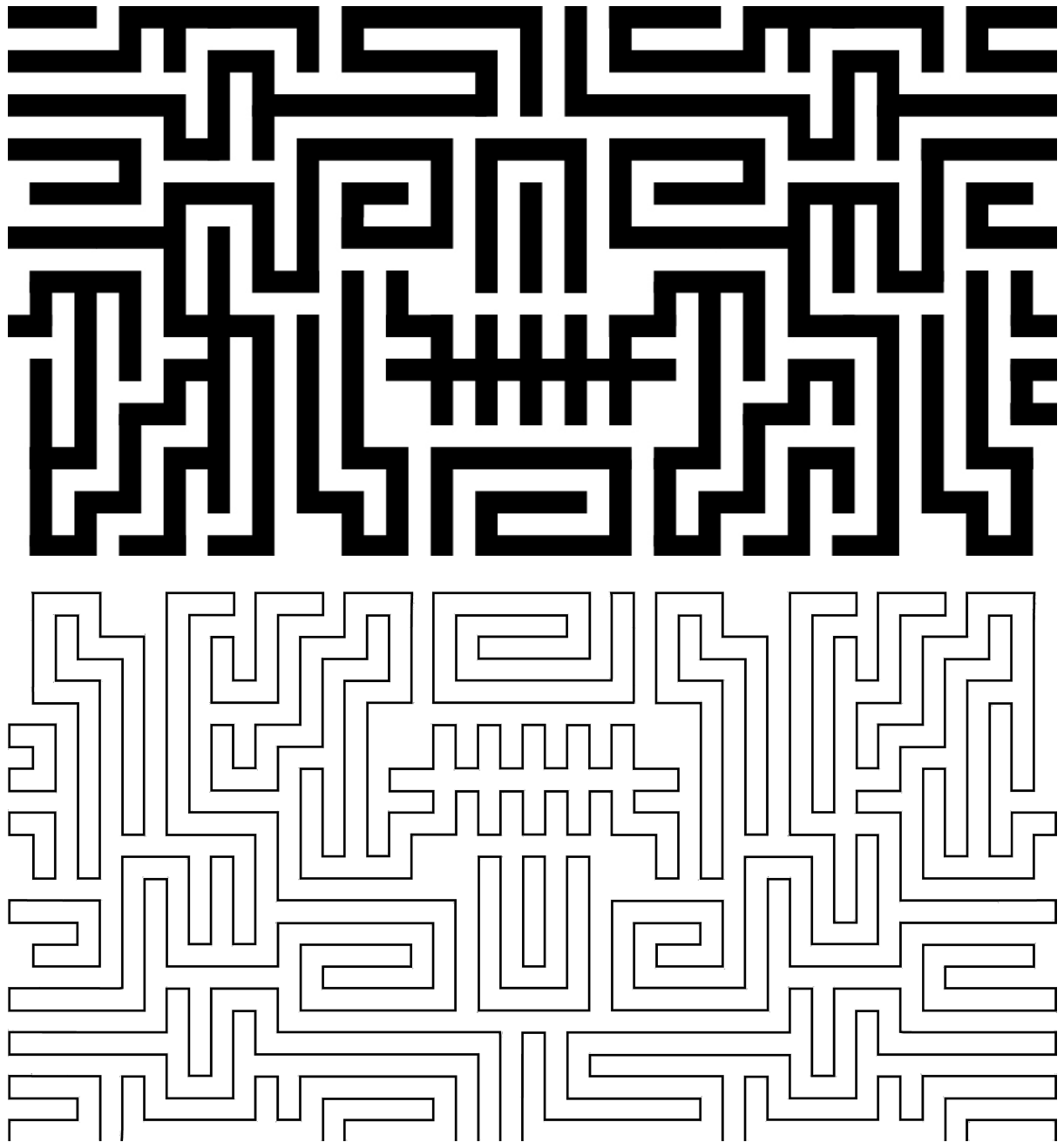


Anders Thrué Djurslev

**Where the Present Begins to Appear as Past:
Mediating Contemporaneity in a Museum of the Future**

PhD Dissertation



***Where the Present Begins to Appear as Past:
Mediating Contemporaneity in a Museum of the Future***

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PART ONE.

Introduction.

The future does not mark the discrete moment of change itself, that sharp breath's pull of sudden transformation or novelty, but that point of disjuncture where the present begins to appear as past—and where lines can be drawn to imagine what it would take to make such a moment stick, to undo the structures that keep the present alive and unwell.

– Evan Calder Williams, “Volcano, Waiting.”

This dissertation is based on my practice as the dramaturg and curator of the cross-aesthetic art exhibition and theatre performance *Museum for fremtiden* (*Museum of the Future*), presented in two versions in Denmark in 2022 at the contemporary theatre Sort/Hvid (Black/White) in Copenhagen and the contemporary arts center Kunsthall Aarhus in Aarhus respectively. Framing the making of *Museum for fremtiden* as a vehicle to interrogate the contemporary as a critical concept for dramaturgical and curatorial practice, the dissertation pursues a poetics of *historicizing the present* in and through a mediation between art exhibition and theatre performance.

Museum for fremtiden was a collaboration between Sort/Hvid, Aarhus Teater, and Kunsthall Aarhus, contemporary visual artists and theatre-makers. The cross-aesthetic project transformed Sort/Hvid's black box theatre and Kunsthall Aarhus's white cube galleries into a series of art installations and set designs of mixed media. Equipping headphones, groups of spectators were guided through the installations and sets by an audio guide, asking them to aid her in establishing a museum dedicated to imagining the future instead of exhibiting the past. Underway, she confided in them her anxieties of her future being lost to climate catastrophe, civil war, surveillance capitalism, collective memory-loss, environmental collapse. To counter these “endgame emotions,”¹ the audio guide speculated on alternative ways of being in and perceiving time; on the formation of a planetary consciousness crossing evolutionary states, species, and geological ages, the enactment of embodied memory techniques, and the embrace of queer and non-human temporalities, explored in the practices of the visual artists Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand, selected due to their engagements with questions of time and temporality. In each space, the audio guide asked the spectators to

¹ Recently coined by the Danish literary scholar and critic Mikkel Krause Frantzen, the term “endgame emotions” signifies the structure of feelings that arrive with what Frantzen calls “the climate endgame;” a structure of feelings that alter our experience of time, causing timescales such as the geological, the cultural, and the intergenerational to “melt together.” Frantzen, “Endgame Emotions: The Melting of Time, the Mourning of the World.” Frantzen shared similar points at a seminar I hosted in Kunsthall Aarhus during the opening of *Museum for fremtiden*, to which I will return in the dissertation's Part 4.

perform collective scenic actions with and for each other as well as for her. For instance, the audio guide would instruct the spectators to wear mirror masks among Krag's uncanny drawings of composite faces while joining hands in *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022); to sing together between the chromosomic sculptures and associative video work of Nymann's *Ode to Creode* (2022), and to consume what was presented as a liquid fungus that allegedly would alter their minds amid Studio ThinkingHand's tall, living sculptures of "scoby," short for a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, in *Vita . Necro . Vita*. (2019-2022). In the audio-based dramatization of these art installations, the playwright and director Christian Lollike and a team of theatre-makers, including myself as dramaturg and curator, in other words staged the spectators as a kind of *tableau vivants* in each installation through the suggestive directions of the audio guide. Concluding the experience, the audio guide directed the spectators to step onto museum pedestals in Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård's scenography to display themselves as the remains of a culture past.² Inviting the spectators to contemporaneously enact the ideas explored by the visual artists and act as temporary representations of these same ideas in the imaginary museum of the fictitious audio guide resulted in a manifestation of a temporal complexity or *contemporaneity* between conflicting forms of temporalization that I will examine in this dissertation.

In addition to the staged exhibition experience, *Museum for fremtiden* presented an exhibition catalogue and a public program. The exhibition catalogue featured interviews with the participating artists, literary and visual artworks by additional artists and writers, theoretical essays in Danish translation, and the script of the audio guide. The public program presented artist talks, readings of catalogue texts, and a research seminar during the opening period at Kunsthal Aarhus. Through these distributed components, the cross-aesthetic project probed contemporary imaginaries in a historical present seemingly permeated by permacrisis. It proposed to do so by commissioning its contributors to engage with the title's preposterous constellation of the historicist phantom—or "spectral infrastructure," to use a recent term by Nora Sternfeld and Irit Rogoff³—of the museum and the temporal category of the future.⁴

² *Museum for fremtiden* was presented in Danish. An English translation of the audio guide script is provided in the dissertation's appendix on pages 185-202. The original script in Danish can be found in the exhibition catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden*, published by Antipyrine and enclosed in the dissertation's appendix on pages 317-341.

³ Sternfeld, "Museums as Spectral Infrastructures."

⁴ The title has namesakes and predecessors. In Dubai, UAE, a Museum of the Future was erected the same year as *Museum for fremtiden* premiered at Sort/Hvid in 2022. Museum of the Future in Dubai is the object of the curator Mela Dávila-Freire's essay, "Museums of the Future: Between Promise and Damnation," included in a

This dissertation, meanwhile, makes no claim to predict the future, neither for museums nor as such. Instead, it explores the potentials, implications, and blockages of a poetics of *making the present appear as past*—inspired by the writer, theorist, and curatorial educator, Evan Calder Williams’s definition of the future in the epigraph of this introduction—under contemporary conditions. To approach the present, the dissertation interrogates the ubiquitous notion of the contemporary itself, often invoked uncritically as a signpost for most art produced today, in relation to the making of *Museum for fremtiden*. As a critical concept, the dissertation argues, the contemporary directs our attention to the ontologically paradoxical and methodologically preposterous problem of historicizing the present. In a curatorial-dramaturgical reflection on the making of *Museum for fremtiden* and its twin iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus, the dissertation pursues an aesthetic practice between dramaturgy and curating that “stays in the trouble,” to use the feminist philosopher Donna Haraway’s oft-quoted slogan, of such an endeavor.⁵ Relating my practice to insights from dramaturgy, curatorial research, literary studies, and aesthetic theory, the dissertation projects the curatorial and dramaturgical proposition of *Museum for fremtiden* as an attempt to mediate a historical present characterized by *contemporaneity*;⁶ a present constituted by the convergence of historical time, experiential time, and geological time;⁷ a present marked by the seeming loss of a futural moment.⁸

This projection is formulated as a practice-based reflection and situated analysis of the making of *Museum for fremtiden* from my implicated and intermediary position as the production’s dramaturg and curator. Unfolding and discussing the temporal complexity produced by the project’s traversing of art forms (visual art and theatre), art institutional frameworks (Sort/Hvid’s black box theatre and Kunsthall Aarhus’ white cube galleries), aesthetic media (art exhibition and theatre performance), aesthetic disciplines (curating and

Danish translation in the exhibition catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden*, enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 265–270. Dávila-Freire’s essay was originally published in *Das Museum der Zukunft: 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, edited by schnittpunkt and Joachim Baur. The *Museum for fremtiden* catalogue also featured a Danish translation of the decolonial feminist Françoise Vergès’s essay, “Museum of the Living Present,” enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 281–282, from the same publication. *Das Museum der Zukunft* revised and reenacted the proposition of a 1970 publication of the same title, *The Museum of the Future. 43 Contributions to the Discussion about the Future of the Museum*. See also, Griesser-Stermscheg, et. al., “The Museum of the Future.”

⁵ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin Chthulucene*.

⁶ Lund, *The Changing Constitution of the Present*, 8.

⁷ Mbembe, “How to Develop a Planetary Consciousness.”

⁸ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition: Introductory Thoughts on Contemporaneity & Contemporary Art*, 9.

dramaturgy), contemporary artistic practices (visual artists and theatre-makers), and, in addition, the phantasmatics of the museum and the future, the dissertation considers the tensions arising underway as tensions between conflicting forms of temporalization to explore how their convergence became constitutive of *Museum for fremtiden*'s mediation of contemporaneity. In conclusion, the dissertation speculates on a method of "museum-ing" between dramaturgy and curating, advocating an overtly self-contradictory and paradoxical approach to the dramatization of a historical present characterized by contemporaneity.

Converging dramaturgy and curating in a practice-based study, the dissertation takes part in the emerging field of curatorial research in contemporary art institutions, exploring its applicability in the neighboring field of dramaturgy and the additional context provided by the contemporary theatre institution. To do so, the dissertation offers a meta-reflection of my dramaturgical and curatorial practice in the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, informed and challenged by insights from scholarship on the contemporary as a critical concept, dramaturgy, and the curatorial by theorists and practitioners such as Jeppe Kristensen, Juliane Rebentisch, Peter Osborne, Theodore Martin, Jacob Lund, Claire Bishop, Mieke Bal, Nora Sternfeld, Simon Sheikh, Bridget Crone, Maaïke Bleeker, Florian Malzacher, Rebecca Schneider, Fredric Jameson, and Boris Groys. Connecting curating and dramaturgy, the interdisciplinary research project aims to contribute to the current discussion of the implications of conceiving both disciplines as practice-based research methods. The project's interdisciplinary research field is reflected in the journals in which two articles included in the dissertation have been published, the Danish dramaturgical research journal *Peripeti* and the international curatorial and art-based research journal *Stedelijk Studies Journal*.⁹

Research Question and Structure of the Dissertation.

