Welcome to The Beginner’s Guide to Standardization. I will tell you what it means when they say, “that is not the standard”. I will do this to give you some of the power back. I will give you tools to fight for your design, and its right to exist. From now on, you will to stop treating the standard as the correct answer, but rather question how it will shape your design and examine the reason for the standard.

Standardization has shaped a correctness to design that will echo through our practices long after our time, but together we will scream louder and let the echo fade away.
INTRODUCTION TO THE BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO
STANDARDIZATION

The thesis is a critical study to tackle the argument of standards and to show the connection between standardization and globalization.

In 1957 the Swedish magazine Form, publish an article by the architect Bo Sundberg. He criticised the architectural establishment for being uneducated in the modern building technique and refusing to accept the future of architecture. The article created a massive discussion about the architectural roll in Sweden. Another Swedish architect named Jöran Curman wrote in support of Sundbergs article:

«Men sätt för sjutton I gang då. Komplettera era kunskaper och skaffa er en insikt i tekniska och ekonomiska förutsättningar. Tyck inte synd om er själva och fasna inte i uppfattningen att standardisering, modulisering och elementbyggeri är farligt och inkräktar på arkitekturens fria skapande. Acceptera verkligheten och försök i stället se nya möjligheter»

“It is about time that you start then. Compliment you’re knowledge and learn about the technological and economic requirements. Do not pity yourself and carry on with the assumptions that standardize and prefab building are ruining the architect's freedom of creating. Accept reality and see the opportunity of this time”.

Thus that is what I’m doing( have done). I am teaching myself about the standard world. Before I did any real research on the topic, I thought that white old men in the 50s made every standard. “These old men cannot tell me what to do” was my opinion towards standards. In my defense this is partly true, but of course there are a lot more too standards. In this Beginner’s guide, I will tell you the story of the greatest collaboration project in human history, standardization. I made my bachelor thesis into a Beginner’s Guide to break down words and include basic knowledge of the standard world.

My educated is in interior architecture and furniture design. Through the work of this thesis, I am shaping my practice and finding my role as an interior architect. The
topic of standardization started initially two years ago together with my collaboration partner Nils Ställborn. We questioned how standards were used as the correct answer in the design process. The work of this thesis is done in the time span from January to May 2018. The work includes materialization and writing and is presented in a blue container at Konstfacks Spring exhibition 2018 and in this thesis.

I want to be a translator in between the Standard World and the norm critical world I belong to. A translator who does not tell you what is right and what is wrong, but maybe a dramatic translator in an effort to create a debate around the power of standards. My thesis is as much a critical study of standardization as it is a critic of the assumptions I taught.
DEVELOPING MY PRACTICE, CREATING A METHOD

My practice consists of noticing the language we use to create and describe the human-made world. How do words shape? I am exploring the power of language. I seek inspiration from linguistics and transform what I learn into a method that fits my role as an interior architect.

We all use language. Right now, I am not describing my thoughts in the language I originally thought them in. I am translating them into my second language. I will lose some of the essences with this translation. Language is not mathematics. A word cannot be translated without the small shift in association to the word. I find a freedom in understanding and noticing this shift.

My first language is Norwegian, my second is English, my third is Swedish. Norwegian is the language that I grew up with, and the language I first learned about the human-made world. English is my second language. It is a distant cousin to Norwegian and a language I have had great difficulty with. I have learned my second language through popular culture with a strong American view of the world. My third language is Swedish. It is a language I have only had for three years. It has a strong relation to my first language. Swedish is the language I am taught my role as an interior architect. Swedish has expanded my vocabulary. It was in the small gap between Norwegian and Swedish I notice the power of language. It is these three languages I know and these three languages I am analyzing.

This project is about one word, standard. I view the word as an argument in the design process. I am tackling this argument by breaking the word and examining the pieces.

Noticing the power of language in the design process did not start with this project, but through my research, I have confirmed the importance of these aspects in this project. The standard world creates and communicates their standards through language. The language barriers are a big topic within the Standard World.
My methods of materializing are rooted in discourse analysis. It is a method of
analysis created and used in linguistic, idea history and philosophy. It has become an
interdisciplinary method. There exist many explanations of the word discourse. I have
grown fond of how the linguists describe it, “A discourse is what is more than the
sentence”.

Translate the quote into my role as an interior architect, it becomes what associations
and history I embed into the design, material, shape and function. What does the
design remind our self of and how does not affect the design? Which words do we
use to describe what we have created and what we want to create? How do these
words shape our design?

To understand how I could develop a design method through discourse analysis I
read an introductory book used in Swedish University, “Diskursanalys i praktiken”
edited by Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad. The book’s title translates to “Discourse
Analysis in practice”.

The book describes the work of eight PhD students and graduates who have used
discourse analysis in their work. They are all social researchers. They have analysed
different materials as interviews, state campaigns, commercials, video recordings
and several other media. They have all analyzed communication.

