

Axiom

This is a short account of something that happened during the summer of 2001. After *a-ha* had re-formed as a band and the fans had finished roaring their approval, one of the three members of the group travelled to Copenhagen. There, in co-operation with good craftsmen, two important projects began to take shape. One involved glass, the other clay. The point of these projects was to explore the possibilities of these materials and search for solutions in relation to various art commissions. Why? Because Magne Furuholmen is impatient. On the one hand we have the ever-changing spectacle of the pop music arena – and on the other a silent, ever present need to express in visual terms. Visual forms that needed to be filled with *stories*, knowing that in the end, it is banality that awakens the most heartfelt emotions: “I love you!”

*“It has become second nature for me to float in and out of these two landscapes or modes of expression. Moving between music and visual art brings energy to each enterprise. In both cases one finds oneself wading around in the world of cliches. We need not forget that the history of pop music includes both Jimi Hendrix and Burt Bacharach – each perfectly valid modes of expression. Neither would it be correct to say that particular forms of expression are exclusively linked to the respective senses: there is good reason to claim that one can **see** music and **hear** images. -Music can conjure up images as surely as a particular image or picture can invoke a mood that is closely linked to a musical experience. Music is a time-thief, yet it needs a space in which to be experienced – art exists in space, but needs time in order to function.”*

Art is the result of adversity. One way of working is to choose materials and techniques that are in themselves so demanding and difficult that one needs to conquer and master these barriers before considering the actual working phase.

“Art work commissiones offer me an exuse for working with materials and techniques that have been stored in the “arsenal” I have built up over the years, but perhaps never had the courage to use. Choosing materials that “put up a fight” forces one into a state of desperation that also forces the work forward. One should not under

*estimate **panic** as a tool. I suffer from a well- developed panic of making no mark upon this world.*

Glass is fragile. It is easily broken. One can cut oneself and start to bleed. Magne Furuholmen likes the fact that glass splinters. Glass can be cut into pieces and put together in different ways. This is called mosaic. It can be painted. This is called glass painting. People have always been fascinated by transparent colours that are flooded with light. “*The Story*” arises at the meeting point between the expressive traces of the brush – created in an instant – and the time-consuming production process. The firing of the glass can take up to 3 days. The colours may appear to be heavy, rough even, but transparency renders them weightless, floating in space. One can hear the shattering aftermath of a volcanic eruption in the background. The fired clay is heavy, solid – glazing increases its durability and strength. – However, like glass, it too can be shattered.

“One thing the materials have in common is that they are brought to life through the firing process, carried out at extremely high temperatures. It’s as if one attacks the same problem from two different perspectives: the fragility of glass and the inert plasticity of clay. Both are finally locked, solidified in a form of expression that cannot be changed.

This process requires a great degree of fearlessness or blind confidence, if you like. Both working methods require an explicit leap of faith. The will to carry on, despite the fact that one recognises the intrinsic impossibility of the project - that is the clue! An artist who is too idealistic on his (or her) own behalf can be easily defeated or lose courage when he (or she) recognises the gap between ambition and ability. Another piece of mental chewing gum is the choice of ultra-traditional materials. Why choose to work with glass at all? Glass is in itself so beautiful that it is almost impossible to use!”

Large vessels placed in a curved line, echoing the hull of a boat – regimented, carefully calculated. One end of a six metre-long rope is anchored to the ground and marks out a circle. Yet another rope with a wider radius describes a larger area. These two lines meet at the widest dimension of the vessels – the larger circle creating the upper part, the smaller circle, the lower. Two almost identical hulls, but

different enough to create an interesting statement at the juncture between them. On the outside the vessels are decorated with an improvised drawing game where each line seems to be endless. Finally colours are applied. These colours can only be seen after the ceramic firing process has been completed. The vessels are like ancient *ampullae*: Vessels made to contain wine and precious oils. In order to see this, the viewer is obliged to continue following the line, the poem, from the outside of the vessel as it continues into the empty interior.

The Irish author James Joyce describes the idea in this way in his book “Ulysses”: “If anyone doubts that I am a god, when water turns to wine at my command – he shall receive no wine, but water my friend – when the wine I have drunk turns to water once again.”

*“I am the Lizard King – I can do anything, Jim Morrison ... When it comes to the question of form, the simply banal is always fascinating, because one so easily and immediately rejects it. So is there any point in trying to make something easy complicated, and vice versa? I know nothing until I’ve tried. I’m really more interested in the fact **that** I do, than **what** I do. It can be a good idea to have words like **perfidious** at hand. Seemingly unimportant or incorrect impulses can give rise to many things.”*

A game that seems to be based on chance alone is controlled by a hidden structure which supports it, just like music played “live”. It’s often more interesting to see **how** something is played than **what** is being played. The path towards the conclusion is the real message.

Not only adversity, but contrast too must be explored if something is to have a living presence.

“I believe in contrasts! In one way this is not a choice I have made myself, but more a result of who I am. Emotionally I am a kind of mixture between a sea-slug and a cockroach – as an artist I shift between being a production-happy, result-orientated aesthete, and a destructive, self-tortured sceptic. Playfulness and perfection, hand-in-hand – is that even possible? I do believe it is possible to move between different points on the artistic compass, yet still maintain continuity. This is not something I

think about as I work. The doubt and the questions I ask myself during the working process come from somewhere deep inside my spine - and in the end that's what I trust the most."

Although each vessel weighs over 100 kg, the force of gravity doesn't manage to capture this heaviness. The heart of the matter lies in this suspended moment, and instead of wine and precious oils, the vessels are full of stories.

I can see the silence and the *ampullae* become axioms – impatient claims...