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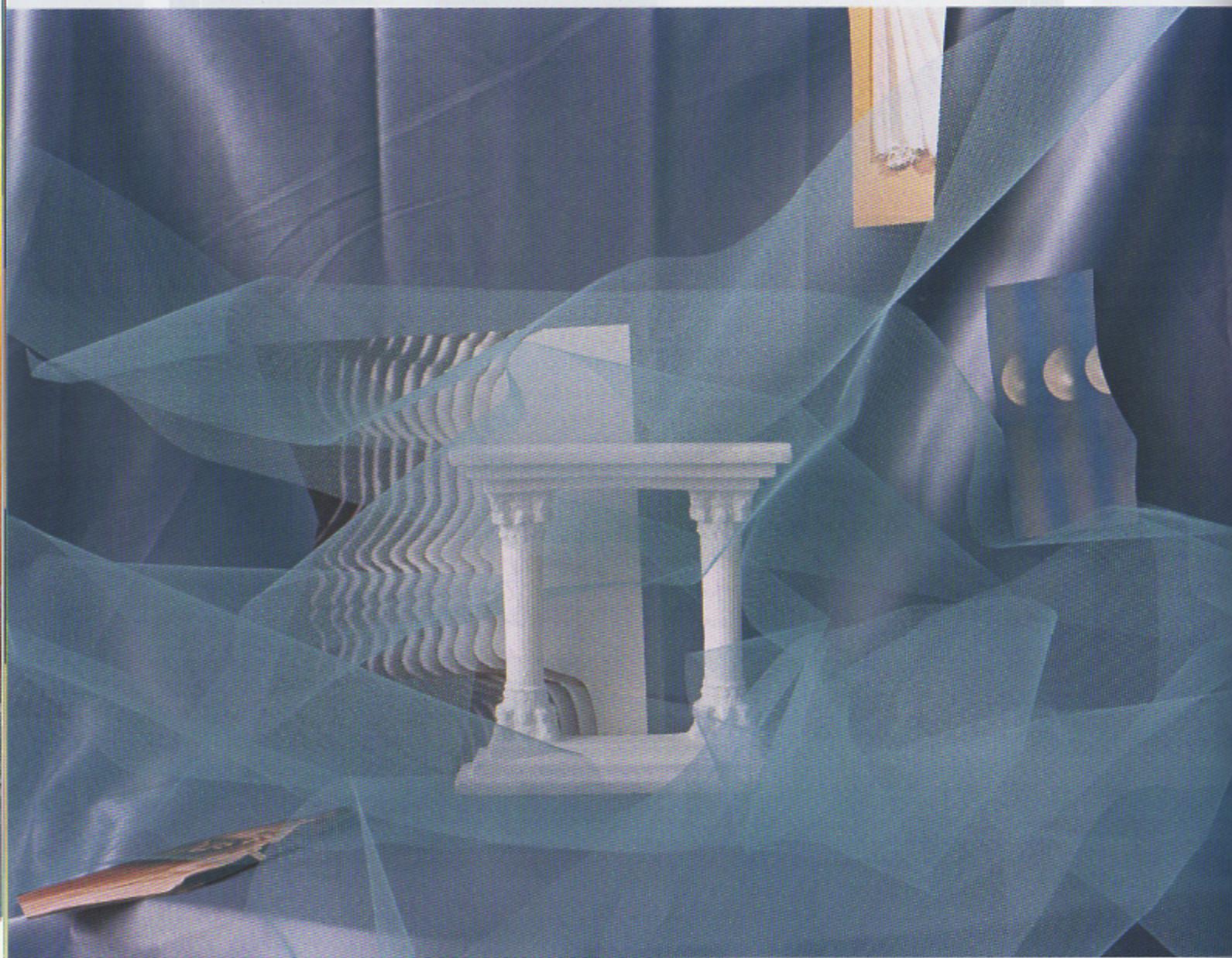
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Celia Perrin Sidarous