The book debates research objectivity and demand honesty from the researchers. It
says that no research is neutral and that we should change the way we talk about
research. Discourse analysis is to analyze the categorization of our society, how they
are made and how we used them.

None of the researchers in the book analyze architectural and design. They all have
made strict frameworks around their research and looked at specific serious of
commercials or recording footage off Junior high gym classes. Their analysis is
presented in publications as written text. I do not believe I can use the same
framework and as an interior architect, I shouldn’t copy the method of a linguistic researcher. I learn from them, but I reform it into my role world. My focus will be to present my analysis in materializations, not in writing. I want to show language in design. Make it visible for everyone to see. I often call this the typicalness or the logic of design and I exaggerate to make something new that has a strong relation to what I analysed. I choose what to take with me in materialization, but my view of the world is not unique. I console others to make my materializations visible and understandable to other people.
WHAT IS A STANDARD

If I shall teach you to tackle the argument of standards you must first understand what the word standard, means. It is a commonly used word, and it exists in many languages. There is not one true definition of the word, and the use of the word differs from language to language.

Oxford Dictionary says, “A standard is something that is used as a measure, norm or model in comparative evaluations”. Standard and norm are synonyms to each other.

In many languages, such as German and French, the word norm, are preferred over standard. The word standard, is used both to show what is normal and to point out what should be normal. It is often talked about how to raise the standard, as in make stronger requirements on what should be considered normal.

NORM=STANDARD

In my vocabulary, the words standard and norm, are used very differently. A norm is a socially constructed system that creates guidelines to show what is believed to be normal. It is a word I am taught to challenge. Standard, on the other hand, is a word I am taught to follow.

The word standard, comes from old French: estendre, estendart. It dates back to the mid-12th century and was used as a word to describe a military flag. The Oxford Dictionary defines estendart as a military standard, flag or banner flag or other conspicuous objects to serve as a rallying point for a military force. The word has later been mixed with the English word, stand. The estendart consist of two elements. A pole stuck in the ground to be visible to the soldiers on the battlefields. It was important for the soldiers to trust that the pole was secured in the ground. They had to trust the standard, and then they could raise the flag to the top, raise the standard. It has created phrases such as; standing firm, up to the standard, raising the standard and setting the standard.

https://www.etymonline.com/word/standard
In the English, the word standard, is used as an invisible threshold to all that is good. “The standard of the law” tells the story of the society we would like to have. The word could be used to describe once moral view, as in “is not up to my standards”. It comes from the influence of the English word, stand. This aspect of the word is an aspect I decided not to look into because it is not as easily transferable to the Scandinavian languages.

In the Scandinavian languages, the word standard, can also refer to something boring because it is normal. It is this meaning of the word I found most common in the Scandinavian day-to-day language.

When we use the word standard, it often has nothing to do with the official standards that are made by the Standard World. “That is not the standard” usually refer to how the problem is normally solved, how is it normally done. The Social standard of things and not formal standards. The social standard are norms on how we should create, but the word standard, is a stronger argument then the word norm. I believe it is a stronger argument because the word standard, is backed up by the Standard World.

The associations to the word differ from language to language, but most meaning and associations to the word are translatable even if it is not as familiar. I have, understandably, focused on the languages I know; Norwegian, Swedish and English. However, the word standard, exists in many languages, and the word itself is easily translatable.
Early on in my research work, I start looking into the organizations that make and distributes the official standards. I called the organization Standard Norway to book an appointment for an interview and the answering machine goes:

*Velkommen til Standard Norge*

*For sentralbord, TAST 1*

*Vil du kjøpe standarder eller normer, TAST 2*

*Welcome to Standard NORWAY*

*For switchboard, PRESS 1*

*To buy standards or norms, PRESS 2*

I thought, how can I talk to these people. Buy a norm? In my education, I am taught norm critique and here they sell norms. However, I did talk to the communication director of the organisation, Marit Sæter. She was sceptical to what I wanted to investigate. She didn't understand me when I said, “I'm investigating how standardization has shaped our design language”. I started preparing for the interview by digging into the world I began calling the Standard World.

To give a collective name to the organisations that work to create formal standards, I made up the phrase, The Standard World. With this phrase, I am referring to the people who are working to develop standards grounded in international consensus. The Standard World is made up of the organisations, both national and international. They are recognised to make the official standard for us and to us, with the purpose of making the world enable to collaborate. Official standards are guidelines for us to follow. Some standards, especially in construction, are made into National laws, these standards are the exceptions and not the norm. Most standards are voluntary guidelines.
The international standard organisation ISO is the biggest most influential organisation in the Standard World. “When the world agrees” is their slogan. The member countries send the best experts to create standards in their interests. This is practical politics. Countries come together and agree to small, but important things such as requirements for containers. The organisation was founded in 1947 by 25 countries. The founders of ISO were industrialised western countries, United States and the United Kingdom. Today they have 161 member countries with the central secretariat located in Geneva, Switzerland. Not all countries are full members of ISO, as can be seen then compared to the United Nations 193 member countries. Some countries are Correspondent members, others are Subscribing members and some countries in the world have no association with ISO at all.

