

Creative Practice Conference – Aarhus, 10 – 12 September 2015

MAKING RESEARCH | RESEARCHING MAKING

Experiment & Surprise

Exhibition Abstract

CRITICAL MAKING WITH ALUMINIUM SANDCASTING

(Design Practice into Practice-led Research)

Ian Lambert

The experimental aluminium sand-cast bowls shown in the attached portfolio (pages 4 - 5, below) are part of an investigation into design practice as research. This *knowledge in doing* is being written up and will be the basis of a paper (abstract also submitted to this conference) investigating creative practice as research in a wider context.

John Dunnigan's essay on *Thinking* (2013) describes practice-led/based research by referring to "critical making" as the "symbiotic relationship" between thinking and making, and describing artists and designers as "form givers who bring ideas into the material world." (Dunnigan, 2013, p.95). In this vein, my experiments explore the use of discarded packaging as a waste mould for sand cast design-craft objects. The research process is currently in progress and the pieces shown here are incomplete. Success in achieving completed objects is expected, but even if not, these partly completed objects, with the pouring gate (or sprue) still attached, can make for compelling debate in revealing the serendipity of the making process. They are not unlike exhibits from the Design Museum's 2014 show *In The Making*¹ where everyday objects, such as bricks, coins and tennis balls, were "*interrupted mid-production*" (Barber and Osgerby, 2014, p2) to reveal new insights in making for both designers and users.

'We have curated this exhibition to capture and reveal a moment in the manufacturing process, unveiling everyday objects in their unfinished state. Often the object is as beautiful, if not more so, than the finished product. We want to demystify how these objects are made, in order to convey our sense of fascination and value that this knowledge can bring to inspiring new design ideas.' (Barber and Osgerby, 2014, p2)

I was inspired to work with the sandcasting process after watching a film of UK designer Max Lamb casting a pewter stool in the sand on a Cornish beach. Marcus Fairs, editor-in-chief of

¹ <http://designmuseum.org/exhibitions/touring-exhibitions/exhibitions-for-hire/in-the-making>

Dezeen, summarises video thus: “the video [of the process] is as much the cultural artefact as the stool itself.”² (Fairs, 2011)

I have previously used Polystyrene foam, a much-used waste mould material, with varying success. The latest iteration with this material uses packaging pellets arranged in a bowl in the sand. (see fig. 1, below)

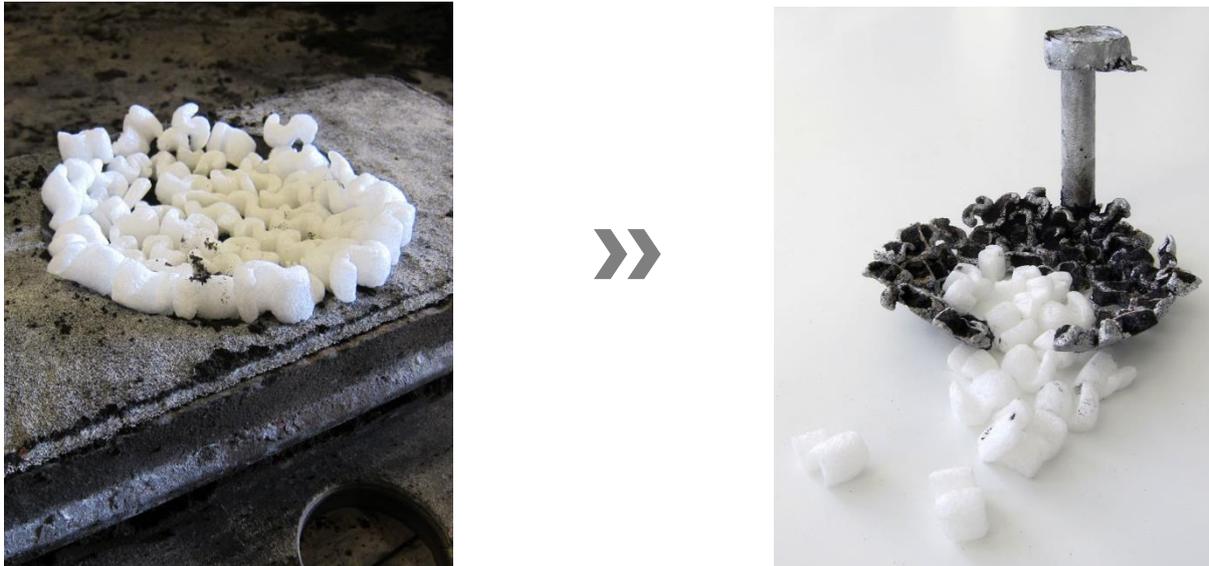


Fig: 1. Polystyrene packaging pellets as a waste mould (left) for a sand-cast aluminium bowl (right). Author 2015

The use of bubble-wrap was inspired by Czech designer Rony Plesl’s glass *Bubbles Bowl* (made using an entirely different process) – the *what if...?* possibility of molten metal passing into the bubble spaces immediately came to my mind. (see fig. 2). The bubble-wrap has been formed over mdf patterns, which are removed before installing the other half of the sand mould.

