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*Conversation Log with the Site  
- First Iteration at Dora 1  
for Garden of Dialogue*

Master's thesis in Master of Fine Arts

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*Conversation log with the site - first iteration at Dora 1 for Garden of Dialogue*

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Looking up, I found it sublime.

“Thus, while the mute creation downward bend  
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,  
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes  
Beholds his own hereditary skies.  
From such rude principles our form began,  
And earth was metamorphos’d into Man”.

[Ovidio, Ca. 8, translated by Garth and Dryden, n.d.  
*Metamorphosis Book the First*, Lines 78-88].

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to illustrate my artistic research project *Garden of Dialogue* which investigates the development of a personal methodology. Detailed portrayals of my artistic method showcase my experimental practice-based approach, which occurred within varied contexts and settings around the historical structure “Dora 1” near Nyhavna district in Trondheim from February to May 2020. The entire passage of this methodological progress accompanying potential developments is described and discussed in the thesis, alongside supporting documentation, outcomes, and findings of the experiments and ways in which the methods shaped my artistic practice.

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## Introduction

This thesis documents the developments of my artistic research project *Garden of dialogue* which was carried out at “Dora 1”, in Trondheim, emerged from my art practice of examination, experimentation, and exploration between me, my body, and circumstances as I experienced them at that time.

By writing this thesis, I intend to evaluate my artistic practice to formulate my methodology of artmaking. This experience enables me to communicate processes and findings to a broader audience.

This thesis takes the form of a narrative to share the iterative attitude and improvement of the methods I used which describe as;

- The more robust conception and materialization in my artistic practice
- New encounters and unexpected outcomes through the production
- Key processes of iterative actions that reshaped and redefined my artistic practice
- Reflections and discoveries from the whole process

In the context of this project, the creative artifacts include:

- A series of instructional performances
- Performance writings
- Sand drawings
- Tracings on paper
- Live performances
- Sound composition of recorded material
- Filmic documentation
- Lens-based works

## Artistic Research Aims

The underlying objectives of *Garden of Dialogue*:

- To develop personal artistic methods through an iterative approach to cyclic performative rituals
- To summarise 2 years of case study experimentation
- To examine the possibilities of interdisciplinary art such as artmaking as performance, performance as writing, and writing as an artmaking

## Background

The focus of my artistic practice for the last 2 years has included performing, observing, and documenting live and continuous processes of artistic production. I worked with the concept of 'repetition' in my practice, which acts as a durational commitment or attitude towards carrying out my work as a type of periodic ritual, score, or set of instructions.

So far, my work revolves around repetitively performing a set of simple instructions together with documenting physical tracings of these experiences via various media. I liken this process of repetition to the shaping of time, made visible or recognizable to us through, for example, the growth ring of a tree, which is subtle but steadily ongoing without an endpoint. By using this approach, I attempt to reveal alternative, holistic ways of valuing time and space. I am working in this manner to investigate an alternative form of what can be a 'final' artwork and the resulting discourse between the audience and their perception of the artwork in relation to its ongoing processes.

In general, I have my body and I physically work with it both consciously and unconsciously as a means for direct artistic expression<sup>1</sup>. My body is the main device for my artmaking, and

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<sup>1</sup> See Figure 1 and 2 as an example.

the only sensor to receive certain stimuli. While working through each experiment, my body in the space and all its surroundings affect me, the tasks, and the processes. This attitude affords an open dialogue between me and space, then the given circumstances and time. Furthermore, my states of consciousness and unconsciousness are often applied then support the ambiguous phenomenon for what my artwork states. Such dialogue repeats itself over and over through my body like a flow state during the process of the planned action.

I use myself materially like one of the components of my practice. For implementing this, I often set a series of instructions or tasks and present them, like a ritual, a routine, or training, which I commit to for a certain amount of time. This attitude is influenced by artist Sadaharu Horio's (2015) extensive involvement in artmaking everyday and specifically his artistic practice approach. Moreover, I am encouraged by Csikszentmihalyi [2009: 76] who has written extensively on states of flow and declared 'art, play, and ritual probably occupy more time and energy in most cultures than work'.



