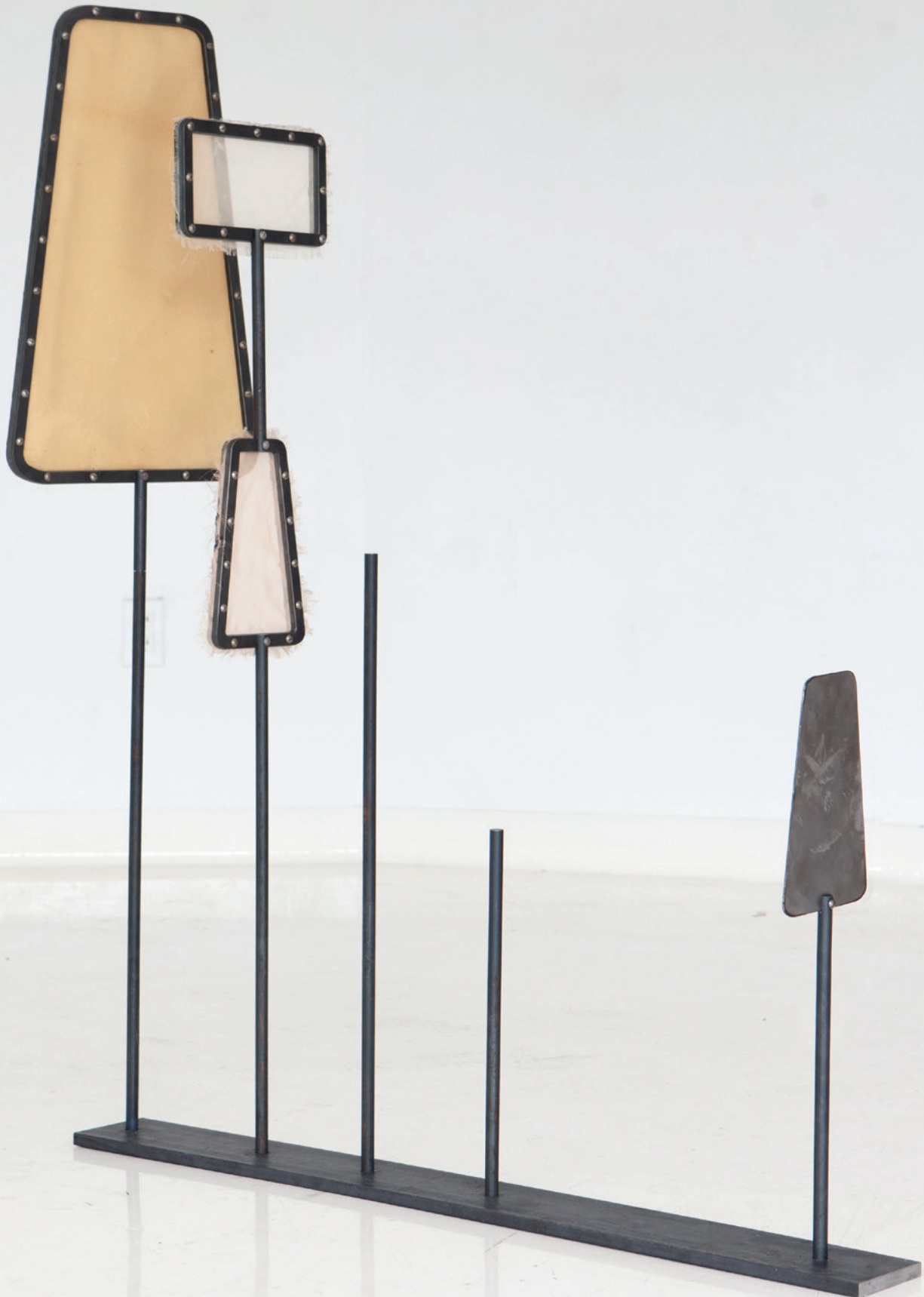


# MILLEKALSMOSE

TRIBE - MY SURVIVAL



## MILLEKALSMOSE

## SPIRIT FAMILY

By Richard Vine,

Managing editor of *Art in America* magazine and the author of *New China, New Art*.

In her installation *My Survival*, Danish artist Mille Kalsmose addresses one of the most universal of all artistic themes—the family. The sculptural objects, gathered into five groups, are sized to evoke individuals of various heights and ages standing, rod-straight, like parents and children at a reunion. But the highly stylized figures—composed of steel stands that bracket sheets of wood, silk, or pigskin—evoke more than just living individuals. They also conjure up a whole genealogy of departed kin, now present as spirits. Indeed, many of the elements bear a formal resemblance to the ancestral tablets found in traditional Chinese temples and homes. The fact that these flat forms lack inscribed names only broadens their associative power. They could commemorate any of our progenitors, and they seem—simultaneously, hauntingly—to await the time when they may serve as funereal markers for those who view them today.

