this anthology) and mention that many research fields translate different aspects of the physical reality into visual media, such as in the field of archaeology where the use of visual material, such as section drawings and vase profiles, has a long tradition. For example, in craft research, Patrik Jarefjäll has used video and time-geography as a visual method (Jarefjäll 2016). The creating of visual material in the Production Novellas has been

conducted in collaboration with a professional documentary photographer, Magnus Laupa. He was chosen to join Folkform on the journeys to different factories because of his previous experience of documentary work capturing the life of people, but also because of his artistic expression and method of using an analogue camera, which is a craft skill too

The different local sites of manufacturing constituted the setting for each series of photographs included in each Production Novella. The photographs were created in a collaborative process between me and the photographer. I was directing the viewpoints documenting the manufacturing, since the emotional and aesthetic qualities of the photographs are an important part in the Novellas. When arriving at the site of manufacturing, I was in constant dialogue with the photographer. It was important to get the overall visual appearance of the images, creating the production narratives, to communicate the knowledge of the techniques and tools of manufacturing visually in the way I was aiming for. In parallel with directing the visual work, I was involved in the manufacturing of the product.

Photographing is not a neutral activity, but always an active production of images through selected viewpoints of buildings, environments, and people. A photograph preserves a moment of time (Berger and Mohr 1982, 91). For me it was important to focus on the key events of industrial manufacturing and the craft of the people involved in the production of our furniture and objects, but also on the appearance of the sites of manufacturing and to capture the part of the design process that is happening inside the factory that is often lost or forgotten.

FOLKFORM PRODUCTION NOVELLAS

In what follows, I present furniture made from Masonite fibreboard designed by Folkform, and my written and visual work from experiences of manufacturing, suggesting memory work and the Production Novella as a narrative methodology. This part of my chapter consists of a selection of photographs and writings from working with the Masonite material. The photographs were created between 2005–2020 in collaboration with photographer Magnus Laupa who captured the processes involved in the manufacturing. Most of the documentation was created with a Pentax using analogue film. The photographs were first published in the self-produced exhibition catalogues "Folkform Production Novellas" (2016; 2019).

Production Novellas Part I: Memory Writing

The Hardboard Industry (Rundvik, Sweden)

The Production Novella is based on my memories of experiences from Folkform's design work inside the last Swedish Masonite factory in Rundvik in 2005 and the collaboration with the head of the laboratory, Jan Persson, when we were carrying out the first experiments for a new material. Flowers were pressed into the hardboard, creating a completely new material. The text was first published in the Masonite Memoriam exhibition at Svenskt Tenn in the spring of 2012.

April 2012

It has now been seven years since we laid down the first flowers at the Masonite hardboard factory. In May, the whole factory will be transported to Thailand. The Norwegian group has sold the wood processing to Metroply in Thailand and the old machines from Rundvik are to be reassembled at a new facility near the Cambodian border. Nordic pine will be replaced with Eucalyptus as the chosen raw material. For us, the collaboration with the Masonite hardboard factory was important since it marked the beginning of a series of design projects in which the vicinity to the production was a fundamental and essential part in the story of the

final product. The visits to the hardboard factory and, later on, to the metal foundry and the glass grinders also became stops on a voyage into the history of a dying Swedish industry. By focusing on the places, the craftsmanship, and the industrial manufacturing processes behind the products, we wanted to shed light on new opportunities but also to have an impact on this manufacturing industry on the brink of extinction before it was too late. In a time where many of the products we consume are imported from countries where labour is cheap and the production is anonymous and impossible for the consumer to trace, the sincere and transparent story of a product's origins is more important than ever. Our project also reflects the current social debate regarding the role of globalisation in terms of the manufacturing industry and constitutes an attempt to initiate a discussion of the rate at which local craftsmanship and production techniques are disappearing. In the expanding global market it is near impossible for a designer to work with production still based in Sweden.