Fig. 1. 2. Exhibition view and making of Linea del Muro, Trondheim (Greni, Da Silva, 2019)

When I work on a durational piece, I often lose the original intention of my work. I even stop thinking about what I am doing, then I just get into a flow-like sensation [Csikszentmihalyi, 2009] and carry on. Such a flow state leads me to focus on my movement. We commonly



experience this sensation at some point, like “oh what I am doing this for?”, which is uncomfortable in the beginning. But in the end, it is a way of going outside one's comfort zone and interestingly, it is at this point one can achieve a less controlled state of mind, where new encounters, mistakes, and unknown outcomes arise. I attempt to experiment with these different states of art creation and what drives one to do this move/act with such intensity? One of the hypotheses is my personal expectation as an artist to experience and unearth something undiscovered or yet to be acted upon. However, as I question in this thesis, no one predicts when the final point of the process comes, when the art is finished, therefore we have no clue when that undiscovered thing will be done.

### Stating queries

I started to think about a set of questions at first.

When does an artwork start and finish?

What is the exact point at which the art happens?

‘If a work of art does not exist until it has reached a state in which it can make its impact on the sensory perceptions of others’ [Newton, 1961: 71] is correct, how can people value that the artwork has reached this clear state of being a finished work of art? Why do we appreciate it as an artistic expression?

Is this essential for me to do?

I believe that no authority can define the value of artwork since ‘the power cannot make culture’ [Sennet, 2011: 58]. Thus, I doubt whether I can do it by myself or not, or rather I should say that I ever wanted to do it or not.

### The context of this exploration at Dora 1

After the beginning of my second year of the study, I gradually set out to cultivate several new habits and daily routines prior to this project. These included: taking care of a shared worm compost box, learning Norwegian, knitting headband, baking, and lithography, etc. Each new activity I relished brought a positive effect on my life and artistic outputs. It also proved my supposition that having new activities to carry out influences the flow of thoughts, or combines a new stream of ideas in different directions. I noticed that

fulfilling these activities regularly makes me cherish my days in a better way, then activates my sensitivity to recognize small and detailed elements of life clearer. Correspondingly, this awareness expanded my range of ideas and yielded more choices within my production. Because of this, I assume I am more adaptable to my artistic practice than before I started the project.

While I was adapting such daily habits on my own, the idea of working at “Dora 1” flashed into my mind when I found that enormous wall next to the parking lot last year by chance. Nothing was clear like for what I do or how I work. But there was a simple and strong will to do something with such a wall. At that moment, I only had a feeling that it would be fascinating. This impulse interconnects to my previous project of the mural and my general interest in everyday spaces like a parking lot.

## Methodology

I designed a sequence of instructions or routines that I performed as a part of my daily habit between 3rd February until 1st of May this year. Each activity was performed on my own as open experiments with no predictive plan or outcome. While doing these activities, I also carried out documentation in the form of; a reflexive journal, spontaneous responsive sketches or sound recordings, photography, film, or vocal recordings of monologue I held about my experiences of my time with following the instructions. I carried out this sequence whenever the conditions allowed. After each sequence, I made some reflective notes in my journal, which I analyzed and expanded the analysis to reveal what I was doing. By understanding the progress of the project afterwards, and then I concluded.

### Personal artistic method

These series of activities needed to be regularly engaging in my everyday life like my other practices, and implied as a discipline to form a certain kind of ritual which can be defined as 'any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set of manner.'<sup>2</sup>

Instructions<sup>3</sup>:

- 1 - Go to Dora 1 when the condition permits, take a photo of the wall each time, put a thin paper, and make frottage images of the wall if the wall is dry.  
... take one photo, this works as if 'clocking in', like what time I started or finished sometimes. The weather was a more important factor than I estimated to carry out planned tasks.
- 2 - Make one drawing in the studio (using Dora 1 as the subject and its area) for 75 minutes.

