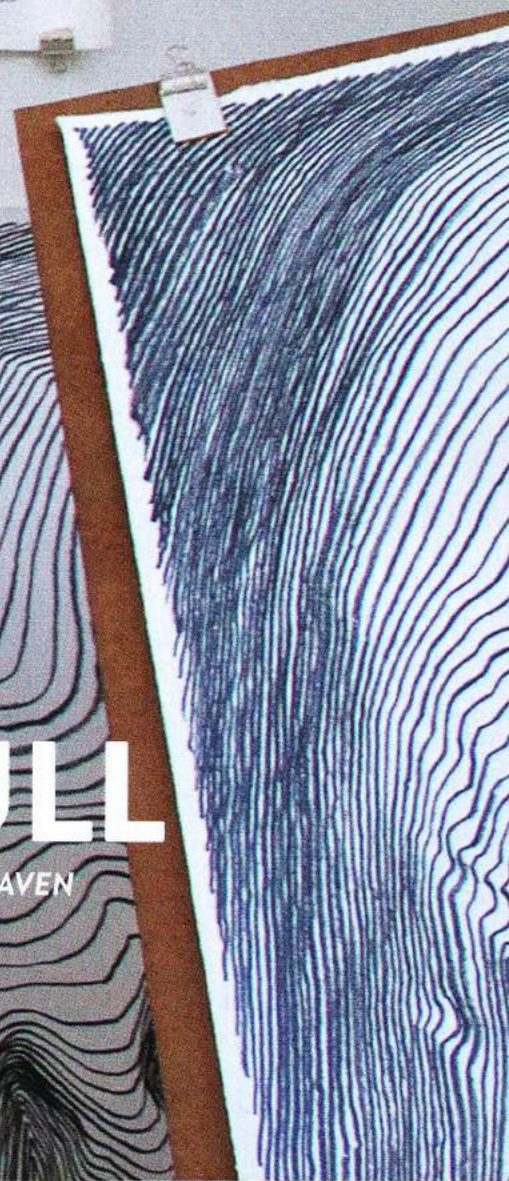
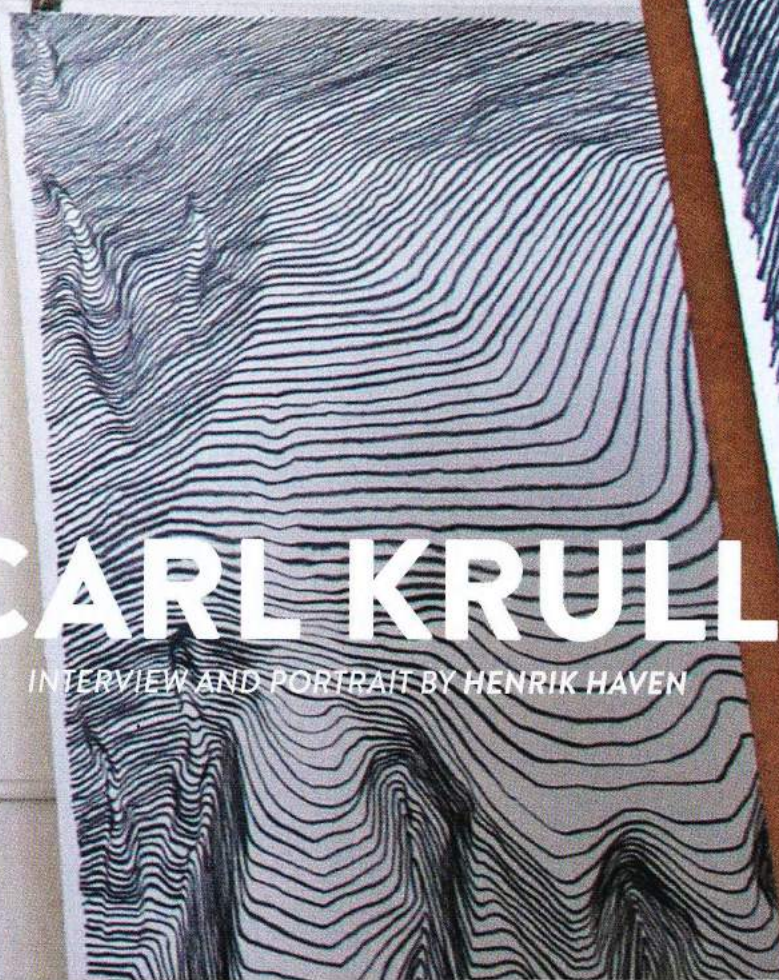






