

At once both enigmatic and perfectly straightforward

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Prelude

"Artistic work is largely a matter of choosing your task. Being a person who has time to think entails both vulnerability and responsibility."
(Eva Löfdahl, *Kalmar Stortorg*, 2004)

My first encounter with Eva Löfdahl's art was red. Possibly with a dash of mustard yellow. There was some verdigris, and probably some blue. The painting was hanging at the back of a basement on Karlsviksgatan in Stockholm; I recall it as a fairly large, unmounted canvas, a raw painting in the style of the day, but traversed by a concretist pattern – two authoritarian formal idioms in a violent clash of styles. The painting was part of the exhibition *10 målare* (10 Painters), which opened rather chaotically in the autumn of 1982 and was one of the gateposts of the new, emerging generation of artists. Memory is symptomatic; Eva Löfdahl's work has its own peculiar effect at a distance, be it time or space.

Since then, Eva Löfdahl has a special place in my mind, and that position has gradually grown stronger. I have primarily been an onlooker, from my initial fascination for her literally radiant, almost hovering tables at Münchenbryggeriet in Stockholm in 1983, or her heavy sand-bag moorings at the Nordic Pavilion in Venice in 1995, to her latest exhibition at Lunds Konsthall in 2009, where I was confirmed in what I always suspected: that Eva Löfdahl has an unerring ability to express the enigmatic in permanent works.

Professionally, our paths have crossed a few times – most recently during Moderna Museet's exile at Klarabergsviadukten, where we collaborated on the exhibition *Interbreeding Classified* in 2002, before that at the National Public Art Council, where she created the ground-

breaking work *Straining Out Gnats and Swallowing Camels*, and, in 1999, producing the exhibition *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* at Riksställningar – Swedish Travelling Exhibitions. This is what she wrote in the catalogue:

“A work of art cannot be completely transparent, an incomplete mirror image is never reflected. We see what is lost, what is absorbed, what is forgiven. The imaginary is turned outwards, spatialised and siteless it does not stick in memory. Do you exit at the same place again, or do you exit at the same place again?”

The same is true of a text: do you exit at the same place again, or do you exit at the same place again? I have chosen not to write a strictly chronological account, but to base this essay on a few themes and a couple of crucial groups of works. So as not to entirely befuddle the reader, I will begin with a short biography, and something about the sculpture *Io*, along with other skulls and shields incorporating walls and shells. The biography is followed by a section on expeditions, relating to her more distinctly research-oriented work, before discussing her interest in language and materials, and ending with a few examples of her public works.

The architecture theoretician Catharina Gabriellson has written an essay in which she follows Eva Löfdahl, both literally and metaphorically, and the art historian Jo Applin places her oeuvre in a broader context, relating it to the work of other artists.

The exhibition is emerging as I write. The fundamentals of Eva Löfdahl's precise balancing acts are created mainly in her studio in Bagarmossen outside Stockholm city. This suburb is slightly on the periphery, like the perspective she so refreshingly adopts in an age where most people are rushing for the centre. The exhibition is, to some extent, retrospective, since it includes works from three decades, but the main intention is to show Eva Löfdahl's current position. She does this by taking the exhibition space as her starting point and formulating a meta-structure in which the other works are incorporated. Our ambition has been to extract earlier works and make them visible anew, in a context that must necessarily be that of space and time.

Io, skulls and shells

Who is Eva Löfdahl?

The Swedish national encyclopaedia gives us the following information:

“By creating various types of paradoxical metaphors, in which habitual visual and mental structures intersect, she attempts to visualise a multitude of enigmatic and aesthetic layers of meaning in the fragmentary signs and imagery of contemporary man.”

It also says that she was born in Gothenburg in 1953.