ISO describes the different memberships like this:

“Full members (or member bodies) influence ISO standards development and strategy by participating and voting in ISO technical and policy meetings. Full members sell and adopt ISO International Standards nationally. Correspondent members observe the development of ISO standards and strategy by attending ISO technical and policy meetings as observers. Correspondent members can sell and adopt ISO International Standards nationally. Subscriber members keep up to date on ISO’s work, but cannot participate in it. They do not sell or adopt ISO International Standards nationally”

On the list of non-ISO members are countries that all have great difficulties with never-ending civil wars, poverty and/or corrupt leaders.

“Because 'International Organization for Standardization' would have different acronyms in different languages, IOS in English, OIN in French for Organisation Internationale de normalisation, our founders decided to give it the short form ISO. “ISO is derived from the Greek word: isos, meaning equal. “Whatever the country, whatever the language, we are always ISO”
ISO have published 22136 International Standards, which you can buy from the national standard organization or the ISO Store.

Although ISO is the far largest organisation, there are others international standard organisations such as CEN. CEN is the European standard organisation founded in 1961. CEN stands for Comité européen de normalisation. The association brings together the National Standardization Bodies of 34 European countries. CEN has been officially recognised by the European Union and by the European Free Trade Association, EFTA, as being responsible for developing and defining voluntary standards at European level. CEN provides a platform for the development of European Standards and other technical documents in relation to various kinds of products, materials, services and processes.

I used the example of standardized binders to show what my project is about early in my process. Binders are not something we use that often anymore, but I noticed the weird binders in Sweden. The first time I saw a Swedish binder, I thought it was a vintage binder, but I later saw it for sale in regular stores. Swedish binders have four holes. The binders I am used to, hav ceilinge two holes. The reason for this is that in 1974, ISO created a standard for holes in binders, ISO838, but Sweden together with a few other countries who did not want to join the standard. The four holes used in Sweden is the Swedish intervention, called Triopärmen, patented in 1890 by Andreas Tengwall. You cannot move papers from one binder to the other binder without tearing the paper. The countries that use the standard ISO binder is a long list off 33 countries. The countries that were opposed the ISO838 were Sweden, United States, Canada and the Philippines. When it comes to binders the countries do not communicate with each other. I believe that the Swedish four holes binders are the part of Swedish culture. I showed the two different kinds of binders to my Swedish classmates. They were very surprised that they have such a unique binder. My non-Swedish friends in Sweden were relieved to hear that Sweden do really have weird binders.
The national standard organizations are organized differently. Some are run by the government, and others are private independent organizations. The business model for funding varies from country to country, but most are non-profit organizations partly funded by their government. A country can have several organizations that work to develop standards nationally. The differed organizations are usually not in competition with each other but works to create standards in different fields. Electronics often have their own standard organizations. Every country can only have one member in the international Standard organization, ISO. The national organizations can be referred to as a member body. Every member body has one vote in ISO.

The national standards organizations I have focused on is the Swedish standard Institute, SIS, and Standards Norway, SN. I chose these standard organizations simply because they were most accessible for me geographically and culturally. They are interesting countries to compare, because they have carried different roles in history. I conducted interviews with representatives from each of the organizations. I researched which topics are discussed on their web pages, and looked at how they present themselves through their web pages.

I planned the interviews as a conversation. At SIS I talked to Kerstin Söderberg, who work as a Project leader in the organisation. At Standard Norway I met with Einar Morten Lassesen, who is a communication advisor in the organisation. My intensions was to include these eight topic in the conversations:

**The business of developing a standard** – how is the organization built? How do the process of developing a standard look like? Who gets to create a standard?

**Defining words and phrases** – when preparing for the interviews I came across many words that were interesting for me to understand through their vocabulary.

**Who owns the standards** – standards cost a lot of money. I talked to the organizations about the future of distributing standards.
Standard and innovation – on their web pages of the standard organisations debates innovation. Standards are grounded in the yesterday knowledge how could they then provide for the future technology?

Standard and identify – one topic they seem to avoid on their web pages, is identity. Can we standardize the world? Do they want to standardize the world?

Social responsibility ISO 26000 – is a new standard from 2015 developed by the Swedish standard Institute. How can you standardize social responsibility? Is this the future of the Standard World?

Standards and measurements – since I started my project I have had numerous discussions that always ends with standard measurements. As a designer deciding measurements is a big part of the work. I asked the Standard World if they talk a lot about measurements?

My project – in the end of the interview I showed my thoughts, words and discussed the future.