In brief, the dissertation asks how the concept of the contemporary might gain critical significance for the aesthetic practices that invoke it, specifically dramaturgy and curating. To answer this question, the dissertation reflects on my practice as the dramaturg and curator of *Museum for fremtiden* in view of select critical conceptualizations of the contemporary,

⁹ The articles are included as Part 3 and Part 5 of the dissertation. See Djurslev, "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research" on pages 55-66 and Djurslev, "Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enactment of Historical Representation" on pages 101-117.

speculating on an aesthetic practice of historicizing the present—a poetics of making the present appear as past—under contemporary conditions.

Part 1 introduces the research project and situates it in the field of practice-based research in dramaturgy and curating, while disclosing its sources of inspiration, its institutional affiliations, its convergence of disciplines, its conjoining of media, and its constellation of the museum and the future to circumscribe its mode of inquiry.

Part 2 presents the dissertation's theoretical framework and method, construed through the cultural theorist and visual artist Mieke Bal's conceptions of preposterous history and exhibition-ism in view of the aesthetic theorist Jacob Lund's claim that the historical present is characterized by contemporaneity; by the coming together of different times, experiences of time, and conflicting historical narratives in an expanded—and expanding—present. To approach this expanded present in relation to the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, the dissertation draws methodological inspiration from Bal, the dramaturg and performance scholar Maaïke Bleeker's conception of dramaturgy as a "thinking through practice," as well as the literary scholar Theodore Martin's definition of the contemporary as a "strategy of mediation;" as "a means of negotiating between experience and retrospection, immersion and explanation, closeness and distance."¹⁰ Converging the practices of dramaturgy and curating, my research practice adds "performance and exhibition" to the mix, signifying in the dissertation conflicting forms of temporalization.

Part 3 elaborates on the project's convergence of dramaturgy and curating in practice-based research in the journal article "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research." The article discusses recent negotiations of curating and the curatorial in the performing arts field to present the curatorial proposition of *Museum for fremtiden*, aiming to create a cross-aesthetic format able to destabilize the opposition between the historicity associated with visual art and the temporality of the live associated with theatre; between exhibition and performance. Written approximately a year before the opening of *Museum for fremtiden*, postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the article reads as an elaborate project description and provides a state-of-the-art on curatorial research to discuss its applicability in the performing arts and the contemporary theatre institution, drawing on the performance scholar Rebecca Schneider's deconstruction of theatrical reenactment and the archive.

¹⁰ Martin, *Contemporary Drift*, 5.

Accordingly, in Part 4, I revise some of the preceding article's arguments in a subsequent retrospective dramaturgical-curatorial analysis of the making of *Museum for fremtiden* and its twin iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus. My revision turns the article's preliminary findings on their head, so to speak, realizing through the making of *Museum for fremtiden* that while the art installations of the visual artists were already performative and enactive in their presentation, *actualizing* ideas of contemporaneity, their dramatization by the theatre-makers installed an ambiguity in their aesthetic dynamic, contemporaneously *representing* these same ideas as characterizing for the historical present through the theatrical dramatization of the audio guide and its "performative musealization" of spectator participation. The analysis shows how the move from theatre to kunsthalle deepened *Museum for fremtiden's* manifestation of contemporaneity by publicly discussing the project's curatorial and dramaturgical proposition and process in a public program, emphasizing the exhibition catalogue.

Part 5 presents the journal article "Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation," in which I excavate and speculate on a method of "museum-ing" from the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, based on dramatization. The article condenses the arguments made throughout the dissertation in a formulation of three theses regarding the relation between past and present, presence and distance, alive and dead, serving to inspire future experiments in museum-ing. The theses articulate the temporal contradictions that I consider enabling of *Museum for fremtiden's* mediation of contemporaneity. The dissertation concludes by arguing that we consider these contradictions productive in a dramaturgical and curatorial practice of exhibition- and performance-making preoccupied with historicizing the present under contemporary conditions.

In addition to these written parts, the dissertation documents the research project's practical component of *Museum for fremtiden* and its iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus in an appendix comprising video, sound, and photo documentation, handouts written for the Kunsthall Aarhus iteration, the original exhibition catalogue in Danish, and selected texts from the catalogue in English translation, including my introduction, my conversations with the participating artists, and the script of the performance, which I co-authored with the then artistic director of Sort/Hvid, Christian Lollike. As such, the research project's practical component, *Museum for fremtiden*, constitutes a considerable part of the thesis submission. Finally, the appendix includes an English translation of my introduction to a book comprising a selection of Lollike's plays, *Underværket* (*The Wonder*, 2022), introducing my conception of

Sort/Hvid's contemporary poetics; a motivation of the research project that I will expand on in the opening below.

Opening: Becoming Contemporary.

Point of Departure: Losing the Future.

In the recent essay “World Theatre and Theatre of the Moment,” featured in a special issue of the journal of dramaturgical studies *Peripeti* dedicated to the oeuvre of FIX&FOXY, the company’s co-founder and dramaturg Jeppe Kristensen looks to the concept of the contemporary to reflect on the work of the influential Danish and internationally acclaimed theatre company, spanning the last two decades. FIX&FOXY’s post-conceptual aesthetics connects global developments to individual bodies and their socioeconomic circumstances, the personal to the systemic, the local to the global on stage and beyond. In their performances, the company collapses distinctions between the imaginary and the real, often engaging both the audience and “experts of the everyday”¹¹ in inventive remediations of canonical works or stagings of the power dynamics of globalized capitalism: In *Come on, Bangladesh, just do it!* (2006), the company outsourced a staging of the Danish “national play” *Elverhøj* (1828) to a group of Bangladeshi actors at the Royal Danish Theater; in *Pretty Woman A/S* (*Pretty Woman Ltd.*, 2008), they hired changing sex workers off the streets of Copenhagen each night to portray the main character of the rags-to-riches tale alongside a professional actor in a theatrical remediation of the Hollywood blockbuster; in *Mod alle odds* (*Against All Odds*, 2019), they directed groups of children to stage the statistical probabilities of their diverse and unequal socioeconomic backgrounds.¹²

In the essay, Kristensen reflects on FIX&FOXY’s poetics through the conceptual prism offered by the philosopher Peter Osborne’s philosophy of contemporary art.¹³ Osborne’s discussions of de-bordering, fictionalization, and collectivization as contemporary art strategies help Kristensen contextualize FIX&FOXY’s innovative works as such in their simultaneous exploitation and display of the forces of globalization. What interests Kristensen, meanwhile, is not merely whether the works qualify as contemporary in Osborne’s terminology. Rather, he interrogates the contemporary to situate the company’s work both historically and aesthetically from his implicated perspective as the company’s dramaturg. In doing so, first, he attributes FIX&FOXY as part of a generation of artists “who were teenagers when the Wall came down,”

¹¹ In theatre and performance studies, the use of “experts of the everyday” is associated with the German theatre group Rimini Protokoll. See Dreyse and Malzacher, *Experts of the Everyday*.

¹² Kristensen, “World Theatre and Theatre of the Moment,” 187.

¹³ Kristensen refers to two works by Osborne—Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, and Osborne, *The Postconceptual Condition*—as well as a public lecture, Osborne, “Contemporary art is post-conceptual art.”

including other European figures such as Milo Rau, Christoph Schlingensief, and Das Beckwerk, united not by an art form or a medium but a shared experience of entering a new epoch of globalization; a generation—

for whom the world opened up, for whom Ryanair took off, and for whom globalisation unfolded with all its possibilities and horrors, prosperity and oppression. The bling and fun, complacency, inevitability and pointless development of globalisation is the geo-political-cultural basis on which all these artists work and their field of investigation.

Second, he proposes Osborne's description of de-bordering as an analytical concept to understand FIX&FOXY's poetics. As a strategy, de-bordering wields a double application, bridging the analysis of the political conditions of globalization and the analysis of the formal dimensions of FIX&FOXY's working process, both transgressing social, aesthetic, and cultural borders. In other words, de-bordering is simultaneously a historical condition and an aesthetic aim of FIX&FOXY, both literally and figuratively. Considering this aspect of the group's oeuvre, meanwhile, brings Kristensen to identify what he calls a blind spot of the contemporary aesthetics FIX&FOXY have been part of developing, leading the dramaturg to a double conclusion: On the one hand, he asserts the importance of working with hyper-current issues of timely necessity and global urgency in an aesthetics of "worlding the globe." On the other, Kristensen recognizes that this work remains contingent to the forces that drive globalization, affirming the globalized state of affairs rather than seeing beyond it.¹⁴ According to the dramaturg, the meta-analysis of the contemporary as a historical category and its drift along the seemingly ever-expanding global present, emphasized formally in the present of theatrical spectacle and reflected in the global issues addressed by FIX&FOXY's performances, robs not only art but the contemporary imaginary as such of *futurity*. In Osborne's critical vocabulary, the contemporary determines a "disavowal of politics;"¹⁵ in Kristensen's, a loss of the future as such:

the loss of the future (which is essentially also the meta-analysis of my generation's world art and world theatre) is not only almost impossible to bear. It is also extremely difficult to give form to. Loss of future on a global scale and the parallel non-clinical depression are the great taboo [*sic*] of contemporary theatre. To me, this perspective is both quite paralysing and inspiring at

¹⁴ One might, meanwhile, consider FIX&FOXY's eerie monologue *Landet uden drømme* (*Land without Dreams*) from 2018 an attempt to do exactly that. See FIX&FOXY's website, fixfoxy.com/en/project/landet-uden-dromme/.

¹⁵ Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 23.

the same time. It is an elementary, crucial part of our world that we have not yet managed to give form.¹⁶

I open the dissertation by referencing Kristensen's self-interrogative essay for three reasons. First, on a personal note, FIX&FOXY's works constitute one of my entries into contemporary theatre as a Danish theatregoer, having, to offer a few examples, found myself onboard a refugee boat imported from Egypt on a canal tour in Copenhagen with a crew of newly arrived refugees in *Lampedusa Cruises* (2016); confronted by the far right on stage in *ROCKY!* (2017); and amid the wealthiest 1 percent on the globe in *Vi de 1% (We the 1%, 2021)* during some of FIX&FOXY's many memorable—and always timely—performances.

Second, and more acutely, the loss of future that Kristensen identifies in the contemporary constituted a starting point for my research project and the curatorial proposition of its practical component, the cross-aesthetic experiment between contemporary art and theatre of *Museum for fremtiden*. Indeed, an immediate interpretation of *Museum for fremtiden*'s paradoxical title suggests that the future as such can be musealized, framing the project as an attempt to give form to the loss of futurity that Kristensen points to. As the dissertation will show, the project provoked and brought together artistic as well as theoretical responses to the meta-analysis of a future lost to the contemporary in the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, composed and eventually presented at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus, expanded in its catalogue, debated during its public program, and scrutinized in this dissertation. In other words, the ambivalence of the contemporary that Kristensen articulates occasions my practice as a dramaturg and curator as well as the research inquiry of the present dissertation.

Third, and most importantly, Kristensen's essay provides an example of the kind of self-reflection of a dramaturgical practice through the conceptual prism of the contemporary that I embark on here. Kristensen scrutinizes the poetics of his own theatre company, co-founded with director Tue Biering, through an engagement with Osborne's critical conceptualization of the contemporary. In other words, Kristensen is implicated in the practice he is *contemporaneously* analyzing conceptually. This dissertation adopts a similar approach, oscillating between practice and theory, the aesthetic and the conceptual, historical conditions and their formal expressions. As in Kristensen's essay, the purpose of the dissertation, however, is only not merely to qualify my practice or *Museum for fremtiden* as contemporary. Instead, the

¹⁶ Kristensen, "World Theatre and Theatre of the Moment," 192.

dissertation serves to critically examine my role in mediating *Museum for fremtiden*'s temporal contradictions and, conversely, explore in what ways that thinking with and against the concept of the contemporary might reveal its potentials and shortcomings, insights and blind spots, for curatorial and dramaturgical practice. Put briefly, I reference Kristensen to point to a self-reflexive research field, however emerging, based on dramaturgical (and curatorial) practice that I seek to contribute to here; a field of thinking through practice that, not unlike the contemporary, holds as many potentials as it poses problems for the practice-based researcher.¹⁷ Of most pressing concern in the latter category in the case of my research project is the implicated position from where this mode of thinking is undertaken.¹⁸

As a practice-based research project hosted by not just a university but by two art institutions as well, the dissertation beckons a thorough declamation of my position and the specific affiliations both enabling and conditioning its claims. Accordingly, in this opening, I would like to situate the research project by disclosing its institutional affiliations, interdisciplinary approach between dramaturgy and curating, and some key assumptions on the media—theatre performance and art exhibition—it mediates in the pursuit of a poetics of historicizing the present. The opening leads up to the dissertation's subsequent construction of its theoretical framework and methodological considerations in Part 2, elaborating on the problem of the contemporary in theory and aesthetic practice.

Institutions: Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus.

The dissertation is formulated from my intermediary position as a New Carlsberg Foundation PhD Fellow at the Department of Aesthetics & Culture at Aarhus University, the production dramaturg and curator of *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus, and the institutional dramaturg of Sort/Hvid. The latter affiliation narrows my research inquiry to the context provided by the theatre's artistic profile that I have been part of developing in and through my research practice.