About the Location

The first time we visited the factory in Rundvik was an early winter morning in 2005. The Head of Laboratory, Jan Persson, collected us from the airport. After what seemed an eternity in his blue Volvo on a country road lined with dark forest on each side, we drew closer to the factory. We were completely taken aback—it felt as if time had stood still since it was built in 1929. The beautiful brick building with its majestic chimneys was still being used and we were given a tour of the factory. Steaming wood pulp filled the space with its particular odour and the loud noise of the machines was persistent—almost frightening. The heat was overwhelming. Jan Persson showed us the large steaming press that would compress the Masonite material. He showed us the machine hall, where hundreds of gears and engine parts lay spread across the floor. We said a quick hello to the factory employees, who were sat in a circle having their coffee break. What does the Masonite hardboard factory tell us about the time we are living in? Quite a bit, we would say. It tells a story of a globalised world in which the domestic manufacturing industry of Sweden has a hard time competing with cheap products from low-waged countries. The factory also symbolises a different story, namely the one about how energy-consuming manufacturing processes and crafts are disappearing in Sweden. They will never make a profit as the energy costs are too high. In their wake, a complex environmental debate follows. We live in a society of mass-consumption that breeds a system built on long-distance transport and production in low-waged countries.

The Woodchip Pulp

When the factory was still operational, it was surrounded by ten-metre-high mountains of woodchips from the surrounding sawmills. This waste constituted the material that the boards were made of. The woodchips were mixed with water and compressed under enormous pressure. This cheap, local, raw material from the great forests of Norrland was the fundamental element in the manufacturing of Masonite hardboard. Items made from wood have long been one of Sweden's most important products. In Rundvik, Västerbotten, the first Masonite factory was built in 1929. Masonite was a cheap surface material designed to utilise the woodchips produced by the sawmills. The woodchips are mixed with water and then compressed. Thus the resulting board material is both environmentally friendly and renewable. During the 1930 Stockholm Exposition, Masonite was one of the foremost construction materials used. There are few materials with as much inherent theory of knowledge as this hardboard. Underneath its surface lies many layers of history. Masonite is closely linked to functionalism and during the Stockholm Exposition in 1930 it was used as a construction material in several of the model houses that were built for the exposition. The areas of use for the material seemed limitless during this period. The Masonite hardboard was part of the construction of the Swedish Welfare State and became a symbol of the period's belief in the future.

Since the hardboards were used all over Sweden at this time, and by a large part of the population, you can still find traces of them today. Many people have a well-established personal relationship to this material and would recognise the surface anywhere. Despite the fact that in later years the material has unfortunately mainly been hidden inside ceilings and behind veneer, it was definitely a challenge to breathe new life into a material with such an extensive history.

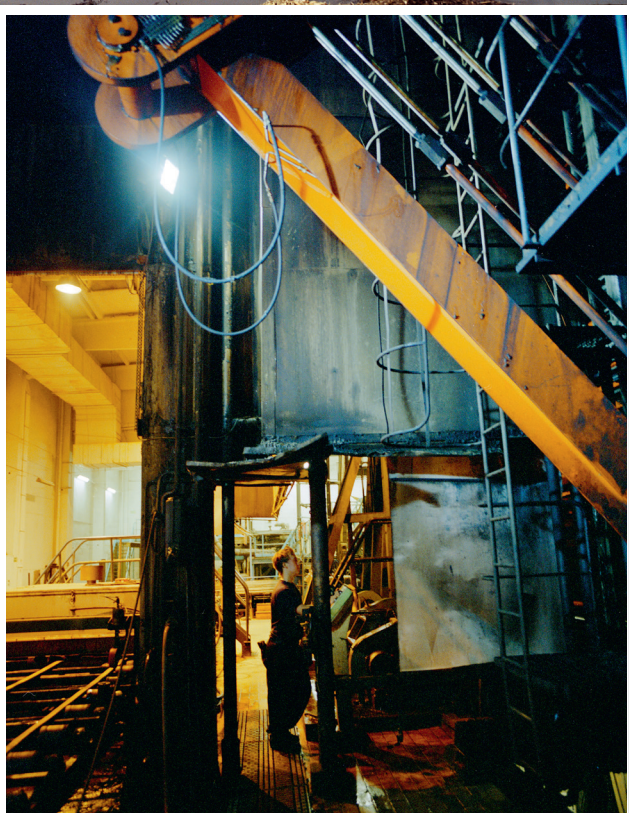
Mass Production and Craftsmanship on the Production Line