Such as association of family members with mortality, of living flesh with visiting spirits, is no doubt prompted by Kalsmose's personal history. Some years ago, her mother committed suicide, and the artist is now in the process of being legally adopted by another woman. In 2013 she collaborated with Spanish photographer Alberto García-Alix to create the installation *Searching for a Mother*, which invited viewers to insert their heads into dangling photo-lined cubicles, thus entering directly into scenes depicting Kalsmose's relationship with her new parent.

In China, *My Survival* reminds us, such individual abandonment is nearly inconceivable. Each steel-rod figure is an integral part of its group; each group stands in balanced, meaningful rapport with the other ensembles. The work is almost a schema for Confucian fealty. The Great Sage saw the nuclear family, with children—having been given all, including life itself, by their parents—tied to their mother and father with lifelong bonds of love, obligation, and respect. This intimate interpersonal dynamic was then the model, on an ever-increasing social scale, for the mutual care between citizens and local officials, local officials and provincial governors, provincial governors and ministers, ministers and the distant but ever attentive emperor.

In East Asia, any name inscribed on *My Survival's* hanging silk (that most “oriental” of all possible fabrics, synonymous with fine garments and time-honored Chinese painting) would take the form of family-name-first. In that way, for millennia, individuals have been assured at birth—and reminded with every introduction and every conversation throughout their lifetime—that they belong, first and last, to a social entity that precedes and embraces and outlives them. How different from the Western convention of naming, in WHICH ONE IS identified first as an isolate being—Robert, Mary, Lisa, John—whose personal identity is only secondarily, almost as an afterthought, attached to a family name.

# 米乐·卡尔斯默瑟

## 魂灵家舍

撰文：理查德·怀恩

撰文：理查德·怀恩，《美国艺术》杂志主编，《中国当代艺术》一书作者。

在装置系列《部族》中，丹麦艺术家米乐·卡尔斯默瑟阐述了最为普世的艺术主题之一——家庭。雕塑模样的物体集成五组，尺寸各异，令人想起不同身高和年龄的个人笔直地站着，就像父母和子女聚在一起。然而，这些风格鲜明的形象——在钢质底座上架起木头、丝绢和猪皮拼装而成——令人想到的不仅是活生生的人，它们还将整个宗谱上的已故血亲召回，以魂灵的状态存在。确实，此中的诸多元素与传统的中式祠堂和家宅里的祖先牌位有着形式上的相似。这些平面上没有题下名字，这恰恰放大了它们引人联想的能力。它们可以纪念任何人的先祖，同时似乎还阴魂不散地等待着时机成为它们今天的观众日后的随葬标识。

家人与亡故、生者与还魂的联想无疑来源于卡尔斯默瑟的个人过往。若干年前，她的母亲自杀身亡，艺术家现在被另一位女性合法收养。2013年，她与西班牙摄影艺术家阿尔贝托·加西亚-阿利克斯共同创作了装置《找个妈妈》，作品邀请观者将脑袋探到布满照片的悬置方室，直接走进展现卡尔斯默瑟与她新妈妈的关系的一幕幕场景中。

《部族》系列令我们想到，在中国，抛下一个人踽踽独行是很难想象的。每一个金属杆人形都是那一组完整的一部分；每一组都与其他组融洽地伫立着，平稳而有意义。这件作品几乎概括了儒家的忠。圣人孔子看到核心家庭的子女——由双亲赐予生命及一切所需——与父母一生都以爱、义务和尊敬维系。这一人与人之间的相处之道在当时是典型，随量级不断增长，适用于百姓与地方吏、地方吏与州官、州官与大臣、大臣与高高在上却时时体察的帝王。

在东亚，题在《部族》作品中的丝帛（所有织物中最“东方”的一种，是上等衣物和中国古画的代名词）上的姓名都是姓在前名在后。数千年来，这种形式认定了——在有生之年的每次介绍和对话时还会提醒——人们从一出生就彻头彻尾地属于一个自己出生前已有、去世后仍在且一辈子摒弃不了的社会实体。这与西方的命名习俗截然不同；后者首先以独立的生命来辨别个人——罗伯特、玛丽、丽莎、约翰——之后，他们的个人身份才被冠以家族的姓氏，如同一个追加的念头。

# MILLEKALSMOSE

## FAMILIES AND OTHER PEOPLE

By Barbara Pollack

Danish artist Mille Kalsmose views the world from a very personal perspective, yet her works appeal universally, cutting through cultural boundaries. She has examined what it means to have an identity, what creates this identity and what emotional scars imprint on the self in ways that cannot easily be erased. Her conception of identity is not rooted in nationality or cultural background, but in something almost pre-Freudian, connected to familial ties and personal history that nevertheless transcends blood relationships.