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A: [1] Ritual

<sup>3</sup> Since that viral infection started to spread enough to shut down the studio, I chose to keep only the activity 1, however, added to have excursions in the area when I could regarding the activity 3. This was to avoid any kinds of extra contacts.

...I was expecting to grab some impressions from Dora 1 to make an image, especially by painting. That space was colorless but intense with aged and artificial textures which could drive my intuitiveness towards colors.

3 - Walk and pick up litters, through a fixed path at Dora 1 when the snow melts away. ...it was more focused on walking around than collecting litters. On the other hand, I anticipated how many strange objects I could find, so I was looking forward to warmer weather.

### Source of designing methodologies

As mentioned in the prior section, there are several sources of inspiration I often borrow to structure my method.

For this project, again I referred to artworks and the artistic approach by Sadaharu Horio [2015]. This artist's methodology is to do each planned activity every day regardless of circumstances. Some of the artist's works imply a strict discipline, like to paint one color on one object, or to make 10 drawings quickly. The accumulation of each artwork represents its powerful appearance to draw our attention for no reason. I might appreciate that it has sculpted the time of the artist's occupancy.

As a theoretical reference, Donald A. Schoen's [2006] "reflection-in-action" was often concerned. In particular, I borrowed the idea of "knowing-in-practice" for my reflection rule. Also in this term, as Schoen denotes, 'as a practice becomes more repetitive and routine, and as knowing-in-practice becomes increasingly tacit and spontaneous, the practitioner may miss important opportunities to think about what he is doing.' [Schoen, 2006: 61]. Here I can see the possibility to expand my artmaking further from my recognition.

## Process and Reflections

I attempted to keep a reflective journal after the routine each time. Each part of the reflection was the source of inspiration, especially for my installation plan at TKM Gråmølna, Trondheim. In this journal, I continued writing that would express my flow of thoughts which I listed chronologically. I added several analysis parts afterwards with the intention to develop this journal as another appearance or extension of this project. This may be called documentation, but at that moment while I was performing each routine, this journal was a testimony of the moment when my art was occurring.

Here below I refer to my reflective journal during this period, then I attempt to evaluate this whole process. The evaluation takes the form of a narrative analysis, which outlines the transition of this project from the beginning to the end. It covers the development of methodologies I applied, changes in the social situation at that time, and shifts I noticed in myself.

### The beginning phase - start and flow

Firstly, I went to see around the place without any intention of working. There were parking lots, several smaller walls, some different buildings with offices both new and old, and the archive. There was also an overhead bridge for vehicles to enter the inside of Dora 1. The whole construction made me feel slightly cramped. As previously mentioned, the only idea I could have at that time was to work with pencil rubbing - frottage - over thin papers repeatedly, so I started.

In the beginning, I struggled with figuring out how I could make this rubbing process easier and kept thinking of a way to improve it. It was essential to consider the weather, humidity, and temperature. In my reflection journal, I often noted that the strong wind bothered me vigorously, for example. I learned from bad conditions how to establish my know-hows to rub outside, which will be useless after having accomplished this project. This little progress was a pleasant step at that time. Even though several rubbed papers were torn afterward, I held myself enjoying this work. Then I developed a method of rubbing to capture the surface accurately with inventing tricks on how to handle my body to reduce fatigue whilst rubbing. These inventions enabled me to feel more relaxed while working every time, which

allowed me to have other thoughts, mostly about the possible development of this project, and things I was aware of during the time around me working, like weird marks and rusted objects attached to the wall. At a certain point throughout visiting Dora 1, my mind would shift to depict further imaginations of the surrounding site. During the time I was experiencing these visions, I realized myself getting more familiar with Dora 1. The whole process was fascinating to go deeper. On the other hand, it was a weird sensation. From this feeling, I noticed that going to the place frequently and carrying out a routine became a strong practice, which makes me familiarize myself with the site. This experience seemed to have a labor with some sort of reward. But I did not know what that could be, and I still have no idea, not even today.