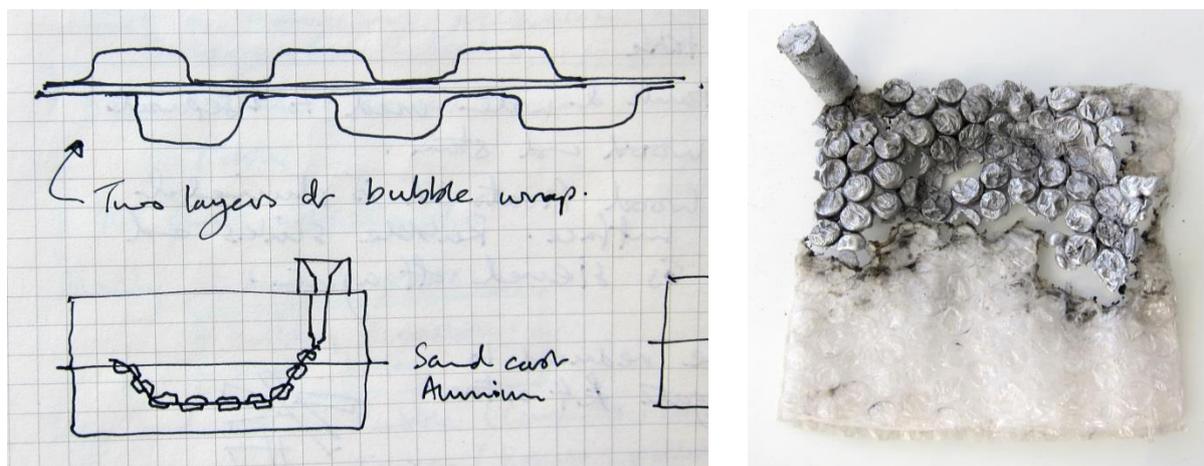


Fig: 2. Method for bubble as a waste mould (left) for a sand-cast bowl (right) (author 2015)

² <http://www.dezeen.com/2012/11/28/dezeen-book-of-ideas-pewter-stool-by-max-lamb/> 28 Nov 2012

In the first iterations of this process, the molten aluminium has not been able to flow all the way through the mould, but additional layers are being added, to create more space. Further iterations will be made, aiming for complete outcomes.

The exhibition will include the items shown in the portfolio (see pages 4 - 5), providing a narrative of critical making alongside more refined artefacts arising from the same process.

Ian Lambert

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503 words (including quotes, excluding image captions and footnotes)

References

Barber, E., & Osgerby, J., (2014) *In the Making*, London: Design Museum

Dunnigan, J., (2013) *Thinking*, in Somerson, R. and Hermano, M.L. *The Art of Critical Making* Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons (pp94-115)

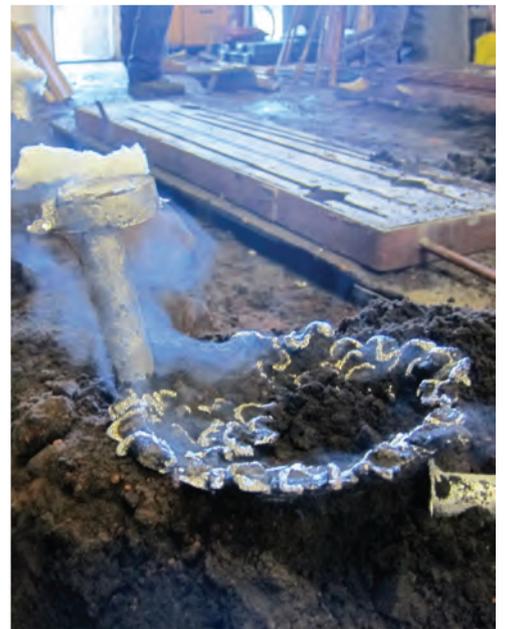
Fairs, M., (2012) *Dezeen Book of Ideas: Pewter Stool by Max Lamb*, Dezeen, 28 November 2012, (accessed 21st April 2014) (<http://www.dezeen.com/2012/11/28/dezeen-book-of-ideas-pewter-stool-by-max-lamb/>)

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Critical Making Progress

Experimental sand cast aluminium bowl (with sprue), cast from a polystyrene packaging waste mould - first attempt.

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Critical Making in Progress

Experimental sand cast aluminium bowls (with sprue), cast from bubble-wrap packaging waste mould - first batch attempt.

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