

Sculptural Work: Jakob Jørgensen

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Written by:
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New sculptures by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.

With his first solo exhibition within the United States just around the corner, Jakob Jørgensen's sculptural works have grown – both in scale and ambition. These latest works mark his individual practices transition from a design led studio to one that is exploring materiality and the purely sculptural. What remains from his first tubular steel piece back in 2017 through to this latest collection is Jørgensen's inquisitive nature towards his chosen medium – heating, pushing, expanding, compressing and deforming the humble steel tube in order to create new expressions.



Faba bench by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.



New sculptures by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.

Around two and half years ago Jørgensen, along with his wife – designer Line Depping, and their son, moved from central Copenhagen to Denmark’s island in the middle of the Baltic – Bornholm. Surrounded by pastures, cliffs and beaches, the change in location brought with it more space to grow his sculptural practice. While his new home did not possess a large, unused barn he could re- purpose, Jørgensen has instead fashioned his workshop from an old garage and a new concrete slab – alongside his trusted assistant, a large forklift. While still practicing alongside Depping within the field of industrial and product design, Jørgensen notes how an initial steel tube project, created for the Danish Cabinetmaker’s Autumn Exhibition in 2017 marked a shift in how he perceived his solo practice, he explains;



Blitz lamp by Jakob Jørgensen. The Cabinetmakers' Autumn Exhibition 2017. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.

“The transition point between my more formal design education and these sculptural pieces was the Blitz lamp, where I still had a function in the work – I was still considering the design of these explorations into steel tubing... Now I don’t consider so much the functional abilities of my sculptural practice. With this latest exhibition, I have a confidence in my sculptural work, rather than trying to retain a connection between design and sculpture.”

The exhibition he mentions is *Take Root* at New York's HB381 Gallery – a new dedicated solo artist presentation space by Hostler Burrows. The exhibition opens 3 March 2023 and marks Jørgensen's most ambitious yet; gone are the functional remnants of his last solo show at Paris' Maria Wettergren Galerie in 2018 titled *Totem* – such as the monumental *Faba* bench. While *Totem* worked with smooth, blackened steel alongside details in wood, *Take Root* is more in touch with the rawness of the material and the elements, perhaps reflective of his move to Bornholm. The raw, cracked steel tubes used in this exhibition have been allowed to rust and decay naturally, and will continue to do so at differing rates depending on their final home. While jumping up in scale since 2018 has allowed further exploration into Jørgensen's methodical material interventions, it has also taught him to embrace the natural tendencies of the raw steel, as he explains;



New sculptural work by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.



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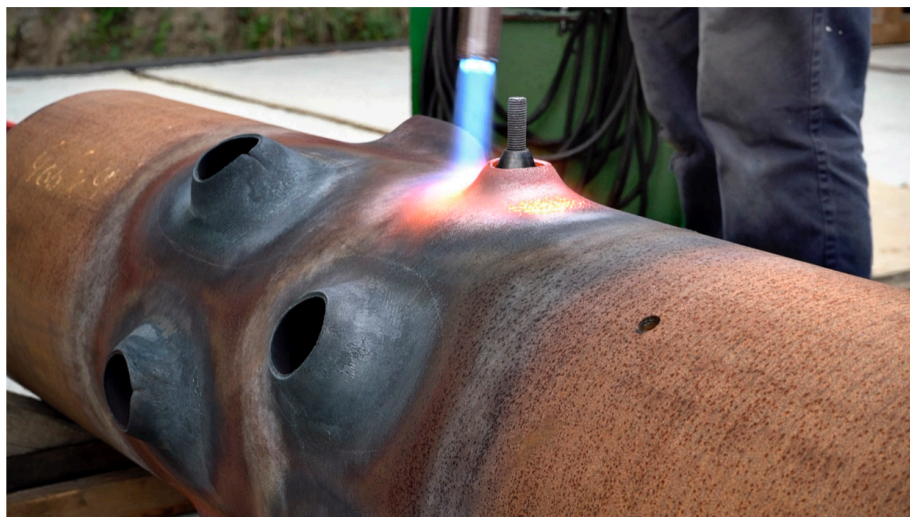


Sculture by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.

“When you start heating the material it totally loses control and form, where it was straight it starts to deform and crack... You either have to go with the material, or you will get lost in trying to make tools that can try to control it. In the beginning I had more control, but now because of the scale it is falling through my hands a little bit. At the same time the process is becoming a lot more interesting as the material becomes more alive and human in a way.”

As with every progressive step of Jørgensen's sculptural practice, *Take Root* presents the largest pieces he has ever produced. Each gain in size presents new challenges – from tooling, to transport and handling the raw material, and how to push the medium into new directions. While this new collection of works delves into the possibilities of positioning within the public sphere, with their likely final destinations including indoor and outdoor spaces – alongside private and public collections, Jørgensen's mind is already wondering about future endeavours that can take this standard, hollow round steel tube into its final form – whilst being realistic about the logistical hurdles he will need to make his ideas reality.

“My work is becoming more interesting as I start to work with these larger sizes; you get a more physical response. I think a lot about the ability of larger pieces to have interior and exterior spaces, the ability for people to walk inside. They are all hollow, so this is an ultimate ambition, but one I cannot realistically achieve without collaboration with a steel producer or a ship builder.”



Process, new work by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.



Process, new work by Jakob Jørgensen. Photo courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen.



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While humble in its essence, the simplicity of a hollowed steel form has allowed Jørgensen the ability to grow his practice alongside the diameter of the next tube he distorts. These imagined spaces offer another opportunity to grow and evolve his artistic endeavours in a way that may end up becoming a full circle moment – with scale bringing the chance to reunite his sculptural work with one of designs founding priorities, to create space and shelter. It is yet to be seen, but this latest exhibition paints the most complete picture yet.