Io is a sandblasted aluminium sculpture that Eva Löfdahl made in 1993. The work now stands in the Department of Social Work of Stockholm University (located in the former Sveaplan high school), a Swedish international-style building designed by Hugo Zim Dahl. Its permanent place is in the bright, open, wide staircase, on a landing that is enhanced by the box-like construction of the sculpture. The people of various generations who pass by in the stairs see a small round pom-pom that stands out clearly, like the dot of an i. If we stand facing the work, we see a skull-like shape resting on a slab, with a woolly hat pulled far down over it. This is a cast of Eva's own head, and it could have been a cast of one of her own hats. In other words, we are looking at a self-portrait, or rather, the closest thing to it. The contours of a box confine the space around the sculpture; the head in its woolly hat appears to be safe, despite the open ends of the box. The work is formally mute, but the round shape of the skull and the vaguely comical headgear evoke tenderness. The *Io* of the title is one of Jupiter's moons. The pom-pom of the hat is securely attached to the head.

Eva Löfdahl grew up in Gothenburg, where she embarked on her art studies at Kursverksamheten's art school, but neither Valand School of Art nor the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm attracted her – in the 1970s, their tuition was considered static and authoritarian. Instead, she studied graphic design at the University College of Arts, Crafts and Design – Konstfack in Stockholm, which she soon discovered was the wrong choice, “but in those days, before the higher education reforms, we were fairly free to do whatever we wanted”. After two years, she went on to the Byam Shaw School of Art in London, which was more process-oriented than the Swedish schools, before returning to Stockholm. Still registered at Konstfack, she had the opportunity to engage in a graduate project focusing on architectural archaeology at the Historical Museum in Stockholm. The museum was building a new permanent exhibition based on recent research mainly on the early and late Iron Age. Eva Löfdahl was appointed to make models, a pursuit in which she could combine her interests in art and science. Soon thereafter, in the shift between two decades, she formed the artist collective Wallda together with Max Book and Stig Sjölund.

The large social sculpture *Otto Settlement* (Boplat Otto) is described elsewhere (pp. 56–57), but Wallda's impact on the Swedish art scene is also attributable to other actions at the time. The new generation had an open approach and was eager to break away from the dominating contemporary narrative trend, to replace figurative art with more direct action. The new magazines spread the orientation towards philosophy and conceptual debate, and a few fascinated art collectors, spearheaded by the investor Fredrik Roos, supported these evolving tendencies. This is also part of Eva Löfdahl's biography, since she was a unique, quirky and vigorous key figure of this budding art movement in the 1980s. She tried cabaret and performance, installations, slide shows and, of course, painting. At Serafen in 1981, she used the concept

of painting as her starting point and turned the space into one enormous three-dimensional painting, incorporating clusters made up of a multitude of fragments. In several works from this period, she combined the everyday with a coded art language, leading to collisions that occasionally had a burlesque cabaret quality.

In the mid-1980s, Eva Löfdahl pursued her explorations of the potential of social sculpture, alongside painting, producing a form of "natural" acrylics suggestive of moss and crystals, Jackson Pollock's drip paintings and Henri Michaux's mescaline drawings. Again, a collision, this time between established art history and basics of nature. *Any Halo* (1986) and *Fix Eye* (1987) are two sculpture groups of identical dimensions but in every other respect each other's opposites: the former is white, with symmetrically applied black ribbons covered with glass beads, the latter covered by black mineral powder and, instead of ribbons, strips of mirror. They appear to mimic minimalist sculpture, albeit in a rustically baroque style, heavy-footed, slightly truculent. They hold the onlooker in a tight grip, their frontality is strongly emphasised, fixing us firmly where we stand. Who is the active party? Who is subject and who is object in this relationship? Added to this, the mirrors reflect the onlooker's image.

Towards the end of the decade, Eva Löfdahl produced a series of sculptures with table-tops in a key role. They served as a boundary between levels, or between states of mind. Moderna Museet's *Untitled* from 1989 belongs to this group. Here, three identical casts of cauliflower heads are laid out. The heads bear a formal resemblance to the later *Io* and several other sculptures on the themes of skulls and protective shells. The table-top in Moderna Museet's work forms the boundary between the upper world, open to clinical scrutiny, and the underworld, where three robust legs are each enveloped in the inner tube of a car wheel. The circular motif and the tubes, incidentally, recur throughout Eva Löfdahl's oeuvre, for instance in the public work *Projection* (Utskjutning) from 1995 (p. 128). The perfectly reproduced porcelain-like cauliflower heads have a distinctly different character from the somewhat over-sized legs that seem capable of supporting a much heavier burden – refinement is juxtaposed to DIY, and, as so often in Löfdahl's work, the profusion of contrasts is subtle.

