



**Gården (The Farm)** 2015, detail, found pallets, wood and corrugated iron, video, sound, 250 x 420 x 360 cm.

## Close Yet So Far

Maia Birkeland has a curious relationship to the immobility of places. On the one hand, she seems driven by a desire to make fixed sites move: to bring the viewer an experience of tree tops swinging in a remote forest or a lonely farm field, perched on the slope of a fjord. On the other hand, the artist is driven by a need to remind the viewer that these places are indeed distant: you are not there, but right here in your body. Take *Gården* (The Farm, 2014), the video of the field, spotted with wild flowers. That initially seems like a one-way nature trip, except that Birkeland screened the video in the second-floor window of a building and offered the viewers headphones to hear the soundtrack: the artist reading a text describing an evening with fellow field workers at the farm. Viewers had to look up at the projection, whereas they would normally look down at a field; both the field and the video of it remained physically distant (and inaccessible). Here, nature is not only disconnected from its original site but also spatially, temporally and aurally split up as a representation. It's as if the artist were sceptical of the Romantic realism that has driven much art, literature and film. Her works – textiles in the broadest sense and in the expanded field of video, installation and short prose text works – are often visually appealing, only to unsettle the viewer's illusions, like whispers in a movie theatre. *All Those Emotions, I Carry Them with Me* (2013) is a collection of found red clothes, carefully folded and stacked into a towering cloth column. Yet since Birkeland installed them at the end of a tight corridor, viewers are drawn into a kind of trap: a cherry-red-ruby dead end. Such deceptions may recall the synecdoche whereby one part represents the whole (to represent that vast, lonely field, she collected a sack of hay from it). For Birkeland, there are many parts, which can never replace the whole nor fit with each other. *Jennifer Allen*



**Tanke & Arbeid (Labour & Thought)** 2014, birch and linen, dimensions variable.  
All images courtesy: the artist.

Maia Birkeland (1978) lives and works in Oslo. Before completing her MFA studies at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2015, she earned a BA in Visual Art (Textiles) at the same academy in 2013. She also studied in the Department for Sculpture and Environmental Art at the Glasgow School of Art and participated in international workshops in Skoki, Poland and Bangalore, India. She has taken part in several group exhibitions, including »Kasbah Vandring II / Kasbah Walking II« at Galleri F15 in Moss, Norway, in 2013.

## Maia Birkeland



**All Those Emotions, I Carry Them with Me** 2013, found red textiles folded and rolled, narrow white corridor, light, 45 x 240 x 270 cm.  
Photograph: Klara Pousette.