

Jeroen Jacobs

— Untitled (Studio Photos)

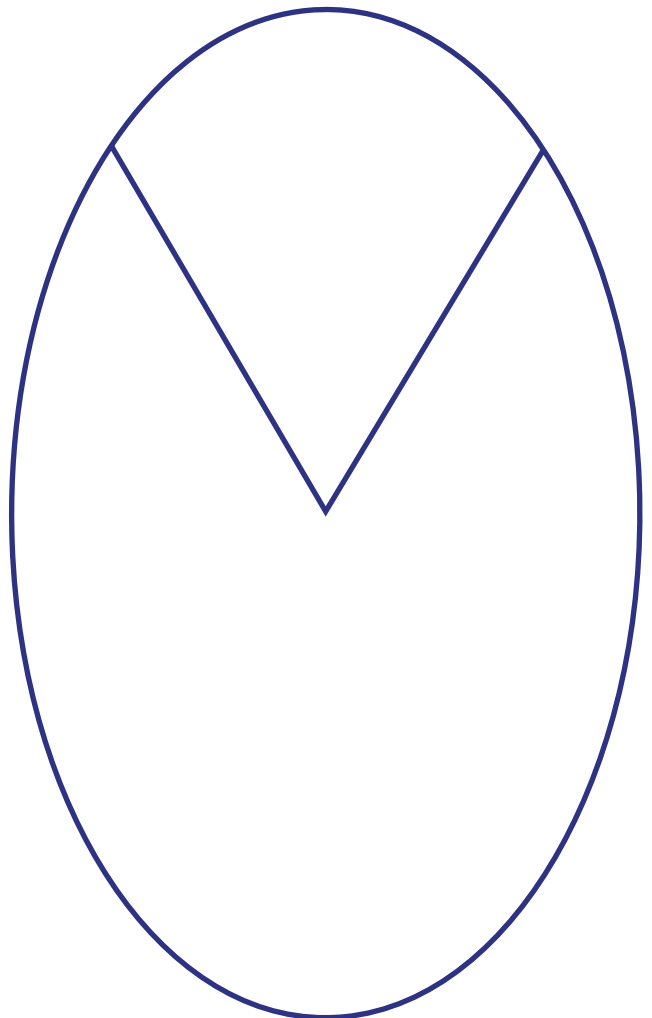
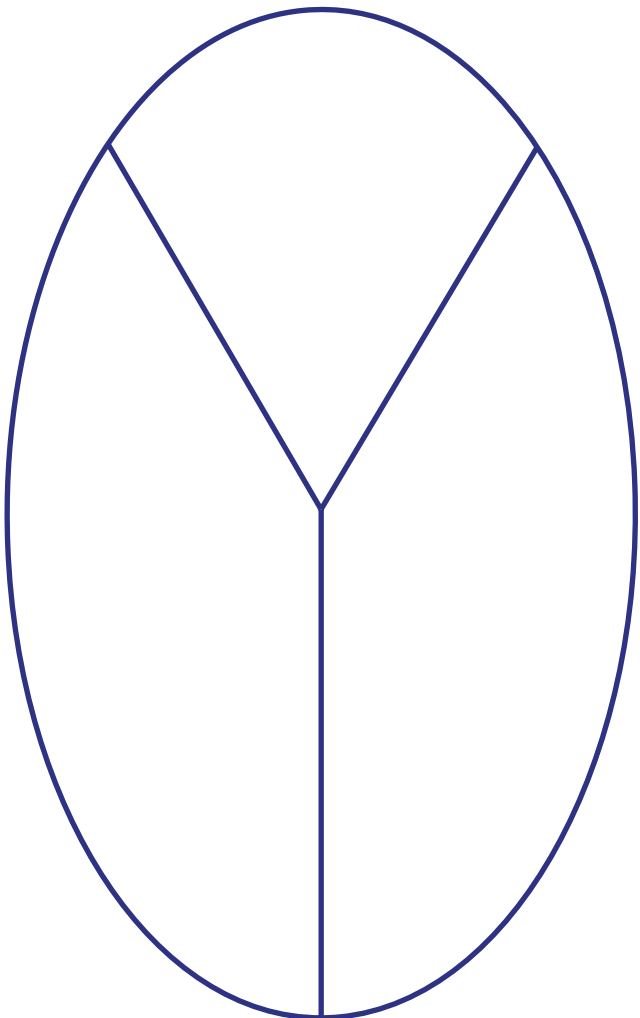
Available from 2009/02/15 – 2009/07/15