¹⁷ By writing "thinking through practice," I forestall an engagement with the dramaturg and theatre and performance scholar Maaïke Bleeker's recent book on doing dramaturgy as a thinking through practice. Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy: Thinking Through Practice*.

¹⁸ All scholarship, it could meanwhile be argued, both critical and creative, is implicated. "Theoretically informed scholarship in the humanities, both critical and creative, is characterized by a care for both object, subject, and approach if the analyses of cultural objects, phenomena, processes, and fields of inquiry aim to expose their implications for ways of thinking, feeling, doing, and making." Tuin and Verhoeff, "Implication," 119-120.

Sort/Hvid is a so-called small metropolitan theatre in Copenhagen, financially supported by the Danish state and the Copenhagen municipality, while raising public and private funds for each production in its repertoire. In the context of Danish performing arts, Sort/Hvid is known for being—and understands itself rather emphatically as—a contemporary theatre and, by extension, a political theatre. On the theatre’s entrance in the Meatpacking District of Copenhagen, it explicitly states: “En scene for kunst og politik,” in English, “A stage for art and politics.”¹⁹ As a stage for art and politics, Sort/Hvid’s profile has until recently been closely associated with the work of the theatre’s former artistic director, the playwright and director Christian Lollike. In 2023, Lollike passed the torch as artistic director on to the director and scenographer Nathalie Mellbye. Before doing so, Lollike and I collaborated on *Museum for fremtiden* as well as several other projects and productions at the theatre. In other words, the research project has been conducted in the context of Lollike’s artistic direction of Sort/Hvid.

Profile-defining performances of Sort/Hvid include Lollike’s controversial staging of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik’s *Manifest 2083* (*Manifesto 2083*, Sort/Hvid and Dramatikkens Hus, 2012); the ballet *I føling* (*In Contact*, Sort/Hvid, Corpus, and The Royal Danish Ballet, 2014) on Denmark’s war participation in Afghanistan, staged by Lollike with a cast of ballet dancers and recently dispatched war veterans; and the zombie horror performance *Living Dead* (Sort/Hvid and Aarhus Teater, 2016), addressing the so-called refugee crisis in Europe of 2015.²⁰ Confronting recent and oftentimes ongoing historical events such as these, Lollike’s plays and performances often spark public debate and occasional controversy by dramatizing untimely opinions and controversial worldviews in an eclectic intermingling of art

¹⁹ On Sort/Hvid’s website, the full profile text reads in English translation: “We are not afraid of the refugee crisis, of the climate crisis, of the financial crisis. Of Taliban or Putin, the survival of the planet, of the mind, of the welfare state. We are not afraid of being stupid, elitist, chauvinist, feminist, post-factual, intellectual, of being out of date or in your face. We are not afraid of being in someone’s pocket or in no one’s pocket. To be the last people on earth before it ends, or to party as if we were passengers on the Titanic. We are not afraid of standing alone. We are not afraid of being alone. Not afraid of being black or white. Not afraid of being afraid. Sort/Hvid is a stage. For art and politics. We are based in an old, industrial butchery in Copenhagen’s Meatpacking District. Come visit us. If you are not afraid.” See Sort/Hvid’s website, sort-hvid.dk/en/profile.

²⁰ Lollike’s works have sparked both public debate and academic scrutiny. For a few examples of the latter in English, see Bönisch, “Into the Blind Spots – Theatrical Approaches to the Terror Attacks in Norway 22 July 2011” on *Manifesto 2083*; Eriksson, “Dissolving Europe?” and Tropper “Enter the Ghosts of Europe: Haunting and Contemporary Theatre” on *Living Dead*; and Eriksson, “Are We Really There and in Contact?” on *In Contact*. An English translation of my introduction to a selection of Lollike’s plays, including *Manifesto 2083* and *Living Dead*, is enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 210–213.

forms and genres, often in collaboration with other theatres, ensembles, collectives, orchestras, and similar cultural institutions.²¹

As a small metropolitan theatre, however, Sort/Hvid's repertoire counts works by a host of other artists, directors, and companies across the performing arts field and beyond. During the PhD project, as the theatre's dramaturg, I have been part of the making of visual artist Lina Hashim's performance lecture on magic in contemporary Islam in *The Touch* (Kunsthall Charlottenborg and Sort/Hvid, 2020); stage director Niels Erling and playwright Ida Marie Hede's conjoining of the #FreeBritney movement and the precarization of labor in *Work Bitch* (AKT1 and Sort/Hvid, 2021);²² performance artist and author Madame Nielsen, Lollike, and the string quartet Halvcirkel's ceremonial call for climate action in *Verdensfrelserinden* (*The World Saviouress*, Teater Momentum, Aarhus Teater, and Sort/Hvid, 2021); the collectively written drama by four playwrights on the basis of their conversations with four climate scientists, *Mens solen brænder* (*While the Sun is Burning*, AKT1 and Sort/Hvid, 2022); and Lollike's final production as artistic director of Sort/Hvid, the opera installation and "requiem of our time," *Orfeo* (Sort/Hvid and Copenhagen Phil, 2023), based on Monteverdi's baroque opera from 1607. In different ways, these projects all inform—and have been informed by—my research. Moreover, I have let some of the artistic practices involved spill into the development of *Museum for fremtiden* by, for instance, commissioning Hede and Nielsen, who both occasionally work as art critics, to contribute with original texts to *Museum for fremtiden*'s exhibition catalogue.²³ Nevertheless, the dissertation focuses solely on the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, a choice I will qualify below.

First, however, I want to add some additional reflections on Sort/Hvid's profile as a contemporary theatre. As my inadequately short descriptions suggest, the theatre's productions often cross art forms, address recent historical events, and intervene in ongoing public debates.

²¹ Since 2021, Sort/Hvid has focused on cross-aesthetic experimentation between music and theatre due to a long-term grant from the Danish Arts Foundation reflected in performances such as *Work Bitch* (2021) and *Orfeo* (2023). The planning of *Museum for fremtiden*, meanwhile, precedes this grant, and the production was deferred to 2022 because of COVID-19. Consequently, the dissertation does not discuss Sort/Hvid's profile-expansion as a contemporary theatre for theatre and music. Meanwhile, the inclusion of music did not, in my opinion, diminish the theatre's self-perception as a contemporary stage for art and politics.

²² The literary historian Tania Ørum has analyzed *Work Bitch* as a "contemporary Lehrstück," arguing that the play updates Bertolt Brecht's learning play genre of the 1920s and 1930s under contemporary conditions. Ørum, "Work Bitch – A contemporary Lehrstück or how to get from I to we*."

²³ Ida Marie Hede's "Museet for faldne statuer, Willkommen, Bienvenue, Velcome" and Madame Nielsen's "Den forkerte tid / Rygvendte sten" were original written contributions for the *Museum for fremtiden* catalogue and can be found in Danish in the dissertation's appendix on pages 283–296 and 253–264 respectively. An introduction to the catalogue on pages 214–217 offers short summaries of these as well as the other contributions.

In the theatre's collaborations with artists and other institutions across art forms, Sort/Hvid's claim to being contemporary appears to rest on immediate societal actuality, using the theatre space to dramatize and debate the hyper-current beyond the stage, be it the protest against the isolation (and subsequent release) of the US pop singer Britney Spears in AKT1's *Work Bitch* or the rise of the climate movement in Madame Nielsen's *Verdensfrelserinden*. However, the presence of current public discourses in Sort/Hvid's productions—and, conversely, the occasional presence of the theatre's productions in current ongoing public debates—does not in itself reveal a position in its aesthetic approach to the present in which it is part and in which it is invested. In other words, my research question—how the concept of the contemporary might gain critical significance for the aesthetic practices that invoke it, specifically dramaturgy and curating—is backdropped by a motivation to explicate and deepen a poetics particular to Sort/Hvid as a contemporary theatre; to reflect on and, in addition, to challenge its notion of “being contemporary.” But rather than explicating a “contemporary poetics” particular to Sort/Hvid by studying its past performances from the distanced perspective of a scholar of contemporary theatre history, I have installed this inquiry in the making of *Museum for fremtiden*; a cross-aesthetic project between contemporary art and theatre, probing contemporary conceptions of time; a project, we might say, of *asking the time*.²⁴ Moreover, I have installed it in Sort/Hvid's collaboration with Kunsthall Aarhus and the cross-aesthetic mediation between contemporary theatre and contemporary art and the media of exhibition and performance. I have done so for three related reasons.

First, as the dissertation will focus on, the involvement of contemporary visual art practices in the theatre served in part to expand—and came to contrast—the implicit negative approach to the present with which I have come to associate Sort/Hvid's poetics, making possible a comparison—and occasioning the mediation—between conflictual forms of temporalization through the composition of the unusually composite work. To briefly preempt my point, the aesthetic dynamic and temporal complexity of *Museum for fremtiden* was produced through a mediation between the theatre's *negative, representational exhibition* of the present and the visual art practices' *affirmative, enactive expansions* of the present. My account

²⁴ For some prominent examples of the philosophical and political implications of “asking the time,” see Latour, “What is the Time?” and Rancière, “In What Time Do We Live?” Latour's essay argues, in the face of the Anthropocene, against a modern, western conception of linear, historical time, blind to geological time, while Rancière underpins the necessarily fictitious and negative character of any reply to the question. To preempt my argument, my mediation of the tensions arising in the making of *Museum for fremtiden* could be understood as an oscillation between these two modes of temporalizing.

of the making of *Museum for fremtiden* focuses on my role in mediating this temporal contradiction, identifying it across the constellation of art forms, institutional frameworks, aesthetic media, and artistic practices. A tension, I should add, I retrace in Kristensen's ambivalent interrogation of the contemporary in his reflection on FIX&FOXY's poetics through Osborne's philosophy.

I emphasize this tension, I should stress, in a time in which the art forms seem closer than ever, not just on the level of artistic practice, but on the infrastructural level of cultural policy as well. In the contemporary Danish theatre landscape, in which the research project has been conceptualized and conducted, the crossing of art forms has become common. For one, Sort/Hvid has spearheaded this development in and through numerous collaborations with artists and institutions in neighboring fields such as visual art and contemporary music.²⁵ Similarly, other Danish theatres engage in cross-aesthetic collaborations, many of which engage artists from fields other than the performing arts. From time to time, these collaborations take the form of long-term strategies of cross-aesthetic experimentation, sometimes involving the dissemination of methods of cross-aesthetic “co-creation,” sometimes involving partnerships between institutions of the performing and visual arts.²⁶ During the course of my PhD, Sort/Hvid has itself become a stage for cross-aesthetic experimentation between music and theatre with a special grant from The Danish Arts Foundation (2021-2024).²⁷ Together, such initiatives and grant structures reveal an infrastructural incentive of cross-aesthetic experimentation across public and private funding schemes in Denmark. In other words, whereas cross-aesthetic exchange between artists from different fields cannot be called novel, its predominancy in contemporary institutional practices and cultural policy

²⁵ To name a recent example, Lollike and I staged the performance and exhibition of the Danish-Iraqi visual artist Lina Hashim's performance lecture *The Touch* (2020) as a part of her graduation from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts with Kunsthall Charlottenborg. See Sort/Hvid's website, sort-hvid.dk/en/project/the-touch.

²⁶ Notably, large institution theatres such as the Betty Nansen Theater and Østerbro Teater implement cross-aesthetics as a curatorial strategy. The Betty Nansen Theater has embarked on the continuous explication of a collective and cross-aesthetic artistic practice across their productions through the initiative and platform *Betty Udvikler* [*Betty Develops*], supported by the Bikuben Foundation. The initiative formulates and projects a method of collaborative cross-aesthetic experimentation onto the theatre's productions and disseminates the results through a public programme, a website with process descriptions, and online publications. See Betty Nansen Teatret, “8 Paths to Collective Co-Creation as the Betty Nansen Theater.” Østerbro Teater has curated a series of stage performances made by visual artists to “investigate the amalgamation of visual and performing arts” over several seasons. Husets Teater and Den Fri Udstillingsbygning, a small metropolitan theatre and a kunsthalle—and thus more comparable in size to the collaboration between Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus—has established the cross-aesthetic platform Toaster, curating a repertoire of both performance art and performing arts at both venues. See Toaster's website, toastercph.dk.

²⁷ See Sort/Hvid's website, sort-hvid.dk/projekt/sort-hvid-scene-for-musikdramatik/.

incentives in Denmark is somewhat recent. Indeed, “cross-aesthetics” appears to have become a magic word when raising funds for artistic projects in Denmark. Of course, this development follows practices that seldomly restrict themselves to one art form, one medium, or one media. It also gives access to more funding options. In this context, I would like for my research project to provide an example of cross-aesthetic experimentation from the perspective of the dramaturg and the curator, taking comparable positions as I will expand on below.