In my thesis I have included what I learned in these conversations with the Standard World.
In my investigation of Standard Norway, I found a presentation by Kirsti Vandraas, held at a Standard Norway conference. She works for Peter Opsvik, a Norwegian furniture designer. His work is known for different views on what a good ergonomic sitting should be like. She has worked to represent his views in the Standard World for many years and has seen the shift on how and what we standardize for. Peter Opsvik has made the children’s chair most Scandinavians has grown up with, the Tripp Trapp. He wanted the chair to change with the child. He believes that children should be active and be allowed to climb up and down from their chair. This concept of children care is not similar to other European countries. In German they want their children chairs to be safe, with the child strapped into the chair. Kirsti Vandraas work to include Tripp Trapp into the standard of children chairs. She says that to understand the standard you must understand the idea the standard is grounded upon. We all want our children to be safe, but what is safety?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJuLzmW6kU
The communication director in Standard Norway didn’t understand what I was investigating, because I redefined the word standardization. I did it without knowing that I named a new era in human history.

Standardization is a word I use wrongly with purpose. The Standard World does not agree with me on my redefining of their word. Standardization is the noun of action from standardize, who again is a hybrid made of the word standard. It was originally used in a pharmacology publication in 1888. https://www.etymonline.com/word/standard

In the Standard Worlds vocabulary standardization simply means the process an idea goes through to become a standard. This is the synchronic definition of the word. I have defined the diachronic meaning to give a name to the contemporary era there the goal to create standards has become very important. This era has no clear beginning. It was an important tool for the functionalists and lives on as their heritage to us.

Standardization has made globalization possible by making the world to collaborate. The Standard World describes there work as creating a common ground for everyone to build on. The goal is that everyone no matter which country they're from, shall compete with the same rules. The Standard World makes guidelines for certification. The Standard World does not carry out to the certification process. By making as many countries agreeing to a common set of certification guidelines, businesses can expand their markets without adjusting to every country’s rule. It is called harmonising the standard. It is usually only small differences between how countries have decided to do things. Sometimes these differences are vital part of cultural identity or it cost too much to change, but often these small differences can be harmonised into one common standard.
The need for harmonizing also exists within the countries. Standard Norway is leading the work to harmonize the standard for busses in Norway. When I first heard of the project, I was quite sceptical. Busses are a part of our cultural identity. I then of course thought about the aesthetic of the bus and its interior. Is all bus sits going to be in the same fabric all over the country? Should all buses have the same colour? I raised my concern in my interview with Einar Morten Lassesen at Standard Norway. He explained the need for the standardization of buses. In one part of the country, it is decided that it should be 5 cm between the seats, in another part of the country it is decided that it should be 4 cm between the sits. A bus company, that decides or is forced to move to another part of the country where they’re able to compete in the market, have to change all their buses because of these small differences in bus standard. Standard Norway want to secure the quality of the bus both for the companies and the travellers. Where should the stop button be? Should it be red, blue or yellow? Which height should it be at? Should it say STOP in English, or STOPP in Norwegian? They do not wish to standardize the identity of the bus. The fabric of the seat will continue to have different colours and patterns, but the quality of the fabric will be the same everywhere.

https://www.nrk.no/ostlandssendingen/standardbussene-kommer-1.13478254

The world is not standardized. The countries have different climates, cultures and language. That is a fact and it will not change no matter how much they standardize, but globalization has made us more similar to each other. It is not the Standard World goal to standardize the world.
By defining a new time period, Standardization, I almost automatically mark the beginning of a new era in human history. A post time, Poststandardization.

They say that you do not see the big changes in the world before they happen. That you only see them in your rear-view mirror as you drive by, but I need to see the changes now before I have driven past them. To do this I am creating my own rear-view mirror, a new era in human history, Post Standardization. Everything I do we'll be done in the era of Post Standardization. This era is the future and the time I am living in. I drive past the present and I can see the changes in my new rear-view mirror.

I am in the era of Post Standardization, because I said so. I do not have any evidence, but let me explain. Post simply means after. A post era is not a time you glorify the times before, and that fits me perfectly. It could be argued against me that we are not in a time after standardization because the standards are very much a valued tool in our society. Other good questions are what the era of standardization is, and if I am in a post-era of standardization, what is when the pre-era. I do not think I can set a starting point for the era of standardization. It could be argued that standardizing came with the functionalists, but it could also have started with the systems that were created to build the pyramids in the ancient Egypt.

In perspective of an International standards committee, the term Post standardization must seem odd. In their vocabulary standardization means the process an idea to standard goes through to become a standard. In their vocabulary Post Standardization, most mean the time after a standard has become an official standard. It can also mean the time after standard has been thrown away. When the standard is no longer useful in society and becomes upgraded or deleted. This is not what I mean, but I can see that it could be interpreted in other ways and I have to acknowledge that.
Post Standardization is my tool to understand standardization. I am in the future looking at the present as if it was the past. I do not know how far in the future I am. I do not know when Post Standardization will start for the rest of the humankind. With my new tool, I am tackling the argument of standard.