Shelters, shells and skulls were consistent themes for Eva Löfdahl in the 1990s, both in public spaces and in her work for the Nordic Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1995. As so often, she based her work on the site, using what was at hand. In Venice, Sverre Fehn's modernist glass and concrete pavilion was the given factor. Inside, plane trees grow through the pavilion roof; Eva moored them with ropes and sandbags, giving the space a completely new dynamic. *The Princess and the Pea or In Touch with Reality* was the title, and to the wall she added a flagpole bulb, the so-called *National Orb*. This bulb is golden, like the crown of the absent princess. Sandbags can be used to build defences

and dams, but they can also form a barrier separating one thing from the other. Counteractive forces, just like the sandbags, can either moor something or sink it. Shelters, dividers, walls are other of Eva's themes in the late 1990s. *Ein Nichts zu überspringen* consists of styrofoam, cut into brick-sized blocks, which she used to build walls, first at Galerie Nordenhake in 1998, where they were nearly man-high and prevented visitors from getting too close to the wall-mounted watercolours and drawings. They were light, white, yet separating, excluding. A variation of the wall was shown the same year at Kunstraum Düsseldorf, with the addition of a pair of stirrups hung from the ceiling, as a means of nevertheless overcoming the obstacle. In Lunds Konsthall yet another version of this work was shown in 2009, where the walls appear instead to open up the room to onlookers, rather than shutting them out.

So far, the 2000s have been dominated by "expeditions" and public commissions, but recently she has also returned to objects and groupings of works that are formally sculptures. A vague link can be found to the series of models she was working on more than a decade earlier (pp. 107–114), reflecting the whiteness and unexpected encounters between disparate entities. Apart from this, her work is new and inimitable, as always. She positions a group of eight plaster sculptures each on a podium, with a layer of pink rubber foam in between. The sculptures are rustic in their design, as though they were houses made to withstand the weather, but they also have cavities, as though the cave or home has imploded. The mind is led to make associations and comes to the conclusion that this is at once both enigmatic and perfectly straightforward.

Expeditions in geography and theory

Eva Löfdahl likes walking. Sometimes, this takes her on long journeys through deserts or mountainous regions, traversing terrain far from Sweden. But it can also involve putting on her hiking boots on a bleak morning in March to explore the granite cliffs a stone's throw from Stockholm.

Her sensitively executed drawings and watercolours testify to her interest in unassuming, often insignificant features – it is certainly not the immediately eye-catching that attracts her attention. Like an erratic herbarium, the works on paper accumulate, with no apparent method other than the artist's own arbitrary observations. It is myopic, it is beautiful, and it is wondrous, in a way resembling the universe that unfolds itself under a microscope. But, as with anything Eva undertakes, simplicity and directness are merely one layer in the engendering of the work. Below the obvious lies a complex, multilayered world. The plants are not dried but flattened in a scanner, multiplied in a process far from the methods of the biology classroom.

Within the framework of the *Odd Weeks* exhibition series, Eva Löfdahl had an exhibition at Moderna Museet's exile address, showing *Interbreeding Classified*, a capacious and complex body of work, including watercolours, photos and computer printouts. The exhibition, or rather, the mega-work, branched out like a classification system with several related sub-systems and interweaving subdivisions. The genetic reassessment of Carl von Linnæus's ideas on God's influence on the evolution of plants was one undercurrent, while another was the artist's own visual commentary on phenomena that are separate yet could belong together. Thought-provoking, confusing: why is it that the closer you stand, the less you see? If it is true that "the more you know, the more you see?" then perhaps the opposite is also true, i.e., that which is a potential starting-point for research: access to large amounts of material, from which to draw conclusions. In her systematically structured imagery, Eva visualises the futility, and the necessity, of wanting to organise, categorise, systematise. She takes this striving further, deflates certain meanings and cross-fertilises others to reach the outer boundary where new insight can be born. The work *Triploids and Souls*, for instance, which consists of 50 watercolours of one and the same egg-shaped skull, confronts the onlooker with as many styles as skulls. It is like a swatch-chart of mental states:

"Distant places attract hopes. They are characterised and named. At closer range, everything grows more tangible and elusive. Then created order is required to deal with the environment."