Kalsmose is fundamentally a conceptual artist who has incorporated photography, video, sculpture and technology into her installations. Yet her works are never overly intellectual nor do they alienate viewers with theoretical concerns. Instead, there is an emotional heart to her works that are certain to move viewers even to the point of tears. For her 2012 project, *All My Suicides: The Quest for a New Identity*, this artist legally changed her name five times over the course of ten years, erasing any connection to her birth name and natural parents. For her later exhibition, *Searching for a Mother*, she encapsulates her search for a woman to replace her birth mother, whom she lost first to divorce at the age of seven, and years later to suicide, a trauma which has cast a shadow over all of her artistic endeavors. This is an artist who does not take identity for granted nor does she accept that family is an incontrovertible given that one must accept.

Family is obviously the fundamental unit of society. It is also the fundamental experience for most individuals in which they first experience the construction of identity. Yet we have all witnessed the destruction of this bedrock of identity through divorce and personal circumstance, through upheavals and reformation brought on by the severe changes in society at the beginning of the 21st century. Mille Kalsmose does not take the family for granted, having experienced its fragility from a very young age. Instead, she sees it as one factor impacting the formation of identity, offering the possibility that her "I" can be recreated and reinvented as she matures.

In her latest two series, *My Survival* and *Mnemonic Archives*, Kalsmose veers away from autobiography to broader social circumstances. In order to make this change, she has shifted her attention away from conceptual installations to more concrete sculptural objects. Nonetheless, her works continue to resonate with meaning, metaphors for social configurations and hierarchical values. It is as if her artworks themselves have changed their identities, becoming full-fledged sculptures, independent of an autobiographical backstory.

*My Survival* is a series of configurations between connected sculptural figures that can symbolize relationships within a family. For this series, Kalsmose works with iron, wood, silk and pigskin to fashion forms that can be read as “mother”, “father”, “brother”, “sister” and all other members of an extended family. These figures are related, as communicated by the strong similarities between each abstract form. They are also connected to each other by a metal base from which they stand. Yet, these sturdy works also communicate fragility and mortality, as the leather is stretched into the iron frames, fastened in place by rivets, like skin and muscles coursing across a skeleton.

In her own words, Kalsmose describes the *My Survival* series, as follows:

“*My Survival* came out of my lack of family and my wish to have an intimate family... I mimed a family made out of iron that couldn’t move away from me.”

In this way, the works convey an intimacy missing from her own life, yet they do not specifically answer overriding questions about the meaning of a family. Instead, this artist leaves her inquiry to be open-ended by allowing each figure to remain anonymous and unspecific. We are allowed to read into these configurations, to imagine a conversation between each form. The works therefore become a kind of test or mirror, interrogating our ideas about familial relationships and reflecting back on our own personal experiences of home life.

By leaving each “face” generalized and non-specific, these works are also amazingly universal, applying to a wide variety of cultures, both East and west. It is impossible to read these works as “Danish” or “western.” That can just as easily be “Chinese” or “Asian.” At a time when so much of the world insists on cultural differences, Kalsmose has invented a vocabulary that truly cuts across boundaries.

The influence of Asian materials is most pronounced in her latest series, titled *Mnemonic Archives*. For this series, Kalsmose had brass frames fashioned for her and then she folded hundreds of sheets of Chinese rice paper. The frames stand 2 meters tall and hang on the wall, like a bookcase in a vast library. The paper is stained, in one instance with black tea and in another with cherry juice, which easily creates an association with blood. Carefully inserted in place, this overstuffed archive evokes thousands of birth certificates and marriage licenses, death notices and wills, the reams of paper that accompany life in contemporary society.

For Kalsmose, these works are representative of hierarchies and social conventions that dominate our lives. The associations in these works transcend family relationships and extend to an evaluation of a broader society, in which we all operate within frameworks not necessarily of our own making. There is also a contrast between materials, the hard surfaces of the brass frames and the pliant folds of the rice paper, which mimics the relationship between masculine and feminine qualities in society. In this way, the frames function much as the legal structure, obdurate and difficult to alter, while the folded paper represents the personal lives of citizens, struggling to maintain their individuality in the face of societal pressures to conform.