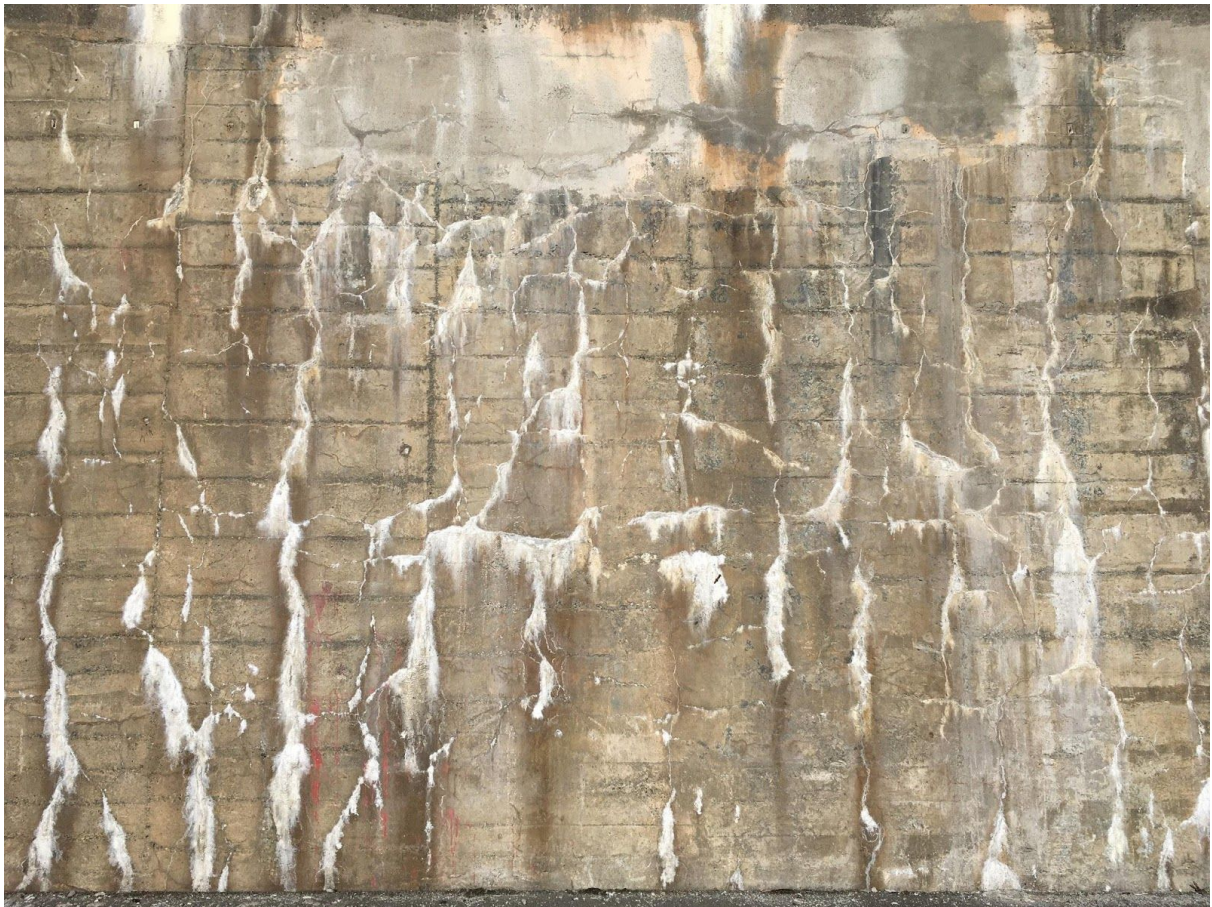


Fig 3. The wall at Dora 1, Trondheim (Kawachi, 2020)

When I could not work because of the weather, it was time to walk so that I could keep my body warm. This short excursion could bring me more insights into the area, those findings made me feel like digging into Dora 1's story of transformation: from the German U-boat bunkers to the municipality's archive and the bowling space.