Interiors, Other Chambers



by Danielle St-Amour

Charlotte Moth

Living Images



"Composition of the Table", a pencil drawing
© Danielle St-Amour

rom September 26th to December 20th, 2015, Celia Perrin Sidarous and Charlotte Moth held separate, simultaneous exhibitions at the Esker Foundation in Calgary, Alberta. On November 8th, 2015, I attended a seminar with Eileen Myles at Mercer Union in Toronto called *How to Write Good*. In December, just before the closing date, I travelled to Calgary to see Charlotte and Celia's works. I corresponded with Charlotte over email over a few months while we both tried to find the best time to chat. During this time I was reading Lisa Robertson's *Occasional Work & Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*. Charlotte and I met briefly in Paris early May 2016 and emailed again a few days later. In late May, I recorded a Skype conversation I had with Celia: she in her studio, and me in my apartment in Toronto, Ontario.

SOME FRAMES

"Scaffolding is an analogy. It explains what a wall is without being a wall. Perhaps it describes the wall by desiring the wall, which is the normal method of description. But also the scaffold wants to fall away from support. Its vertigo is so lively. The style of fidelity of scaffolding is what we enjoy. It finds its stability in the transitions between gestures.¹"

The first work in Charlotte Moth's exhibition at the Esker Foundation in Calgary was a room of tables displaying images and texts, with colored plexi covering and supporting various documents. The documents included edits from Moth's ongoing project *Travelogue*—her generative, unfixed collection of architectural and natural spaces and their granular details. These were interspersed with selections from Austrian artist Raoul Hausmann's own "travelogues," a series of images he generated in Ibiza from 1933 to 1936², where he travelled from his home in Vienna to escape the increasing persecution of artists. Narrating the assemblage was a text by anthropologist Alice D. Peinado, excerpted by Moth, under plexi on clean, white, letter-sized sheets, distributed non-linearly throughout³. The title of this work was *Noting Thoughts*, 2011.

From an email exchange with Charlotte:

I think the main difference between a collection and an archive is this idea of categorisation, the fixing of meaning, or assertion of something in relation to something else, this is why I prefer the idea of *collection*. In my collection the *Travelogue*, it is unstable, how one image is understood or thought about one day can potentially be very different the next.

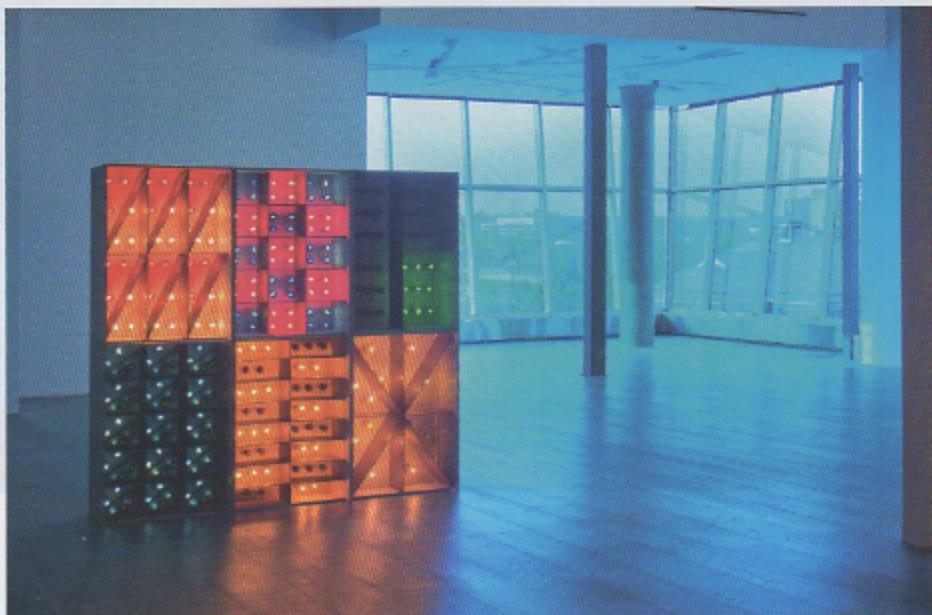
In a second room, Moth's film *Filmic Sketches*, 2015, played alongside a vitrine full of images, titled *Inserts*, 2015, a revision and reiteration of a nearly identical display structure compiled by Moth mounted simultaneously in the Tate archives. At the Tate, the vitrines housed work from Moth's exhibition "Choreography of the Image," wherein Moth