Memory is also a key factor in this series, delicate memories that cling to our lives even as we try to forget them. In one way, the brass frames can be viewed as a human brain, the mind of one individual, and the sheets of paper are all the memories contained within that make up an individual's identity. So, these works can be read as either applying to a greater society, governing the lives of many individuals, or as the experience of just one, lone, being, populated by the many experiences that has made up their life.

This ability to read these works on many different levels is a sign of Kalsmose's talent as an artist. For example, she had no idea that she would be traveling to China at the time she made *My Survival*. Yet this is a series that can definitely resonate with Chinese viewers who are particularly attune to the importance of family. Similar to Zhang Xiaogang's portraits of families, *Bloodlines*, Kalsmose's sculptures encapsulate familial relationships in ways that are both universal and specific. We can easily see the faces, that the artist leaves blank, as if we are flipping through a family album. Also, the works in the *Mnemonic Archives* series resonate particularly well in Asia where the use of rice paper is fundamental to the history of art. These works particularly remind me of the Library Room at the caves of Dunhuang where explorers discovered a grotto filled with Buddhist scrolls more than a century ago. Just as those westerners were amazed to find a treasure trove of information packed into an anonymous cave situated in the middle of the desert, we viewers approach Kalsmose's library in amazement at the feat it took to daub each sheet with colors, to fold and insert each one in its frame. It is an example of an artist's touch bringing us closer to an intimate experience, now somewhat a rarity in contemporary art.

Combining autobiography with neuroscience, personal experiences with social inquiry, Mille Kalsmose creates artworks that resonate on many levels. She has worked with a wide range of materials, but with her latest works, she reaches a new peak of creativity. These works appear as individual sculptures, independent forms that can be appreciated for purely aesthetic reasons. But each one tells a story about family and society, about the creation of identity within a social framework. These are tales that can be appreciated by audiences from a vast variety of cultural backgrounds. Just as many contemporary Chinese artists have managed to make works that have a global appeal, yet retain the specifics of Chinese cultural identity, Kalsmose has achieved a perfect balance in her work between the universal and the individual. It is impossible to view her works without discovering an element of identification. This makes the experience inescapably emotional and personal, defying cultural boundaries. That is quite an achievement for an artist and for this alone, her artworks deserve widespread appreciation.

BARBARA POLLACK

IS AN AUTHOR AND CRITIC WHO HAS WRITTEN ON CHINESE CONTEMPORARY ART SINCE 1997 FOR SUCH PUBLICATIONS AS THE NEW YORK TIMES, VANITY FAIR, ARTNEWS AND ART IN AMERICA. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF THE WILD, WILD EAST: AN AMERICAN ART CRITIC'S ADVENTURES IN CHINA AND MY GENERATION: YOUNG CHINESE ARTISTS. FOR HER RESEARCH IN THIS FIELD, SHE WAS AWARDED THE PRESTIGIOUS ANDY WARHOL/CREATIVE CAPITAL ARTS WRITERS GRANT AND TWO GRANTS FROM THE ASIAN CULTURAL COUNCIL.

# 米乐·卡尔斯默瑟

## 家人与他人

撰文：芭芭拉·波拉克

丹麦艺术家米乐·卡尔斯默瑟以非常个人的视角观察世界，其作品的魅力却穿透文化的疆界，放诸四海皆准。一直以来，她审视拥有身份的意义，是什么塑造了身份、是怎样的情感创伤难以磨灭地铭刻在自身。她的身份概念并非植根于国家或文化背景，而是来自弗洛伊德学说创立之前与家庭纽带和个人历史相勾连却又超越血缘的状态。

从根本上来说，卡尔斯默瑟是一位观念艺术家，在装置作品中融合摄影、影像、雕塑以及科技。她的作品从不过于费脑，也不依仗着理论思考拒人千里。然而，在她引人泪下的作品中贯穿着一个情感中心。在2012年的项目《我的每次自杀：寻求一个新身份》中，艺术家于十年期间五次合法更名，抹去她与本名及生身父母间的关系。在之后的展览《找个妈妈》中，她讲述自己如何寻找一位女子来替代生母。卡尔斯默瑟七岁时先因父母离异而失去母亲，几年之后，她母亲又自杀去世，这一痛失为卡尔斯默瑟的所有艺术创作都笼上了阴影。这位艺术家不视身份为理所当然，也不认为家庭是一个人必须接受的无可否认的预设。