I made a manifesto, for Poststandardization practice, to put my thoughts into words and my words into acts:

**THE MANIFESTO OF POSTSTANDARDIZATION**

We declare the beginning of Post Standardization in November 2016. It marks start on a new era in human history. Post Standardization comes as a reaction to the development in Standardization.

We will stop treating the standard as the correct answer, but rather question how it will shape our design.

Standardization is a product of functionalism. Early on standardization talked about creating a higher standard of living for everyone. Through mass production, democratization of design, rational building and generalization it has done what it set out to do. We’re not looking back. We do not wish we could reset the clocks to the time before standardization, but the narrative standardization has created needs to be examined and changed.

We will unpack standardization history and look at it from a feministic viewpoint to find how old standards have contributed to the continuation of imperialism.

We will see the connections between architecture and social injustice.

We will analyze the intersectionality of our society and create spaces for the people history has ignored.

The belief in the star architect will fade as the truth of collaboration comes forward. Standardization is the most successful collaboration project in human history.

We will continue the collaboration standardization created, but without becoming mindless.

We will ask questions and create new words when we can’t communicate.

We will teach through our practice and in our practice, we will create.

Standardization has shaped a correctness to design that will echo through our practices long after our time, but we will scream louder and let the echo fade away.
MY MATERIALIZATIONS

To materialize is to communicate through a form. I see it as a word squeeze in between representation and illustration. To materialize is to create new material out of your findings. Materializing is a concept I am constantly struggling with. It is a fine balance and I never know if I have succeeded before I see the new material. I materialize as an interior architect working in Poststandardization. I often call how I materialize for “moving the logic”. I try to understand and conquer the logic of an object and apply the same logic onto another object. It is then the logic of both objects I materialize.

I have grown fond of the concept of explaining a word with an object. It, of course, exist many ways to explain the word, standard, but as it originates from the word estendart and was used as a name for military flags, I choose to explain the word with a flag. Trust the flagpole, trust the standard, raise the flag, raise the standard.

As I looked into the history of ISO, I found pictures of ISO gathering from the organisation's early history. Male representatives from the different national organisations sit around a table with female secretaries in each corner. In front of all the representatives stands a small table flag representing the country they are from.
When I talk to my Swedish friends about my plan to explain the word standard, with flags, they all say "ja, som i standar". The Swedish language has kept the meaning of the French word. When I google “standar” I find a web shop that sells similar small table flagpoles as in the pictures from ISO gathering. I bought 10 small flagpoles with white marble feet.

My flags are red, because it is a typical flag colour. I want you to be reminded of revolution and change. I choose this particular shade of red that is almost pink, because it is the shade of red cheap mass-produced flags has.

My phrases, redefinitions and words are important in this project. I will not materialize the words I have made up, but show them with my materializations. My words will be represented on the flags as a word or a phrase on each flag.

I am fascinated of language in general, but it is the spoken language my interest is drawn to. I use the written language to freeze down spoken language, but when I do that the language suddenly has a shape and in need of a design. I ask for help to shape the letters to communicate what I want to communicate. Linda Boodh, a graphic designer and my friend, helps me to separate what I have made up and what I have borrowed from the Standard World. She wants me to use Helvetica for my main text, as it is the topography of functionalists. Helvetica, and similar fonts, are used by the Standard World, in their document and websites. For the words I have redefined or made up she suggests a typeface she has made.

Linda Boodh describes the topography, she has named Mono’s, as follows:

By mixing/fusing these typefaces, Helvetica and Trajan, I aim to make a comment on today’s representation of women in the field of type design. Helvetica is for many, and has through time, been a symbol for the “neutral”, “modern” and most usable font. It is widely used in different corporate logotypes of world-leading companies across the world. The type tells us about a male-dominated history of type, where the rational man was setting the trends of the design world, and where the industrialist era functional, capitalist and neoliberal was the driving force and influenced the aesthetic of design all along from the Bauhaus up until today.
The sans serif aesthetics of Helvetica is still regarded by many designers as the most neutral and universally pleasing form of typography, even though its dominance is relatively recent, and happened mostly in Western Europe and North America. The fact that it is regarded by some as a “neutral”, “universal” typeface has to do with the use of West European modernism design, the branding of multinationals and the success of these multinationals in dominating world markets.

Trajan is an elegant, sweepy curved typeface, first spotted on the Trajan Column in Rome. Today the typeface is widely used, often seen on posters for movies about the Rome empire. It has been remade a couple of times but the most popular remake was done by Carol Twombly. The type is interesting since it lacks the small capitals, plus that it still has the handmade feel left to it. For me, what Carol Twombly did, when redesigning the historical typeface Trajan, symbolizes one of the key issues in today’s design, namely the redesigning of the history of design. Not in the sense that we need to deconstruct it, rather diverse it, make it a more pluralistic and including history where all stories, the marginalized, paralleled, as well as the centred, can coexist and be read and be shown equal importance. The fact that Trajan only has capital letters also symbolizes the reclaiming of place, since the hierarchy between small and big capitals always has implied a hierarchy system (i.e. during the apartheid when a black person name was referred to with small capitals and a white with big caps etc.).