(Eva Löfdahl, "Preface to Letters", catalogue text for *Arkipelag*, 1998)

In the summer of 1997, Eva Löfdahl was invited, as the only artist, to accompany a polar expedition to Svalbard together with a group of scientists. The purpose of the expedition was to study the premises on which arctic research was based, and how these had changed over the years. The other participants were somewhat consternated by the fact that Eva neither sketched nor made any other visible attempts to record her experiences, apart from making observations and taking the occasional photo. Instead, she used her experiences from the journey for two works based on her correspondence with a few of the participants, after their return home. One of these, *Expedition*, consists of letters and e-mails that include non-participating researchers in a discussion characterised by openness and misunderstandings, theoretical explanations and slightly comical observations. It resembles a chamber play, enacted against the backdrop of an endless arctic landscape, or rather, the memory of being in that place. A distance in time and space is coupled with a close and synchronous focus. The powerful physical presence, the voluntary and occasionally mandatory socialising on board the ship, are contrasted against the vast landscape and the distances that arise when the participants return home to their respective disciplines. The correspondence lasted for nearly two years, the time it can take to create a public work of art, to produce an exhibition or, why not, complete a sub-project as a scientist. In other words, it requires persistence, and not losing one's intensity or direction.

In the course of the correspondence, none of the participants were really aware of the context beyond the immediate exchange, that is, the latest letter to be answered or left to wait. The question is, what was Eva's intention? A parallel can be drawn here to commissions for a public space if the draft sketch were full-sized, 1:1, or if the project of making the work of art had to be adapted entirely to other conditions – then it would come to nothing. At least not as art. The same is true of *Expedition* and other more explorative works by Eva Löfdahl. They have some sort of direction, an underlying query, but the work cannot be finished until it has been realised. All expeditions require a meta-level, but also a focus. In *Expedition* the work coincides with the objectives of the arctic voyage: to study the motives and points of departure for polar research. Eva pursues the assignment at her own meta-level, penetrating even deeper into the underlying issue and presenting it in a text-based work. In this respect, she joins the ranks of a long and theoretically burdened movement in twentieth-century art, with forerunners in Robert Smithson and Donald Judd. Not even arctic exploration is virgin territory, a fact of which she is fully aware. She stakes out her own path across the sphere that could be called conceptual, where research-based specialisation has come to be a genre in its own right, sanctioned by academia. She adheres closely, but always at a healthy distance, and often with a humorous twist.

At the Historical Museum, Eva Löfdahl took her *Expedition* one step further as part of *Arkipelag*, an exhibition series that was part of Stockholm Cultural Capital in 1998. In a whitewashed, empty room, she placed a chair and a desk on which she laid out the correspondence and a few off-white objects. A strip of postcard-sized pictures from the arctic expanses lay on the floor. The enactment was razor-sharp, chilling, as if the museum had turned itself inside out with regard to what little we can know for sure about the history of these distant regions. Later that year, Eva installed another desk at the former National Archives, as her contribution to the National Public Art Council's exhibition *Sites* (Platser). The 16 invited artists had been requested to choose a site for a new, envisioned work. Eva chose this exhibition space for her work, a plain wooden table, folding chairs, an old-fashioned pendant light and folders full of documents relating to public art. The written material referred back to the original terms: the work of art in the public space and the commission from the National Public Art Council. She had collected all the texts she could find on the subject, without any claims to present the whole truth – in this respect, her method differs from the scientist's ambition to cover a subject conclusively. History, analysis of the site, community projects, the siteless space, and an element of her own commentary, surreptitiously slipped in.