CARL KRULL

INTERVIEW AND PORTRAIT BY HENRIK HAVEN





UTILIZING A SCULPTURAL APPROACH IN HIS WORK, CARL KRULL

draws lines that extrude the paper like stalactite in caves or growth rings in trees. The Danish artist, based in Copenhagen, is a consummate draftsman whose practice centers around drawing. His working style involves the invention of elaborate drawing techniques that may seem to constrain but actually break open new territory.

On his road trip across the US, Krull worked on multiple scrolls, some of which were drawn while riding passenger, and a larger one done on multiple locations throughout the entire country. The journey itself and the method used recall Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, which was typed on a continuous, one hundred and twenty-foot scroll. In the past several months, I visited Carl Krull many times in his beautiful studio to document this work process, and we talked about the *Seismic Mural*, his road-trip across the United States, his Polish connection, as well as the physically demanding drawing process that mobilizes his art.

Henrik Haven: Your parents met at the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Poland where you were to study years later, so one could claim that it was written in the stars that you would become an artist. Tell us how you embarked on a life in the world of contemporary art.

Carl Krull: As far back as I can remember I have always drawn, and so far that's 38 years of drawing. Most kids stop drawing at a certain age. I didn't. With both my parents being artists, I never learned that grownups don't draw. So, rather than beginning, I guess I just never left. Like all children, I started as an abstract artist, then I found the pleasure of drawing symbols of the surrounding world: my mom, my dad, myself, a house, a car, a plane and so on. The most crucial decision concerning what path my artistic expression would take was

when I as a teenager; I decided that I had to learn how to draw the human body from every angle and every position. Expressing myself artistically is an integrated part of who I am and how I feel. Working is both a valve for letting out steam and a portal to open for tapping into something bigger than myself. I never work from sketches because I love the feeling of surprise and wonder I get when stepping back after finishing a drawing. Even when working, I feel alienated towards what occurs on the paper, and that is the whole point.