began with an archive image Hepworth took of her sculpture *One Form (Single Form)*, 1937, and expanded outward: using additional material from the archive, alongside her own photographs from Hepworth's studio, the Palais de Danse (where Hepworth moved her sculptures freely about on wheeled plinths), Moth addressed concepts of staging and positioning, thinking openly about how documentation might create, alter and illuminate environments and contexts.

Danielle St-Amour: A word used by both you and Charlotte is this word choreography. Charlotte sent me a note about her ideas about this word. She wrote, "I really first used this word when properly discovering the work of Barbara Hepworth. Her sculptures sought to articulate, or organize a passage in time and space for the viewer around the sculpture. In this sense there is a direct engagement that makes the sculpture something that is not representational, it is not a substitute for experience, but is something that creates it."

Celia Perrin Sidarous: The way that I was thinking about it ... in the studio physically there's always a dance. I am moving the objects and then photographing them and then moving them again and then photographing them⁴... To me, choreography is something that develops in space, but it's also something that develops in time. I was thinking about it in that way, the idea of choreography as something that—when successful—changes over time. And the more you look at it the more it changes. The kind of transformation that happens in the photograph is something that I think is similar.

In *Filmic Sketches* hands hold needles like a cat's cradle between fingers, water condenses on a window, plants move in the wind. Exiting this room, cast bronze hands gently consider straws, examining their shape, feeling and framing them.



Page 24: Celia Perrin Salaroos, *Nuit*, 2015, inkjet print on matte paper, 102 x 122 cm, courtesy of the artist and Parisian Laundry, Montreal. Page 25: Charlotte Moth, *Buying Images*, 2015, Co-commissioned by Ester Foundation and The Banff Centre; created with the support of a Paul D. Fleck Fellowship residency at The Banff Centre; photo by John Dean. This page: Charlotte Moth, *Sculpture Made to be Filmed*, 2013, collection of Centre national des arts plastiques (France). FNAC 2013.0101, photo by John Dean. Opposite: Celia Perrin Salaroos, *Chorégraphie de la main et du pied*, 2014, inkjet print on matte paper, 76 x 102 cm, courtesy of the artist and Parisian Laundry, Montreal.



In a third room, the gallery lights are gelled blue. The space is occupied by two framed images facing each other from opposite walls: a photograph of a famously empty plinth in a park in France, devoid of its sculpture⁵ faces a photograph of a photograph of a Modernist house in Poland that's been printed, framed and hoisted on posts in a forest where said house once sat, was occupied, and then subsequently demolished.⁶