After a completed expedition, one needs to sit down at a table and contemplate one's findings and draw conclusions. In another context, Eva quotes the philosopher Hannah Arendt, who refers to the table as a metaphor for the forces that divide and unite people in society, but

where social development has made the table disappear, like a conjuring trick in a séance. Eva's "trick" is to reinstate the table in various situations, like the adhesive in a space, a divider between two mental states or a practical support for other objects. Back in 1983, at the now legendary *Ibid II* exhibition in Stockholm, she exhibited an ordinary dinner table, strongly lit from below – giving it the appearance of being the object of a séance in the otherwise darkened and empty room. Eva's consistent approach is obvious, with a few recurring themes, regardless of what new expeditions she embarks on.

Language and materials, models and conjunctions

"My work is not built with language. Language is a sorting machine to which I subject it, to weed out any undesired meanings."

This is how Eva Löfdahl expressed herself in a conversation on art with her colleague Carina Hedén in 1991. This was a time when language was the focus of many disciplines, not least philosophy and aesthetics. However, far from merely being typical of the times, her statement expresses a fundamental approach. Many have noted the difficulty of verbalising what we see and experience in Eva Löfdahl's works; they are equally hard to decipher with the tools of linguistic theory, psychoanalysis or art history. Her art defies both paraphrase and description, there is a sovereignty to her conclusive style. The work of art is what she shows, and metaphorical descriptions of the onlooker's impressions often lead away from a potential understanding, a difficulty that needs to be overcome. *Ein Nichts zu überspringen* (A Nothing to Overcome) is the title of a styrofoam sculpture, as though advising the onlooker to completely ignore the nothing. The hybrid nature of some of Eva's works challenges our seeing and our understanding of what we perceive. In correspondence about the work *Clouds to Be* (2009), now in the Moderna Museet collection, she writes:

"My only concrete objection is that 'silver thread' is not correct. What you seek to describe is made of silver-steel wrapped in nylon rope. Replacing silver-steel is misleading, since there could be drills made of silver-steel. And what could be said is: that there are real drills and that which is not drills."

So, there are real drills, and that which is not drills, i.e. art. However, to describe the work of art, we need to be just as exact as Eva Löfdahl when she chooses her materials. That does not mean to say that contradiction, language-less grammar and the enigmatically meaningful is banned from the whole.

Eva Löfdahl is not a fetishist about materials, but chooses her materials meticulously. In some instances, the material itself constitutes the work, in the tradition of the *objet trouvé*. *The National Orb* (Nationalkulan),

the gold-plated flagpole bulb she found in the scrap room of a building supply shop, is a rare example of this. She found the bulb, like a new bud in an age when organisations and corporations of all kinds were sprouting buds in every direction – and then, the contrast between the shiny, polished bulb and the crude screw for attaching it to the flagpole. She acquaints herself closely and intuitively with the properties of various materials; to get at a particular expression, universality does not suffice, it has to be entirely specific. The whole assortment of conventional artist materials – such as plaster, bronze, ink, crayon, watercolour and acrylic paint – are used prolifically, while more unusual materials such as aluminium foam, dental stone and flocked steel appear sparingly in some works. Economic realities, not least, have prompted an increased awareness of the enormous product range stocked by building suppliers.

Models is a series of works that engaged Eva Löfdahl for several years in the early 1990s. These sculptural creations have the appearance of models of the structures surrounding them. Structures are created in theory by thoughts and language, but Eva reverses this relationship – the model, i.e., the work of art, is the first premise, and the world has to be interpreted on its terms. *Model S* (1995) is a sieve of the kind found in kitchens before the designer industry refined this utensil. Eva turns the sieve upside down and has a thin, lumpy trickle of water running upwards. She reverses the laws of nature, liquid becomes solid, down is up. In her kitchen-sink realistic contemplation of the wide world, she pursues the sieve theme in a drawing, where it forms the dome of the sky, with holes for the stars, and a fragile shield for the earth. At around the same time, she was also finalising the large public work of art, *Straining Out Gnats and Swallowing Camels* (pp. 126–127) – and makes a note, "sieve, large, small" on the drawing.