How did we come up with the idea of pressing plants into the boards? This is a question we have attempted to answer many times. To us, it seemed too obvious to just create yet another "product," which was the aim of the particular design competition advertised in 2004 in connection with the 75th anniversary of the factory. Instead, we wanted to alter the composition and expression of the material by blending a new material into the wood pulp. We came to the conclusion that organic materials, such as thin plants, would be best suited to this purpose since they would combine with the wood pulp to create patterns on the surface. We drew up a sketch of a Masonite hardboard with plants pressed into the surface, and submitted it to the competition. The material did not yet exist, other than as an idea. After a few weeks, we heard from the competition jury, who announced that we had been given an honourable mention and that the material would be exhibited at the architectural museum in only a few short weeks. However, the flower Masonite was still just a sketch. We now had to quickly get to the factory and initiate the practical implementation. We received an invitation from the Head of Laboratory, Jan Persson, who was an incredibly important person in this process because it was he who believed in our ideas. We booked our flight and bought as many flowers and herbs as we could carry from Hötorget in Stockholm. With a carrier bag full of flowers each, we arrived at the Rundvik factory. Our initial experiments were conducted at night, whilst the product line was not running. Jan Persson conducted all of the first tests with rose petals in secret and it turned out that our idea worked. However, the colour of the rose disappeared and we ended up with something that looked like wilted leaves. We climbed up the side of the production line where the Masonite hardboards were manufactured and began to scatter flowers, in order to form the patterns we wanted in the three minutes we had at our disposal as the regular production came to a halt on behalf of our flower experiments. With fear-tinged delight, we found ourselves literally in the middle of a mass production—in the heat, the loud rumbling noise, and the humidity from the press. Once the boards had been displayed at the architectural museum and published, we were commissioned by a number of architectural firms to create interior designs using the Masonite, for example, for the Fjällnäs Chapel and the head office of Diligentia in Stockholm. We received so many requests that we had to stop buying flowers at Hötorget and instead initiated collaborations with various herb gardens in Västerbotten, who would deliver sacks full of herbs directly to the factory so that we could make our hardboards on a larger scale. When the first sack of thyme arrived early one spring morning, the staff at the factory entrance thought that the delivery had ended up in the wrong place and ardently argued, "This is a Masonite factory, not a restaurant." We began designing our own furniture using the floral hardboards and once we had exhibited them at the Milan Furniture Fair, we started getting orders from all over the world. It is absurd to think that the last order of flower Masonite we received prior to the closing of the factory was from the Queen of Jordan, who ordered boards with pressed-in olive leaves. These boards turned out to be the last we ever made.

