



Art  
07  
mins. read

## Exploring Jakob Jørgensen's monolithic steel sculptures at HB381

Danish artist and sculptor Jakob Jørgensen discusses his recent solo exhibition *Take Root*, of monumental steel sculptures, at HB381, an art gallery in New York City.

by [Manu Sharma](#) | Published on : Jul 09, 2023

HB381, a [contemporary art](#) gallery in [New York](#), the [United States](#), exhibited *Take Root* from March 3-April 22, 2023. The [solo exhibition](#) featured sculptures by the [Danish artist](#) and designer Jakob Jørgensen, a highly regarded creative practitioner, hailing from Nyborg, [Denmark](#). Jørgensen studied Fine Art at The New Art School, Odense, Denmark and Guildhall School of Fine Arts in [London](#); he focuses on creating large steel sculptures that play with form and functionality. He is also a graduate of the Royal Danish Academy for Design, and has founded a design studio of his own. Jørgensen's work has been exhibited all over the world, in both solo and group shows. The venues he has presented at include Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris, [France](#); [Louisiana Museum of Modern Art](#), Humlebæk, Denmark; Designmuseum Denmark; and the 21st Century Museum in Kanazawa, [Japan](#). His enthralling work has also garnered him a great degree of acclaim, resulting in Jørgensen having been the recipient of numerous awards and grants such as the Finn Juhl Prize, the Bodum Design Award, and the IFDA Goldleaf Award.



*Branch Out and The Wound*, 2023, sculptural installation  
Image: Joe Kramm, Courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen, HB381

In conversation with STIR, the Danish furniture designer and artist explains that he is a "hands-on artist, deeply involved in the tangible material he is exploring as well as in the intellectual perspectives of a given project." Resistance is a key focal point for Jørgensen, who is thrilled when materials put up a fight, and he has to grapple and tussle with them in order to "bring out their core." The artist is committed to locating the very essence of the thing he works with, and extracting the form, however challenging that task may be. His process is one that is very personal to him, and often holds him enraptured for the duration of a project. It takes him to a meditative state, where there is little else save the artist, his material and the [sculpture](#) practice that binds them together.



A close-up of Jørgensen's work, 2023, sculpture  
Image: Joe Kramm, Courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen, HB381

skills by the Danish designer. These are often chairing or storage pieces, expands on the exciting position he occupies, explaining that he "works in a continuous cross-fertilisation between set and free tasks." Jørgensen the craftsman masters all that he undertakes, regardless of the materials he is working with. Thus far, these have included wood, stone and steel, and he ensures to delve deep into the possibilities of each of them, whenever the time to create an **art sculpture** arises. The artist has been the subject of a fair amount of coverage and discourse, with writers placing him as a brilliant master of matter who pursues an unmatched level of understanding over the materials that enter his hands. It is no wonder that the proposal he submitted to the Danish National Workshop in 2017 was accepted, and that its vast metalworking facilities became a former workspace for the artist.



Jørgensen's process for *Freedom Vessel*, 2023  
Video: Jakob Jørgensen, Courtesy of HB381

Initially graduating from school as a **furniture designer**, the artist has also trained as a **sculptor**, and the combination of these disciplines is on full display in *Take Root*. Jørgensen's brilliant work displayed here is built upon the artist's explorations with low carbon steel pipes, which sits at the very bedrock of industrial production the world over. These pipes are favoured for their durability and stress-resistance within the manufacturing, **urban planning** and agricultural sectors. If an audience member were to take the pieces in *Take Root* at face value, they might see little more than production materials, however, when one is to understand the transformational process they have undergone in Jørgensen's hands, these become "monolithic columns" that spark new thought on the twin idioms that the artist treads, and of course, on the possibilities that arise, provided the proper creative talent is applied, from the most commonplace materials even.



*The Tree*, 2023, sculptural installation  
Image: Dorte Krogh, Courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen, HB381

As the exhibition's curatorial note reminds us, the cylinder is a form that appears in nature, even though it may not carry the sleek perfection we associate with industrial production. Geometrically speaking, the cylinder is an abstract expression, but in nature, it can be found as a tree trunk or a similar structure, or even at a much deeper level; capillaries, membranes or such. The artist and his family would move out from the city to the Danish island of Bornholm, wherein he produced the **sculpture installation** pieces for the exhibition. As that transition took place, the form of the pipe began to lose its industrialised connotations, and increasingly returned to its more natural origins. A major challenge that arose for the artist during the production process was to develop an efficient way of managing both material and fuel. He experimented outside, on a concrete base, with a customised forge and hand-held torches to bring specific areas of the pipes to forging temperature. Temperatures needed to reach a blistering 950 degrees Celsius-1250 degrees Celsius for the steel to become malleable and workable, which forced Jørgensen to find a delicate balance between managing heat and pressure. Whenever he found himself failing to fulfil the material's demands, he saw it cracking: a visual that is at odds with the durability and endurance we associate with steel.



Portrait picture of Jakob Jørgensen, 2023  
Image: Dorte Krogh, Courtesy of Jakob Jørgensen, HB381

When confronted with the sheer scale of the work on display at HB381, one would be forgiven for feeling intimidated by the seemingly mechanical perfection of some of the angles, the ridges and the crevices of the pieces on display. However, we must keep in mind that this is all the product of one artist's imagination, and just as importantly, his crafting skills with fire and forge. When asked about his plans for the near future, Jørgensen tells STIR, "I would like to work on a bigger scale with steel tubes; there are many interesting possibilities when scaling up. You would be able to walk into the sculptures so they will also provide a special experience." This is a fascinating prospect and one that demands further exploration. We may only sit and wait in anticipation of further work from Jørgensen.

#### Manu ShaStirWorld - Exploring Jakob Jørgensen's monolithic steel sculptures at HB381.pdf

Senior Features Writer

As a writer, Manu mines the depths of the internet for subversive and evocative practices. He holds a Master in Asian Art Histories from LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore. Going beyond his digital and new media focus, his work also treads topics ranging from queer culture to the art birthed by...