

Where do I end, and you begin?  
(Entangled with hammers)  
By Siv Lier

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Halfway into my time as a Ph.D. fellow in artistic research I find myself entangled with my project. This exhibition is an open invitation into my process at the moment. It consists of fragments and unfinished work: collections, observations, reflections, drawings and transformations. It is an exploration of the intimate relation between humans and designed objects, represented by the hammer. It is about being close and personal with my material (the hammer) and letting go of some of the control over the research process. I believe that design is (or that it should be) an open-ended exploration and collective process. Therefore, I also invite you to share your reflections and re-imagine with me and with the hammer. Because even though the hammer is a striking tool typically used to forcefully join or break things, it can also be a tool that creates resonance – like the xylophone hammer or reflex hammer. Instead of demonstrating power and dominance I want this exhibition to be a hammer that ignites resonance.

Welcome!

## The subjective hammer archive

A collection is a way to explore diversity within a category – in this case: When does something start and stop being a hammer? What are the boundaries for hammerness? With a few exceptions, this might look like a collection of recognizable and quite similar hammers. But if you look closer, they are not. Underneath the surface they all hide personal stories making each of them unique. Some of them look like hammers but might be difficult to use as hammers. Others might not look like hammers but can be used as if they were. They are hammers I have found, made, or borrowed. I asked people: What hammer do you have in your life? And what do you use it for? Which kind of relationship do you have with the hammer? And what stories can your hammer tell?

You can read some of the hammer stories in the folders here in the exhibition.

The hammer collection is still growing. You are more than welcome to contribute with your take on what a hammer is by lending me your hammer, and I welcome your writing about it very much too.

Getting closer to the hammers and the essence of hammer-ness

A broken hammer, a homemade meat hammer, a reflex hammer and a 'hammer' to merge electronic and acoustic sound called a solenoid. I have selected a few of the less typical hammers from the subjective hammer archive. They all challenge what we could call hammerness in different ways. For, what is the essence of a hammer? What do we expect from a hammer's function, form, and meaning? What is a hammer when it is broken? And even though the musician thinks of the solenoid as a hammer, I doubt someone does who does not know how it works. And I guess the reflex hammer is not the first kind of hammer that pops up in your mind when someone says the word hammer? And isn't there something beautiful with the irregularities and funny proportions that makes the homemade meat hammer look more like a big-headed creature than a hammer?

Through drawing I get closer to perceiving what might be the essence of hammerness. I want to enter a space of intimate dialogue with the hammers through letting go of some of the designer's control. Therefore, I draw without looking at the paper. I draw with my left hand (though I am right-handed). But it is certainly not easy trying to lessen my control of the situation, and in the end, I observe surprisingly little difference between the right-hand and left-hand drawings. What is happening here? Could it be that I, with my need to force and control the drawing situation, am in fact the real hammer? A hammer that works by forcing – rather than a hammer of the resonant kind that I want to be?

## Tools as an extension of the body

Hammer, pencil, and laser cutter are all tools. The hammer and the pencil are both direct extensions of the arm. To hit something with a hammer is an act that happens in the moment as my body interacts with the tool. The way I hold the hammer, how much force I use, my attention and confidence all play parts in how the blow of the hammer turns out. In much the same way, my force, grip, and skill while manoeuvring a pencil is reflected in the drawing on the paper. Using a laser cutter is different; I use a mouse to make a digital drawing on my computer, and this drawing is transformed into information and step-by-step instructions the laser cutter needs to be able to cut. I am never in direct contact with the laser that cuts the material. When I use a hammer or a pencil, I can fine-tune pressure and movement and with that change the outcome along the way. This aspect of improvisation, a sense of nuance, and being attentive in the moment does not happen with the laser cutter; there is no way for me to change its process as it cuts, unless I stop the machine and make changes in the digital instruction file. The laser cuts perfect and precise versions of my imperfect hand drawings.

## Interwoven and entangled

Since tools and other designed objects are extensions of our bodies and minds, it is tempting to ask: What is a human without its tools, and what is a tool without its human? What are the possible consequences of seeing humans and objects as interwoven and entangled?

In this exhibition I explore different ways of humanizing the hammer and listen to each hammer's own 'voice'. I could also explore how the focus on efficiency and productivity in contemporary society can be seen as a way of 'hammerizing' the human – as a way of eliminating diversity and making us obedient and well-adjusted tools and consumers, by design.

## Make a hammer

The judge's hammer, the carpenter's hammer, the sledgehammer, the bone hammer used in plastic surgery, and the hammer for tendering meat – there are so many different and specialized hammers in the world!

But what types of hammers do not exist yet? What kinds of hammers are we in need of? What might a hammer for someone without hands look like? Or a hammer that could be used for carefully hitting last night's dream out of your subconsciousness to make you remember it? How about a hammer for checking if the egg is still fresh (without breaking it)?

What would the hammer of your dreams look like? And what might it be used for? I would like to know, and I therefore invite you to make that hammer:

1. Chose materials from the red table.
2. Use tape, glue, nails, string or even a hammer (!) to join the materials.
3. Write about your hammer.  
For example: Does it have a name? Who uses it and for what? Is it functional? If yes: in what way?
4. Use the hammer you just made to hit the nails needed to hang it up on the plywood board. (If your hammer is not up to the task, you can use one of the mainstream hammers from the table instead)
5. Put your written description on the board beside your hammer.

If you were not able to make the hammer you wanted, you can write and draw to explain what it should look like. Put the description on the plywood board together with the other hammers. Maybe I'll make your dream hammer for you later on.

Feel free to contact me if you have a hammer that you think should be part of the hammer archive. Remember that whatever YOU define as a hammer IS a hammer in this archive. And that if you also write a bit about the hammer, it will be extra fun. Examples of things to write about: What hammer do you have in your life? And what do you use it for? Which kind of relationship do you have with the hammer? And what stories can your hammer tell? You can write in Norwegian or English. All contributors to the hammer archive will eventually receive a publication of the hammer archive. All personal information will be anonymized in the publication.

Any input, thoughts and reflections you may have are very welcome.

Greetings from Siv  
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