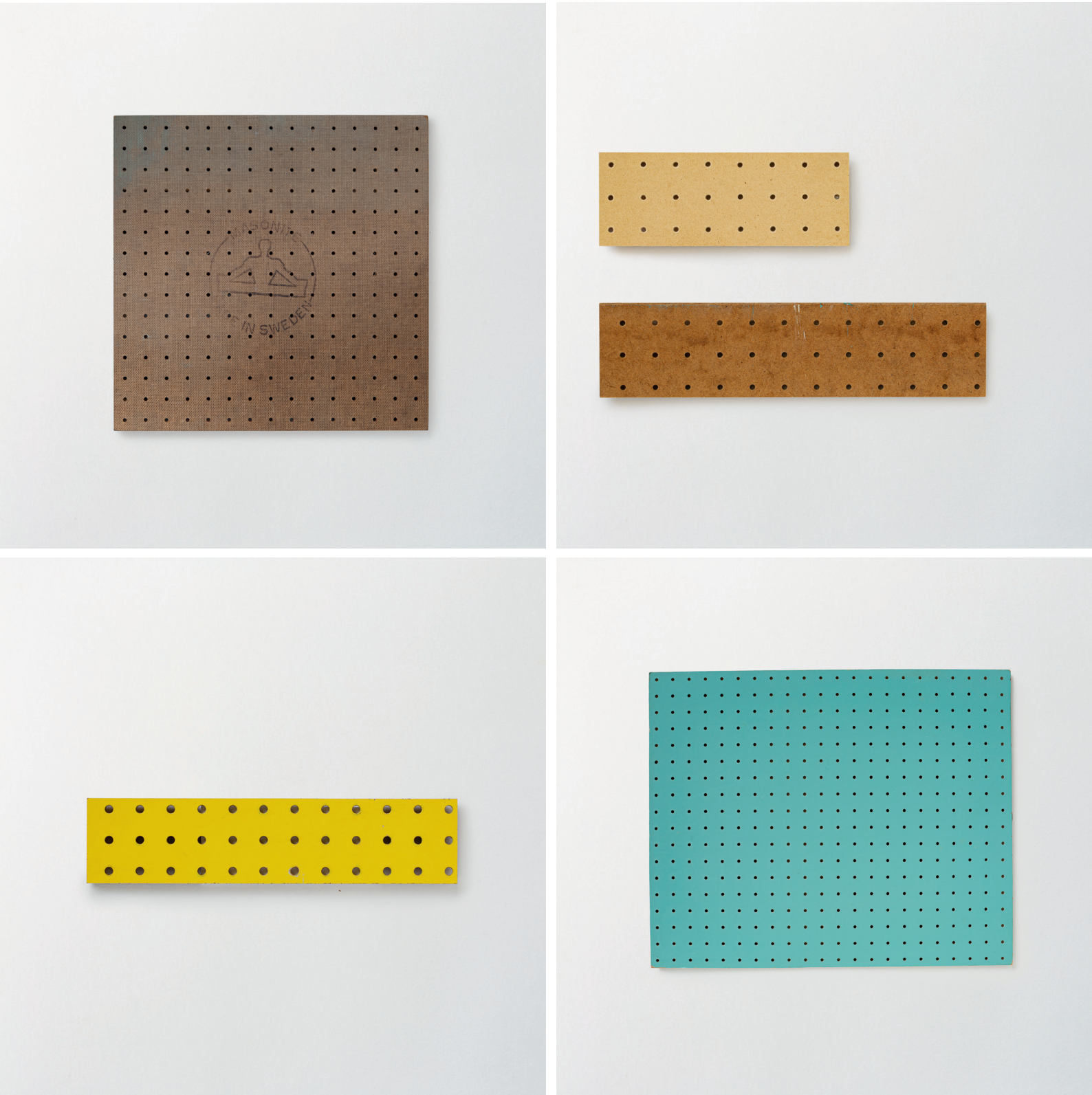
The Masonite Cabinets for Svenskt Tenn

On 4 April 2011, the last Masonite hardboards were manufactured in Rundvik. The steam press is now silent. At about the same time as the fac-