家庭显然是社会的基本构成单位，它也是绝大多数人最初塑造个人身份的基本经验。通过离婚等个人情况，也通过21世纪初社会剧变所带来的动荡和改革，我们都曾见证过身份的根基土崩瓦解。米乐·卡尔斯默瑟在幼年时切身感受过家庭的脆弱，她不轻信家庭。相比之下，她将其视作对身份形成产生影响的一个因素，留下她的“我”可以随着她变成熟而被重塑再造的可能。

在最近的两个系列《部族》和《记忆档案》中，卡尔斯默瑟由自传转向更广泛的社会环境。为实现这一转变，她将关注点从观念装置移到更为具象的雕塑上。然而，她的作品含义一如既往地回荡其中，隐喻着社会格局与阶级价值。似乎她的作品转变了自身的身份，出落成羽翼丰满的雕塑，逸脱于自传式的背景故事。

《部族》系列中相互连结的雕塑构造象征着家人之间的关系。在这一系列中，卡尔斯默瑟运用铁、木头、绢和猪皮创作出的形象可以被解读为“母亲”、“父亲”、“兄弟”、“姐妹”以及一个大家庭里的所有其他成员。这些形象是有关联的，

这从每两件抽象的形状间强烈的相似性中足以见得；它们也由一个金属底座联结着彼此。然而，这些结实的作品也诉说着脆弱和死亡，猪皮紧绷在铁框里，用铆钉固定，仿佛皮肤与肌肉长满整副骨架。

形容《部族》系列时，卡尔斯默瑟亲口说：

“《部族》来源于我的家庭缺失以及对亲密家人的渴望……我用铁模拟了一个不会离我而去的家。”

如此看来，这些作品传递出在她生活中缺席的亲密，却并未明确解答关于家庭意义的首要问题。相反，她让每一个形象保持匿名且无特指，给这一质问留出开放性的余地。我们可以细细品读这些构造，遐想与每一件之间的对话。从而，作品化身为一种试验或镜子，审视我们关于家庭关系的思考，返照出我们对家庭生活的亲身经历。

由于每一张“脸”都被脸谱化和笼统化，这些作品也被赋予惊人的普适性，适用于各种文化，不论东西。它们无法只被解读为“丹麦的”或“西方的”，它们同样可以是“中国的”或“亚洲的”。眼下，大半个世界都在笃守文化差异，卡尔斯默瑟却开辟出一套实实在在打破疆界的语汇。

亚洲材料的影响在她最新的系列《记忆档案》中最为鲜明。这一系列中，卡尔斯默瑟定制黄铜框架，折叠数百页中国宣纸。铜框高达2米，悬挂于墙上，像是一座浩瀚的图书馆中的书橱。宣纸上洒有红茶和樱桃汁，形成色斑，令人油然想到血痕。这尊沉甸甸的档案被小心翼翼地固定就位，数以千计的出生证、结婚证、死亡证和遗嘱等伴随当代社会生活的纸制文书跃然浮现。

在卡尔斯默瑟看来，这些作品代表了主宰我们生活的等级制度和社会习俗。作品引发的联想超越了家庭关系，延展到对一个广义社会的评估；在这样的社会里，我们都不由自主地戴着脚镣跳舞。铜框的坚硬与宣纸的柔韧也给作品材料带去对比，这也模拟出社会的阴阳两性。如此说来，铜框比喻法律架构，铁面无私且难以变更，而折纸则指代平民的个人生活，在社会压力下竭力保全自身的个体性。

记忆在这一系列中也是一个关键元素，那些长在我们生命里忘也忘不掉的幽微记忆。一方面，铜框可以被视作人的大脑，一个个体的思维，而纸张便是其中储存的构成个人身份的所有记忆。因此，这些作品可以被解读为适应一个统领众多个体的庞大社会，抑或被解读为一个个孤立个体的经验，众多经验构成他们的人生。

作品可以从多个不同层面解读，卡尔斯默瑟的艺术才华由此可见一斑。譬如，她在创作《部族》时并没想到自己会来中国，但这一系列势必会在家庭观念颇重的中国



观众间引起共鸣。与张晓刚的家庭肖像《血缘》系列类似，卡尔斯默瑟的雕塑以泛指和特指并行的方式阐述了家庭关系。不难发觉，我们看这一张张艺术家留白的脸就像翻阅一本家庭相册。

另外，《记忆档案》系列作品特别受亚洲观众应和，因为宣纸的运用在当地艺术史中举足轻重。这些作品尤使我想到敦煌藏经洞——一百多年前探险家们发现的一个藏满佛教经卷的洞穴。恰如当年那群西方人在沙漠中的一处无名洞窟觅得宝藏瞠目结舌，我们也对卡尔斯默瑟在档案作品中将每一页纸涂色并折叠、装嵌入框的技艺惊叹不已。这是以艺术家的笔触带领观众近身体验亲密的一次典范，在目前的当代艺术中已经罕有。