Second, the inclusion of contemporary visual art supports the project’s interrogation of the contemporary on a theoretical level. As Kristensen’s choice of Osborne’s thought suggests, theorizing on the contemporary as a critical concept appears to be a more established and elaborate debate in contemporary art criticism than in contemporary theatre (even if, as we shall see, the theories of contemporary art often draw on theatricality to describe contemporary art’s manifestation of contemporaneity). Moreover, in the last decades, contemporary art has come to designate emerging forms of practice-based research through both artistic and, in question here, curatorial practice, which I have sought to install in my function as a dramaturg positing to be conducting research in and through my practice. In this regard, Kunsthall Aarhus is no random choice for a collaborator. Established in 1917, Kunsthall Aarhus is one of the oldest institutions of contemporary art in Denmark. In the last decade, Kunsthall Aarhus has been part of a handful of research projects co-hosted with Aarhus University, spearheading curatorial of as well as artistic research through contemporary art in Denmark.²⁸

Among these, I would like to emphasize *The Contemporary Condition* (2015–2021) as a main source of inspiration for my research.²⁹ *The Contemporary Condition* offered a series of critical conceptualizations of the contemporary, provoked by Geoff Cox and Jacob Lund’s theoretical proposition that the historical present—the “present present”—is characterized by contemporaneity.³⁰ The project served to respond to a dissatisfaction with the often “unreflective or imprecise ways in which we conceive of and use the notion “contemporary art,”” identifying a need to “historicize “the contemporary.””³¹ I consider my research in continuation

²⁸ For instance, Kunsthall Aarhus co-hosts the artistic PhD project of Helene Nymann, one of the three participating visual artists in *Museum for fremtiden*, together with the Interacting Minds Center at Aarhus University. I fully realize that artistic research constitutes an emerging field closely related to that of curatorial research, involving many of the same potentials and problems. Meanwhile, my project is decidedly curatorial and dramaturgical as it focuses on my practice as a dramaturg and a curator; an intermediary role between the aesthetic and the conceptual that I will elaborate on below.

²⁹ See the *The Contemporary Condition* website, contemporaneity.au.dk.

³⁰ Cox and Lund, *The Contemporary Condition*, 9.

³¹ Lund, *The Changing Constitution of the Present*, 7.

of this project, exploring select of its claims through the making of *Museum for fremtiden*. Contributing to this field of inquiry, too, the dissertation involves the performing arts, dramaturgy, and insights from literary studies, especially Theodore Martin's framing of the contemporary as a strategy of mediation. Surprisingly, I have found Martin, a historicist scholar of contemporary literature, and his writing on the contemporary as a critical concept useful in outlining my pursuit of a poetics of historicizing the present, perhaps revealing of the fact that my academic background is in neither art history nor theatre and performance studies, but in comparative literature and modern cultural studies; a condition that might explain the absence of certain discipline-specific tenets and trajectories of curating and dramaturgy—blind spots of my research, as it were.³²

In the dissertation, I have chosen to interrogate the less discipline-specific concept of the contemporary in relation to my dramaturgical and curatorial practice because it bridges my interests as a practitioner and a scholar, occasioned the research project, and remained a relevant backdrop to our discussions throughout the making of *Museum for fremtiden* due to the collaboration's thematization of time and temporality. In retrospection, I continue finding the concept helpful in—and intriguingly challenging when—articulating the tensions that arose in the process of its making across the theoretical, practical, medial, and disciplinary levels connected by the research project; tensions that have become significant for my engagement in formulating a poetics of making the present appear as past. One pitfall, however, would be the contemporary's somewhat abstract, drifting character and its tautological double-bind, becoming simultaneously the question and the answer as Martin argues:

What period are we in? What defines our immediate present? These supplementary forms of self-reflection—rooted less in individual experience than in the abstract realms of the collective and the historical—are questions whose source and solution are, strangely, one and the same thing. The contemporary is both the question and the answer. It codifies our historical moment in order to authorize its study; yet to study it is inevitably to be returned to the question of what history the contemporary names, what its boundaries really are, whose moment we're actually talking about.³³

³² For instance, dissertation could have benefitted from having been situated within emerging and more specific disciplinary formations in the performing arts such as ecodramaturgy, as the project and the practices involved dealt with issues related to ecology and climate change, or "New Media Dramaturgy," as *Museum for fremtiden* was composed of heterogenous media. See Woynarski, *Ecodramaturgies – Theatre, Performance and Climate Change* and Eckersall, Grehan, and Scheer, *New Media Dramaturgy: Performance, Media, and New Materialism*.

³³ Martin, "The Currency of the Contemporary," 230.

In other words, the contemporary is a concept that historicizes while resisting historicization, beckoning an oscillation of questioning without pointing towards a future solution or solid conclusion we might expect of, say, a scholarly dissertation. The contemporary is a paradoxical concept that gains critical meaning when it inspires a reflection on what history it delimits. Consequently, the dissertation does not pose to fix it for good. Instead, I aim to show what it came to mean in and through the making of *Museum for fremtiden* from my point of view as its dramaturg, curator, and researcher.

Third, on an infrastructural level, it is only through Sort/Hvid's collaboration with Kunsthall Aarhus that the project can even be conceived of as a research project. It gains this status by way of its inclusion of visual art and its collaboration with the visual art institution. As opposed to theatres, institutions of visual art in Denmark and elsewhere are authorized and hold—if all too limited—funding opportunities for conducting research projects drawing on curatorial practice.³⁴ Arguably, the contemporary visual art institution has inherited their research authorization from the museum in the museum's capacity of researching its collection, constituting a branch of art history and related disciplines centering on the conservation of cultural heritage, tangible or otherwise. Meanwhile, under contemporary conditions, history is not what it used to be.

Disciplines: Dramaturgy and the Curatorial.

In the past decades, the tradition of art historical research in museums has migrated into and transformed inside contemporary visual art institutions holding no collection, such as Kunsthall Aarhus, undertaken by curators of contemporary art exhibitions and other cultural projects. In such research projects, on the most general level, the focus of the scholar shifts from the illumination of the historical context of artworks and artistic practices, i.e. the *representation* of the past, to the act of exhibiting, i.e. the provisional constellation and *presentation* of various materials in the present, artworks and otherwise.³⁵

³⁴ The New Carlsberg Foundation and The Novo Nordisk Foundation offer PhD and Postdoc stipends for practice-based curatorial research. The Novo Nordisk Foundations moreover offers PhD and Postdoc stipends for artistic research projects. See The Novo Nordisk Foundation website, novonordiskfonden.dk/en/art-research/. My research project is funded by The New Carlsberg Foundation's research initiative, inaugurated in 2010, originally applied for by Kunsthall Aarhus for their collaboration with Sort/Hvid. See the New Carlsberg Foundation website, ny-carlsbergfondet.dk/en/researchfunding.

³⁵ Some of the points made in the following will reappear in the journal article "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity," in which I provide a state-of-the-art on curatorial research and discuss its applicability in the

The shift of focus from past to present, representation to enactment, or display to experience, has led curators and theorists alike to begin renegotiating curating as a research discipline, exploring the derived notion of “the curatorial” as a field of knowledge, or “a philosophy of curating,” to use Irit Rogoff and Jean-Paul Martinon’s influential steps towards a definition.³⁶ The emergence of the curatorial shares, I believe, a deep and fundamental connection to the contemporary, following a similar historical trajectory in the spread of its usage as much as a similar preoccupation with the present and presence. Moreover, the curatorial connects to the understanding of the practice of exhibition-making as a form of research.³⁷ To qualify its epistemological features as a mode of knowledge production, the curatorial often draw on theatre as a model for aesthetic experience, considering the exhibition a performance, “an event of knowledge,”³⁸ or describing the exhibition with the live dynamics of the stage. This development calls for a scrutiny of the approximation between dramaturgy and curating, performance- and exhibition-making, that I converge in my research practice.³⁹

While the curatorial draws on theatre and performance to determine its production of knowledge, in turn, theatre professionals and dramaturgs, including myself, increasingly call themselves curators, furthering the suggested closeness between the disciplines. Invoking the curatorial and the notion of research in the performing arts, as I do here, meanwhile, poses a

performing arts and theatre institution. The article is enclosed as the dissertation’s Part 3 on pages 55–66. This part of the dissertation revises some of the claims made in the article.

³⁶ Rogoff and Martinon, “Preface.”

³⁷ In this regard, it should be mentioned that the proliferation of both curatorial and artistic research also rests on an infrastructural incentive. As the art historian, curator, and artist Tom Holert has scrutinized, the understanding of contemporary art as a form of research—as producing a “knowledge beside itself,” as Holert calls it—does not only determine a new kind of art, namely, contemporary art; it is also a part of a historical trajectory of cognitive capitalism in which the authorization of art and curating as forms of research opens novel funding opportunities for practitioners in the art field and for art institutions. See Holert, *Knowledge Beside Itself*. One immediate danger is, of course, that academic authorization privileges a certain kind of academic art as recently critiqued by the art historian Claire Bishop in *Artforum* last year. See Bishop, “Information Overload.” Another could be the concentration of art funding. In Denmark, for instance, almost all practice-based curatorial and artistic research projects are supported by one of two private foundations, funded by the tax-exempt assets of two mega corporations, namely The New Carlsberg Foundation and The Novo Nordisk Foundation, the one selling beer, the other insulin medicine and, more recently, diet medicine. It is beyond the scope and ability of this dissertation to analyze these infrastructural incentives in depth, but all the while important to acknowledge.

³⁸ Rogoff and Martinon, “Preface,” ix.

³⁹ See Eckersall and Ferdman, *Curating Dramaturgies: How dramaturgy and curating are intersecting in contemporary art*, Trencsényi, “Methods: Curating,” Bismarck, “Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in the Visual arts – And Its Possibilities for the Neighbouring Disciplines,” Sprogøe, “Live Experiences in the Theater Gardens of Contemporary Art: Affective Curating and Exhibition Experiments with Theatricality.” Moreover, the dictionary *Critical Concepts for the Creative Humanities* offers concise definitions of the expanded uses of both curating and dramaturgy in the creative humanities with reference to Maaïke Bleeker, mentioning their intertwinement. See Tuin and Verhoeff, “Curation,” 66–67, and Tuin and Verhoeff, “Dramaturgy,” 84–86.

task of critical introspection and offers a—if sometimes excessive—vocabulary for undertaking it. As the writer, curator, and dramaturg Florian Malzacher, an adamant advocate for advancing the curatorial in the performing arts, argues, curating and the curatorial implicates a “bethinking of one’s own strengths”:

The ambiguous title “curator” should be seen as a self-provocation, a challenge, a self-inflicted and complex task, rather than a possible gain of prestige. It is meant to make the job more complicated, not easier. It proposes an ambition that is not easy to fulfill but by which we, as curators, should be measured.⁴⁰

Inspired and challenged by Malzacher and others considering the approximations between dramaturgy and curating, the dissertation seeks to both explicate and complicate my practice of moving between aesthetic disciplines, artistic practices, aesthetic media, and institutional frameworks. As the first dramaturgical-curatorial PhD project co-hosted by an institutional theatre in Denmark, and, to my knowledge, in the world for that matter,⁴¹ an additional motivation of the project is to probe the potentials in and implications of considering the dramaturg a curatorial—or better yet, a dramaturgical—researcher of the theatre institution.⁴²

Since its conception as a profession, meanwhile, dramaturgy already holds a double meaning, indicating both the structure of a play or a performance (or other cultural events, products, or media such as the exhibition), framing dramaturgy as an analytical discipline, and the making of plays and performances (or other cultural events), framing dramaturgy as a compositional practice.⁴³ The dramaturgical double-sight traverses the historical transformations of the discipline: from the professionalization of dramaturgy in the German playwright and theatre critic Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767–1769), mediating the creation and reception of plays to project the emerging reflexive bourgeois subject,⁴⁴ Bertolt Brecht’s influential “productive dramaturgy” of the twentieth century,⁴⁵ and the contemporary formations of “New Dramaturgy” of the new millennium.⁴⁶ Today,

⁴⁰ Malzacher, “Prologue: Bethinking One’s Own Strengths. The Performative Potential of Curating,” xvii.

⁴¹ If the ascertainment of the project’s novelty sounds self-congratulatory, the intention is the opposite; to stress its experimental character and to excuse the dissertation’s eventual instances of disciplinary ignorance.

⁴² See the conclusion of Part 3, the journal article “Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research,” enclosed in the dissertation on pages 55–66.

⁴³ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 23.

⁴⁴ Boenisch, “Theatre Curation and Institutional Dramaturgy,” 73–74.

⁴⁵ For an introduction to Brecht’s “productive dramaturgy,” see Turner and Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 42–66.

⁴⁶ Trencsényi and Cochrane, *New Dramaturgy: International Perspectives on Theory and Practice*.

dramaturgy still signifies the mediation between making theatre and reflecting on theatre (and other forms of cultural communication). Mediating creation and reception, the compositional and the analytical—or “experience and retrospection, immersion and explanation, closeness and distance,” to repeat Martin’s conceptualization of the contemporary as a strategy of mediation to which I will return in Part 2⁴⁷—remains a fundamental tenet of doing dramaturgy and, consequently, of my inquiry here.