Meanwhile, the sun started to stay longer and longer, and it made me experience a feeling of release. I realized that the darkness stressed me out, I can imagine that I wouldn't have

recognized this sensation if I had only worked inside my studio. At the same time, I became more and more familiar with Dora 1 and started playing with further imaginations of the site.

### Detour - transition in planning through acknowledging the history of the site and my previous works

My starting point was "to repeat tasks I set out to perform" at Dora 1, which led me to realize Dora 1 was closer to me while repeating the tasks. From that point, my interest shifted into the whole area itself and its historical context. I put aside my previous plan of just "repeating tasks" and decided to begin undertaking research on Dora 1. This proved challenging as there were hardly any resources or documents written in English. Although I have been studying Norwegian, it was still a tough task to carry out, even today. In the end, I could only find information on a website<sup>4</sup> and a few visitor information boards around Dora 1, even so, this small progress of familiarization triggered a stronger empathy to the site.

After several weeks, I figured out that Dora 1 has become a big rental property and is owned privately today. I was excited to know this because it seemed there would be more information to uncover, like how this transition of Dora 1 being governmentally owned to privately owned had occurred, and by whom? At the same time, it was such a strange feeling to be excited about one concrete monolith-like structure.

Reflecting briefly on my prior projects related to a specific place, similar progress often occurred. The longer I worked in one place, the more familiar there I felt than before. This place consists of the space itself, the neighborhood where that space locates, the history, and the local narratives. It shows that there are various dimensions and layers of information that draw my attention. I could reflect on my previous works from this awareness which is like a by-product of working on this project.

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<sup>4</sup> Dora Eiendom. (2020) *Historie*. Available at: <https://www.dora.no/historie> [Accessed 16 April 2020].