The fact that classical Roman capitals require more discipline and skill to make than industrial Roman capitals is surely part of their allure. They are a challenge to everyone who takes the making of letters seriously. They do not have to be embraced or even accepted, but they do have to be confronted.”

I have set out a grid parted in 29 horizontal lines, one for each letter in the alphabet. By starting from each corner and work my way towards the middle it makes the typeface aesthetics characterize a constant “movement” or the look of a state of “forever becoming”. The 29 different styles of each letter, ads up to a wide font family with very diverse and multicoloured weights. The two typefaces are in a constant collaboration in bringing the visual together with the semiotics across, and since there is this fusion between the two I have chosen to call them Mono’s. Not only because I associate it with the words “movement” and “nomads”, in line with the transgressiveness of the type design, but also to pin- point the pluriversal oneness that appears when they are shaping forms of letter S together.
I want to show the extent of the Standard World. Present the Standard World as it is, through facts, not as I believe it to be. I want to show that the words norm and standard are synonyms to each other in the Standard World. On ISOs website, all their members are listed. You can see how many international standards each national standard organisation has contributed to, which year the organisation was founded in and the full names of all the organisations. You do not see all of the information at once, but by clicking on each country to find the information. There are 161 members of ISO. I chose 60 countries and gathered information about the organisations. How many standards each country have contributed to, the countries name, the organisation’s name, which year the organisation was founded and what kind of ISO membership they have? I organize the countries alphabetically as they do in ISO meeting. I gathered the information in a big chart. My chart is a zoom in of a flag. It waves in the wind. A have gathered data that will change in the future. More standards will be written. Some countries will contribute more than others and more countries will become full members. I freeze this moment of time and project my wave chart on mirrors to create an element of classic interior.
Containers are standardizations proudest child. It is a direct product of an era where standards are the ultimate tool of efficiency. It is called the containerization of the world. It is the space the world has agreed-upon and as an interior architect, I find this space interesting. I choose to exhibit in a shipping container to give myself the challenge of adjusting my design to a standardize space and to show the container in a context of an art exhibition.

How a design fits in a container is an important economic and environmental aspects of design. In an effort to design for the containers the user of the design gets less time and care from the designer. I call this part of design for containomic. It is a part of the mass-production to democratize design. However, the containers involvement has gone beyond transport. Container architecture is the pornographic version of prefab building. Apartments are transported on tracks and stacked on top of each other to create housing complex on one day. It is seen as a solution for many cities housing crisis.

Containomic = container + ergonomic: from Latin ergon = work + nomos = law
contain law
Containomic
Container architecture is everything from using an original shipping container as a building block, to using the measurements of the container to build houses in factories and transporting them on trucks. I look at the concept of container architecture with disgust, but I have sympathy for it as a solution to housing crisis. Architecture like this might be used in refugee camps as temporary housing, in schools with too many students, as student housing and it exists as high-end architecture for the rich. The containerization of the world has a prosperous future. All of our belongings have probably been inside a container and in future it will our homes.

The containerization of the world made globalization possible by revolutionizing the shipping industry. Before containers, the shipping industry was one of the worlds lagers employers. The idea to create containers for transport started in the late 18th century with several inventions to contain goods. With the invention of railways in the 1830s, the industry was in need of a smarter solution for containing goods. At the beginning of the 20th century, there are several attempts to create container systems. Poland was the first country to develop a container system, but the effort to complete the invention was stopped by the Bolshevik War. During the first and second World War several container systems were in place, but most containers were made of wood and not stackable. The US Army discovered the importance of metal containers during the Korean War. In the post-war, Europe containerization was on the horizon. The first truly successful container system was made by the American entrepreneur McLean in 1956. His idea was to move the entire container box from trucks, to boats, to railways, without ever open the container during transit.

In 1968 the first ISO standard for containers was published and it has had several updates since then. 20 countries from all over the world work together for seven years to create ISO 668.

Containerization has had a massive impact on the world in terms of production, shipping and globalization, but it has also change the structure of every city in the
world. To learn more about containerization I highly recommend the podcast series, Containers, an 8-part audio documentary from Radiotopia.

I have bought the ISO Standard for containers, ISO 668, *Freight Containers Classification, Dimensions and Ratings*, and two extra updates made to the standard. It cost 1575 SEK and I understand very little of the content. The standard consists of very few drawings and by focusing on the language they use in the standard, a couple of repeating phrases catch my attention:

….has to be as large as possible….
….the corner of fittings are very important….
….has to be essay moved in and out of the container….