Obviously, the compositional dimension of dramaturgy is never done by the dramaturg alone. Instead, the dramaturg embodies an intermediary position, entering a dynamic between immersing herself in the processes of making and distancing herself to analyze the very same processes, thinking through the forms that come about in and through what is composed collaboratively under the conditions set up. These conditions are in part created by the dramaturg herself as was the case for me in *Museum for fremtiden*.⁴⁸ As the performance scholar and dramaturg Maaike Bleeker argues in her new materialist conception of dramaturgy as a mode of thinking through an intermediary practice, “doing dramaturgy involves attending to what comes about in collaborative making-thinking of others.”⁴⁹ Being part of the making of *Museum for fremtiden* in the three-fold position of dramaturg, curator, and researcher emphasized my role as an “in-between figure,”⁵⁰ setting up the conditions of the collaboration and mediating between practices, disciplines, media, and institutional frameworks.

This position underlines my research project’s difference from the neighboring field of artistic research. I am not an artist, and my research is not artistic in the sense that I take an intermediary position between the artistic practices involved as well as the institutional frameworks in which they are brought together and composed in *Museum for fremtiden*.⁵¹ While based on practice, the dissertation concerns the dramaturgical and curatorial mediation between composition and analysis, closeness and distance, implication and reflection.⁵²

⁴⁷ Martin, *Contemporary Drift*, 5.

⁴⁸ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 68.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁰ Cathy Turner and Synne Behrndt’s offers an extensive overview of the many roles of the dramaturg in *Dramaturgy and Performance*. For their analysis of the dramaturg as an in-between figure in the context of production dramaturgy, see Turner and Behrndt, *Dramaturgy and Performance*, 151-171.

⁵¹ This statement is complicated by the fact that I was credited as co-author of the script of *Museum for fremtiden* with playwright and director Christian Lollike. I will discuss the implications of this move in Part 4, maintaining my co-authorship as an intermediary position.

⁵² This is not to say that the artistic researcher cannot be considered a mediating figure in a time in which contemporary artistic practices often transgress media and other public contexts. As early as 2010, the curator Lars Bang Larsen and the artist Søren Andreasen argued that both artists, curators, and critics can be

Curating and dramatizing *Museum for fremtiden* involved me working collaboratively with an assembled collective of visual artists and theatre-makers, mediating between heterogeneous practices as well as two different art institutional contexts. In the dissertation, to reflect on the choices made throughout the process of its making and double presentation at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus, I employ in Part 4 what Bleeker via Geoffrey Proehl calls “dramaturgical sensibility;” “a balancing act performed by dramaturg between the intellectual and the emotional, the concrete and the ephemeral, and between clarification and complication,” not simply interpreting the performance, but thinking in and through the choices made during the process of its making.⁵³

As I have previously touched upon, taking on the implicated and intermediate position of dramaturg, curator, and researcher, meanwhile, provokes an urgency in situating the research I have conducted further, again, most pressingly in terms of my embeddedness in the institutions, and again, especially in terms of my affiliation with Sort/Hvid. This latter affiliation precedes the PhD project with two years and some months. Moreover, it implicates a close and in the time of writing yet ongoing partnership with Christian Lollike as a director and playwright. Such a partnership between a dramaturg and a director is no novel constellation in theatre, even if we see more and more independent dramaturgs working similarly to independent curators in an increasingly project-based cultural economy. Still, the dramaturg often follows one or more directors or other stage artists, comparable perhaps to the partnership between artist and curator in an artist’s solo exhibition. Having in mind, however, that the curator has often been compared to the theatre director as much as to the dramaturg, the dramaturg-gone-curator seems to find herself in yet another intermediate position.⁵⁴ By adding curator and practice-based researcher to my practice, I have taken a more prominent and visible role in the development of *Museum for fremtiden* that I have in other productions at Sort/Hvid, co-authoring the script of the performance, co-editing a catalogue, and hosting a public program; having been subjected to interviews in media outlets, taught courses at the university, and written peer-reviewed journal articles underway. In the context of my work at Sort/Hvid, becoming a curator and a researcher has meant the becoming visible of the dramaturg.

considered “middlemen” (of all genders) in the contemporary art world; “a privileged agent in late capitalist-bureaucratic society.” Larsen and Andreasen, “Remarks on Mediation.”

⁵³ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 6-7.

⁵⁴ Gade et. al., “Editorial,” Friedman, “From Content to Context: The Emergence of the Performance Curator,” Bismarck, “Relations in Motion: The Curatorial Condition in the Visual arts – And Its Possibilities for the Neighbouring Disciplines.”

According to the Marxist literary scholar, cultural theorist, and critic Fredric Jameson, whose writing on utopia I will discuss in Part 4 in the dissertation in a different context, meanwhile, the figure of the curator has a “nasty side,” namely her imbrication in the art institution. To Jameson, the “curator may be said to be something like its embodiment, its allegorical personification.”⁵⁵ As I have stated earlier, a backdrop to my research inquiry is a desire to explicate a contemporary poetics of Sort/Hvid, making a reflexive advocacy—even as it involves “bethinking my own strengths,” as Malzacher encourages—more likely than a ruthless critique. In other words, my research is conditioned by my affiliation with Sort/Hvid that is important to state, if not a “nasty side.”

Addressing the issue of implication from a systems-oriented approach in *A Theory of Dramaturgy* (2019), the dramaturgy scholar Janek Szatkowski argues for making a clear distinction between *poetology* and *poietics* (poetics). Poetology concerns the scientific theories of dramaturgy as they are developed and researched at the university on the departments of dramaturgy and theatre and performance studies—*dramaturgies-ς* in Szatkowski’s terminology—interrogating dramaturgical practices in the art system from an analytical distance. Conversely, poetics concerns the reflexive theories of dramaturgical practices as they operate in the art system, *dramaturgies-α*.⁵⁶ Formally implicated in both by way of the PhD scholarship, my research could be seen as transgressing Szatkowski’s useful distinction. Therefore, I would like to disclose that I consider my research as belonging to the domain of poetics, *dramaturgies-α* (even as I reference somewhat eclectically to contexts beyond it). If, as Szatkowski argues, the theories of poetics and poetology need each other in their difference from one another, then it is my hope that the dissertation can render the poetics that I am pursuing more accessible to the poetological critique of *dramaturgies-ς*, should this gaze find it of interest. Coincidentally, such an exchange was effected when none other than Szatkowski reviewed *Museum for fremtiden*’s iteration at Kunsthall Aarhus for the dramaturgical journal *Peripeti*, raising relevant questions to not only the exhibition—signaling an “oblique poetics” to Szatkowski—but the design of the research project as well, inquiring about the differences between the two versions of the work at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus.⁵⁷ I will discuss Szatkowski’s review in the dissertation’s analysis in Part 4.

⁵⁵ Jameson, “The Aesthetics of Singularity,” 110.

⁵⁶ Szatkowski, *A theory of dramaturgy*, 57-58.

⁵⁷ Szatkowski, “Museum for fremtiden: Christian Lollike og Anders Thruøe Djurslev, Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus Teater,” 224-229.

In the meantime, to briefly conclude on my intermediary position as a practice-based researcher, I see no point in denying Jameson's observation and Szatkowski's distinction. Instead, I would argue that the mediation between implication and reflection is characterizing of not just my position and not just dramaturgy or curatorial research, but of the contemporary condition as such. This is, essentially, Jameson's point in his caricature of the curator; to draw an emblematic figure of the cultural logic of late capitalism, a "demiurge of those floating and dissolving constellations of strange objects we still call art."⁵⁸ Meanwhile, Jameson extends this caricature to include himself. Self-consciously, he compares the rise of the curator in contemporary art museums to the turn from philosophy to theory that he has been accused of championing, establishing novel and provisional constellations of uneven philosophical ideas and cultural phenomena in books and course syllabuses to create new meaning—like we might say of what the curator does with artworks.

Similarly, and more concretely, the dramaturg and performance scholar Solveig Gade shows and discusses how the "in-between figure" of the dramaturg can be considered an ideal embodiment of post-Fordist neoliberalism, based on interviews with practicing dramaturgs.⁵⁹ Acknowledging these framings of the curator and the dramaturg as expressions of the cultural logic of the neoliberal present here, meanwhile, does not mean that I succeed in transcending them. As I have suggested earlier, the ubiquity of the contemporary and the emergence of the curatorial appear to develop in tandem⁶⁰—as both a response to and an expression of the diminishment of critical distance in these "times of contemporaneity," that are also times of contemporary capitalism. The question becomes, then, what this implicated, reflexive, intermediary, embodied, and embodying perspective might offer in such a historical predicament. With Szatkowski's distinction in the context of dramaturgy in mind, this dissertation builds on the presupposition that it can contribute to research in the contemporary condition with a reflexive and situated formulation of a poetics of a contemporary theatre from the point of view

⁵⁸ Jameson, "The Aesthetics of Singularity," 110.

⁵⁹ Gade, "In-between Figure Working in a Precarious Field: Re-engaging with Notions of the Dramaturg."

⁶⁰ I would venture the qualified guess that one would find a similar trajectory as in contemporary literature. In his studies on the contemporary in the context of US literature, Martin, with reference to the literary critic Mark McGurl, shows that the designation of contemporary literature in the US follows the emergence of creative writing programs during the post-war era, resulting in a fiction produced both in and for the university. The approximation between the university and creative practice might well be signifier of the contemporary in other fields, too, such as contemporary art and curatorial research. Martin, "The Currency of the Contemporary," 230-231.

of its dramaturg-curator, informed by a collaborative process of making and faced with the task of explicating on what terms it understands its own *contemporaneity*.

Media: Exhibition and Performance.

If the curatorial emphasizes the performative and theatrical dimension of exhibition-making, one could expect the connection of dramaturgy and curating and the mediation between the media of art exhibition and theatrical performance in *Museum for fremtiden* to be seamless. As I have hinted at above, my research project tells a different story. In my account of the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, I unfold the tensions arising between the artistic practices, disciplines, institutions, and media that I brought together in the project, constituting, I argue, contradictory forms of temporalization. Most acutely, these contradictory forms of temporalization arrive from the quotidian uses of the words exhibition and performance. In the following, I would like to share the presumptions on the research project's mediation of the media of exhibition and performance in the paradoxical pursuit of an aesthetic practice of historicizing the present.

Art exhibitions and theatre performances are both media that in a multitude of ways mediate the imaginary and the real, the symbolic and the actual. In turn, in their colloquial usages, they commonly designate different temporal statuses to the content they offer publics, prefiguring different forms of temporalization. To exhibit something traditionally implies the display of an object that already existed beforehand, enabling a (temporal) distance to it through its *representation*. In contrast, performance typically signifies an action in the present, an *enaction* of something—oftentimes imaginary, including that which is not yet present. In the Germanic languages, such as the Danish in which *Museum for fremtiden* was produced and made public, these presumptions are embedded in the double meanings of the terms used for exhibition and theatrical performance, in German *Ausstellung* and *Vorstellung*. *Ausstellung* connotes exposure, revelation, and the spatio-temporal distance imposed by the gesture of display, while *Vorstellung* quite literally designates the imaginary.⁶¹ In these basic understandings, *Ausstellung* concerns the representation of the past—its objects as well as its own representations—in the present, whereas *Vorstellung* indicates an enaction of the

⁶¹ Additionally, of course, *Vorstellung* is used in the sense of “looking like” as in make-believe; a different, if related, kind of representation.

imaginary—including, of course, fictional worlds, tales of the past, and visions of the future—in the present.

Meanwhile, as is well established in the fields that I connect here—contemporary theatre, contemporary art, curatorial thought, theatre and performance studies, and aesthetic theory—these reductive perceptions of exhibitions and performances are all but satisfactory.⁶² Understood as media, their differences as forms of temporalization are increasingly blurring in favor of performativity and enaction.⁶³ Exhibition-making is increasingly theorized as a performative venture;⁶⁴ contemporary exhibition spaces and contemporary artists increasingly include the ephemeral, the processual, or the “live” in their programs and works;⁶⁵ artistic and curatorial practice increasingly connects art to other contexts and aims in the present through exhibition-making and related cultural activities, predominantly social activism, education, and research.⁶⁶

Even the museum—sharing, as Adorno once wrote, more with the mausoleum than the fact that the words rhyme⁶⁷—has come to life.⁶⁸ The performance scholar and museum practitioner Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett calls the museum of today a “theater, a memory palace, a stage for the enactment of other times and places, a space of transport, fantasy, dreams,” arguing that exhibitions “are fundamentally theatrical, for they are how museums perform the knowledge they create.”⁶⁹ This shift of attention from exhibition to performance, or from display to experience, places the exhibition of art in a double-sided relationship with the

⁶² Mieke Bal notes that the term “exhibition” “is usually understood to intimate that what is exhibited already existed before,” before adding: “It did, and it did not.” Bal, *Exhibition-ism: Temporal Togetherness*, 2020, 26. Bal’s thinking motivates the dissertation’s theoretical and methodological considerations in Part 2. Similarly, Lucy Steeds proposes to counter the opposition by a reengagement with Walter Benjamin’s notion of *Ausstellungsbarkeit* (“exposability”), emphasizing the “taking-place” of art in its exhibition: “I want to suggest that the exposing or staging of art—which specifically moves us from display or presentation, toward a call to collective imaginative play or social action—that we might borrow most productively from Benjamin today.” Steeds, “Exposability: On the Taking-Place in Future of Art,” 83. For an in-depth analysis of the relation between the display and performance in contemporary art, see Guy, *Theatre, Exhibition, and Curation: Displayed & Performed*.

⁶³ In the context of art exhibitions, see West, “Concepts for the Critical Study of Art Exhibitions as Media.”