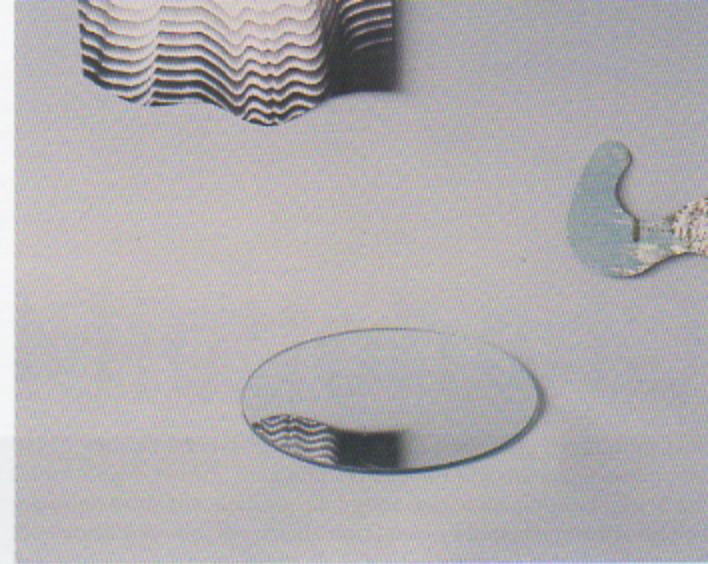
Danielle St-Amour: I did a writing seminar with Eileen Myles, which happened just before I saw the shows at the Esker, and I got very excited about Eileen's definitions, which took up the first half-hour of the seminar. She said—I'll paraphrase from my notes—poetry is play-shaped language. With poetry, the negative space becomes a place of possibility, its subject is allowed to be aerobic, it is the inflectional space forced to the fore. This is the space where all of the peripheral and marginal thoughts can happen and are given room. Room to change. She also said ALL SUBJECTS ARE FUGITIVE. You're in constant pursuit of the subject. Not to capture it, but to surround a subject with a negative space that can frame it, shape it, can allow it to keep an aerobic quality. The shape of a thought, but also the negative space to fill with correlate thought.

Celia Perrin Sidarous: In any practice where you're trying to

It's important that the idea remains open, and have specificity without being specific.

Celia Perrin Sidarous

talk about something without naming it, constraining it, where you're talking about the peripheral things, this is important. The idea persists that a photograph captures something and that is absolutely not what I am interested in. That idea of decisive moment, it doesn't apply to the way I make images. It's important that the idea remains open, and has specificity without being specific. I've been lucky that the people who have written about my work understood this, that there's a risk of explaining away or flattening the images, which is something I am trying always to avoid in the work itself. It's not an easy thing to do at all! You're always looking for the space around the thing you are saying, pointing to that instead. She's great, Eileen Myles! I like



this a lot.

Danielle St-Amour: And when you were saying that objects are necessarily changed by being photographed ... is this a problem for you?

Celia Perrin Sidarous: I am interested in it, but it is not a problem;

it's an ongoing investigation. What can this simple thing do? There is an element of magic in that. But it's not about tricking. I take many, many photographs—and this is part of it too—and then the project is to figure out which one is the right photograph, because it has a quality that the others don't have. What are the best steps toward this idea?