ISBN 978-82-8203-003-8

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Jeroen Jacobs













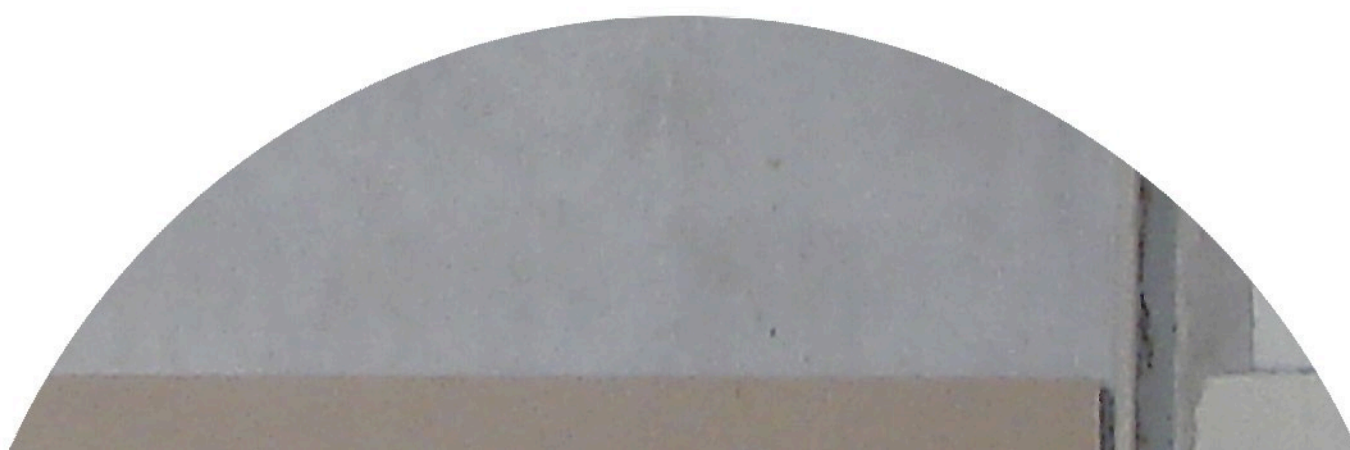


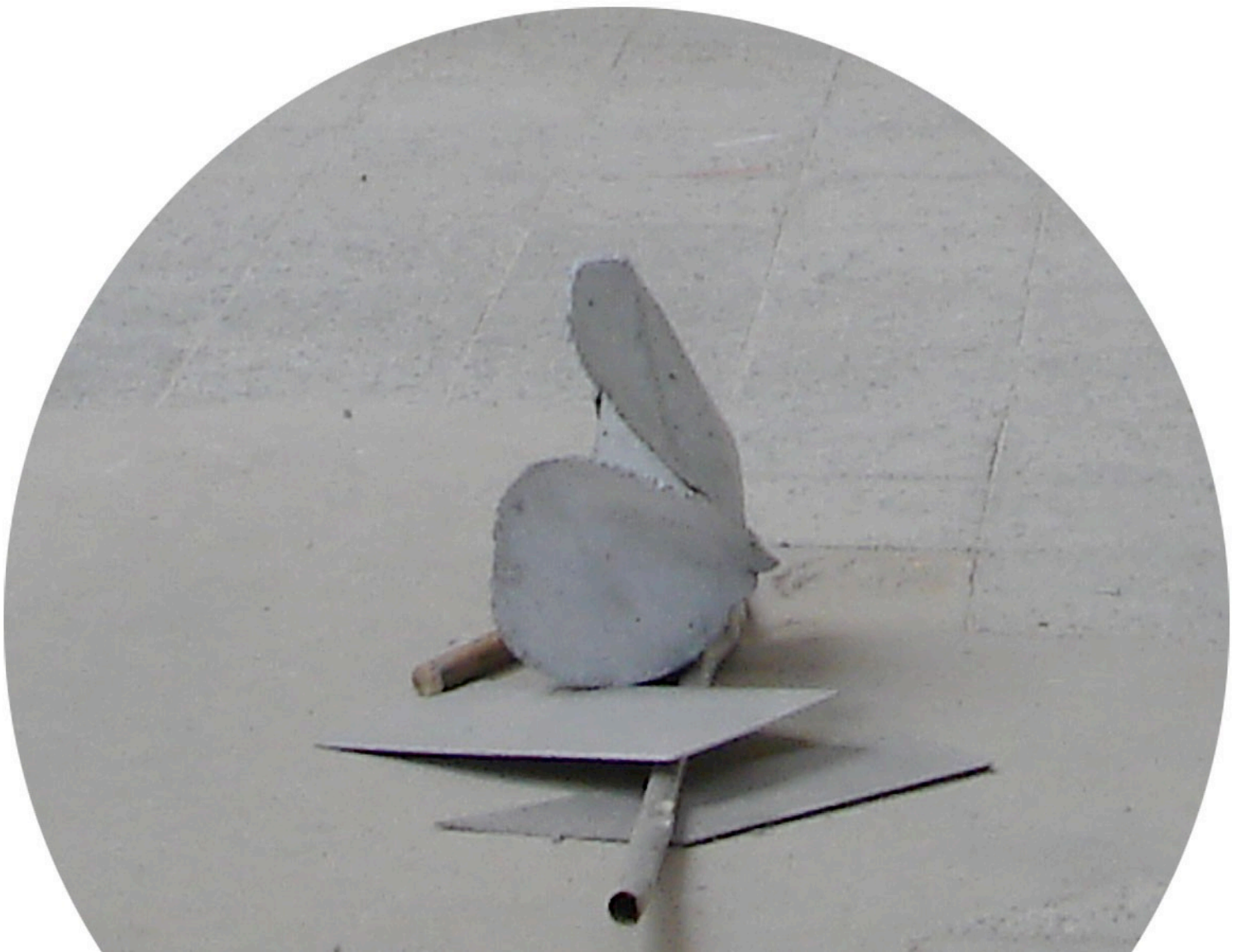
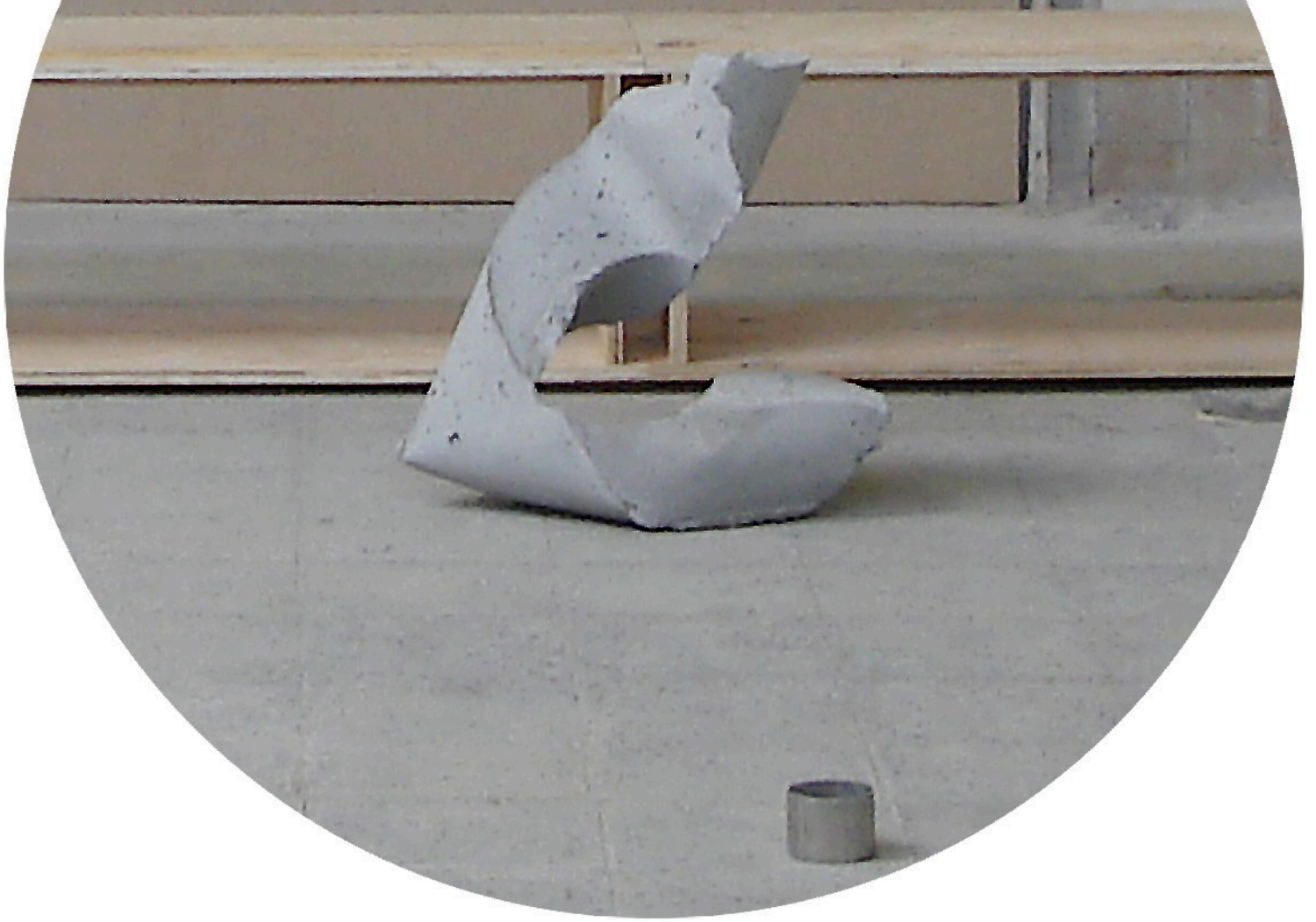