⁶⁴ Lind, *Performing the Curatorial: Within and Beyond Art*, Martinon, *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*.

⁶⁵ Bishop, “Black Box, White Cube, Grey Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention,” 22–23.

⁶⁶ For a good example, see the introduction to the project *Towards the Not-Yet* at BAK – basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht, the Netherlands, presenting the exhibition project *Training for the Not-Yet* that explored the chronopolitics of the “not-yet” by gathering “artistic and cultural practitioners” in a “rolling assembly of people, communities, ideas, objects, art, food, research, talks, politics, performances, screenings, and learnings that accumulated and strengthened each other transversally.” Heeswijk, Hlavajova, and Rakes, “Introduction: Toward the Not-Yet,” 11–18.

⁶⁷ Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum,” 607.

⁶⁸ Such a statement is supported on the level of cultural policy, considering the new museum definition of ICOM. See “ICOM approves new museum definition.”

⁶⁹ Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 139, 3. The same quotes are used by Susan Bennett in *Theatre & Museums*, a concise overview describing a turn from display to experience. See Bennett, *Theatre & Museums*, 4–8.

ideals of neoliberal governance, on the one hand explicitly engaging in political struggles that are typically critical of neoliberalism and, on the other, accommodating the demands of the neoliberal experience and attention economy to boost visitor numbers and to explicate the impact of art on society at large. Moreover, it muddies the relation between art and history, or the attentiveness to art's function as representational of its historical present. In contemporary curatorial practices, the museum has become "post-representative," as the scholar of art mediation and curator Nora Sternfeld argues. In significant ways, I consider the contemporary to correspond with the post-representative in Sternfeld's coinage of the term in relation to museums.⁷⁰

As a signpost, then, the contemporary in contemporary art implies an obscuration of the temporal logic of historical representation—the exhibition of something that existed beforehand—focusing instead on what artworks and exhibitions might do, enact, or perform in the present; not the (historical) distance they display, but the (experiential) presence they produce.⁷¹ A similar analysis can be traced in contemporary theatre, in its influential configurations as postdramatic theatre, coined by Hans-Thies Lehmann,⁷² or, simply, as political theatre as recently surveyed, discussed, and conceptualized as "the art of assembly" by Malzacher.⁷³ In both cases, the contemporary marks a cascading crises of representation as such.⁷⁴ According to Malzacher, in the case of political theatre, these crises are posed by contemporary realizations ranging from the irrepresentability of democracy (always to come as Malzacher quotes Derrida for writing)⁷⁵ to the irrepresentability of the natural world in the suggested (and heftily disputed) novel geological epoch of Anthropocene, during which modernity's *Kulissen-Ontologie* is proposed to be collapsing.⁷⁶ For contemporary theatre and contemporary dramaturgical practice, the registration of such crises has become indicative of a shift away from understanding theatrical performance as a means of representing the world

⁷⁰ Sternfeld, "Inside the Post-Representative Museum," 177-179.

⁷¹ Ibid., 176-177.

⁷² Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*.

⁷³ Malzacher, *The Art of Assembly: Political Theatre Today*.

⁷⁴ On the crises of representation in contemporary political theatre, see *ibid.*, 18-33. For a philosophical, deconstructive inquiry into representation in relation to theatre as such, see Derrida, "The Theatre of Cruelty and the Closure of Representation."

⁷⁵ Malzacher, *The Art of Assembly*, 22-23.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 28-29. Actually, the neologism *Kulissen-Ontologie* stems from the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's critique of the Anthropocene. Sloterdijk argues that the proclamation of the Anthropocene follows, rather than breaks with, modernity's "scenery-ontology," presenting nature as the stabile stage on which "dramatic animal" of the human being performs its history. I have opted to use it here because of its theatrical metaphor. Sloterdijk, "The Anthropocene – A Stage in the Process of the Margins of the Earth's History?," 9.

(and the times I would add), beckoning instead enactive formats with the provisional public gathered in and through theatrical performances. As opposed to making plays and performances to offer representational models of reality, Bleeker argues, contemporary theatre composes “provisional arrangements” of materials in time and space—in reality—instead, producing new ideas and affects through assemblage and composition rather than illustrating or representing existing ones.⁷⁷ On a practical level, this shift is reflected in a turn away from considering the performance a representation of, say, a script of a playwright or an existing idea of, say, a theatre director or a dramaturg. In practice, the shift determines a reorientation from product to process.⁷⁸

While the contemporary indeed marks a crisis of representation as such, this dissertation, while interrogating my practice and the process of making *Museum for fremtiden*, makes the case that dramaturgical and curatorial practice stay in the trouble of groping for ways to represent the historical present under these post-representative conditions. Such trouble necessitates a paradoxical engagement with said conditions in which theatre represents and exhibitions enact. Exemplified by the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, I consider the contemporary as a strategy of mediating between performative enaction and exhibitionary representation, their coming together, not in seamless amalgamation, but in dialectical tension; “an irresolvable tension,” as it is emphasized in the philosopher Juliane Rebentisch’ theories of contemporary art, “between what is representing and what is represented.”⁷⁹ In the case of *Museum for fremtiden*, this tension characterized the relation between the contemporary visual artists, enacting or actualizing ideas in and through their already composite practices and the

⁷⁷ Following theatre scholar Marianne van Kerkhoveen, Bleeker identifies a general turn away from representation in theatrical performance: “Van Kerkhoven’s observations are indicative of a shift from an understanding of theatrical performance as means to represent ideas, texts, narratives, and imaginary worlds, toward an understanding of performance as means to bring about ideas, experiences, associations, affects, and emotions by means of compositions of materials in time and space. This is not to deny that representation can be part of how performances make sense (and in certain types of theatre and dance is an important component). Yet, a focus on how that which is materially present on stage as first and foremost a means to represent something else (something supposedly given within the play being staged, or ideas in the mind of a choreographer or director) obscures the complexity of what is actually there to be seen and heard, and thus of how what performances *do* and how they are meaningful is the result of how the performance articulates relationships between elements, some of them there on stage, others evoked by what is there.” In *Museum for fremtiden*, representation certainly played a role, which I examine in the dissertation. I agree with Bleeker, however, that representation gains meaning only in tension with what’s materially present. Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 49.

⁷⁸ Bleeker calls for attending to process as a part of doing dramaturgy, describing ways in which dramaturg might “inhabit process” through such activities as speculating, analyzing, feeding, articulating, questioning, creating conditions, and structuring, most of which I identify in and use to articulate my function in the making of *Museum for fremtiden* in Part 4. Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 58–70.

⁷⁹ Rebentisch, “Theatricality, Autonomy, Negativity. Conversation with Juliane Rebentisch,” 57.

theatrical dramatization, offering ways to represent these ideas theatrically through the script and the exhibition of spectatorship. Put simply, the process ended up producing a tension between “what was representing and what was represented,” or, more concretely, what was enactive artwork and what was representational scenery, who were spectators and who were actors, what was exhibited and what was performed. Rather than arguing for its success, I would like to think about this tension as productive in evoking an experience of becoming part of a “dialectics at a standstill,” to use a concept from Walter Benjamin’s historical materialism in the context of the image, the flash of a constellation between the present and the historical that we just might consider contemporary.⁸⁰

The tension between enactment and representation, one could meanwhile object, is already at play in the notions of performance, the performative, and the theatrical so often invoked as a model for aesthetic experience and, consequently, curatorial practice—and, indeed, Rebentisch posits *theatricality* to be the central characteristic of not just contemporary art but of all art.⁸¹ However, “art world discourse,” as Rebentisch puts it, increasingly banishes representation from its self-understanding, purporting a less ambiguous identification with its enactive qualities. Against this one-sided emphasis on “positive” enaction in artworld discourse, the dissertation is underpinned by my preoccupation with redressing what Rebentisch calls the “fundamental negativity” of aesthetics under contemporary conditions. As Rebentisch states in an interview:

what is missing in much of contemporary art world discourse is aesthetic autonomy—and an acknowledgment of its fundamental negativity: Art does not produce knowledge in any strict sense nor is it doing politics—it interrupts the accumulation of knowledge as well as social relations. Art unfolds its cognitive dimension within the mode of what Kant called thinking (as opposed to knowledge), in a process that establishes a reflexive distance toward social knowledge production, and it unfolds its own politics through an asocial element. In and through this negativity art has a social function—that of stepping back from the given. That such a reflexive distance cannot be measured in terms of any immediate “impact” on society is, of course, not the least of its points.⁸²

⁸⁰ Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 10.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 65.

Here, I believe, Rebentisch pinpoints the dialectic that I have tried to instigate in the curatorial proposition and dramaturgical concept of *Museum for fremtiden* and that I seek to articulate in this dissertation, reflecting, I argue, a central tenet of Sort/Hvid's poetics of ambivalence, negativity, and doubt, enabled in this case by the inclusion of and tension with affirmative practices as well as the institution of contemporary visual art, engaging in novel forms of knowledge production.⁸³

To return to my research question, we can now deepen its implications with a host of new questions: Under contemporary conditions, under the regime of the post-representative, how does exhibition- and performance-making enable us to step back from the given, how does exhibitions and performances enable a reflexive distance to a present that so overwhelmingly, provisionally, and persistently contains us? How might curating and dramaturgy contribute to the invention of contemporary ways of making the present appear as past, when the present is characterized by the obsolescence of representation as such? "How do aesthetic objects," as Theodore Martin asks, "invent their own ways of thinking historically in response to the absence of historical distance?"⁸⁴ In a more direct phrasing, inspired by Martin's engagement with the contemporary as well, how might we begin imagining the contemporary *as a historical moment*?

Enter the Museum: Museums and the Future.

"There is only one place that does not totally belong to our contemporary world," the philosopher and media theorist Boris Groys writes in the essay, "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution." "It is the museum."⁸⁵ Groys's thought, always defending the "dead end" of the paradox, reflects better than most the temporal contradictions that I have come to consider myself mediating as dramaturg and curator in the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, leading me to include a Danish translation of the essay in the exhibition catalogue. Groys's meditation on the museum as a place where we can distance ourselves to contemporary culture rings delightfully anachronistic, considering the turn from exhibition to performance, representation to enactment, across contemporary aesthetic disciplines, artistic practices, media, and

⁸³ The emphasis on producing doubt is expressed in one of Sort/Hvid's numerous catchphrases, "Kom i tvivl," meaning both "Enter in doubt" and "Begin doubting" in Danish.

⁸⁴ Martin, *Contemporary Drift*, 6.

⁸⁵ Groys, "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution," 264-265.

institutions I have sketched above.⁸⁶ Groys, however, does not merely advocate a simple return to a modern regime of representation.⁸⁷ Rather, he reinstalls the historicizing function of the museum in tension with the inescapable immanence imposed by the contemporary, summoning the—likely impossible and certainly preposterous—task at hand: to imagine the present (as characterized by inescapable immanence) as if it was past. Only by understanding the contemporary as “dead and musealized—a particular social form among other social forms,” Groys argues, can aesthetic experience ignite the desire to change the status quo in its totality, a revolutionary desire engrained in the origins of the modern museum institution. In this framing, the act of exhibiting becomes not only a means to actualize an artwork in the present but a simultaneous performance of laying the pervasive status quo to rest. “Such an understanding,” Groys concludes, “comes not so much from putting on the mask of past cultures, but from seeing the face of contemporary culture as a mask.”⁸⁸ Somewhat on the nose, perhaps—and certainly on the level of representation—the poster illustration of *Museum for fremtiden*, a maze as seen from above resembling a human skull, underscores this haunting legacy of the museum: to negotiate how to sketch such a mask of the present, however preposterous this may sound.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, in the efforts to do so, I collaborated as the dramaturg and curator of *Museum for fremtiden* with the institutions of Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus and the contemporary visual artistic practices of Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio

⁸⁶ I return to Groys, especially the essay “On Art Activism,” in the journal article, “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation,” enclosed in the dissertation as Part 5 on pages 101–117.

⁸⁷ Regrettably, I reduce the complexity of Groys’s argument in the journal article “Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research,” enclosed as Part 3 in the dissertation on pages 55–66.

⁸⁸ Groys, “The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution,” 258. Groys invokes the famous image of Walter Benjamin’s angel of history, looking from the future towards the past: “History teaches us that the culture in which we live is mortal, just like we are. We can anticipate the death of our culture just as we anticipate our own death. If we only look at our culture from the perspective of its origin in the past, we remain immersed in it, unable to see it as a form. This renders us incapable of revolution. But due to, let’s say, today’s apocalyptic anticipation of the death of culture, we can adjust our perspective to look not from the past and present into the future but instead from the future towards the present and the past. Walter Benjamin famously described such a change of perspective using the figure of the Angelus Novus, who looks at history backwards—from the future toward the past—and sees progress not as a creative movement but as a destruction of both the past and present. Looking back to the historical past from the anticipated future, one loses one’s own cultural identity.” Benjamin presents the image in his ninth thesis on the philosophy of history. See Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” 392.

⁸⁹ Unexpectedly, the face became an important string in *Museum for fremtiden* through Ferdinand Ahm Krag’s contribution, the installation *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022), causing us to title this part of the script “Face.” See a short presentation of *Hall of Psychopomps* in the handout I produced for the Kunsthall Aarhus iteration of *Museum for fremtiden* on pages 204–205 as well as an English translation of my interview with Krag in the exhibition catalogue on pages 159–165.