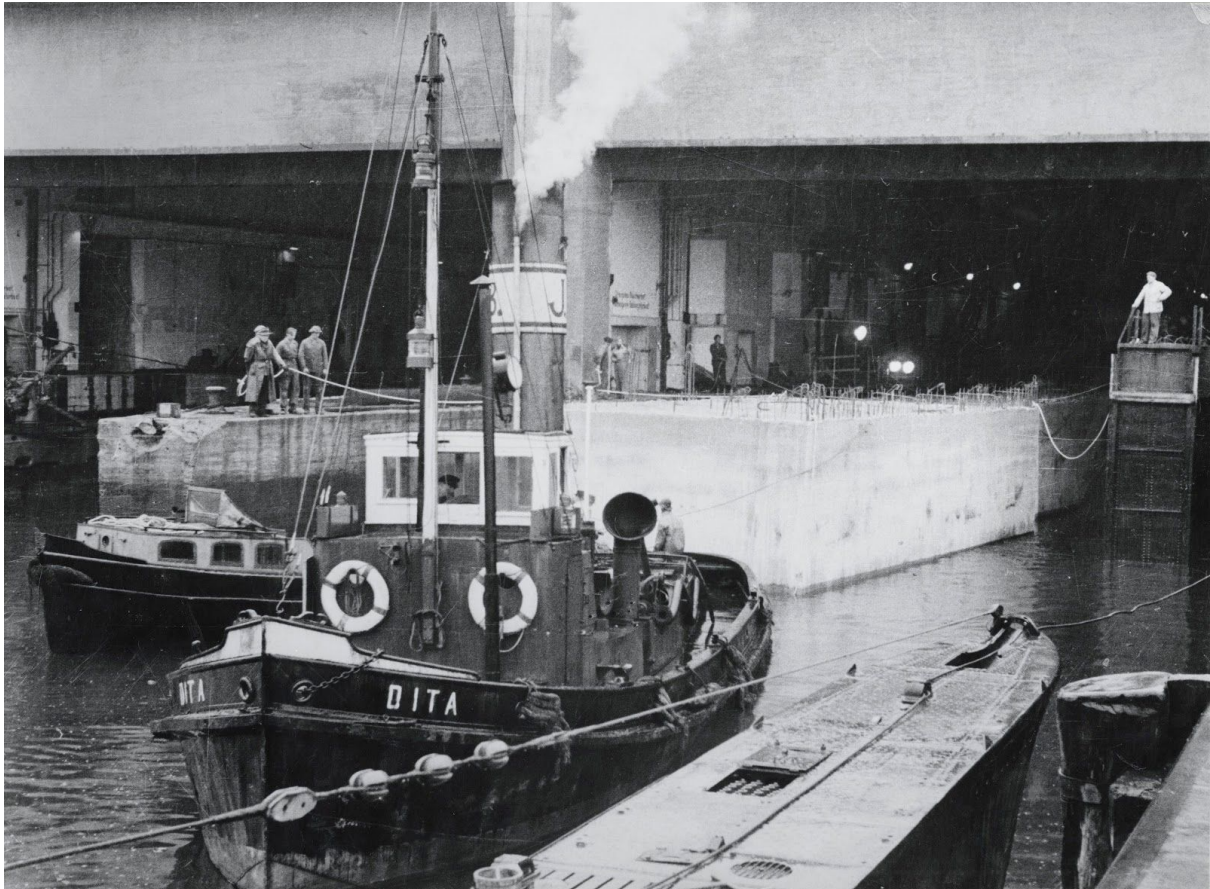


Fig 4. Dora, Trondheim (Schröder, Ca. 1950)

### Unpredicted situation - when everyday life affects work

From the end of February, this ongoing viral infection has started at a slow pace. I was underestimating how this infection would develop and what effect it would have on my practice. It did not feel so obvious yet that the situation would become more serious, nevertheless, I felt anxiety starting at around this time. I had to stay away from my routine for a while to prevent the infection, it was easy to lose the feeling that drove me to go to Dora 1 for work, as the seriousness of the infection showed up strongly in my mind. By following other countries' notices, especially from Japan and Italy, where my family and close friends are living, I found myself getting intensely stressed by the pandemic situation. However, soon after, I chose to go back to work again, because I realized that having my work suspended was irritating me deeply and it became impossible for me to ignore. At the beginning of the lockdown, going outside made me feel guilty, and even I was scared when another pedestrian came in sight, such emotion was ridiculous. The rubbing work was a kind of relief after the stressful commuting because of its meditative movement. Even



though some negative thoughts would flash into my mind to interrupt my work, at least my body kept rubbing since it is a genuinely simple task. In this way, I can say now that this routine maintained my mental state of wellbeing during that ruptured period.

### The influence of routine - thoughts flow to further possibilities

As I mentioned in the previous section, I had a lot of thoughts and impressions about the progress of this project and I could look back upon my past experiences during the process of working with historical context and physical engagement. The routine I performed at Dora 1 maintained my motivation and encouraged me, also my mind kept flowing as long as the body functioned. This experience felt solid because I could not accomplish any developments on this project when I remained at home during the quarantine. Although it was a negative experience, it enabled the project to develop in different ways in the end. And this is why the project now consists of several complex layers with historical perspectives, which in many ways I did not expect to develop at the onset of the project. *Garden of Dialogue* project at Dora 1 has been developing day by day, and it might be a potential response of what Dewey[1958: 12] inquires "how is it that the everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?". In this context, to understand the influence of routines should be a powerful agent for strengthening my artistic practice. This is what even more I would like to determine how to utilize this concept well functioning for going forward. I have to pay attention, however, that there should be a trap which drags my mind narrower without thinking a whole structure because this repetitive commitment has a kind of addictiveness to make me focus on small details.

### The development for the installation planning - setting up a space to generate a personal dialogue

In the meantime, my installation plan was steadily changing. Before starting the almost daily routines at Dora 1, I had no specific idea of the installation, but a blurred picture of having an audience inside. The idea developed gradually while performing the routine and I arrived at the idea of making a garden, using the concept of my past work

titled *Garden*, which seemed to suit the notion of ritual in this project. This decision led me to research the term 'garden' and its philosophy of making both the Japanese garden<sup>5</sup> and the Norwegian garden.<sup>6</sup>

Today, as I write my thesis text, the final show has been canceled, so the installation will never happen in the same context. However, I still conceive of how my plan should appear or be arranged for an audience. For example, I was expecting to have some daily activities in or around the space to represent my attendance under labor conditions, like one of the components of my original installation, this idea also occurred during the routine.