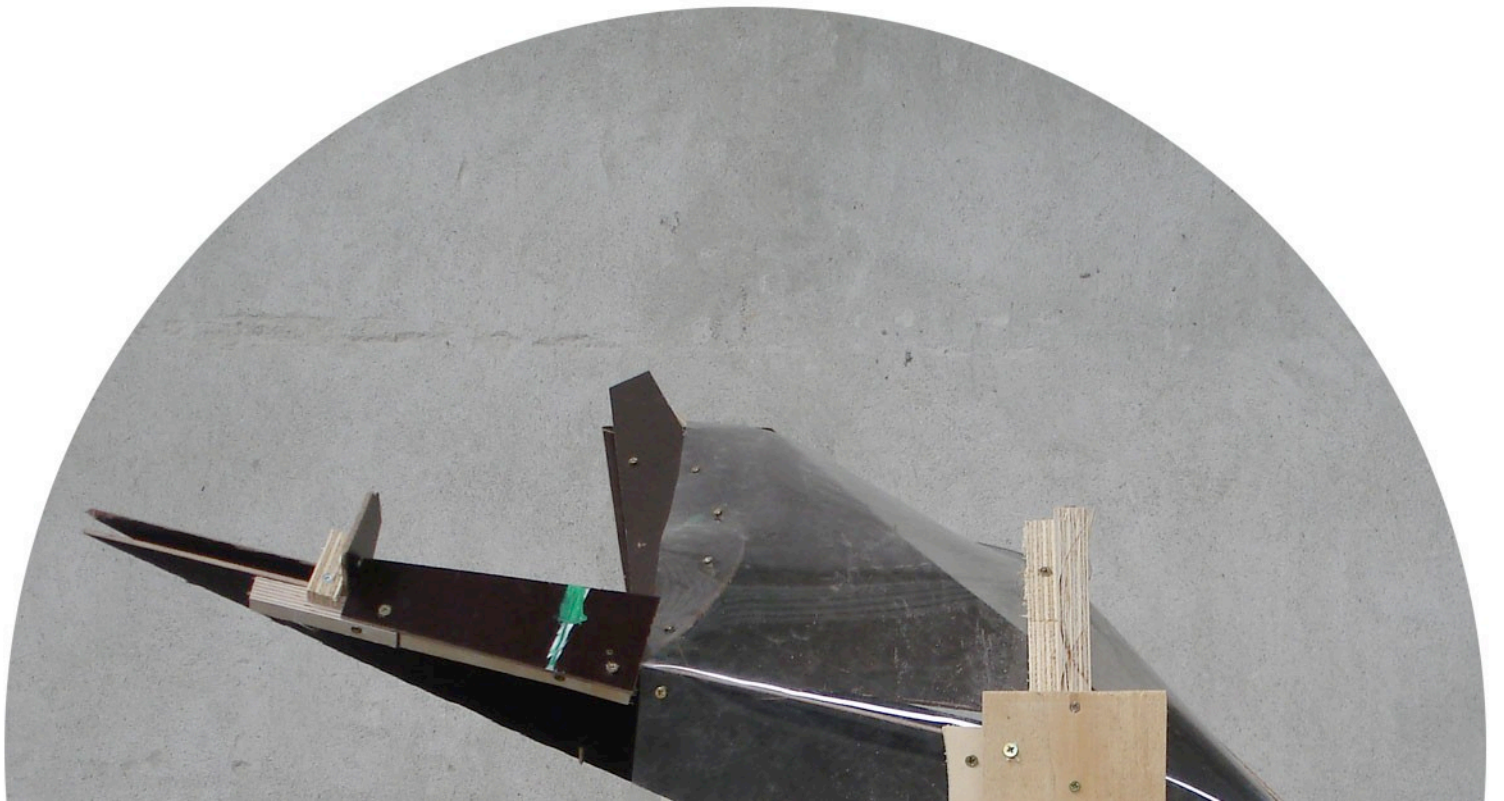




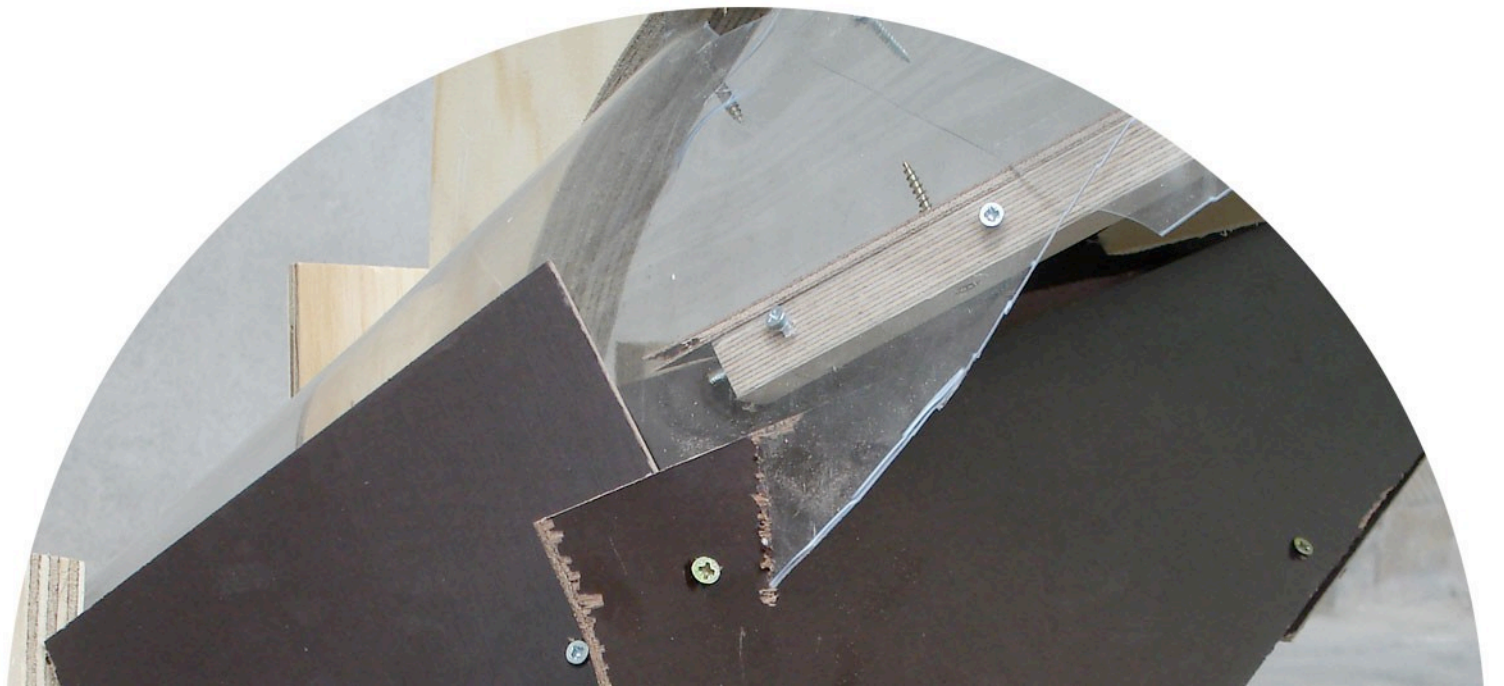






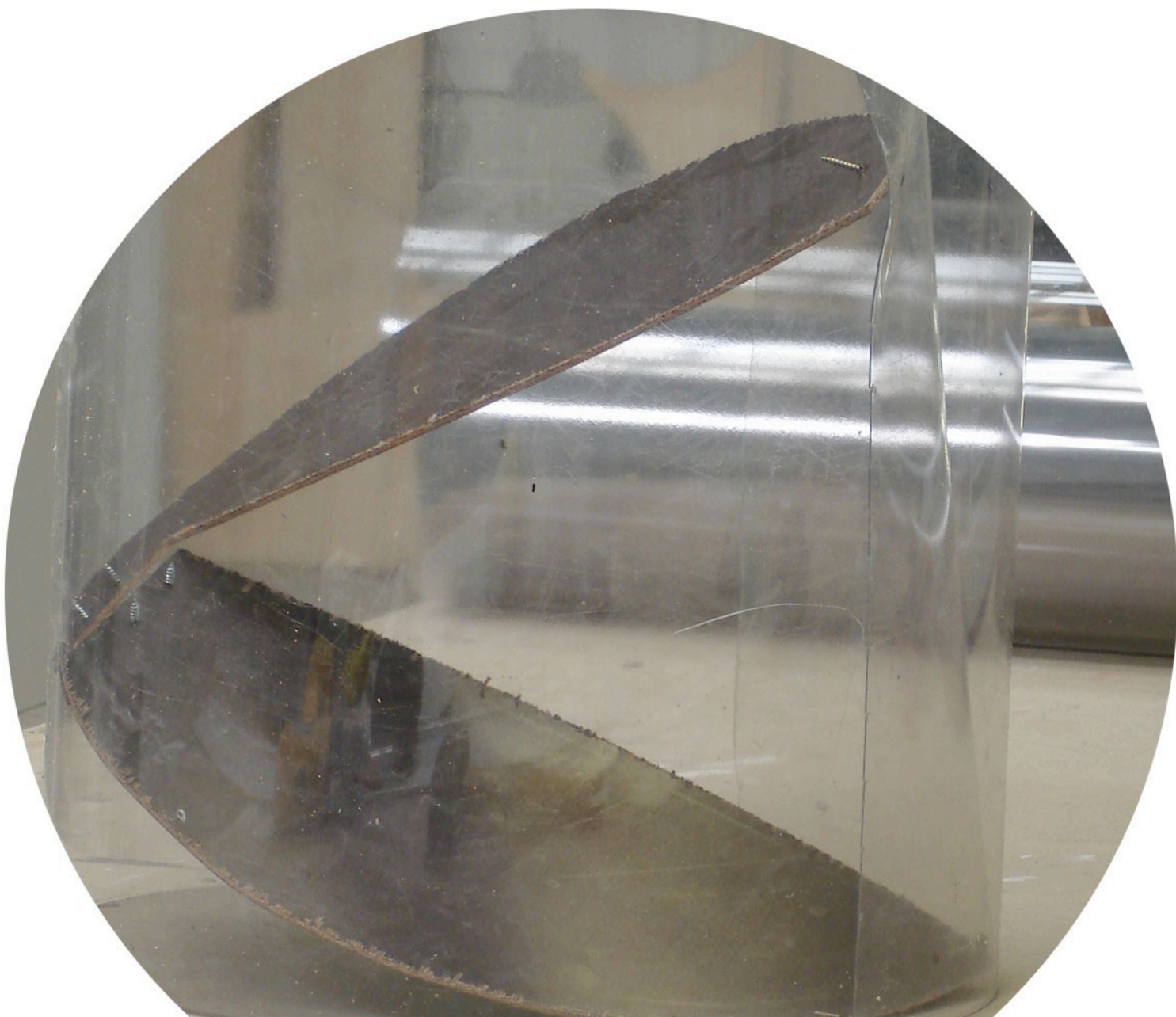


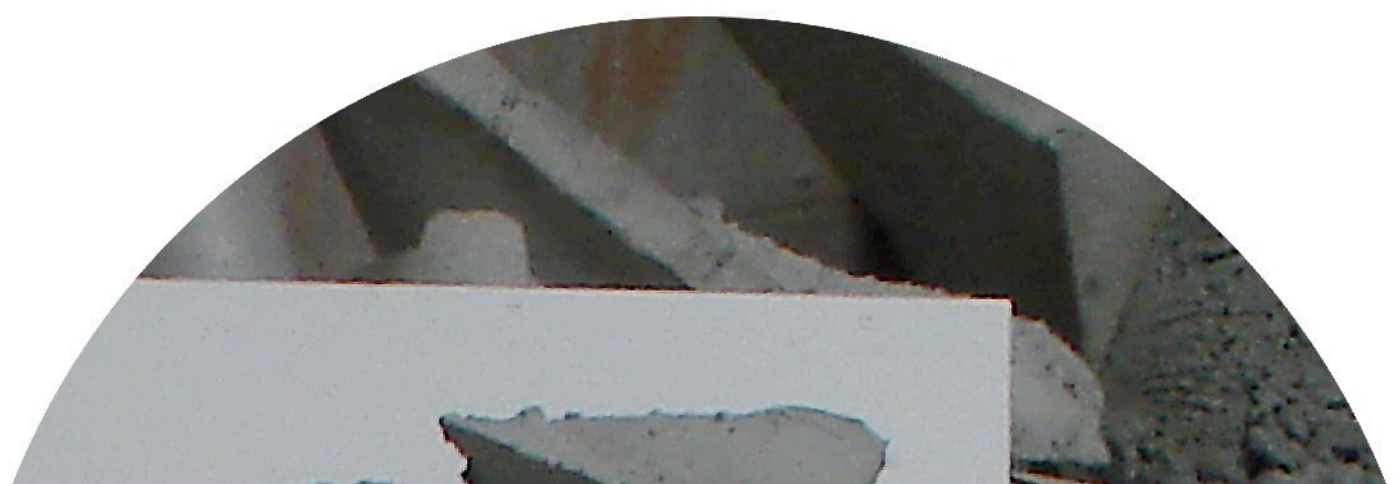


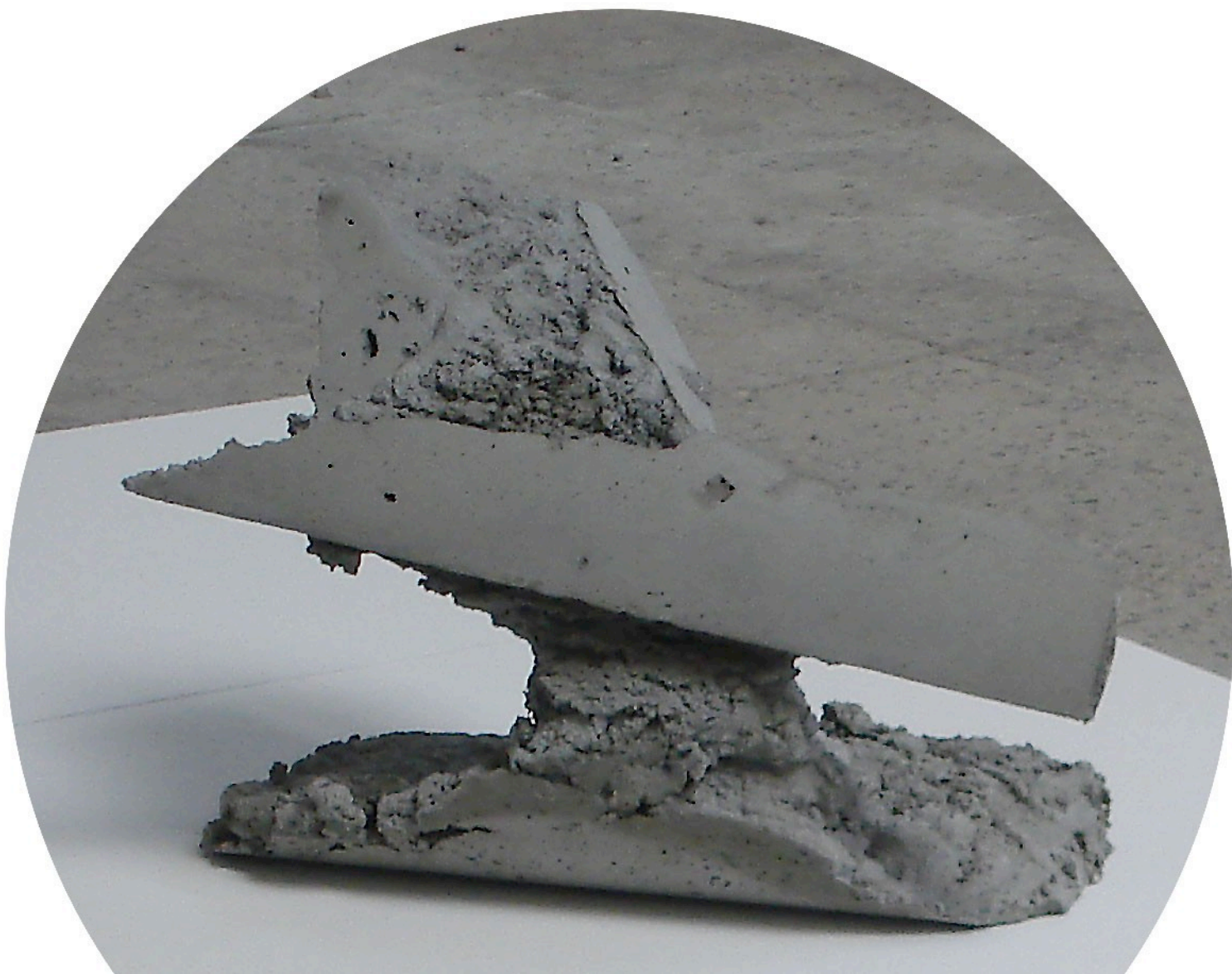








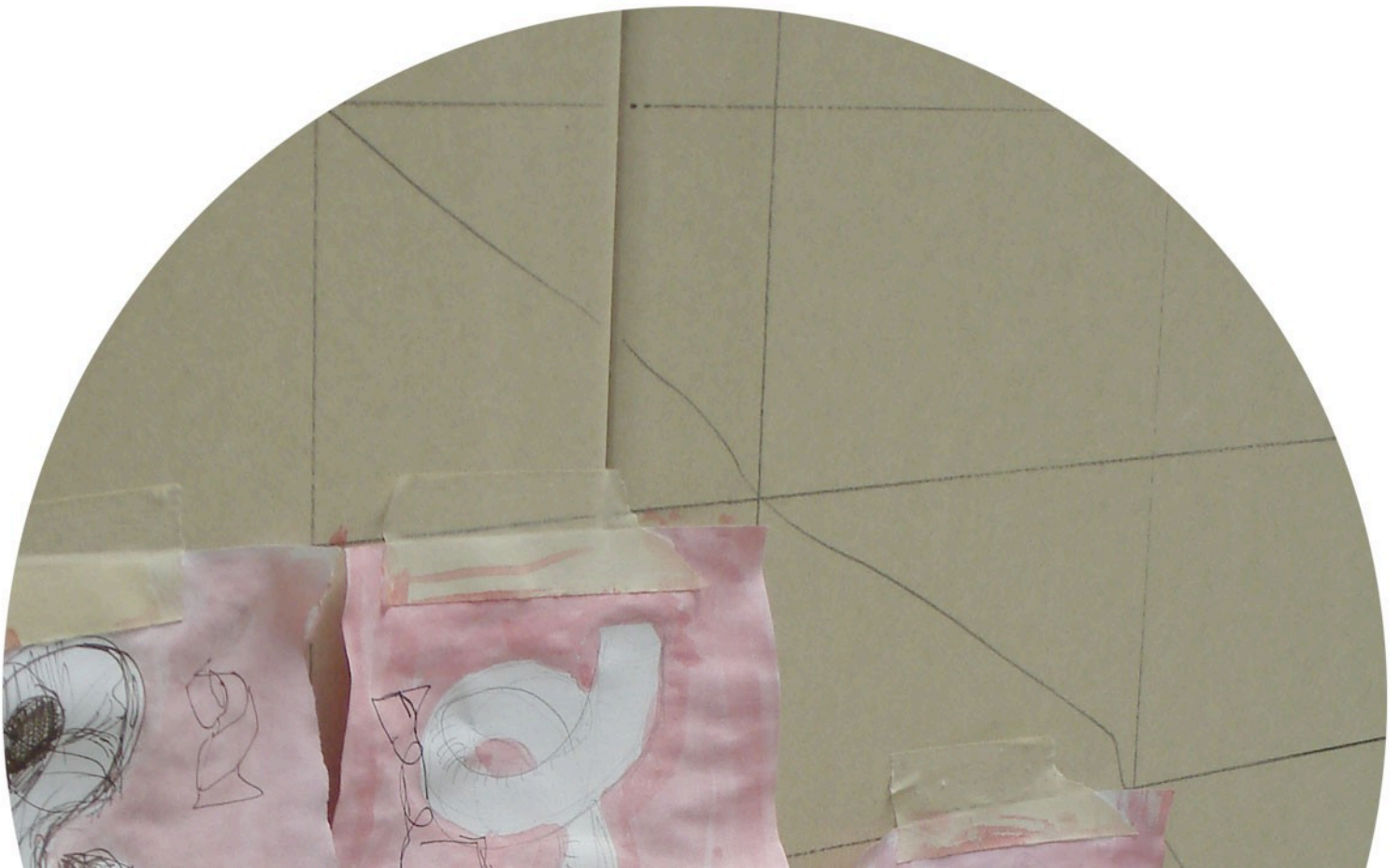


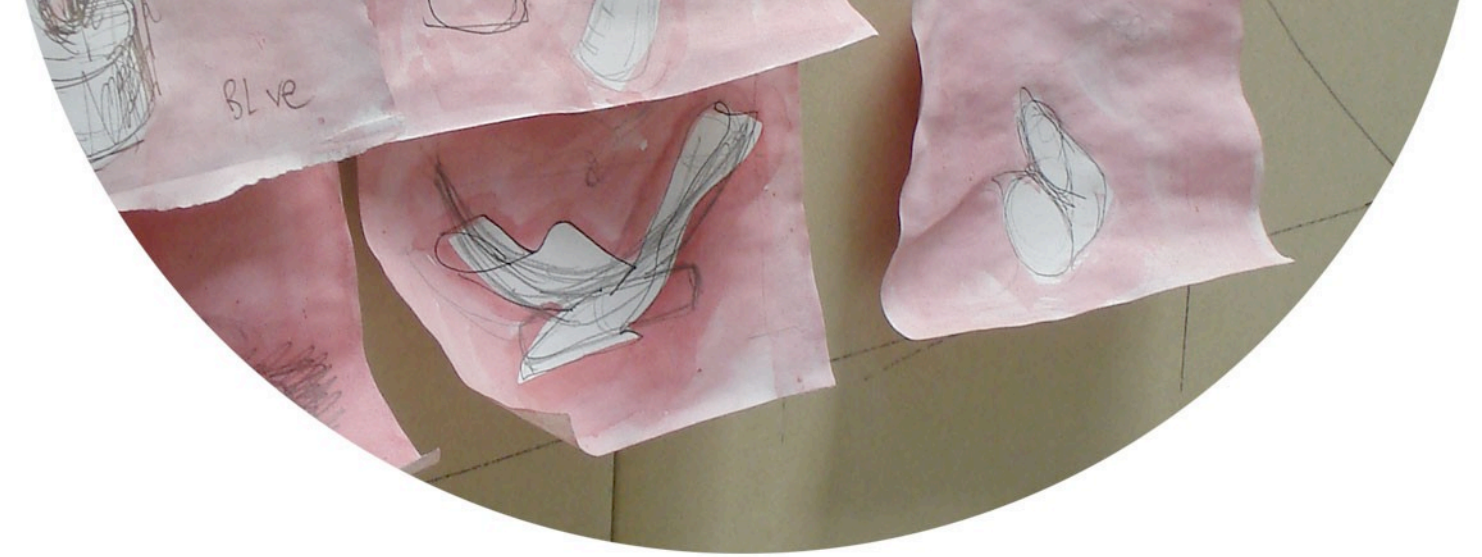


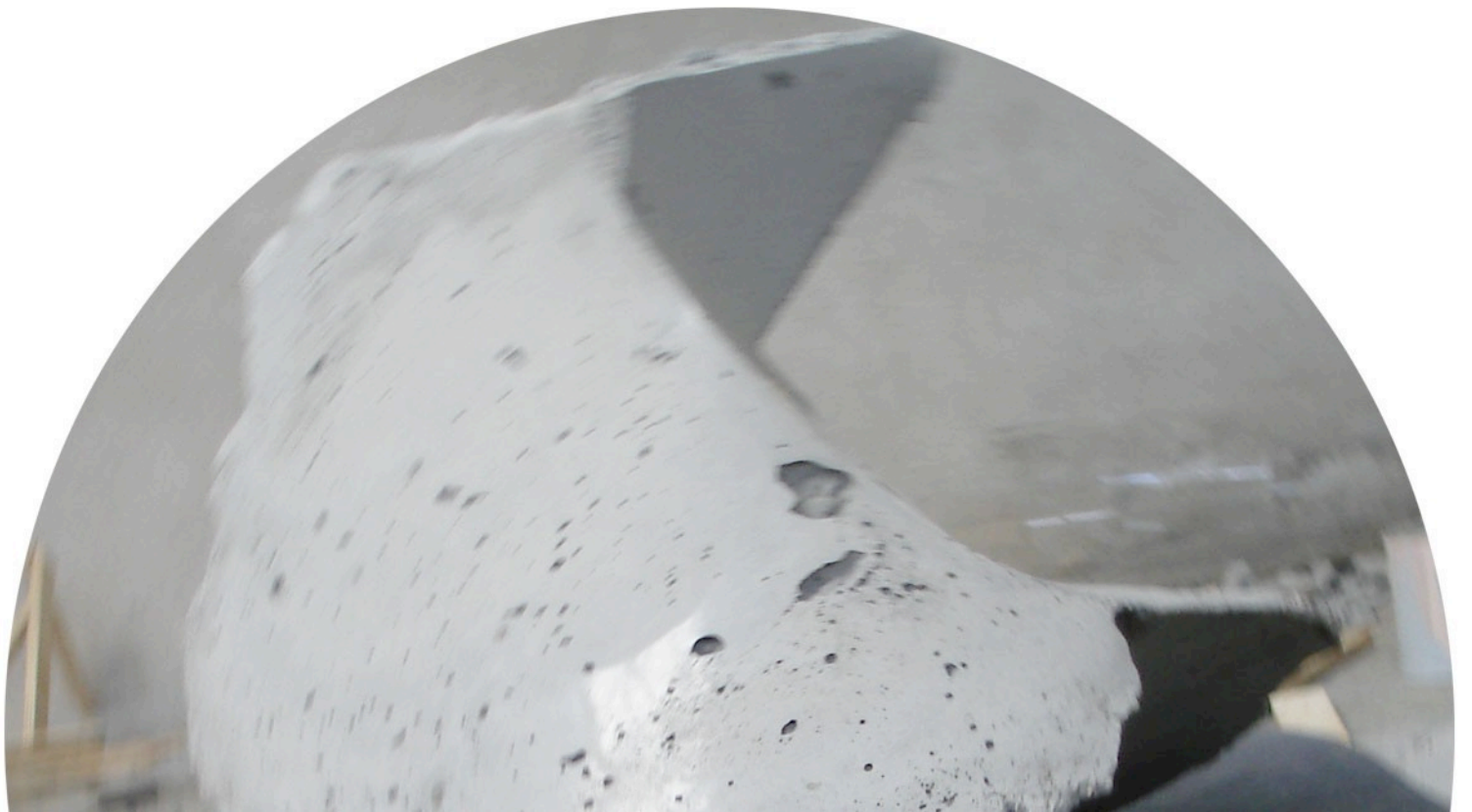


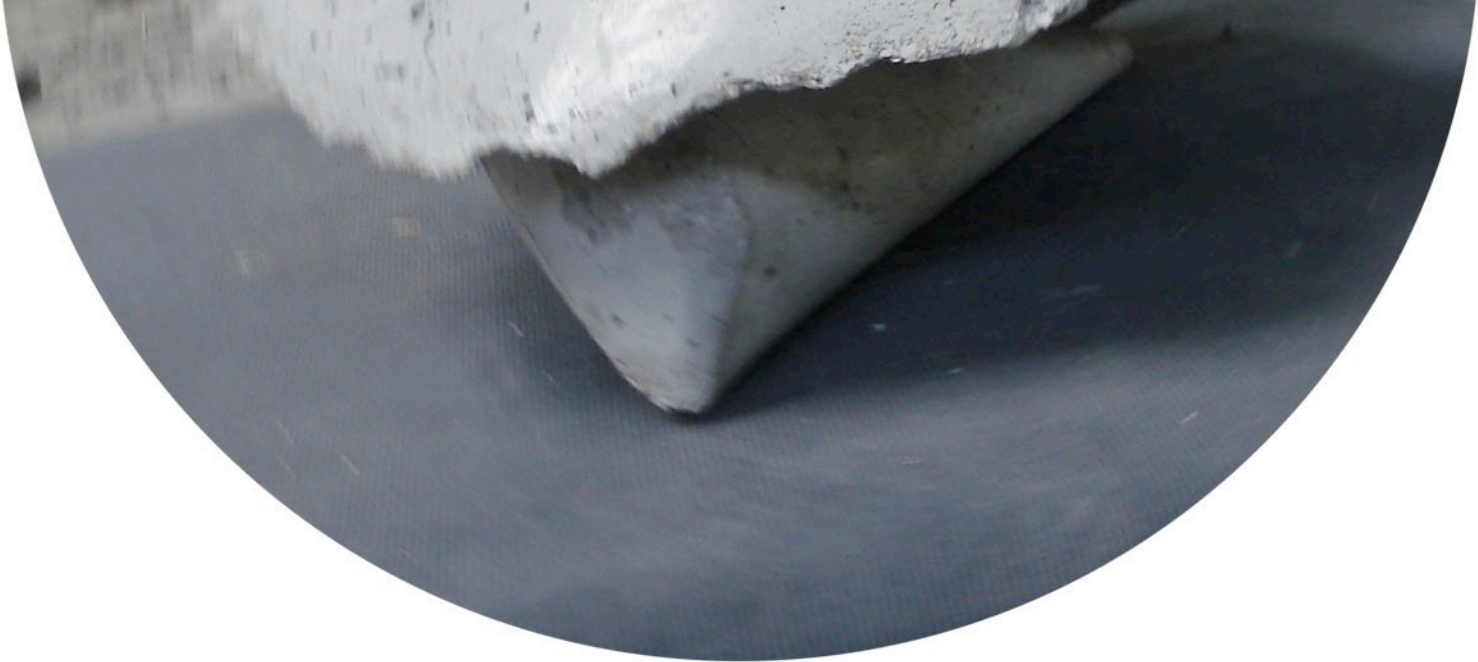
























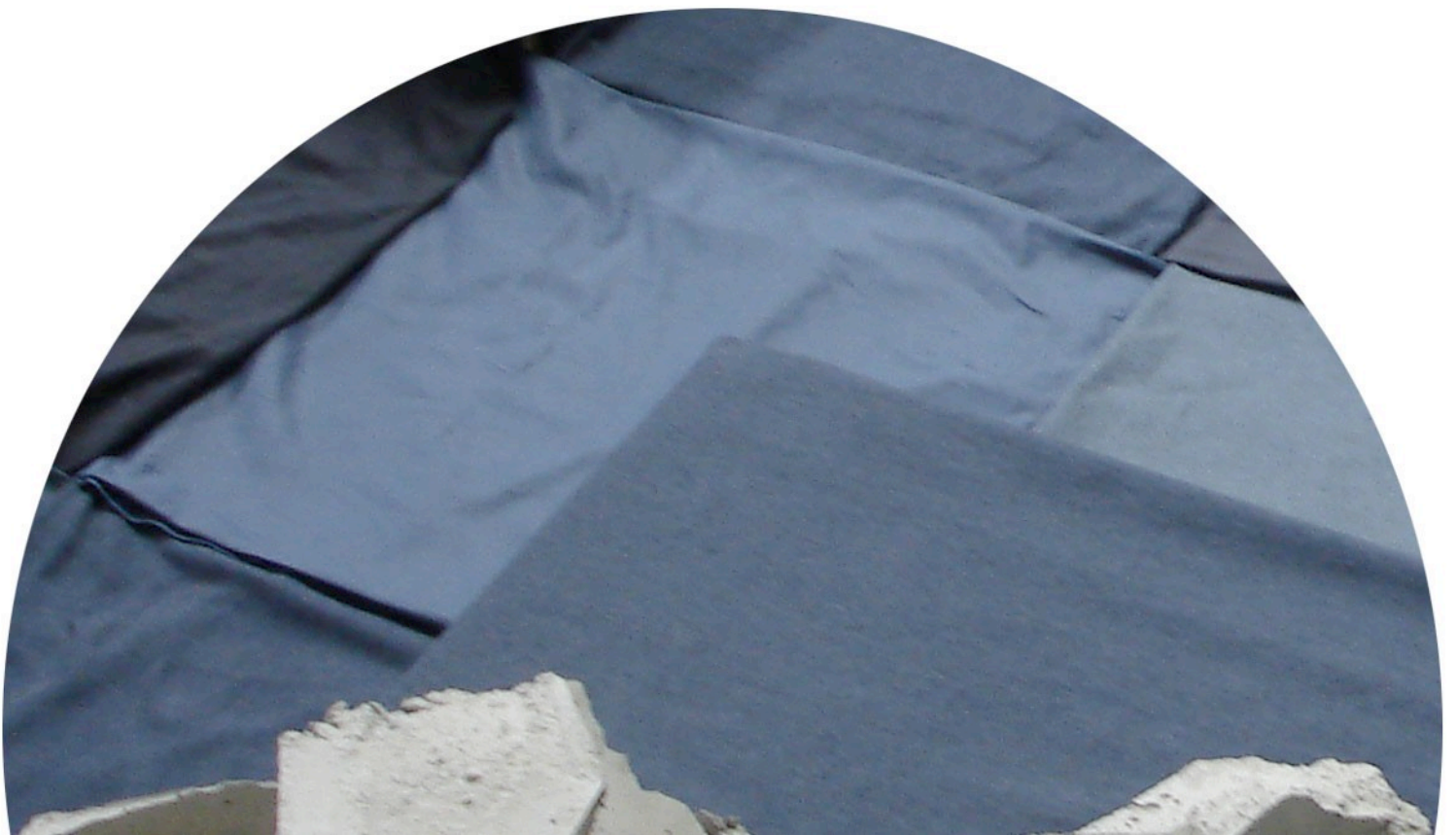














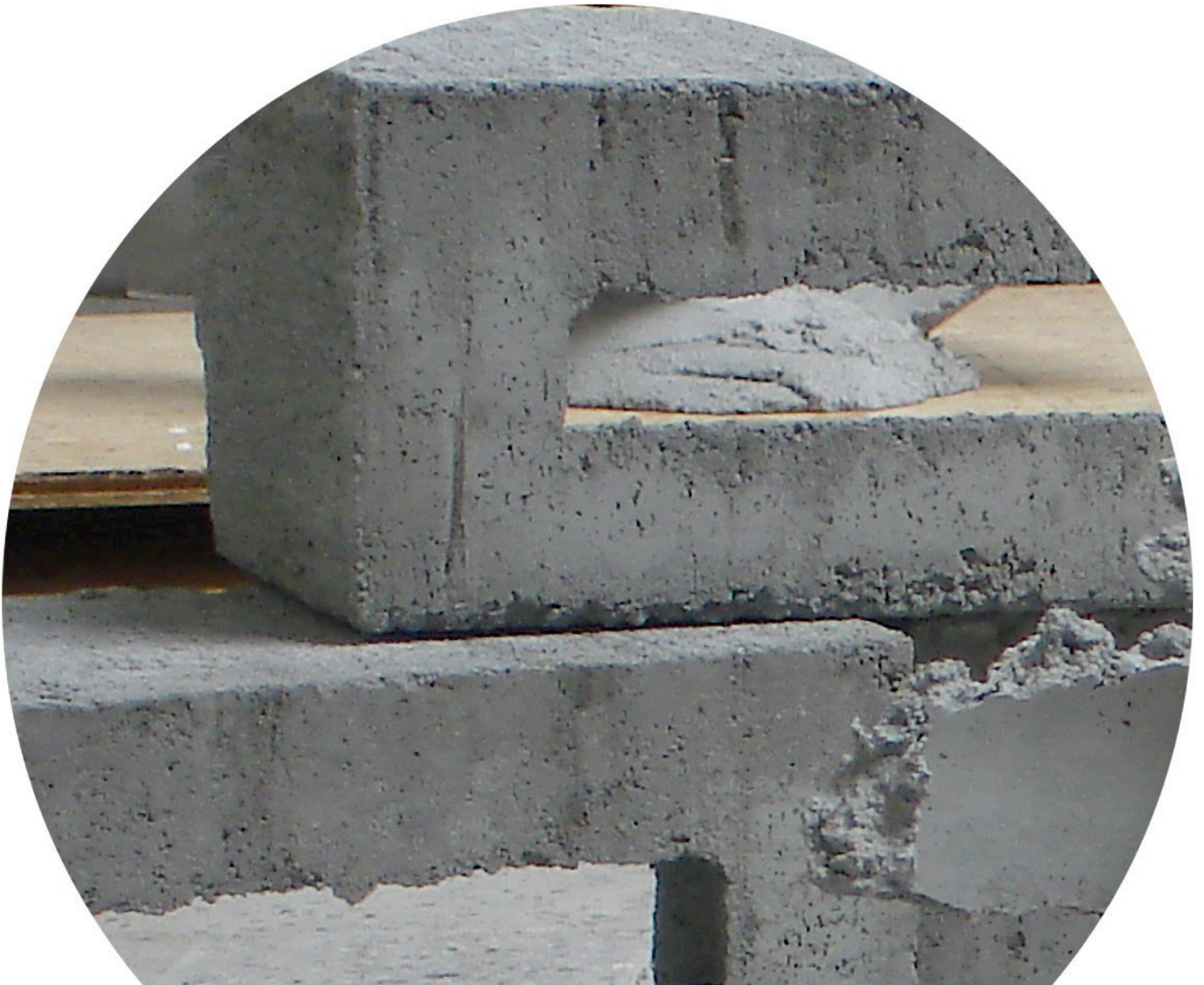




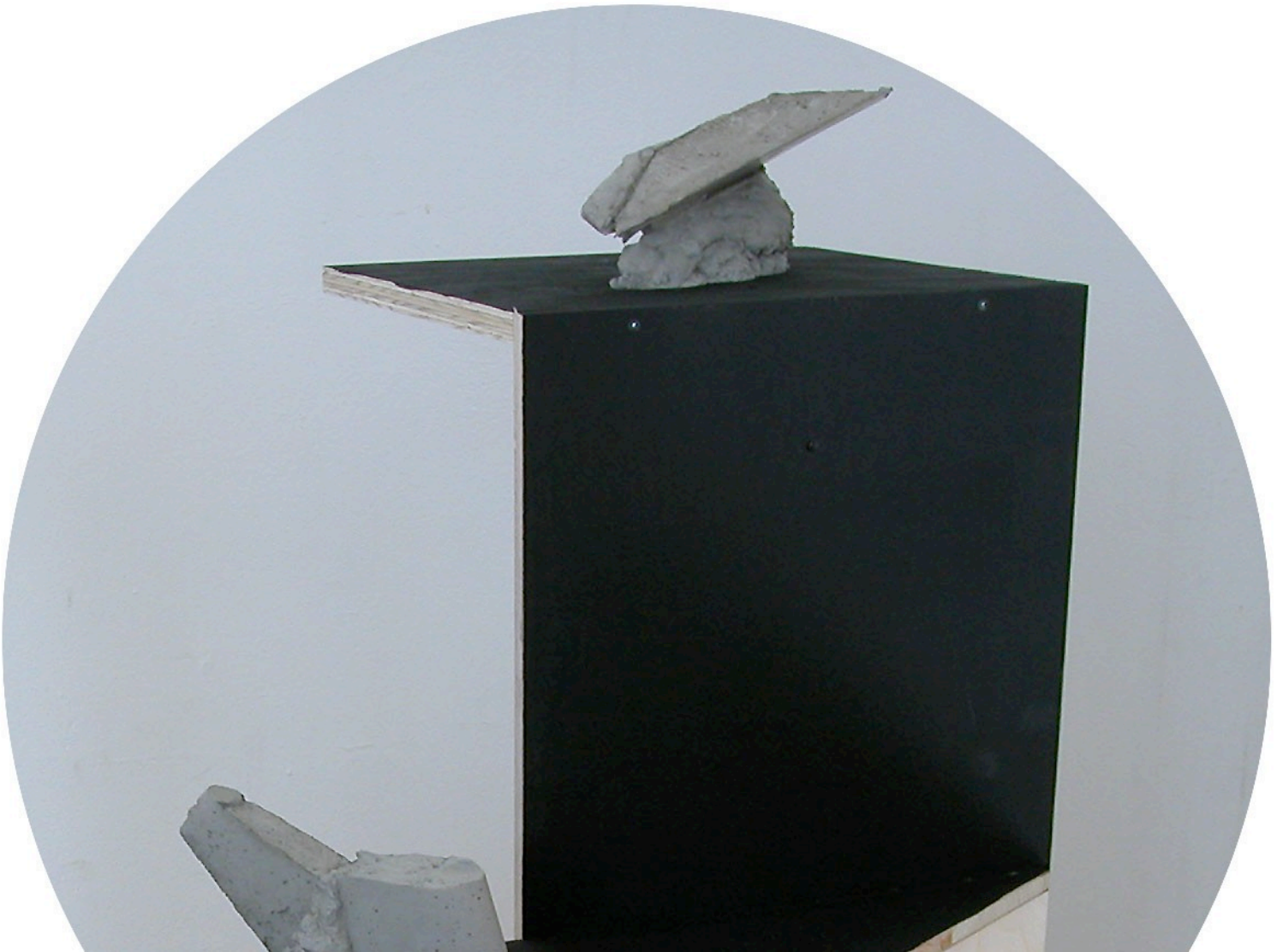




















Jennifer Allen
Jeroen Jacobs: Between Here and There

There are many ways to get a sense of the distance between two places: telephone rates, the duration of flights, even good old kilometers. Jeroen Jacobs uses