I started looking at the construction of the container. The container is like it is for a reason, but the aesthetic is not the reason. In container architecture it is the containers that creates the architecture, it forms the aesthetic of the building. I decide to use the aesthetic of containers in my materialization.

I decided to adapt my exhibition to a container. The container itself is not my materialization, it is like a podium for my exhibition. I am an interior architect and I have a space to exhibit in. I create an interior to the container made of the logic I have learned from the container.

As I said, I want to create a debate about how we use standards. I want to teach what I have learnt about standards. I start out with teachers desk. The teacher’s desk is the table with the three walls. It makes it uncomfortable to sit around table. This is the table of teaching I do not agree with. I want everyone to be able to sit with me at a table to
talk about standards. When I take away the walls I am left with a table. It is my conference table.

A table has four legs, the legs are the corner fittings of a table. The table top gets the athletics from container pattern walls. You might say the logic of the container is to contain, but that is not the logic of the table.

Instead of using my disgust for container architecture or work against containomic design, I exaggerate what I see. What if it was aesthetically visible that an object had been in a container. What if containers could shape the aesthetic of our world not only the function.
I continue to build my exhibition to the container. I looked at the containers as an interior to find the containers furniture. The euro pallet is the furniture of the container and podiums the furniture of an exhibition. I built podiums with the euro pallets function to fulfil the logic of them both. The function of the pallets become an aesthetic detail to the podiums. The Euro pallet is Swedish invention developed by building and transport economy (BT) and the Swedish railroads (SJ) in 1949. It became are standard for European Real ways in 1957.
I am confused when I choose the colours to my project. On every website, on every program, everywhere it says standard colours and everywhere the colours and different. They often have the same type of colours; red, blue, yellow, green, but with difference nuances of the colours. I know that I’m going to get a blue container. I decided to have a very blue floor of my blue container. I started looking at typical colours I have around me. I am interested in typical colours on functional objects or tools. Colours that has not been chosen for its aesthetic value. The light yellow painting tape, the orange red brick and container blue. I also choose to have a bright yellow. A colour that is used for warnings in many different settings. The bright yellow has a reason for its colour, but it has also become the standard colour for “be aware” and “you are warned”.

![Image of a container with a red flag]

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REFLECTION

The project has been a journey with twists and turns along the way. I have challenged my new role as an interior architect and question what I have learned in my education. My opinions have changed with the project and I am grateful.

I am now able to put words in place for my ideas around the power of language. My practice has started taking shape and through my methods I will continue to form my practice.

The dive into the Standard World was more complicated than what I could ever imagine. Standing on the edge on my way into this world I decided to put my critic aside to understand the Standard World’s mission.

The project became very theoretical. I am pleased that I was able to communicate what I have learned in the materialization, to show my thoughts through furniture and interior. I packaged my project into a practical approach to debate my role as an interior architect.
I worked on the atmosphere in my exhibition. In the process of creating an atmosphere you never know if you have succeeded before it is all assembled. The atmosphere I wanted to create, needed some sort of a corporate feeling, but I didn’t want to use any souvenir from the corporate world. The container is a standardized space and it was a well suited space to discuss standards. By using a container, I took control of the context of my exhibition. The blue plastic flooring I put in the container, contributed to the futuristic feeling I wanted to achieve. Together with my color choices and lighting, the container felt like a step into the future with a strong corporate vibe. I wanted to create the same feeling in the container as what I felt reading about the Standard World. A feeling of an exciting future because international standards make the world collaborate and contribute to the peace effort. I didn’t want to portray a despotic future, even if my project initially was a critical study of the standard word. The interior of my container and the furniture I built are not the standard. It is not normal, but the atmosphere is my materialization of the Standard World.
I spent a lot of time in the container, talking to visitors. I started out with a short presentation of my project and then I got them to reflect with me. My mirrors were an excellent introduction to the project. I shortly explained my chart and people immediately found their country or countries they didn’t expect contributes in international standardization. We started discussing how standardization history mirrors world history.

I used Afghanistan with their five standards as an example of a country who has made few standards. We all know that Afghanistan is a country with a difficult history with many wars. I’ve talked about how wonderful it is that even so, Afghanistan have a standard organization and what that might mean for the country’s future collaborating with other countries.

I used United Kingdom with their 737 standards and Frans with their 740 standards as an example to show how imperialism has played part in standardization history. It isn’t surprising to see that countries who historically have been rich empires and early became industrialized, have contributed a lot to International standard.

I used North Korea (D.P.R.E. Korea) with their 93 standards as a surprising example that non-democratic states also contributes to international standards.

