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The Pebble in My Pocket

I have a persistent habit of carrying a pebble in my pocket, letting it passively participate in my journey through life. I reach for it whenever I find myself faltering; my hand slides into my pocket, and I turn the pebble over and over. I achieve a sense of solidity and grounding from the repetitive motion and feel of it, as if my sense of “being” in relation to my surroundings becomes more tangible when I touch something as concrete as a stone. Every pebble I carry is replaceable; never consciously selected; it is picked up on an impulse ruled by intuition.

Back in the spring, I went on a trip to Oslo with the research network behind this book. While I found myself immersed in the sharing and production of knowledge during the trip, I was also in a constant state of overwhelm – by information, interactions, and sensory impressions. The research network group went on a guided walk through the campus of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences after a day of intense workshopping, which I had yet to fully process. I remember the campus as sprawling with lush vegetation behind the astounding historic buildings, and I was nearly paralysed by my humility and awe at the site and the situation.

We walked along with the sharp rays of spring sunshine illuminating our surroundings, and somehow the sound of chattering people seemed to be intensified too.

On this walk, I recognised that I was overwhelmed but also bursting with both gratitude and vulnerability. Experiences such as this took me out of my personal and professional comfort zone and expanded me in one way or another, stretching or bending my horizons.

The situation made me reach into my pocket, and I flicked the stone around in my hand, inside the lining, noticing it warming up from my touch. The continuous motion helped me to maintain my attention to the details of my surroundings, and I was able yet again to absorb and digest the conversations around me: conversations about how the lack of archives of work by female architects had led to societal amnesia concerning these women. . . as well as architecture *for* women. . . and the value of feminine approaches to architectural matters.

My eyes fell upon a specific pebble on the gravel path, and instinctively I wanted to pick it up to replace the pebble currently in my hand.

The actual appearance of any of my pebbles is unimportant in and of itself. In hindsight, what was important was the impulse that arose on that campus in Oslo among those people participating in that exact experience: a collective and sensitive exploration of the professional creation of space by recognising and reflecting on work previously done by women throughout time. A collective curiosity and

spirit arising from conversations, questions and reflections regarding the work of female landscape architects.

What was important in this network was the plurality of beliefs, which complemented and conflicted with one another but converged to become a myriad of questions to be explored rather than answered; the open, intimate, self-critical dialogue, and the recognition of one's constant contact with one's surroundings and its effect on the professional work of both men and women. It was the first breath of a conversation about how social construction impacts on our embodied experience of the world and thus all knowledge production; how women in landscape architecture have historically impacted on their surroundings; how embodied spatial creation based on a feminine value system can cultivate new forms of creation and appreciation.

What I realised when I picked up the pebble was that this network's exploration was a tangible invitation to give feminism a solid voice within the academic and practical fields of Scandinavian landscape architecture. Just as I picked up the pebble, I will pick up this invitation, and I am going to pick up the conversation and carry the narratives of past female landscape architects onwards with me. I will do it as a reminder to myself to push for the recognition of narratives about today's woman landscape architects, in the hope that tomorrow's versions of us will lean on the rock of our collective effort.



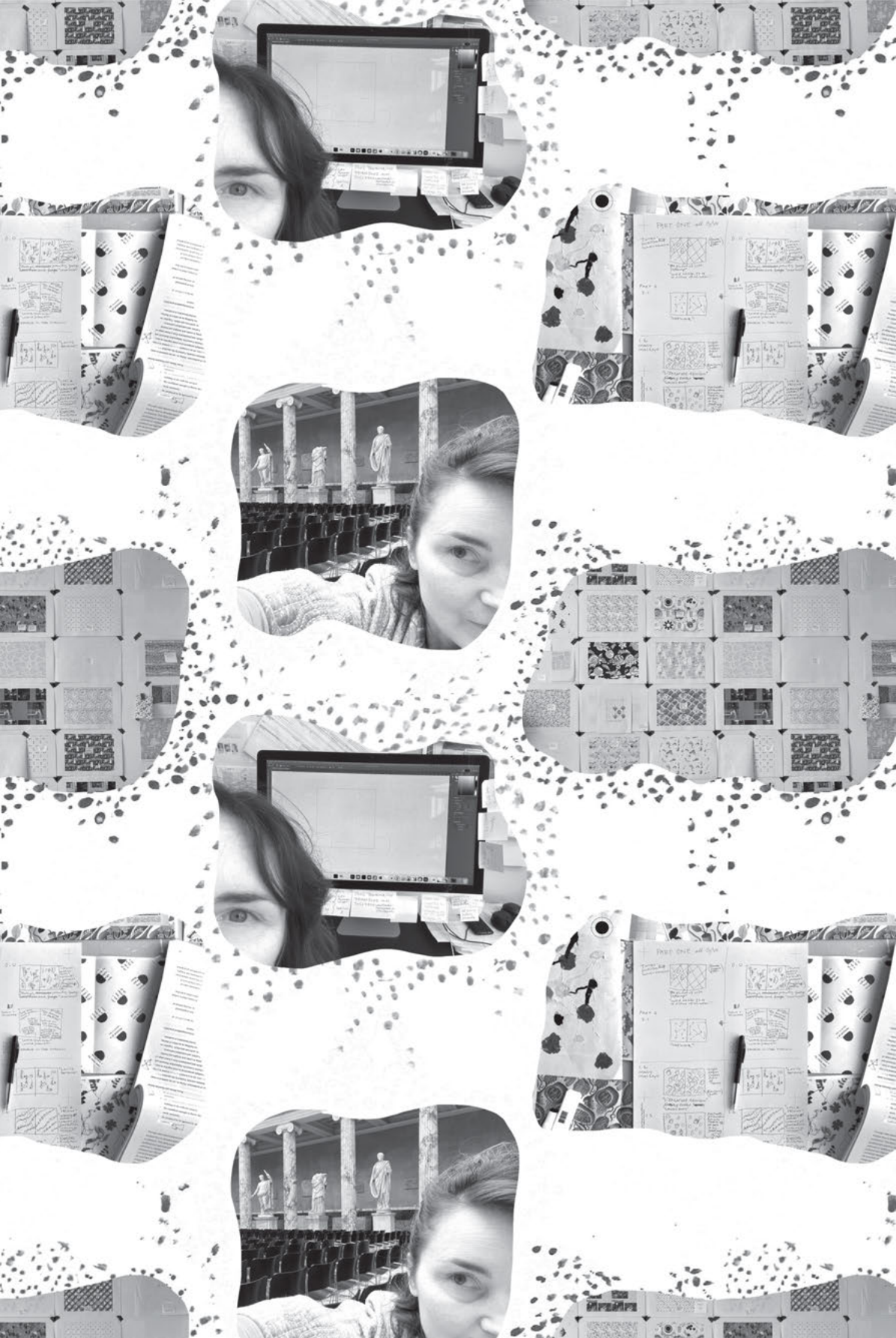


Figure 5.1: Pattern process. Pattern inspired by Notes on Illustrations: Interview with Designer Liv Løvetand Rahbek