Oasis is Jana Sterbak’s investigation into the psychological and physical limits of the self within the spiritual and technological realities of our day. Its title suggests a safe haven, and its tent-like form is an enclosure large enough for a person to occupy. Fabricated from knitted stainless steel filaments, Oasis is modeled after the idea of a Faraday Cage, a 19th century sealed metal structure used in scientific laboratories to block lower frequency electromagnetic waves. In today’s culture, this would include blocking waves from cell phones, televisions, and radios. As a space of retreat from the technology that surrounds us, yet created from a technologically advanced metal fiber, the symbolism of Oasis darts between poetry and science.

Sterbak and the FW+M extensively researched conductive fibers currently in production that would satisfy the artist’s aesthetic sensibility, functionally perform the capabilities of a Faraday cage, and have the tensile strength to hold their shape. Experimentations were conducted with handwoven copper, nickel-plated Kevlar, and silver-plated knit nylon before settling on knitted stainless steel, which was developed in Belgium for use in industry.

After Sterbak selected a final form for the tent from the many experimental shapes modeled at the FW+M, a small three-dimensional prototype was given to FTL Happold in New York, an engineering and design firm that specializes in tensile structures. With the aid of their form-finding computer programs for tensile structures, FTL Happold generated a blueprint for the tent's exoskeleton and a pre-stressed pattern for the knitted stainless steel skin. Based on this pattern, the FW+M then sewed the knitted steel into the tent form.