ThinkingHand to contribute to—and, crucially, to discuss the ambition of—such a sketching by commissioning original art installations to furnish a *Museum for fremtiden* to be dramatized and staged by Christian Lollike, the scenographers Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård, the composer and sound designer Asger Kudahl, voice actor Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, myself, and, during the process, a host of other contributors—from stage builders to performing custodians, catalogue contributors to seminar participants, technicians to the visitors becoming part of the exhibition as living remains of a contemporary culture past.

On the level of making, the process of collaboration revealed a temporal contradiction between the visual artists' affirmative expansions of the present—through engagements with the planetary, the embodied, and the more-than-human, rejecting linear mediations of historical time—and their museal dramatization or “performative musealization,” contracting these affirmations as at the same time characterizing of our historical moment. It did so through the voice of the audio guide, composed from dialogues between visual artists, theatre-makers, and researchers, along with readings on museums and the future, crisis and care, climate change and contemporary capitalism, new and historical materialisms. In Part 4 and 5, I account for this process, not forgetting its shortcomings.

Musing—the museum, as we know, is derived from *mouseion*, the temple of the muses—on the desires and expectations of our present, the *Museum for fremtiden* audio guide took form as a haunting figuration of the contemporary: a faceless voice, both absent and present, embodying longings for other ways of being in time excavated from the artworks, directing the spectators to become representations of these longings as characterizing for the historical present. In the tension between her absent presence and the presence of artworks and spectators, I consider *Museum for fremtiden* as a striving towards offering its visitors a *hetero-chronic* experience between immanent presence and distanced representation.⁹⁰ Necessarily, the museum is at once a haunted and a haunting space, connecting the phantasms of the institution to the temporal category of the future. “The future,” as cultural critic Mark Fisher reminded us, “is always experienced as a haunting: a virtuality that already impinges on the present, conditioning expectations and motivating cultural production.”⁹¹ With the mention of

⁹⁰ In the dissertations Part 5—the journal article “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation” on pages 101-117—I discuss the audio guide of *Museum for fremtiden* by way of Derrida’s coinage of “the visor effect,” signaling the ghost’s ability to look without being seen, contemporaneously present and absent. Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 61, and *Specters of Marx*, 8.

⁹¹ Mark Fischer, “What is Hauntology?,” 16.

Fisher's "hauntology," we can return to Williams's definition of the future as the point of disjuncture where the present begins to appear as past; and *Museum for fremtiden* as a place where the living momentarily begins to appear as dead—or undead.

But I am getting ahead of myself. The purpose of the dissertation is not to interpret *Museum for fremtiden*—its documentation enclosed in the appendix—but to interrogate the contemporary as a critical concept for dramaturgical and curatorial practice in and through its making. In the following Part 2, I sketch the theoretical framework and the method I employ in my research practice, imbuing my previous use of the adjective "preposterous" with criticality borrowed from Mieke Bal's conception of preposterous history to present the research project's method inspired by Bal's notion of exhibition-ism. Connecting Bal's thoughts on exhibition-ism as a method to Theodore Martin's conception of the contemporary as a strategy of mediation, I explicate my research method between dramaturgy and curating and propose *Museum for fremtiden* as a "theoretical fiction."

PART TWO.

The Contemporary as a Critical Concept.

Theoretical Framework and Notes on Method.

The Contemporary as Presentism.

In art criticism and beyond, being contemporary is hardly an unambiguous ideal. Instead, it is an exceptionally contested term. In an essay entitled “Institutional Imagination – Instituting Contemporary Art Minus the ‘Contemporary’,” the sociologist Pascal Gielen chronicles a bleak history of the contemporary’s journey through the institutions of art, characterized by the abandonment of historical imagination as such:

From the moment that art started calling itself ‘contemporary’ (everything that is made now is contemporary and therefore has no historical depth, but neither does it have a future), it not only lost its verticality. [...] art lost its own voice. Everything that is made today can be labelled ‘contemporary’ and this automatically disqualifies anything that was made yesterday. Contemporary art refuses to make a clean break with the past, precisely through an uncomplicated forgetting. But in its embrace of the hyper-current, art above all lost its vigour to really concern itself with history. The intoxication of the contemporary leaves no time for solidification and so everything remains fluid. In its desire to be ‘with it’, to ‘keep up with the times’ and not, like the historical avant-garde, be *ahead* of its time, contemporary art gave up on any utopian plan to really intervene in the world. In short, the route from fiction to non-fiction was closed.⁹²

In this comprehensive quote, Gielen rehashes a familiar sentiment towards the contemporary as a predicate for art, namely the conviction that the contemporary equals *presentism*. This sentiment echoes the negative dimension of Jeppe Kristensen’s identification of the loss of future at play in the poetics of FIX&FOXY and the meta-analysis of our age.⁹³ By becoming contemporary, Gielen argues, art lost its ability of transcending the present as either a historical artefact, solidifying as an object representing a given past, or, conversely, as an ignition of a utopian impetus, projecting a qualitatively different future to be pursued. Gielen’s sentiment points to the temporally ubiquitous character of the contemporary: On the one hand, we seldomly hesitate to call new works of art contemporary, overriding the possibility of

⁹² Gielen, “Institutional Imagination: Instituting Contemporary Art Minus the ‘Contemporary’,” 31.

⁹³ Kristensen, “World Theatre and Theatre of the Moment,” 192.

differentiating between its manifold, heterogenous, and “radically pluralist” expressions.⁹⁴ On the other, the contemporary does not immediately designate a historical period to which the art object belongs; it does not solidify. Instead, the contemporary chases the whims an ever-expanding present, pursuing experiential presence instead of historical permanence. Or so the argument goes.⁹⁵

Indeed, the contemporary is a moving target. As the art historian Claire Bishop, among others, has pointed out, every attempt to periodize the contemporary as a historical epoch, to mark its beginning, is essentially “dysfunctional”—and unmistakably Eurocentric.⁹⁶ In Theodore Martin’s wording, the contemporary is “a periodizing term that doesn’t quite manage to periodize.”⁹⁷ Consequently, any vision of its end remains opaque, and the contemporary seems above all to be permeated by the historical realization of the awkward inadequacy of historical representation as such. Instead, the concept seems to conjure a perpetual present, banishing the position of a critical—and, critically, a temporal—distance necessary for historical imagination since, to summon one of the usual specters of the philosophy of history, Hegel. As Martin writes:

The contemporary is contemporary *to us*, meaning close to us in time, meaning always possibly too close. This ineluctable proximity makes historicism—that miracle of hindsight—a more delicate affair. At least since Hegel, for whom historical knowledge “always comes too late,” the lack of critical distance that distinguishes the present has been taken as an obstacle to historical understanding⁹⁸

Nevertheless, any notion of the contemporary entails a persisting preoccupation with the present as much as a persistent issue with historical imagination. As Boris Groys observes in a characteristically humorous and condensed history of what must be the western societies’ relation to time, itself a parody of simplistic periodization: “The Middle Ages were interested in eternity, the Renaissance was interested in the past, modernity was interested in the future.

⁹⁴ In the introduction *Art Power*, Boris Groys rejects the “radical pluralism” as an adequate signifier of contemporary art, advocating instead perception of contemporary art as a realization of a paradox between art and non-art, requiring a “paradoxical interpretation.” Inspired by Groys, I strive to stay in the paradoxes in my practice as well as in this dissertation. Groys, *Art Power*, 1-8.

⁹⁵ For a brilliant philosophical deconstruction on the contemporary, weighing arguments for and against the contemporary, see García-Düttmann, “For and Against the Contemporary. An Examination.”

⁹⁶ Bishop, *Radical Museology*, 16-18.

⁹⁷ Martin, *Contemporary Drift*, 2

⁹⁸ Martin, “The Currency of the Contemporary,” 227.

Our epoch is interested primarily in itself.”⁹⁹ Read together, such histories frame the emergence and persistence of the contemporary as a symptom of a historically unprecedented presentism; a temporal narcissism that feels as difficult to reject as it is to see beyond. The present has become “omnipresent,” the historian François Hartog similarly argues in his broader historical analysis of presentism as the “regime of historicity” of our present age; the contemporary constitution of the present bears no temporal horizon but itself.¹⁰⁰ Seen in this light, or perhaps more appropriately, under the shadow of presentism, being contemporary is hardly an end in itself. It arrives with a persuasive ambivalence towards historical imagination and, consequently, the ability to envision a different future; “what could be otherwise imagined,” as Gielen puts it when lamenting the lost utopian or otherwise future-oriented impulse of—modernist, avantgarde—art to the contemporary condition.

On a broader cultural level, we can trace this lament in influential Marxist cultural critiques of contemporary capitalism. Prominent examples count Fredric Jameson’s critique of the cultural logic of late capitalism as “postmodernism,”¹⁰¹ Mark Fisher’s account of capitalist realism,¹⁰² and Franco “Bifo” Berardi’s—self-proclaimed whimsical—resignation: “the future is over.”¹⁰³ Indeed, as each day passes, the immense task of insisting that it is not easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism appears only to be growing in scale.¹⁰⁴ Even the short duration of my research project offered countless climate disasters all over the world, rising temperatures, a pandemic, unwavering inequality, and the eruption of war. In fact, each year does seem historical in severity but in an eerie manner, taking the form of the loop or *stasis* as the artist and writer Hito Steyerl has argued with reference to the philosopher Giorgio Agamben in her aptly titled *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War*.¹⁰⁵

I take this specific entry to the contemporary because I consider Sort/Hvid’s artistic profile—especially the works of Christian Lollike—as deeply influenced by such critiques. Some of Lollike’s most prominent plays and performances self-consciously gaze down into the abyss of the stasis-ridden present. Under the theatre’s flippant slogans “THE SHOW IS

⁹⁹ Groys, “Modernity vs. Contemporaneity. Mechanical vs. Digital Reproduction,” 137–138.

¹⁰⁰ Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time*.

¹⁰¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*.

¹⁰² Fisher, *Capitalist Realism – Is There No Alternative?*

¹⁰³ Berardi, *After the Future*.

¹⁰⁴ For a recent art historical intervention against the sentiment of capitalist realism through the reading of contemporary art practices, see TJ Demos, *Radical Futurisms*. Invoking futurism, Demos analyzes and argues for an art building on the traditions of the oppressed and social movements that “decolonize the future.”

¹⁰⁵ Steyerl, *Duty Free Art*, 3.

OVER” and “DON’T HAPPY BE WORRY,” Sort/Hvid’s poetics—again, especially Lollike’s works—explore, satirize, and expose the lack of political imagination permeating the historical present, typically with explicit reference to recent historical events and urgent crises on the public stage. Not unlike the critical analyses of “late capitalist presentism” mentioned above, however, this work is motivated, I would argue, by the desire of breaking presentism’s chains on the imagination by exhibiting these imaginative restrictions and their real effects. Lollike has proposed to do so through a poetics of the estrangement and defamiliarization of contemporary discourse; a postdramatic variation of the legacy of Brecht, projecting negative representations of our present and our present selves on stage and beyond to make us and it appear strange, unworkable, and, often, undead.¹⁰⁶ This poetics confronts the audience with dismal reflections of a present robbed from dramatic gratification and futural imagination.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Sort/Hvid and Lollike *exhibits* the perpetual present in all its doom and gloom, *represents* it in dark, twisted reflections, so that we, in the audience, may recognize our part in it, gain distance to it, and begin to think about how to change its mind-crippling status quo.¹⁰⁸ Drawing on the critical, feminist, and queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, meanwhile, we might call Sort/Hvid’s poetics decidedly paranoid: anticipatory, reflexive, mimetic, pursuing a strong theory of negative affects, placing its faith in *exposure*.¹⁰⁹ These characteristics also have temporal implications.

The Contemporary as Untimeliness.

The negative ideal pursued by Sort/Hvid, I would argue, can be traced back to the notion of untimeliness that Agamben adopts from Nietzsche’s “untimely meditations” to characterize the “true contemporary.” According to Agamben, the contemporary is someone who steps out of time to perceive the present from a self-imposed anachronistic and disjunctive relation to it.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ I am thinking of works like *Living Dead* (Aarhus Teater and Sort/Hvid, 2016), staging the Danes fearing the arrival of refugees as zombies, *Revolution* (Aarhus Teater and Sort/Hvid, 2018), and, most recently, the opera installation and “requiem for our time,” *Orfeo* (Copenhagen Phil and Sort/Hvid, 2023), transforming the theatre into the realm of the dead.

¹⁰⁷ Now, I am thinking of *All My Dreams Come True* (Aarhus Teater, 2013) in which two nameless characters, A and B, who suffer from apathy and depression and remain unable to imagine a different future, use the staging of Disney’s fairytales—and violent transgressions—to feel something again.

¹⁰⁸ I elaborate on this poetics in the English translation of my introduction to a selection of Christian Lollike’s plays, “The Show Is Over/On Shattering Time,” enclosed in the dissertation on pages 210–213, in which I characterize the Lollike’s poetics with reference to Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*

¹⁰⁹ Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You’re So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You,” 130.

¹¹⁰ Agamben, “What Is the Contemporary?,” 40–41.