If *Model S* can be described as both frail and robust, *Model H* (1993) has more tangible weight and obvious solidity: three steel buckets support aluminium boards with seven white balls of dental stone attached along the edges. This is a model, without distinguishing features, only the typical and most pure forms of vessel, frame and orb are used. In the construction, their normal meaning and purpose are suspended, however: the buckets appear to be empty, the boards neither present nor support anything, and the balls are in a fixed position, beyond gravity. The balance is forced, like the balance in *Model F* (1993), where she has shattered an ordinary glass bottle and glued it together in order to insert a rod with one ball inside the bottle and the other outside, vertically positioned. The work is far from evoking the sense of wonder caused by a ship in a bottle; *Model F* has been subjected to dictatorial coercion.

Two large hoops are placed opposite one another high up on the wall, and inside each hoop a small rubber wheel rotates constantly. *Model G* (1993) may be a circular model for the futility of existence, where the

In 1980, Eva Löfdahl appeared with her artist colleagues Max Book and Stig Sjölund at Årstafältet – a windswept, semi-central part of Stockholm. They shared a studio nearby, in a former health-food shop where the name Wallda remained on the door. They appropriated this name for their artist collective that operated in the early 1980s, producing happenings, performances and paintings, and presenting their own commentary to housing policy in the form of *Otto Settlement* at Årstafältet, alongside the grey mid-1970s concrete apartment blocks built towards the end of Sweden's major housing development programme. The official housing exhibition *Bo 80* was in full swing in Kungsträdgården in central Stockholm, but here on the periphery visitors could look at a cluster of kiosk-like shacks, brightly painted with concretist patterns. This exhibition was typical of Wallda's strategy: take command, do it yourself, use available materials, claim sites that are not intended for art. Of course, they shared this strategy with other artists in a pivotal period when the ingrained structures and institutions were incapable of harbouring the disparate styles evolving in the wake of punk, styles far removed from the academic and political tendencies that had dominated the previous decade. This was a new generation that did not ask for permission but operated on its own terms on the periphery, like the project at Årstafältet – a no man's land, neither nature nor culture. Was this an irony aimed at the welfare state? An attack against the Men of 1947? A rebellion against the parent generation in the backwash of the punk era? To me, it was none of this, but a precise artistic action. Few saw it, but this is something the *Otto Settlement* shares with other crucial phenomena in art history. The action placed itself exactly alongside the so-called political art, setting examples in the mythically-entrenched tradition of site-specific art, and arousing associations with abstraction and architecture-friendly art. As if by magic, *Otto Settlement* succeeded in delivering institutional critique while maintaining a sense of humour. Årstafältet has never been the same since.

The last time Wallda exhibited was at Lunds Konsthall in 1984, when the group had been dissolved, but staged an action in Klas Anshelm's exhibition space titled *Lacuna* (= gap, crack). Eva Löfdahl showed paintings resembling large black and white drawings at a distance: black acrylic lines drawn steadily across white-primed masonite, plain, geometric shapes that caused double vision. A small circle in a semi-circle, or a fulsome breast? Three slack lines or a pair of underwear? At once both designed and designated, an asyndeton – that is, the obvious omission of a conjunction, according to stylistic terminology. The meanings are closely packed, but the surfaces are practically bare, apart from the black lines. As if to enhance the asyndeton, Eva carries the paintings out to various environments, or rather, non-environments, where no one would think of placing a statue; near an underpass, in front of a loading bay, in a parking lot – contrasting with the gallery's architectonic challenges. A quarter of a century later, Eva Löfdahl returned to Lunds Konsthall, this time with a solo exhibition.

The invitation card shows her $3D\pi$, a plaster sculpture measuring approximately ten inches, against a vast clear-blue sky, with a white concrete viaduct in the background – this is a public work of art, but where is it? In the gallery it is displayed in its actual size, a plaster model of a mushroom with two stems.