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<sup>5</sup> Slawson [1987] declares that the garden is primarily a visual art, but it can also directly engage our sense of hearing and sense of smell.

<sup>6</sup> As the first book of gardening in Norway titled 'Horticultura', the garden was supposedly more focused on cultivation than landscape design at that time.

## Conclusion

Through this entire progress of *Garden of Dialogue*, besides, I can perceive that I shaped up my fuzzy ideas into some more solid forms with my words when my daily commitment was there. Furthermore, sometimes I got interrupted with various inputs from references or conversations, but I could take back myself convinced to them after doing the routine. This experience made me aware that there was a special form of communication, like sharing energy between me and the place through alternative languages by engaging myself in the routines.

This is my temporary conclusion, and I say temporary because it may vary in the future, as the whole project remains in progress. Therefore, this text has formed a path to interpret my perception of what was happening at that time by having my routine and to determine what I will be able to do with this as my further developments happen. Consequently, there can only exist a vague language that only echoes my impressions, not solid facts and I believe this is necessary to leave my temporal trace as an artist.

By writing this text, I tried to entangle my work into personal vagueness and to lose its reason for existence in the process. So, as I set out with the assumption that my artmaking is not going to be judged and the result may lead to no point, I strived to carry out the processes of artmaking from start to finish. I believed by experimenting in obscurity could bring essential discoveries that would arise during the making process, directing the project to the next step and unexpected outcomes.

The possibility for next productions - format named *Garden of Dialogue* to take place in many spaces

Even though the installation has been planned for the specific site of TKM Gråmølne with its big windows<sup>7</sup>, I see the project itself as being flexible and possibly carried out again within a different context either in Trondheim or other cities and places.

In the end, I am aware that this *Garden of Dialogue* addresses the attitude of facing myself, through being more familiar with one site for a certain amount of time and the artwork is part of this process rather than the result. With this awareness, I would declare that my artwork does not finish as one result, and in other words, it is always about to finish every second of its process, which is in transition all the time, which might be the product.

This project can become any form of representation. Hence, I am willing to hold the progress by trying to find other possibilities to work with this idea. On the other hand, I continue to have routines as daily disciplines to make my artistic practice more internal and personal without a final vision. I do this to figure out how to regain the fundamental aim of artmaking for us and our life which is not for the exhibition or seizing artistic glory.

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<sup>7</sup> For this reason, I was permitted to set it up as a test installation from 25th to 27th of May 2020.

## References

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## Appendix A: Definition of terms

Dictionary.com, LLC (2020) Dictionary.com. Oakland: Dictionary.com, LLC. Available at: <https://www.dictionary.com> [Accessed 28 May 2020].

### [1] Ritual:

1. an established or prescribed procedure for a religious or other rite.
2. a system or collection of religious or other rites.
3. observance of set forms in public worship.
4. a book of rites or ceremonies.
5. a book containing the offices to be used by priests in administering the sacraments and for visitation of the sick, burial of the dead, etc.
6. a prescribed or established rite, ceremony, proceeding, or service: *the ritual of the dead*.
7. prescribed, established, or ceremonial acts or features collectively, as in religious services.
8. any practice or pattern of behavior regularly performed in a set manner.
9. a prescribed code of behavior regulating social conduct, as exemplified by the raising of one's hat or the shaking of hands in greeting.
10. *Psychiatry*. a specific act, as hand-washing, performed repetitively to a pathological degree, occurring as a common symptom of obsessive-compulsive neurosis.