tory closed, we received a call from a man called Per Wikström. He is the grandson of Carl Wikström, the man who founded the Masonite factory in Rundvik in 1929. Merchant Carl Wikström's son, the engineer of the same name, followed in his father's footsteps and was fascinated with the properties of Masonite. In the 1950s, he started his own board-processing factory in Eklången, just outside of Eskilstuna. The old warehouse of this old Eklången factory held a few well-preserved, original hardboards from the mid-1950s of varying colour, surface structure, thickness, and perforation. Per Wikström wanted to know if we would be interested in using these boards. We arranged to meet him and, excited, we went to the warehouse to take a look. Among the boards, we found Masonite leatherboards that were manufactured in Rundvik during the mid-1950s upon the initiative of Carl Wikström. Special cylinders with leather patterns had been designed for the steam press in the Rundvik factory. The board were used for items such as dados, bevelled, and coloured mouldings to disguise joints. The Masonite was spray-painted at first and would later be curtain coated whereas the leatherboards would be roller coated in a second shade to create depth. Manufacture of the classic, perforated boards also started in the 1950s. When metal hooks were attached in the holes, shelves as well as tools could be mounted upon them. The perforated Masonite hardboards that were mainly delivered by Carl Wikström to hardware stores were a product that stuck around for a long time and which was challenged by similar makes. Based on these original boards from the 1930s and 1950s and those very last boards produced at the factory in April of 2011, we now design the unique cabinets. Each cabinet is a collage of Masonite from different time periods and a memorial monument to the last of the Masonite factories that are now sadly being closed down. How come we chose to collaborate with Svenskt Tenn and work with material that is more than 80 years old? Perhaps we were looking for something timeless, something original and durable—a subtle criticism of the constant quest for the next new thing. Above all, the cabinets constitute an attempt to make people see that production and craftsmanship is rapidly disappearing from Sweden. Svenskt Tenn is one of the few furniture and design companies in Sweden that was around at the time when the Masonite factory was started and that is still here. Estrid Ericson founded Svenskt Tenn back in 1924. The furniture of Josef Frank does not fit the clean, strict, and functional design in which Masonite is a common feature. Perhaps the real challenge lies in using the last Masonite boards—the material of modernism—for Svenskt Tenn in order to challenge, in terms of material choice, the precious woods preferred by Josef Frank. In his opinion, the long legs of his furniture were important for allowing the eye to see both the floor and the wall behind the piece. This idea has been our inspiration when creating the new cabinets. There is also something alluring in investigating the way Josef Frank questioned the uniformity of modernism and was not afraid to utilise décor and patterns. He was a defender of pluralism and of embracing individual expression. In his opinion, the best thing about the age of machines was the possible freedom it entailed. He would also emphasise the importance of craftsmanship—a subject that seems as relevant today as it was then. All the human encounters we had at the Masonite factory were amazingly inspirational. Ever since we scattered those first flowers, we have kept returning to Rundvik. We wanted to showcase the people behind the production of the boards and put the place, the craftsmanship, and the industrial manufacturing processes in the spotlight. For the same reasons, it is also interesting in this context to mention another important collaboration, notably that of Estrid Ericson and Josef Frank, and how together they managed to create a functioning form of artistic expression. It is interesting that two people in collaboration can draw out aspects of one another that each, on their own, would not dare exhibit.



Figures 1–4: The Masonite factory was located in Rundvik, outside of Umeå. Photographs by Magnus Laupa.



Figures 5–8: Samples of perforated Masonite. Above, with the Masonite logotype. Photographs by Kjell B. Persson.

Figures 9–11: Masonite Cabinets with butterflies and flowers pressed into the Material. Folkform 2010. Photpgraphy by Emma Blonski.

Figure 12: The huge Masonite press. Photography by Magnus Laupa.

Figures 13: Bedside, Folkform 2022.
Photograph by Kjell B. Persson.

Figures 14–16: To the left, Masonite Cabinet With Stripes. Middle, Masonite Cabinet with Red Doors, Masonite from 1929 and 1950. Right, Masonite cabinet with 18 drawers, Folkform 2010-12. Photographs by Kjell B. Persson.

DISCUSSION

Forms of Re-presenting Craft Research

In this section, I discuss challenges in representing and communicating practice-led research in an academic context. How can we communicate knowledge and experience of form-giving, materials, and manufacturing?

From Renaissance to Bauhaus, there has always been design research (Borgdorff 2010), but knowledge production through design practice has not qualified as academic research in Sweden until recently. I believe that through practitioner-research within the academic context we can contribute to the creation of a multimodal language to communicate practice through developing dissemination methods.

