

# Joachim Römer

Germany · Cologne  
[www.unterblicken.de](http://www.unterblicken.de)

"Temporary beach sculptures", a work in progress along different coasts of Europe: I walk along beaches, fix something from jetsam and flotsam – without tools in less than 5 minutes, take a photo, leave it and walk on. On all images one can see the surrounding: The sea, parts of the coast, the sky and sometimes even the wind and the rain.

Jetsam and flotsam is the main material for my artwork. Living and working in Cologne, throughout the year it is drift material from the river Rhine.

The results are different: small "sur-realistic" sculptures, installations from blue or red drift plastic, installations from floated shoes, "paintings" with flotsam plastic in big scales, series of photos of: shoes, gloves, food, dead animals, bottles...

Time ago I picked up interest at the events on water/landlines. Lots of materials float into these everchanging "inbetween" spaces. As people do, I picked up things, though the artificial materials had my interest, and started a kind of "painting" with drift material, using fragments of plastic-flotsam from the Rhine as pigments, resulting in works as the "red room" (a collaboration with Petra Supplie).

Starting with a feeling about what to do and how to work, the material changes the idea that evolved from the first thoughts, but not the initial feeling itself, which keeps feeding the workprocess. The material leads me through a process to results which derive a beauty from – in itself – ugly elements. When finished the work contains both, messages of beauty and ugliness.

The initial thought seems to be strong enough to arouse spontaneously different views on what I do or what I think, each time when I enter the work.

I am not finished with this process, and want to explore it further.







## The Beach as an Open Canvas

For Gyrite Andersen, one of the main focus points in a project like Footprints along a coastline is the presence of the now, the importance of being in the moment and experiencing things first-hand. Technological advancements today allow us to store and keep tons of visual information, which we have access to at any time we choose, on our tv screens, our online computers, our cellphones. We no longer have to be there in order to see something happen, and we can decide to watch it over and over again, or fast-forward through it.

This is why the concept of the Footprints-project is so simple: be there or be square. In a project like this, it is not entirely up to us to decide, what we want to experience or when, because nature meddles, and nature can checkmate us – the wind, the rain or the tide might beat us to it and erase what was there a moment before.

Footprints along a coastline turned the beaches of Marbæk, Hjerting and Blåvand into an open canvas for the artists – working together, they created new expressions uniquely tailor-made for this particular area.

To Gyrite Andersen it seems that the mentality and the approach to the world, to life and to nature of the participating artists is well matched with the mentality of the area itself: "Maybe it is a humbleness towards nature and its vastness. I also see a certain modesty. It all adds up, the area itself is also modest and has at all times been dependent on the weather, like the artists are now", she says.

New and innovative art is often thought to be connected with the big city and not with the costal areas. But it seems that the only right place for a project like Footprints is the wide, open spaces of the West Coast of Denmark. A cultural festival like this takes political courage, as it not necessarily has a huge popular appeal.

*Gyrite Andersen, Cultural consultant for Region South Denmark (until 2008)*