concrete. It's an unlikely tool, yet Jacobs takes advantage of concrete's peculiar characteristic: totally malleable when wet; unmoveable when dry. With such polarized extremes of existence, concrete can measure only short distances: not between the artist's native Amsterdam and his chosen residence Berlin but between two of the various objects sitting on a table in his atelier. To cover all of the possible combinations – pencil to plank, pencil to paint tin, plank to paint tin and so on – Jacobs created a chart, like the ones in agendas that indicate the kilometers separating European capitals. The resulting sculptures – 1:1 concrete casts of the small yet real spaces between two objects, joined by a fragile grey pivot – have nothing realistic about them; it is difficult to imagine the objects, let alone the atelier, behind them. Their oddly shaped forms – made with clear plastic sheet casts – are not quite abstractions either, at least not as abstract as the incremental units that adorn, say, a ruler. It's as if Jacobs invented a new measure – not cubic centimeters but flinging, twisting, bending, arching units – for each sculpture. Too distinctive to be industrial, yet too mute to be the handwork of an artisan, the sculptures have both a haptic and an anonymous quality, much like a ruler that anyone might use with the hands.

There's a second set of sculptures, also in concrete but less visible than their flinging, twisting, bending, arching predecessors. Jacobs used a more traditional wooden cast – a miniature version of "shuttering" used for constructing buildings