

A letter from Céline Mathieu to you, visitor of the exhibition Lån at Kunsthall Trondheim

Dear X,

Titling this exhibition, I learned that the English word "loan" is beautifully spelled in Norwegian as "Lån", as if the letter o is stored for later. In LÅN, I think about chains and circuits—invisible tendons of (local) relationships made palpable through sculpture, sound, and this very letter.

At the entrance, you receive a little wooden block, which is a comfort object. Its ever-so-slight indent fits your thumb. The object is for you to carry along, in and beyond the exhibition. Maybe it will live on in your pocket? It operates as a form of self-hypnosis, it links touch to thought.

With the comfort object in hand, you'll find in the exhibition space, two sponsored bars of Norwegian aluminum, in the raw shape aluminum is traded in, lying on the floor. The surface texture of the bars oddly resembles human skin. The mass of the aluminum is measured in what I can carry in a backpack. Over time, these ingots will be melted and remelted into different sculptures. They'll do so until someone buys the work; from then on, it will remain unchanged.

Further back, you'll find a gargoyle "fountaining" bubble wrap, it stands close to the hay it came shipped in. It is placed in a space near where gargoyles from the Nidaros Cathedral were presented in a previous exhibition—the ones that were removed after the fire for restoration. I became interested in these sculptures that spit water, originally designed to keep rainwater from touching a facade, after learning that original gargoyles are being replaced on many cathedrals with fakes to preserve the originals. How odd I found it: that we'd look up at the fake, thinking it's an original. Looking for copies of gargoyles, I found a "stone-carved" piece for 159 dollars from a Rouen-based Etsy seller called "Opus Magnum". It arrived in a bed of hay, and I brought with me a powdery scented perfume sample for it.

Throughout, Japanese newspapers, which the record player in the adjacent room came wrapped in, cover lamps that leave washes of white light on the floor. Newspaper clippings and magic cards line the space with abstract flavour texts. The magic cards are borrowed from Rasmus, a curator at PoMo, a nearby museum built by a family that owns a supermarket chain and a significant amount of Trondheim's real estate. I was struck by the choreography of funds and information circulating in this cyclical economy, a motion of thought I tried to follow in many of the works. And these cards, as well as (illegible to many) newspapers, open up speculative ways of structuring worlds. I was thinking of how an appetite for strategy and fantasy is cultivated in children through games like these, which involve worldbuilding exercises. I told Rasmus I had "given him all my magic cards" after telling him of several lives I have lived.

On the wall, there is a photograph by Erik Olsen that I wanted to borrow from a local hotel, Bakeriet, where I first saw it in my room. Upon asking, the hotel told me they have it on loan from a museum, so they couldn't lend it. Later, I learned from the internet that the image is over a hundred years old and thus in the public domain, with a free download link below the information. What I did take from the hotel is their way of curiously placing the image upside down in the frame. I thus loan from them, the presentation only.

Nearby, the polished bronze mathematical formula $\subset \supset \in$ is presented. It is 'Le sourire de l'être' by Michel Tombroff, who is a supporting collector, artist, philosopher, and mathematician, who bought my work 'Oyster' (2025). A photograph of the sculpture now appears on the cover of his book. He asked me to help find a place to exhibit the bronze formula that synthesizes his book. I proposed including it and the books in my exhibition, with his name in the material list but contextualized as my work, and he agreed.

You may notice pieces of cut-up sponge lying around. And a mechanical bird designed to fly, flap, and chirp upon activation, rests in its nest.

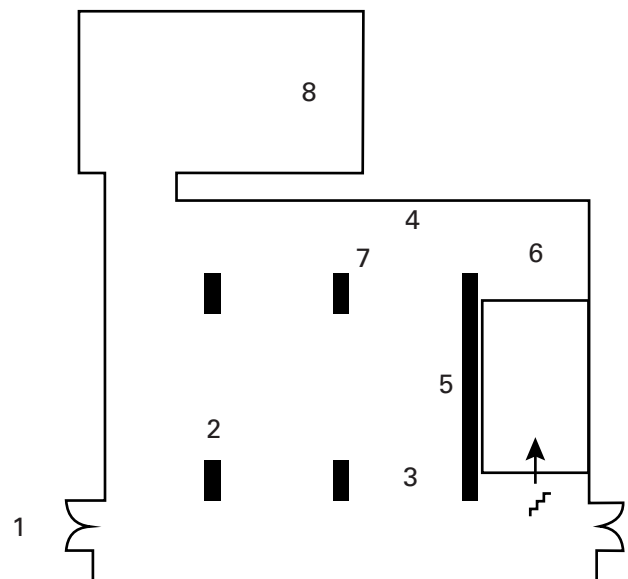
In the rear stand-alone gallery, a recording plays of a choir singing at the local cathedral, with a priestess chanting and the choir responding. The record player automatically starts over every time the record is finished, looping a 4-minute sequence all day.

I hope this gives you a sense of what lies in and beyond these loans: how borrowed objects create their own worlds elsewhere—no less themselves for being moved.

Warmly,

Céline

1. Komfortobjekt, 2019-2025
Gift of birch-wood with subtle indent for the thumb
2. "I think at every season inner things must shrink or swell like roofs or timber", skrev Rosemary Mayer, 2025.
Raw, sponsored Norwegian aluminum ingots, will be melted into different sculptures in future exhibitions morphing until it gets sold
3. Gargle MGM 123, 2025.
Metal holder, stone gargoyle from Opus Magnum Etsy seller, fountaining plastic, furry cloth, powder-scented perfume, dried apricot, twisted balloon animal, hay, stranger's hair, gathered dirt
4. Stallen, 1897-1906, 2025.
Photograph of a stable framed upside down, as found in the local hotel Bakeriet, shot by Erik Olsen over a 100 years ago making it a public good
5. Magiske kort, 2025.
Rasmus' magic cards (Rasmus Thor Christensen is a curator at the nearby museum, PoMo, which was founded by the family who owns a supermarket chain, a chic hotel, and a large part of Trondheim's real estate), Japanese newspaper clippings



6. Bifurokat, 2025.
Books 'Le malentendu capital' and bronze artwork 'Le sourire de l'être', both by collector, friend, mathematician, philosopher, artist Michel Tombroff, on oil-like plastic sheet
7. Fugls indre mekanisme, 2025.
Electronic bird's inner mechanism, nest
8. Kor, 2025.
iPhone recording of a choir and priestess singing in the cathedral 800 meters away from the Kunsthall, pressed as a translucent record