Like London-based researcher and furniture designer David Gates (2013), I suggest that we should bring light to the everyday concerns of craftspeople of the field from the inside. Gates's research is drawing upon "small-story" research (Georgakopoulou 2007), which is an alternative approach to the grand canonical narratives. Swedish craft researcher and interior architect Andreas Nobel is one of the founders of the Swedish design group Uglycute. He is perhaps one of the most vocal critics of textualisation of design in the Swedish context. In his doctoral dissertation "A Dimmer Switch on the Enlightenment: Text, Form and Formgiving" (2014), Nobel argues that interdisciplinary attempts to integrate theory into practice often result in an increasingly strengthened position for traditional academic and text-based approaches at the expense of form and practical knowledge. Nobel explains that he is critical of the extent to which text-based knowledge production directs research within design professions (2014, 32). He argues that within these schools the educators have, before this new tendency of focusing on text-based work, developed important, efficient, and alternative languages and methods for knowledge that does not—and cannot—come in text form. Swedish ceramist Mårten Medbo, on the other hand, considers the idea that material constitutes its own language, with a unique set of communicative qualities distinct from those employed by text (see this anthology). In his published PhD thesis, "Clay-based Experience and Language-ness" (2016), Medbo considers the ways in which clay-based language can be understood, suggesting that materials such as clay, wood, and metal are both languages and examples of artistic materials (2016, 110). Through his own creative practice, Medbo seeks to communicate with the observer via clay, and to demonstrate that craft can function as a language practice.

In the case of my practice-led research conducted at Folkform, the theoretical positioning of the research work was formulated in retrospect. Responding to the requirement to position my research within the academic theoretical tradition, I found methods used in the social sciences and narrative research, such as ethnography and autobiographic narrative, and field studies that corresponded to my own process. My research also has some similarities to action research in the sense that it aims to transform and enhance practice. The theoretical point of departure is inspired by narrative research (Bruner 1991), where the small story becomes a way to capture knowledge. Within the academic field of practical knowledge, the experience is at the centre of attention. The methodological tradition of writing down events, such as memories, from one's professional life is also an established methodological approach (Ljungberg 2008).

The knowledge base that constitutes the actual making is often poorly communicated and overlooked in research when compared with the attention given to the artefact (Rosenqvist 2016). To bridge this gap, the first versions of my memory writing have often been formulated and published in exhibition catalogues (Holmquist 2017; 2019). This approach to novella writing was similar to the early writings by furniture artist Thomas Tempte in his book *Lilla Arbetets Ära* [*In Honour of Minor Work*] (1997), which was also a self-publication in connection with an exhibition in 1982. Through his short-story writing he reflects and communicates the experiences of furniture making, but he also interviews other practitioners, such as a boat builder. Like that of Tempte's, my own research explores practical collaborations with local workshops and factories and suggests that the designer should have a close relationship with production.

Part of this reflexive approach involves the researcher revisiting the design projects. In this case, within the field of material and furniture design, there is also use of narrative design and visual images of the production processes and the design of artefacts. Through the narrative method of writing and manufacturing Production Novellas, the project attempts to communicate knowledge of the design production process behind the objects, focusing on past industrial processes and craft techniques.