with reinforced concrete – to create a concrete frame (like four walls without a roof, nor basement), although the artist removes the shuttering before the concrete hardens. While the outer layer of shuttering is relatively square, the inner layer resembles an inverted pyramid, albeit missing its apex. The bottom perimeter must be wider than the top, so the concrete can harden on its own support; otherwise the form would collapse when the shuttering is prematurely removed. Appropriately, Jacobs uses the resulting brick-like frames – shaped by the support system of their own materiality – as a foundation to display the first set of sculptures, based on the spaces between objects in his atelier. Are the concrete frames sculptures or pedestals? These works seem to be both since there is a sheet of fabric that lies between the first set of sculptures on top and the second set underneath. The fabric might function as an ornamental mat, like a doily, which serves to underscore the auratic quality of the upper sculptures; the sheet could just as easily work as a protective cover, like the sheets on stored furniture, to prevent the lower sculptures from damage and dust. Despite concrete's solidity, its hardened surfaces remain fragile, always susceptible to scratches, chips and erosion.

Together, the sculptures and the fabric account for the move from the studio to the museum, from fabrication to display. In their conflicting roles, Jacobs's sculptures illuminate the space between aesthetics and usefulness – an unstable gap that haunts architecture, which tries to unite beauty and use. Jacobs wants concrete to be many things: an artwork, a support pedestal, a display unit, a material whose physical properties warrant exploration. Pushed to divergent extremes, each sculpture possesses a clumsy elegance, like an elephant pirouetting instead of lugging a caravan. But such an incongruous move seems appropriate for concrete. However universal as a construction material, concrete is one of the few products that has resisted globalization: Its market remains resolutely local, without export and import. What better way to honor concrete's remarkable fusion of ubiquity and locality than using the material as a measure for the space between the objects sitting before one's eyes?



All photographs were taken by Jeroen Jacobs at his studio in Berlin between 2005 and 2007