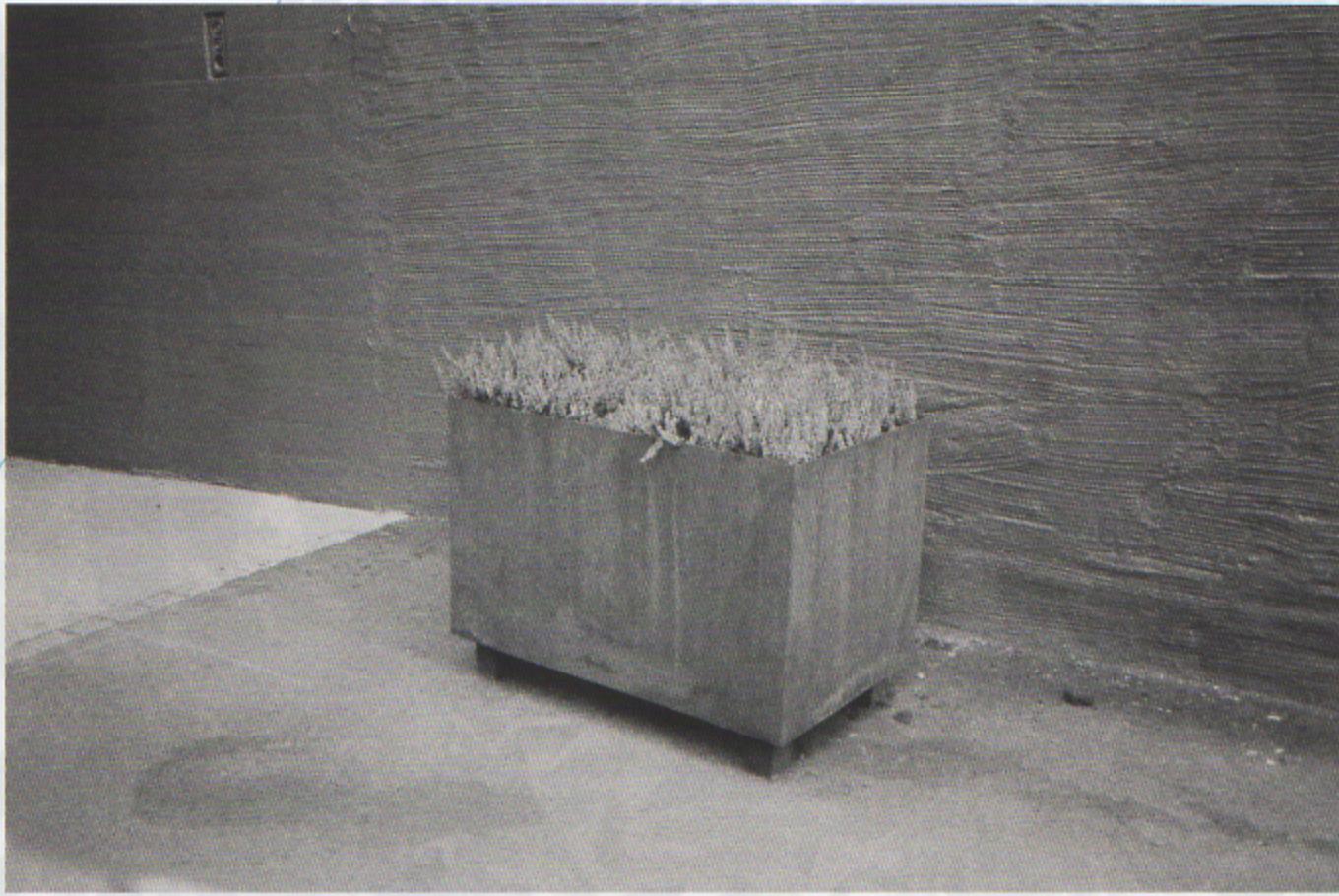
Danielle St-Amour: What are the criteria that you use to decide this?

Celia Perrin Sidarous: It's intuitive. The relationship is about the images and the exhibition space, the images and the architecture, the images and each other—all work together in a constant puzzle that is ambiguous until it isn't. The slowness of wanting to look is important, I think. I need the slowness of that idea, of looking over time.

Further still, Moth's film *Story of a different thought*, 2014, extrapolates on a building in Marl built to be suspended from above, interspersed with still images of a house constructed on an isthmus on Lake Manitoba built to react, to shift at its foundation on the occasion of a flood. In this way she introduces the ideas of support: suspension, flotation, changeable success and failure in architecture, that encircle the notion of *Figura* that is central to Moth's practice. These ideas find further bodies in the vertiginous network of images, diagrams, drawings and small maquettes that constitute the remainder of Moth's exhibition.

This network, or constellation-making, has a visible reverberation. Objects and subjects are changing, living,





Opposite top: Celia Perrin Sidarous, *The Waves*, 2015, inkjet print on matte paper, 76 x 90 cm, courtesy of the artist and Parisian Laundry, Montreal. Opposite bottom: Charlotte Moth, *King Thoughts*, 2011, installation detail. Photo by John Dean. Left: Celia Perrin Sidarous, *Ostia Structure IV – Box*, 2013–2015, inkjet print on matte paper, 25 x 39 cm, courtesy of the artist and Parisian Laundry, Montreal.

enlisted in an effort to guide viewers both inward and outward toward new connections, a reorientation of causal histories. These are frameworks for thoughts, of how one might trace connections, possible arrangements of understanding. Folding, supporting, suspending, changing, repeating and disappearing a shifting chorus of constituent subjects.