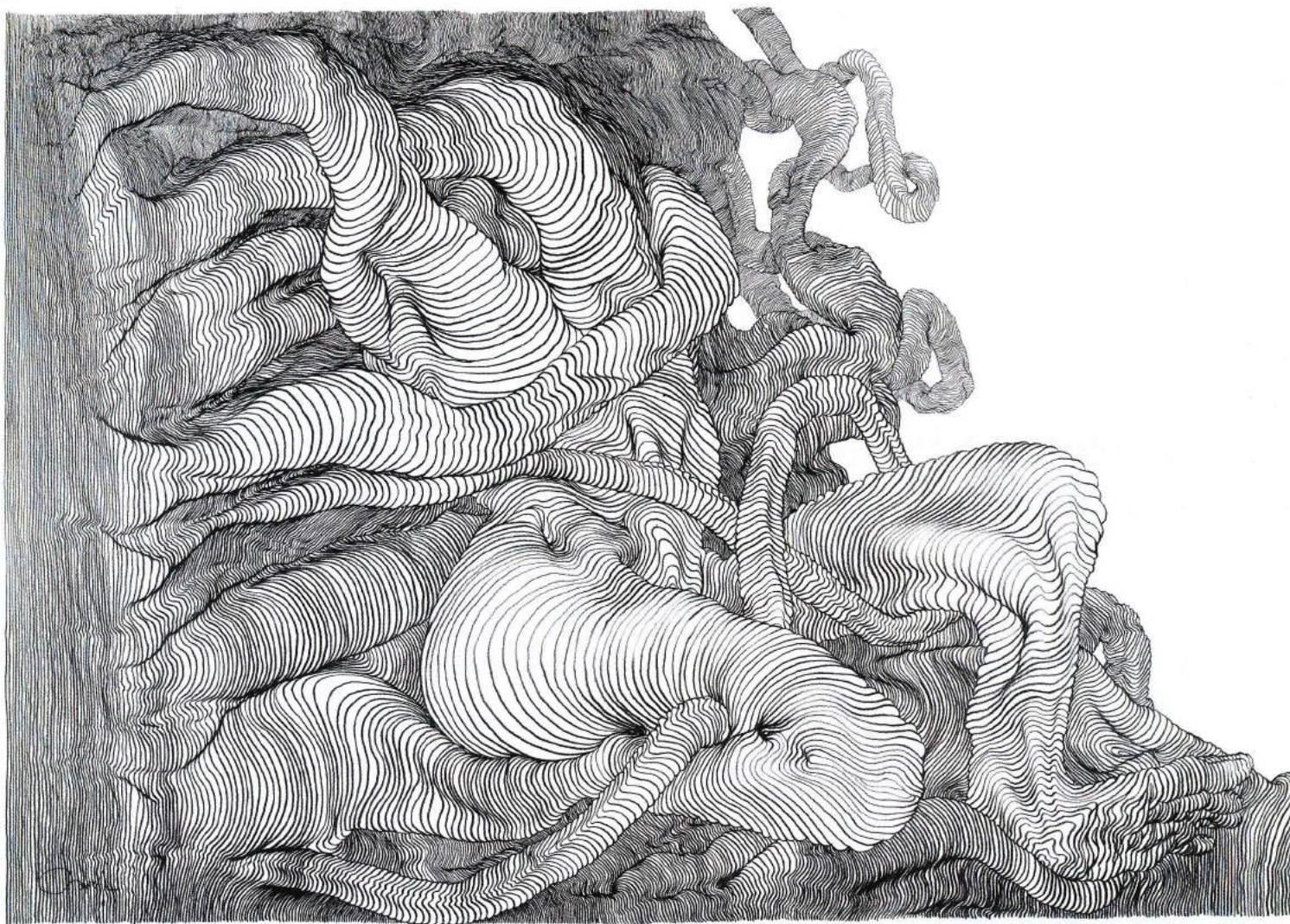
How would you describe your work to someone who has never seen it?

My work is figurative in nature and centers primarily around drawing. In almost all of my drawings you will find the human form. My most recent work, rather than having contours that run along the outlines of a subject, instead has an abundance of lines protruding from the subject, as if multiple cross sections have sliced the object and left their paths on its surface, emphasizing the three-dimensional space in an almost topographical manner.

What inspires and influences you?

I'm inspired when I think about perception and how our eyes function, how sensory information becomes images in our minds when light strikes the retina. Playing with cameras and various photographic techniques inspires me. Conversations with friends about the mysteries of life, science, philosophy

oppos
Untitled 5 (det
Graphite on pap
45.5' x 67.7
20



and all the things I don't understand inspire me. I know that a cell divides in two but not really how they do it, like whether it starts with a spin, a twist or a twirl, if the two divisions are like mirror images of each other or clones, if they spin in different directions and if their spin is possibly connected to quantum mechanics. I know next to nothing about quantum mechanics, but I have read that recent studies have identified such processes and phenomena in both photosynthesis and vision. My love for my wife and the fact that she is pregnant with our child is a miracle to me. Our creation and yet part of something bigger than both of us combined, conception and creation. My drawings, what are they? What information is passed through me through the pencil onto the paper? When the image strikes the retina of the spectator, what happens then?

Born in and residing in Denmark, with a Danish father and a Polish mother, having spent some of your childhood with your grandparents in Poland and speaking your first words in Polish, having studied in Mexico and lived in Paris twice—how has all this influenced your work?