My chart only show countries contribution to International standards. It does not show countries national efforts to standardize. I used Norway with 331, and Sweden with 562 international standards as an example to show how history and culture are reflected in standardization. Norway had to fight for its independence. The country has never been a member of the EU. The national effort to standardize is more important for Norway. The country have contributed to a lot less international standards then Sweden. Sweden has had the opposite role in history. The country early embrace modernistic idea of industrialization. The country’s effort to standardize internationally is imported to establish it’s role in the International market.
I got different reactions from the public on the container and my exhibition. Many said “is this the way we are going to live in the future?” Some wanted to talk about how to make an apartment out of the container, even if I mention all the negative things about container architecture. I have had many great discussions with the visitors. Many could relate to my critique of standards in their fields and how standard shape their job. When I talk about my project I am often asked to give one reason why the world makes standards. It is not one reason. Standards are just as important to capitalists as it is to socialist. It is about to creating a system, to simplify, to increase efficiency and create a better life for everyone.
Something weird happened:

I exhibited two ISO standards. ISO 668 for containers and ISO 26000 about social responsibility. With the standards book I showed what a standard looks like and the range of things that are standardized. These books are expensive, and most people will never have the opportunity to read them. In an agreement with SIS I borrowed the two ISO standards to exhibit them. I made new covers for the books to make it clear what it was and that it was not free books. Under the press showing of the exhibition the day before the vernissage someone stole the ISO standards. They got away with the most boring of reading material at the spring exhibition at Konstfack

Presentation:

The 14th of May, I presented my project to my class, teachers, mentors and opponents. I presented the project sitting at my table like a teacher behind her desk. Next to me was three of my flags with the words: standard, the Standard World and standardization. I had an office lamp mounted on the table. When the auditorium quieter down in the darkness, I clicked on the lamp and welcomed everyone to The Beginner’s Guide to Standardization. I presented the project with isometric Illustrations of my work.
The project took an exciting turn when I discovered that norms and standards are synonyms to each other. In my education we talk a lot about the term norm critic, or in retrospect I would like to rephrase to, we talk a lot about norm critic, but not about the term. I was surprise that the Standard World use both words equally. I discussed this with both the Swedish Standard Institute (SIS) and Standard Norway (SN). At SIS they said that they only use the word standard. In Sweden the term norm critic is a lot more used and discussed than in Norway. It seemed like an uncomfortable topic to discuss at SIS. At SN they said that they mainly used the word standard, but it is still industries that prefer to use the word norm. In the international standardization work both words are used because some languages only have one of the words. In that regards they feel obligated to make both words available. At Konstfack, I have had lectures by teachers telling us this is the standard height on the chair. However, in another lecture the teacher can talk about how important it is to be critical towards the norm. It does not seem like the teacher understand that norms and standards are the same. We are taught to follow the standard and challenge the norm. I have heard many of my fellow students at Konstfack discuss that all norms are bad for us and they get annoyed when someone says norm criticality is the new norm. I of course understand what they are referring to when my fellow students talk about norms, but for people on the outside of the norm critical society, this will seem absurd.

The big question is: did I make a beginner’s guide? Through the project I said that I want to teach my classmates, as they are the future in interior architecture, to tackle the argument of standard. Give them an introduction to the world behind the word. I might have made complicated beginner’s guide. I am not sure if my exhibition was understandable without my guidance. However, my classmates now note when other use the argument of standards. They know what a standard is. I hope that the visitors I talked to in my exhibition got a critical interdiction to a world they perhaps never have thought about and a new understanding of the word standards.
I would like to see historians dig into the archives of the Standard World. What will they find, how has the process of standardization changed? How political is the Standard World? What is the legacy of the world greatest collaboration project? How should these meeting be archives for the future? What do they tell us about our present time? I want others to join me in researching standardization, to join me in Post Standardization. I have created a foundation for myself, a beginning for further research of the effects of standardization. I hope I find new collaborative partners to look into other aspects of standardization. I will continue reading the fine print of standards out loud, to involve my surroundings in questioning our common ground. I will continue shaping my practice as interior architect working in Post Standardization. My research will continue because the argument of standard will follow me where ever I go.

An observation that has always fascinated me, is that I can look around me no matter where I am and always find something that is human-made. In most situations the only thing I can see that is not human-made is the sky. With this project my fascination has got another layer. I now “see” all the meetings that take place to create my surroundings. The many meetings amongst architects and officials to create the building I am in, too all the meetings to decide the components in the floor I am standing on. All the meetings to make safety rules for the people who has built the building and the meeting to demand the same quality for similar floors all over the world. These meetings create the world.
In my research for the project I read the following books:

At Home: A Short History of Private Life by Bill Bryson (2011)

Diskursanalys i praktiken edited by Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad (2007)

Rationell arkitektur by Helena Kåberg (2003)

I research The Standard Word through their web pages and interviews with Kerstin Söderberg at SIS and Einar Morten Lassesen at SN.

ISO webpage: https://www.iso.org/home.html

SIS webpage: https://www.sis.se

SN webpage: https://www.standard.no

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