Danielle St-Amour: I felt similarly about experiencing both yours and Charlotte's exhibitions as I felt about Myles' seminar. Which happened just before! In the environments of the exhibitions and the seminar both, I felt overwhelmed by ideas—I couldn't see a clear narrative. But I am constantly returning to all three, thinking, oh, this is like that idea, this is like those ideas, which feel different each time I recall them. They are fully formed, but they refuse to be instructional. Charlotte's show was so expansive, yours was so intimate. But they both did the same thing for me. Like short and long versions of the same thought about this negative space.

Celia Perrin Sidarous: These ideas are precarious, delicate. You have to be sure not to crush them. They are fragile. There's a special kind of attunement, I think. It's really difficult, but I think you can tell when it happens and when it doesn't. This kind of narrative is something that you know, that you can grasp onto when you've encountered it. To make it work, there is a level of abstraction where you're not necessarily voluntarily concealing or pulling away information. It's about a way of looking that can positively abstract. I don't want to make the narrative come from me; I want the narrative to come from the images, and to be circular and not linear. Or maybe to be a spine. This is the way that I want to think about images.

"Thus the scaffold promises practically everything to the architect both languorous and alert. Then it disappears. As for us, we too want something that's neither inside nor outside, neither a space nor a site. In an inhabitable surface that recognizes us, we'd like to gently sway. Then we would be happy."⁷

Charlotte Moth: *living images* and Celia Perrin Sidarous: *Interiors, Other Chambers* exhibited at Esker Foundation, Calgary, Alberta from September 26 to December 20, 2015.

Danielle St-Amour is a writer and artist living in Toronto, Canada.

Notes:

1. Lisa Robertson, "Doubt and the History of Scaffolding," in *Occasional Work & Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*, (Portland, Oregon: Clear Cut Press & Lisa Robertson, 2004), 163.
2. "In 1930 Hausmann began working systematically with photography, a field he developed further when he emigrated to Ibiza in 1933. For a prolonged period of time, these documentary photos and phototechnical experiments were the only activity Raoul Hausmann could follow relatively unrestricted. As a banned artist, Hausmann was always on the run until 1944. From Spain he went to Zurich in 1936 and then on to Prague in 1937. A year later he went to Paris and then via Peyrat-le-Château to Limoges, where he finally settled. Raoul Hausmann lived there in isolation until his death in 1971." From Raoul Hausmann's biography <http://www.raoulhausmann.com>.
3. Text (in fragmented form) from Alice D. Peinado's "Continuous Trajectories—Broken Utopias," Bleckede 2009 / Rochechouart 2011 (2011).
4. As Barbara Hepworth describes to Reg Butler, "I had a curious image of your sculptures stalking in [my] garden, walking, dancing round solid lumps of rock in my yard, all waiting to be carved." She continues, "There's no limit to the materials one can use, but the great thing is to make this live image."^[1]
- [1] Broadcast on 26 August 1952 on the BBC Third Programme, *Artists on Art*, and was originally published in *Barbara Hepworth: Writing and Conversations*, ed. Bowness, Sophie (London: Tate Publishing, 2015), 49.
5. ...this was the plane—the variously large and accentuated, but always exactly determined plane—from which everything would be made..., 2012.
6. Willa Niespodzianka (*Villa Surprise*), 2012.
7. Lisa Robertson, "Doubt and the History of Scaffolding," in *Occasional Work & Seven Walks from the Office for Soft Architecture*, (Portland, Oregon: Clear Cut Press & Lisa Robertson, 2004).