My Polish connection meant that I got acquainted with

the world of Polish posters and printmaking from early childhood. How it has affected me artistically is hard to say, but it has made a great impact and it influences my work to this day. It is true that my first words were in Polish, but I don't remember much from that time. I grew up in Denmark and my mother tongue is Danish. When I eventually learned to speak Danish fluently, I was intrigued by the fact that speaking and thinking in Polish seemed to change me and my perception. It made me see the world from a new angle, through different glasses. Traveling makes me see everything anew, which is invigorating, and it doesn't just apply to the journey itself. I like to think that traveling keeps me young. It wakes me up. It's good to get out of your routines, especially when it comes to making art.

Describe how you go about making a new drawing. Do you have a favorite element or phase in the work process that you enjoy the most?

I really enjoy the intensity of drawing. It requires a lot of focus and becomes very meditative. I always start by looking at the white piece of paper in front of me. One approach is to attack the paper without hesitation. I do a lot of damage

about
Graphite Drawing Series
Graphite on paper
55.5" x 39"
2014

opposite
Scroll Drawing Series
Graphite on paper
15.75" x 39"
2014

and then clean up the parts I don't like with the eraser. Something will eventually emerge from the chaos that I can work with. In my recent work, I don't erase. It makes the whole approach very different. It might seem less spontaneous because every line stays, which could make me less eager to erupt in sudden freaky outbursts. But spontaneity can't be contained and I find a different form of tension in these drawings. It's impossible for me to select a favorite phase in the work process, but there is one thing I always aspire to achieve and always get. It's the feeling of wonder I get from looking at my own work. I never truly seem to understand that what I am looking at came from me. I feel as if I have tapped into something bigger than just myself to make it come to life.

I was surprised to see how physical the drawing process is for you. You put all of your body weight and force behind the initial linings on the paper and you describe it as "forcing energy into the line itself and the work as a whole." Tell us more about this part of the process.

On my latest drawings, to get the broadest line possible, I draw with a big chunk of graphite. But as the line gets broader, it can also get fainter unless I apply more pressure. Because of my predilection for thick black lines, the drawing process has a tendency to become very physically demanding. I like to think that some kind of energy is being transmitted during this workout, that something other than just sweat is being poured into the drawing. Maybe some kind of subconscious outburst takes place, something that obviates the need to go to a shrink.

With both abstract and figurative elements, is there a certain strategy behind your choice of subject?

I like to keep the eye on the move. Looking at a drawing should be an ongoing exploration. In my earlier work I did more complex compositions with a more fragile line. In my more recent work, the compositions are simpler but heavier when it comes to the amount of lines. In going from one to the other, it seems as if a new state of equilibrium was naturally established.

Your mural in Copenhagen this summer must have required a different approach.

I really enjoy working on a large scale, using grand gestures while moving on top of the paper. Having no static vantage point, you kind of grasp the whole surface using your body as a compass. The mural in Copenhagen was done as part of a two day event, leaving me only two days to finish it. So my approach was less improvised compared to how I usually work.

***Seismic*, which opens September 19, 2014 at V1 Gallery in Copenhagen, is a show that has a very special story. Can you reveal a bit more about that, the meaning of *Seismic*, and your new body of work?**

Central to the show is a series of pencil on paper drawings made during a road trip across the US. I call this series the *Scroll Drawings*, and they consist of one large drawing measuring 152x338cm (133x60 inches), made on various





stationary locations across the US, and six smaller drawings measuring 100x40cm (40x16 inches), which I did from the passenger seat, my wife at the wheel, while crossing the North American continent. I had to invent a method that would enable me to do the work on the road. So I came up with the idea of drawing on a tube when working in the car, scrolling my way through the larger roll of paper. Working while traveling, with bumps in the road and cracks in the floor affected the flow of the line, making the drawings topographical maps of the journey itself. On the road with my hand working through the paper like a seismograph, I discovered a new kind of plasticity which is the epicenter of my upcoming show, hence the title: *Seismic*.