Reflections on the Production Novella

Through the Production Novellas it was possible to highlight some of the manufacturing traditions and old industrial processes in local contexts and craft techniques that were, in some cases, threatened with extinction. It was possible to communicate the spirit and history of the places where the artefacts were produced, how the products were made, and by whom. These elements are also key to the narrative of the furniture and objects that we designed and that are included in this research. A challenge with the format of the Production Novella is to integrate formats other than text-based communication, such as the haptic expression of the furniture, to share it with the research community. In a future scenario I would also like to include the physical materials of the furniture as part of the compositions creating the Production Novellas. However, because of the form for disseminating this anthology, no physical materials or furniture could be included in its material form. Some other limitations of this approach that I have experienced during my research is that the writing and visual material only represent fragments of memories from the design and manufacturing process. Since I have chosen to leave out parts of the process, there might be a risk of simplification or forgotten moments. Finally, the method is very time consuming and expensive since I bring a professional photographer on my journeys and because I aim for the images and texts included in the Novellas to have an "artistic expression" within themselves. The advantage of the approach is that I am sharing a unique insider's perspective on the design and manufacturing process that manufacturers and designers do not usually visualise. The Production Novellas are more than ethnographic notes since I am offering a creative visualisation and documentation tool for practice-led research which integrates textual and visual artistic narratives into craft and design research.

The texts are written from my situated position and knowledge based on experiences from manufacturing processes as a researcher-practitioner in

a creative practice. The recollections are based on my own memories and include a selection of short episodes from the manufacturing process.

The Production Novellas in combination with the exhibition format become a way to share experiences from the processes behind the manufacturing of each piece. Through the Production Novellas, the intersections between craft and design and the presence of craft even in factories and large-scale production settings become visible.

While reading the Production Novellas, I also notice the importance of the designer being present at the site of manufacture, both as a source for inspiration in the form-giving process but also as a key to innovation, such as in the case with the Masonite board. Furthermore, the engagement builds trust and shares knowledge between the designer and the craftspeople. This might be a crucial factor in advancing the collaboration between the craftspeople and the designer and, in the best cases, creates stronger relationships with the manufacturer.

The approach of the craft-based design method of looking back in history and discovering old traditions of manufacture as an important tool in the design process (see Holmquist, Magnusson and Livholts 2019) is interesting to explore further, especially how the combinations of novel and traditional ways of manufacture in new exhibition contexts lead to new meaning for the audience.

From an insider's perspective of design, I notice that there are unexpected combinations of materials—a collage approach—guiding the design process. In the case of the industrial Masonite material, different types of Masonite fibreboards were combined in the same Masonite cabinet. In other furniture, thin flowers were pressed into the fibreboard to create a new expression.

In the case of the Masonite fibreboard, the initial experiments were carried out during the night, showing the critical element of time in relation to experimentation in manufacture. To innovate and develop traditional techniques of manufacture and old craft techniques, the designer and craftsperson need time to experiment in close collaboration with experts in the old craft or industrial processes.

The manufacturing narratives that I refer to as Production Novellas are a narrative process documentation method to communicate industrial heritage and collaborations with different craftspeople through my design work. While working as a designer at different locations producing furniture and other objects and reinventing old traditions of manufacture, I have captured some elements of the industrial processes and the use of technical tools and machines before the holders of the traditional skills and knowledge were lost, such as in the case of the last Masonite factory in Sweden.

CONCLUSION

The Production Novella presented in this chapter is a methodological contribution to communicate materiality and experiences from the co-creation during manufacturing practices at Folkform between the craftspeople and the designers. This form of practice-led research communication shares an inside perspective on the design and manufacturing process. The experiences from the design and manufacturing process were described in the form of short written memory fragments and photographs. In this chapter, they recall the manufacturing process of a new Masonite material and a series of Masonite furniture.

The Production Novellas as a narrative multimodal composition, where the processes of manufacturing the artefacts are visualised, could be a contribution not only to craft and design research but also to the field of Industrial Heritage studies.

The personal, subjective, emotional, and aesthetic qualities of the Production Novellas are an important part of the composition and documentation. By combining a research-through-design approach using the Production Novellas, I introduce the audience to the collaborative process between the craftspeople and the designer and the handcraft which goes on inside factories and large-scale production in Sweden. Through my Production Novellas, I wish to make local manufacturing cultures more visible. Hopefully I will inspire craft practitioners and academics to further develop narrative methods in craft research and to explore new, creative, practice-led strategies for an inside perspective in the making of knowledge.

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