结合自传文学与神经科学、个人经验与社会探查，米乐·卡尔斯默瑟的创作在诸多层面与观者声应气求。她用材广泛，更在近期的作品中攀上创造力的新高。这些作品呈现为可凭纯粹的美学意趣来欣赏的个人雕塑、独立形象。同时，每一件都讲述了一个关于家庭与社会以及在社会框架下塑造身份的故事。这些故事可以被来自任一文化背景的观众所领会。正如许多中国当代艺术家已经创作出既具有全球性也保有中国文化身份特性的作品，卡尔斯默瑟在她的作品中也找到了普适性与个体性的完美平衡。观看她的作品必定会感受到其中身份认同的成分，这让观看体验不可避免地动情且含个人色彩，挑战着文化的疆界。这是艺术家的卓绝成就，单凭着一点，她的作品足以广为赞赏。

芭芭拉·波拉克是一名作家兼艺术批评家，自1997年起为《纽约时报》、《名利场》、《ARTNEWS》及《美国艺术》等刊撰写中国当代艺术评论。她著有《狂野的东方：一位美国艺术评论家在中国的探险式经历》和《我这一代：中国年轻艺术家》等书。她在这一领域的研究贡献曾获安迪·沃霍尔基金会和创意资本共同颁发的艺术写作者奖以及两项由亚洲文化协会颁发的殊荣。