How did you come up with this unique work method for the scroll drawings?

I had been working with linear hatching and cross-hatching as techniques for portraying depth for many years. The technique had a tendency of separating background from figure in an undesirable manner, and I was looking for a way of breaking these constraints. In the series of drawings I did

leading up to the trip to the US, I found a way. In the first two drawings, I drew caves and ripples on water, giving every line more and more individuality. The breakthrough came just as I began the third drawing. I started doing a straight line that ran from the edge of the paper horizontally from left to right towards the center. After running for a while, the line rose very slightly and fell back down in a u-turn, the shape of an eye, and returned from right to left, parallel with itself back to the edge, stopping just below where it had started. A new way of drawing was born, background and foreground had been united. Instead of lines acting as borders, separating inside from outside, I started stacking lines one by one like a human printer. Every line has its own characteristic flow but still corresponds and relates to the previous line. Drawing had come a step closer to sculpting.

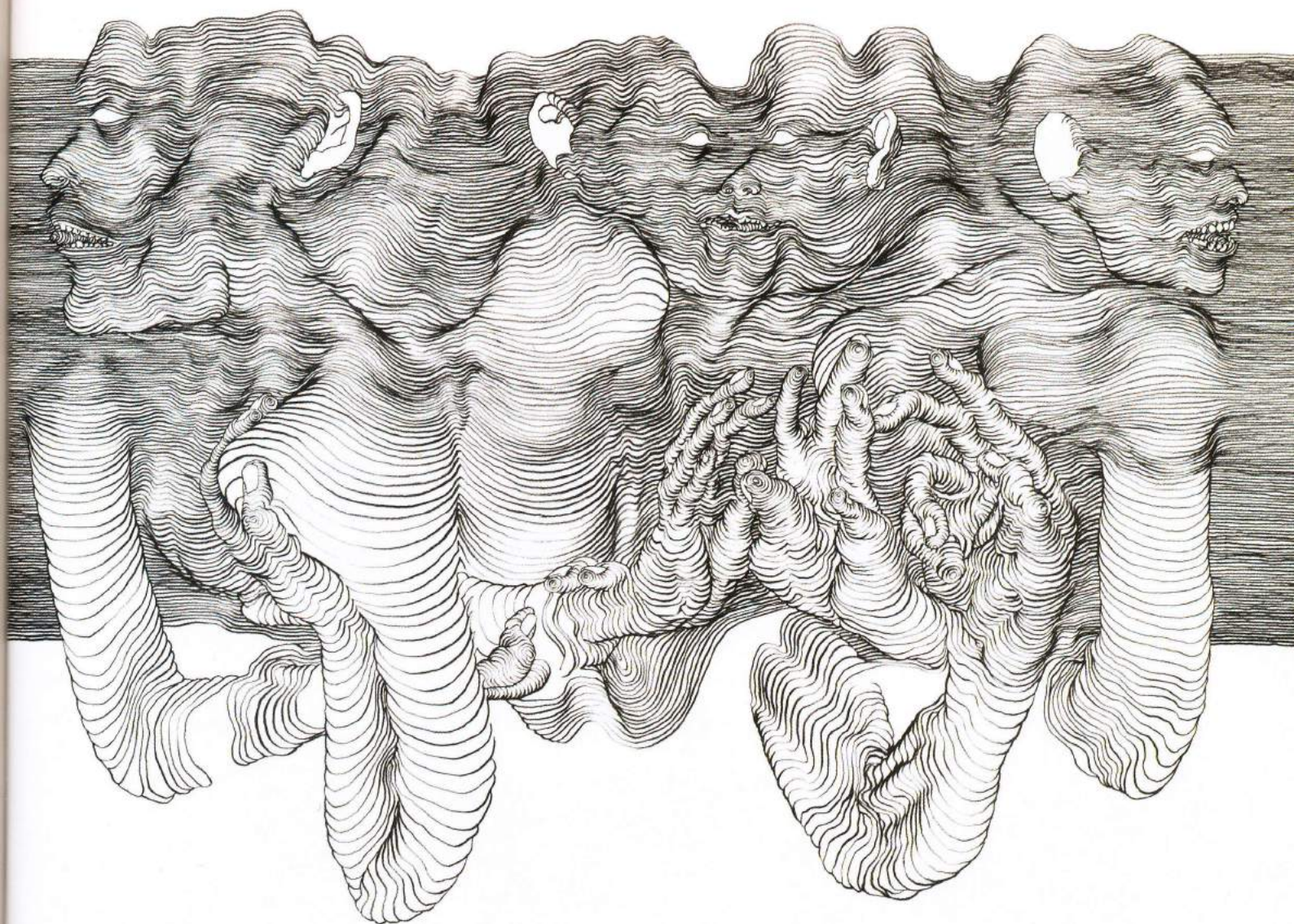
You describe yourself as a "human seismograph" and your drawings as topographical maps. Does the landscape and the ground beneath physically determine the nature of your artwork?