Eva Löfdahl has an unerring analytical ability, coupled with a super-sensitivity for spatial dimensions. Another commission for the National Public Art Council was to claim her entire capacity for a few years around the turn of the millennium. Together with the architectural team Caruso St John, she took on Kalmar Stortorg, which had been degraded into a parking lot from its heroic past as a centre-point during Sweden's period as a European superpower. This upgrade was high on the City of Kalmar's wish list, but few of its inhabitants could fathom that the artist and architects would opt for a programme of reduction. "Where is the art?" asked those who expected to see some object to manifest the project. "The plaza as a whole", was the answer, although there are elements – poles, wells and paving stones – that unify the space and define surfaces, scales and distances. Walking across Kalmar Stortorg is not primarily a visual experience, but a physical one, "the work" envelopes us as we wander from the end of the high street onto the stone-paved ground that separates the cathedral from the worldly powers. Could this not have been achieved by the architects alone? In connection with *Straining Out Gnats and Swallowing Camels* Eva commented on the relationship between the roles of the architect and the artist:

"I believe that our ways of determining spatial presence are different. The commonplace, slightly fragile construction of the net rooms combined with the fairly strong optical effects of the nets (visuality taken so far that it begins to waver). To the architect, the building is the object." Laconically, she adds that he would probably not choose to communicate with the space above by means of a spoon.

In Kalmar the interaction between artist and architect is taken even further. In the first presentations of their joint proposal, the word "energy" was mentioned repeatedly. At around the same time, Eva Löfdahl was working on an essay for the Hilma af Klint exhibition, and this presumably influenced her choice of words. In a later phase, she tried to avoid this ambiguous word, since its meaning became vague when parking spaces and immaterial characteristics were being discussed in the same breath. Her ambition was to realise the space; by stabilising and deepening it, the space could be defined, not least by making the ground level more distinct. Together, the tall poles, the sounding wells and the selected stones were means of achieving this. Eva saw her task as calibrating the balance of the plaza space, but noted that this was not something she could do alone. She and the architects wanted to introduce the concept of ceremonial spatiality, where the principal parameters were distance, proportion and the mutual relationship between

different levels. The separating and uniting distance is what distinguishes a public space. This is probably also what impels her to persist with more or less impossible assignments in the service of the public.

The Entrepreneur Monument is the latest result of an invitation to design a public space, in the form of a competition for a new plaza in central Helsinki. This appears to be the antithesis of Kalmar Stortorg, a monument – as the assignment from the Finnish Entrepreneur Monument Foundation prescribed. Her contribution is a geometric figure in perforated aluminium embracing a black, lava-like block of concrete. Metal, concrete, plaza – she adheres to tradition, while breaking free from it. She shows no trace of wanting to decorate, elevate or historicise, the usual purpose of a monument; on the contrary, she wants to speculate on the conditions and essence of existence. The sculpture is placed so that there is ample space to look at it from any direction. In this way, it stakes out its place, with its stature of six metres, but at close range it disintegrates infinitely. This infinity is ordered and structured, however, based on an intricate mathematical principle where two rhomboids are combined to form a regular aperiodic pattern. The shape of the sculpture is the contour of a three-dimensional solid body based on the two rhomboids. The modules of the monument form a cluster of perforated shapes that bulge in different directions and twist in and out as though striving to break free from the three dimensions and transform into a novel state. The logic is impossible to overview. An infinite number of spaces arises in the inner life of the sculpture, at a distance it resembles an inorganic plant. Up close, it is easy to lose oneself in its endless complexity, while at a distance the work arranges itself into a plain, monumental shape. Unique and illusorily tangible, the sculpture insists on its uprightness while hovering in the destabilised state between one and the other.

In a live broadcast on Swedish Radio in 1989, on the occasion of the Edstrand Foundation award, Eva was asked, "How is it possible to understand your work?" Eva replied, "You just think of everything around you that you know." This is a communicative exchange that can be transferred to the streets and open spaces.