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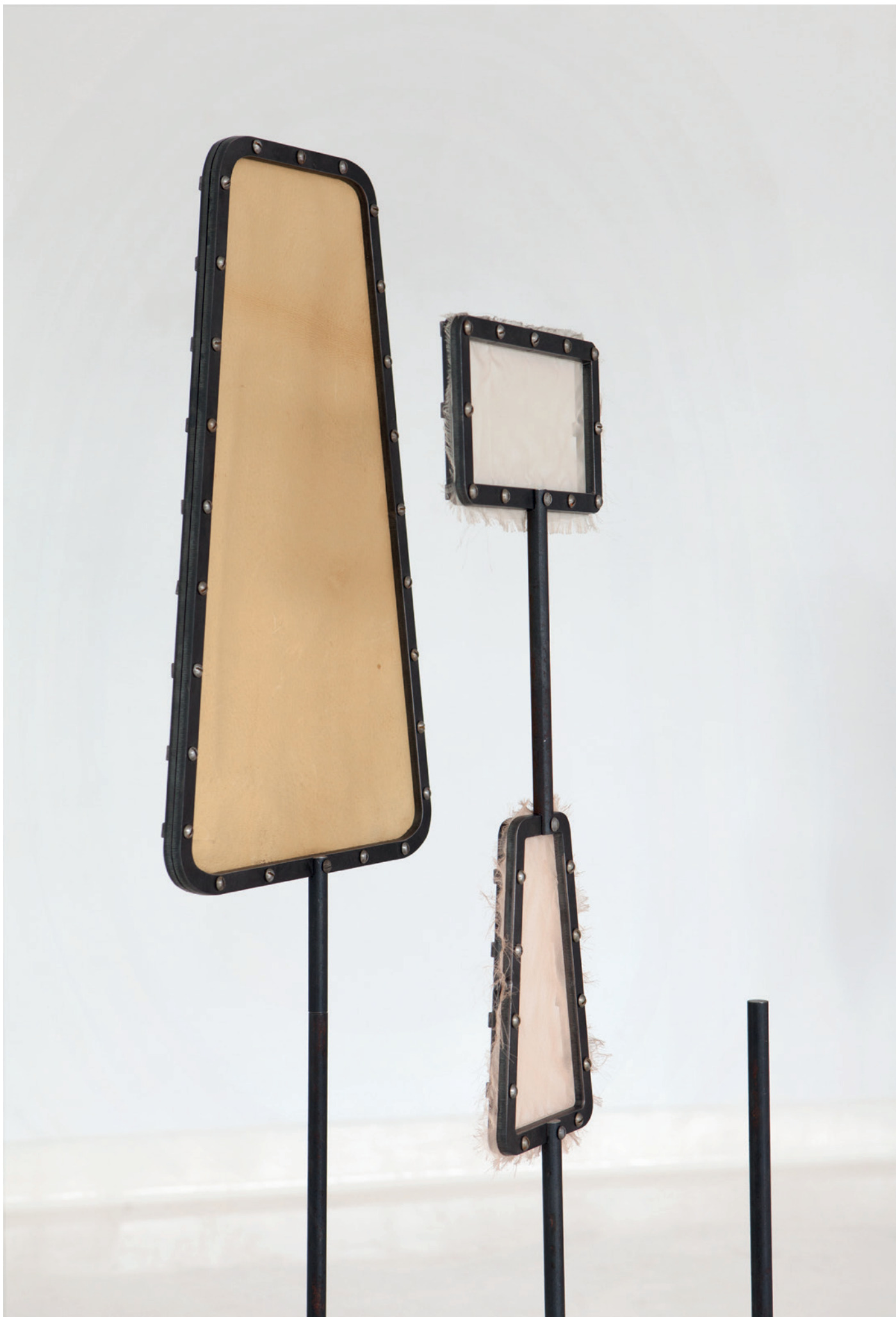
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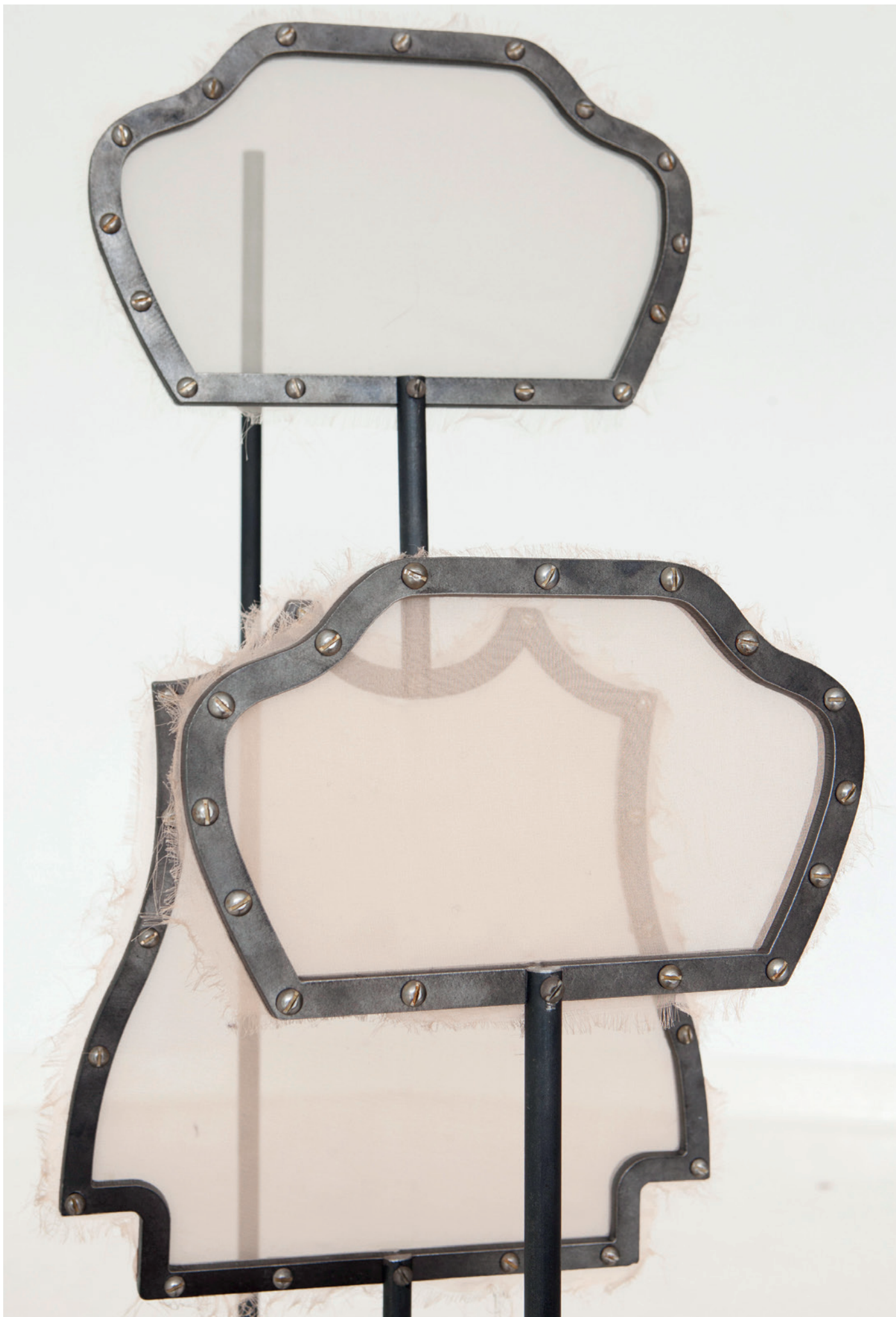


TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) — 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 110 / 120 / 140 / 170 X 90 X 10 CM / 43,3 / 47,2 / 55,1 / 66,9 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH



TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) #1 — 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 120 X 90 X 10 CM / 47,2 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH

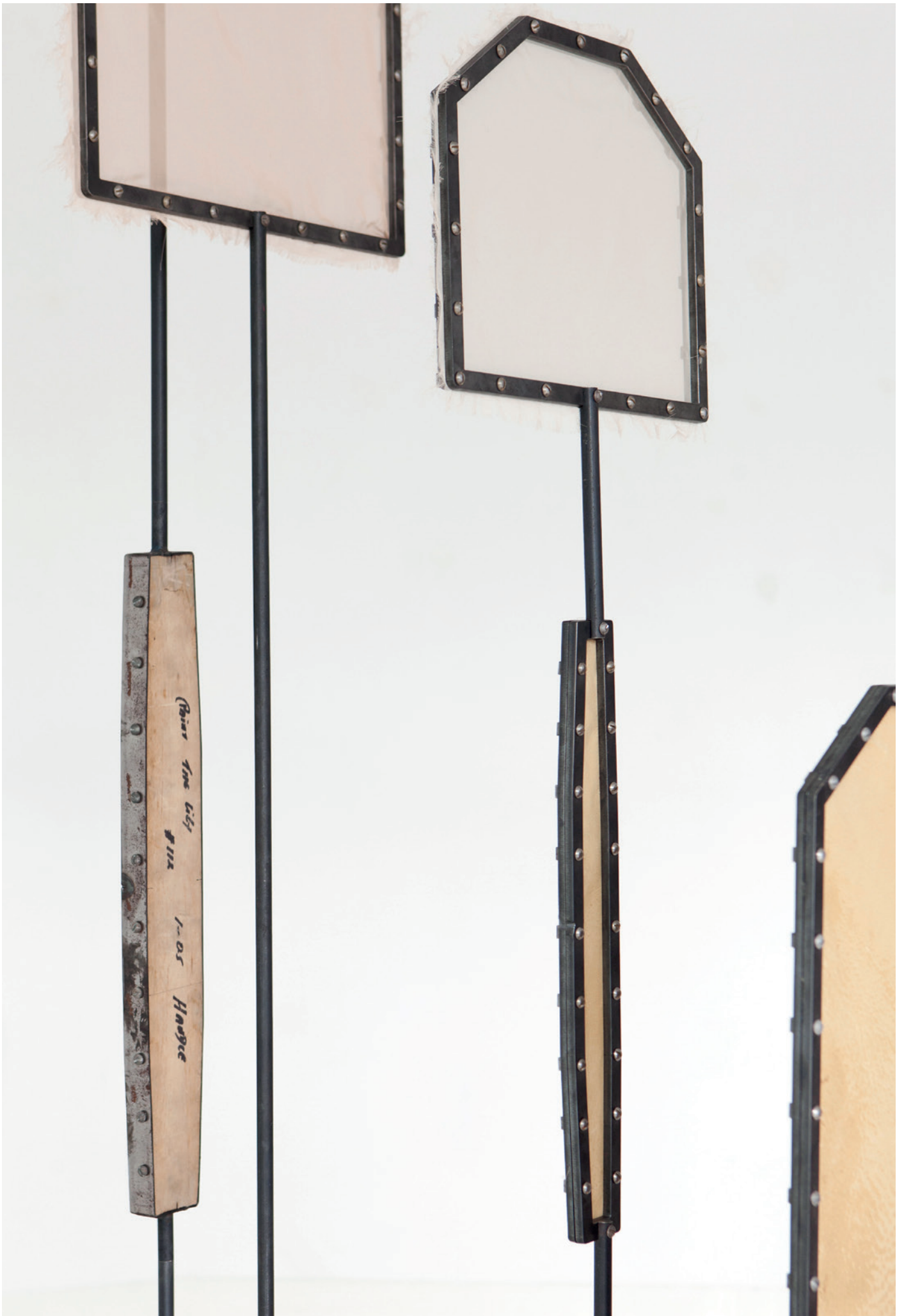




TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) #2 — 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 110 X 90 X 10 CM / 43,3 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH



TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) #3— 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 140 X 90 X 10 CM / 55,1 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH



TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) #4 — 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 170 X 90 X 10 CM / 66,9 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH



TRIBE (MY SURVIVAL) #5 — 2016. IRON, SILK, WOOD AND PIG SKIN. 170 X 90 X 10 CM / 66,9 X 35,4 X 3,9 INCH

graphic design: Clémence Wambergue

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