In a way it does, but only to a certain degree. I see

left
Graphite Drawing Series
Graphite on paper
55.5" x 39.5"
2012

right
Graphite Drawing Series (detail)
Graphite on paper
55.5" x 39.5"
2012

following spread
Scroll Drawing Series (detail)
Pencil on paper
133" x 60"
2013



correlations between my work and natural phenomena. I'll get inspired by the layered rock formations in Badlands National Park. I stick to a general idea or compositional plan when I draw, but with improvisation being an essential part of my approach; so when drawing like a human seismograph, a butterfly effect might arise that could take the drawing in any direction.

You have previously exhibited in the US, France, Japan and Denmark. Does the venue or the country have an influence on your work and the themes?

Generally speaking, the answer would be no. I seldom know where or how my work will be displayed and prefer to do a large body of work from which I can pick my favorites when a show comes up. On the other hand, knowing the exhibition space before can determine the scale. When I have big walls at my disposal, I love taking the challenge of doing the largest drawing possible.

What's next for you?

I have a lot of different ideas concerning experiments with

both sculpture and photography that I look forward to trying out, and of course, many new drawings are waiting to be drawn.

Until recently, you've seen yourself as a young, free, independent artist, but you are soon to become a father for the first time. How do you think this will influence you as a person and your work as an artist?

I don't have a clue but I'm pretty sure that the future involves a whole lot of improvisation.

JUX

For more information about Carl Krull, visit carlkrull.dk

Carl Krull (b. 1975) graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow, Poland in 1999 and has ever since contributed to a wide range of exhibitions in both Denmark and abroad. His upcoming solo exhibition entitled Seismic opens at V1 Gallery in Copenhagen, Denmark on September 26, 2014.

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STUDIO TIME

CARL KRULL

COINCIDENTAL HEIRLOOM



THE BLOCK WHERE I LIVE WAS BUILT MORE THAN one hundred years ago in pretty much the bullseye of Copenhagen. It is said that the founder of the Carlsberg Brewery, who was a well-known patron of art, owned the land. He sold it to the entrepreneur who wished to build this structure on the condition that artist studios occupy the top floors. So, for more than a hundred years, artists have been roaming this building.

I got my studio because of climbing on rooftops. I remember looking down through the large north-facing window the first time, where to my amazement, the studio was empty. I contacted the owner, who fortunately seemed to like me and my art, and voila! The studio was mine. Soon after, my father visited me and later called his sister to tell her about the place. What happened then was pretty bizarre. As my father was explaining where the studio was situated and

how to access it, describing how, after exiting the old-school elevator on the fourth floor, visitors should take the stairs to the fifth, his sister completed the directions by giving a detailed description of the place. It turned out that my grandfather's best friend once had the same studio.

When my father was a young boy, a still life painting of a drop of dew on a leaf hung in his parents' home. It had always fascinated him, and now this painting, a wedding-gift for my grandparents, has returned to the studio where it was once painted nearly a century ago. —Carl Krull

JUX

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Photo by Henrik Haver