### [2] Garden:

1. a plot of ground, usually near a house, where flowers, shrubs, vegetables, fruits or herbs are cultivated.
2. a piece of ground or other space, commonly with ornamental plants, trees, etc., used as a park or other public recreation area.
3. a fertile and delightful spot or region.
4. slang, a woman's public hair or genitals

Appendix B: Figures

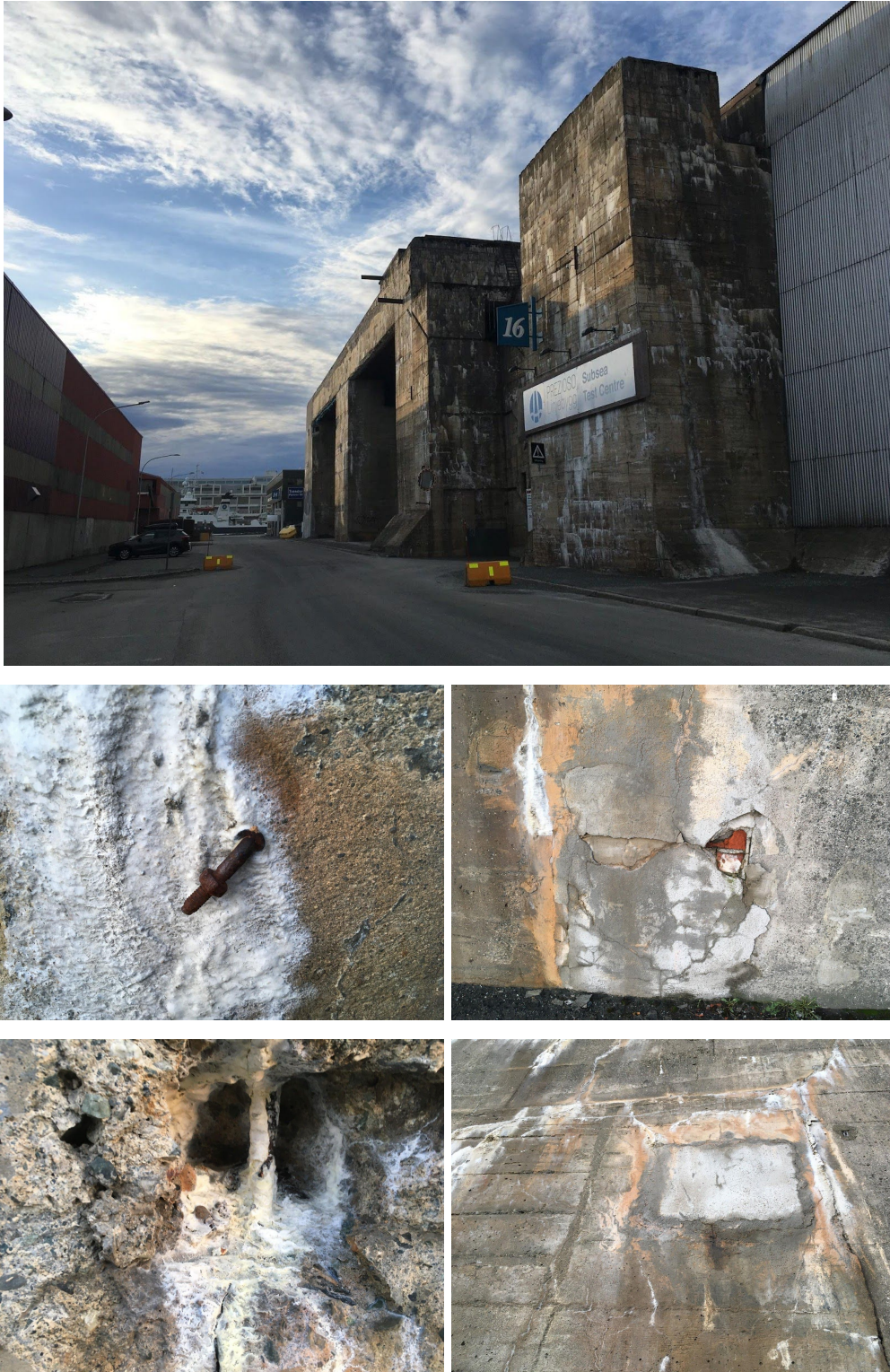


Fig 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. Dora 2 and findings, Trondheim (Kawachi, 2020)