“The contemporary,” Agamben writes with characteristic masculinist bravado, “is he who firmly holds his gaze on his own time so as to perceive not its light, but rather its darkness.”¹¹¹ A similar pursuit of inversion is suggestively hinted at in the theatre’s name, Sort/Hvid meaning Black/White.

The position of critical distance towards the present is, meanwhile, problematic under the conditions we find ourselves immersed in today. As the aesthetic theorist Jacob Lund argues in a critique of Agamben, the notion of the contemporary as untimely presupposes the unification of a singular (always western) history (and an equally singular and homogenous public sphere, we might add) that the contemporary critic (or artist) can step out of and become untimely to, so to speak. Defining the historical present as constituted by a contemporaneity of different already disjunctive times, experiences of time, and historical narratives rather than a unified, homogenous history, Lund suggests that Agamben’s notion of untimeliness ends up affirming the reductionist conception of history as the decidedly western narrative it itself seeks to critique and expose. Lund argues for a revised conception of untimeliness that accepts its implication in an expansive present to *act* upon it which he discovers in contemporary artistic practices:

To be untimely *then* (under the modern regime of historicity), was to not coincide with the present time in the singular; to be untimely *now* is to act on present times in the plural and to counter the time of global capital, which is about standardization, synchronization, and accumulation with no other temporal horizon, with no different future, even if imagined.¹¹²

In Lund’s renegotiation of untimeliness under contemporary conditions, again, we see the shift of emphasis from representation to enaction that I sketched in the dissertation’s opening: to be untimely today means *acting* on present times in the plural as they contain us rather than *representing* negative, inverted images of a present in the singular, inviting spectators to gaze into the darkness of our age.

Through the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, I have come to consider the visual art practices that we invited to collaborate with Sort/Hvid engaged in such enactive experimentations with present times in the plural, if in radically different ways: Ferdinand Ahm Krag’s

¹¹¹ Ibid., 44.

¹¹² Lund, *The Changing Constitution of the Present: Essays on the Work of Art in Times of Contemporaneity*, 88. I am referring to his essay “Untimeliness in Contemporary Times,” 81–94.

conjunction of a planetary perception of time in his ritualistic installation *Hall of Psychopomps*, inspired by cave paintings, Helene Nymann's constellation of Aboriginal Songlines and epigenetic theory in the chromosomic sculptures and associative video work *Ode to Creode*, Studio ThinkingHand's decentering of human time in their exaltation of non-human life forms through the sculptural work of *Vita . Necro . Vita*, made with living and decaying organisms of scoby. Despite their obvious differences, all three artistic practices undertake explorations of temporalities lost or left out in the totalizing, representative, dramatization of historical time, the becoming sensible of the undifferentiated, namely the planetary, the embodied, and the more-than-human.¹¹³ In other words, collaborating with the visual artists on *Museum for fremtiden* came to constitute a challenge to Sort/Hvid's representational untimeliness, pursuing a defamiliarizing perception of present, with the visual artists' enactive untimeliness, seeking to affirmatively expand the present in each installation. On the one hand, the dramatization of the installations sought to mediate and enact these ideas and, on the other, contracted them within the voice of the audio guide and the set designs enveloping them. The tension between these temporal directions is what I have come to consider meaningful in describing the temporal complexity of *Museum for fremtiden*; a complexity I forestall in the following by briefly expanding on the notion of contemporaneity as a characterizing term for the historical present.

The Contemporary and Contemporaneity.

As Lund's revision of untimeliness suggests, Gielen's rejection of the contemporary in contemporary art only tells one side of the story. Against this lament, scholars from such fields as philosophy, art history, literary studies, and aesthetic theory has worked to qualify the contemporary as a *critical concept*, formulating criteria for what affords the contemporary as a predicate for art, literature, and thought, countering the unconscious and naturalized resignation of calling all art being made today contemporary that Gielen criticizes. Often, they do so by emphasizing the time-relation of *contemporaneity* derived from the contemporary.¹¹⁴ As Groys begins an oft-quoted essay, "Contemporary art deserves its name insofar as it mani-

¹¹³ To stay on track, I am opting not to expand on each individual artistic practice in the dissertation. Instead, I refer to the dissertation's appendix, especially the English translations of my interview with Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand for the exhibition catalogue on pages 159-180 and the handouts on each artist I produced for the Kunsthall Aarhus iteration on pages 203-209.

¹¹⁴ See for instance Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, Rebentisch, *Theorien der Gegenwartskunst – Zur Einführung*, and Bishop, *Radical Museology, or, What's 'Contemporary' in Museums of Contemporary Art?*

feats its own contemporaneity.”¹¹⁵ In other words, the concept bridges the analysis of the formal characteristics of art to the analysis of the historical conditions under which it is produced.

These conditions mark a historical shift from modernity and its modifications such as postmodernity. In contrast to the relentless *futurity* associated with western modernity, the historical present, Lund argues, is characterized by *contemporaneity*. In a collection of essays exploring the notion of contemporaneity in philosophical aesthetics and contemporary artistic practices, Lund writes:

Our present is characterized by contemporaneity in the sense that it is constituted by the bringing together of a multitude of different temporalities at different scales, including deep geological time and different grand narratives and imagined communities developed during modernity. It is formed by an intensified global or planetary interconnectedness of different times and experiences of time, and this interconnection of times is something historically new. We seem, therefore, to be living in an expanded present, a present in which several temporalities, times and historical narratives take part in what is perceived as present and presence—and in making presence and the present come into being.¹¹⁶

According to Lund, the historical present is expanded by the co-existence of different and often conflictual times and experiences of time. This expansion is on the one hand driven by the combined and uneven developments of globalized capital, digitalization, and computational technologies, rendering presence networked and distributable. On the other, it is marked by the growing realization of the all-encompassing—if perversely unequally distributed—planetary predicament, an intrusion of deep geological time in- and onto historical time, made visible by the ongoing climate catastrophe of fossil capital and the dwindling conditions of life on earth. Instead of being satisfied with critiquing this state of affairs, exhibiting its abysmal darkness as I have ventured we tend to do at Sort/Hvid, Lund calls, echoing the philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe, for the articulation of a “planetary consciousness;” a way to think about time that “takes seriously” the “concatenations of geological time, historical time, and experiential time.”¹¹⁷ In other words, Lund calls for ways to mediate between these heterogenous timescales; mediations that would make the entanglement of times sensible. The selection of visual artists contributing to *Museum for fremtiden* have come for me to echo such

¹¹⁵ Groy, “Comrades of Time,” 84.

¹¹⁶ Lund, *The Changing Constitution of the Present*, 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 7, Mbembe, “How to Develop a Planetary Consciousness.”

a call, interrogating geological, experiential, and biological temporalities left out by the dominant narratives of historical time. And yet, the notion of contemporaneity does not entail a complete abandonment of the notion of historical time. Rather, it calls for an expanded understanding of what we might consider historical; what and who we might involve in the dramatization of history. How do art exhibitions and theatre performances, then, become spaces to expand such an understanding?

The Contemporary as Preposterous History.

Etymologically, the contemporary means something like “with time,” and, as the cultural analyst Mieke Bal notes, “alongside, side by side, together, in dialogue” with the present. Bal’s writing on art, cultural theory, and methodology stresses the performative and theatrical aspects of art exhibitions, even when they engage with art from past (art) historical periods. For Bal, reflecting on the “temporal togetherness” of different times enabled by its medium, the exhibition stages a dialogue between past and present that does not rest on opposition, linearity, or chronology, but still insists on historicization, on an expanded sense of history: “Present and past are not opposed;” Bal writes, “nor are contemporary and historical.” The contemporary exhibition, Bal argues, instead mediates a temporal togetherness of different times and temporal directions, enabling an understanding of the contemporary as “what happens *now*, as a way of historicizing without the invariably deterministic chronology, built on blaming the past and praising the present as more “developed.”¹¹⁸ In other words, Bal rejects the mediation of historical time as a unified narrative of linear and singular progress without losing sight of the urgency of historical imagination.

With her knack for conceptual invention, Bal coins the term “preposterous history” to prescribe an understanding of history that—as the word preposterous itself does—converges the prefixes of “pre-” and “post-” in contemporaneity. Preposterous history takes the cue from Benjamin’s invaluable “On the Concept of History,” from the dictum that “[e]very image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.”¹¹⁹ It serves to describe how contemporary artistic and curatorial practices stage dialogues between different times, creating meaning in and through their constellation in the

¹¹⁸ Bal, *Exhibition-ism: Temporal Togetherness*, 26–28.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 26–35. Elsewhere in the dissertation, I use a different translation of Benjamin’s text in which the same quote is translated like this: “For it is an irretrievable image of the past which threatens to disappear in any present that does not recognize itself as intended in that image.” Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” 391.

present of the exhibition.¹²⁰ Each contribution to *Museum for fremtiden* drew on histories and inventions, materials and ontologies, forms and conventions that were brought together in it. The visual artists were all engaged in the making present of practices associated with other time perceptions than the narrative such as Ferdinand Ahm Krag's evocation of cave paintings, drawing together motifs from the deep geological past, evolutionary and cultural history while referencing Greek mythology in its title; Helene Nymann's enactment of Aboriginal Songlines as an embodied memory technique, constellated with a video work drawing heftily on different imagery, and Studio ThinkingHand's living pillars of scoby, exalting the temporality and agency of non-human lifeforms.

Meanwhile, I connect my research through *Museum for fremtiden* to Bal's concept of preposterous history, because I consider my method to resemble the exhibition-ism that she formulates in the essay of the same name; a practice of bringing different times—or forms of temporalization—together in the same exhibition to consider their contemporaneity, a practice of “making, presenting, and thinking about art as contemporary”:

“exhibition-ism” is a plea for the recognition of the fundamental contemporaneity that defines the cultural practice of exhibiting, and hence, a plea for taking exhibiting under certain conditions as a model for making, presenting, and thinking about art as contemporary. [...] The practice of exhibition-making, called curating, here becomes central, rather than derivative or secondary to the art-making that allegedly precedes it.¹²¹

Exhibition-ism connects thinking to making in contemporaneity, mediating between cultural theorizing and cultural practice. Describing the relation between thinking and making in her own work, Bal refers to the *Denkbilder* of the Frankfurt School. Citing Gerhard Richter's exposition of *Denkbilder*, Bal proposes to translate “thought-images,” understood as “a conceptual engagement with the aesthetic and as aesthetic engagements with the conceptual hovering between philosophical critique and aesthetic production,” into an activity of “image-thinking.”¹²² Characterizing her own practice as both a cultural theorist and experimental video artist as one of making “theoretical fictions,” Bal proposes “the deployment of fiction to understand and open up difficult theoretical issues, and to develop (academically viable) theory

¹²⁰ In the work in which Bal coins the term preposterous history, she specifically deals with the Baroque through engagements with contemporary artists. Bal, *Quoting Caravaggio: Contemporary Art, Preposterous History*.

¹²¹ Bal, *Exhibition-ism*, 19.

¹²² Ibid., 30–31, Richter, *Thought-Images: Frankfurt School Writers' Reflections on Damaged Life*, 2.

through “imaging” what fiction enables us to imagine.”¹²³ In the making of *Museum for fremtiden*, I deploy fiction to understand the difficult theoretical problem of the contemporary, fictionalizing (as dramatizing) the artistic practices in order for me to explore how such a fiction enables us in imagining the present as a historical moment. In other words, I consider *Museum for fremtiden* a theoretical fiction, installing a conceptual engagement with the aesthetic and an aesthetic engagement with the conceptual in an activity of, not image-thinking, but what we might instead call *exhibition- and performance-thinking*: curating and dramaturgy.

Before returning the potential of fiction—or rather, fictionalization¹²⁴—in such a mode of thinking, I want to add that in the context of dramaturgy, Maaïke Bleeker advocates a similar “interference” between the conceptual and the aesthetic with reference to Deleuze and Guattari. In *What is Philosophy?*, the philosophers famously distinguish between art, philosophy, and science as three different modes of thinking. According to their distinction, philosophy is associated with concepts, whereas art is associated with emotions and sensations.¹²⁵ Bleeker, meanwhile, argues that Deleuze and Guattari’s surprisingly conventional distinction implies a call for crossing over—for mediating—between modes of thinking:

Deleuze and Guattari leave it to their readers to further flesh out these modes of thinking to come. It seems that here much is to be gained from a closer look at theatre, dance, and performance and their history of expertise with crossing over between concepts and compositions, with sensing logic and composing ideas, and with the poetic force of conceptual thinking.¹²⁶

Dramatizing the contemporary art practices involved in *Museum for fremtiden*, I take to be an attempt to fictionally theorize or to theorize through fiction the contemporary, probing the limits to and allowances of the contemporary historical imaginary. As I will explicate in the following, as a critical concept, the contemporary constitutes an imaginative, fictitious venture,

¹²³ Bal, *Exhibition-ism*, 30.

¹²⁴ Jeppe Kristensen discusses FIX&FOXY’s use of fictionalization, claiming that the company uses fiction to work against it. Kristensen, “World Theatre and Theatre of the Moment,” 190. Similarly, I will ultimately consider fictionalization to make possible a negative interpretation of *Museum for fremtiden* in Part 4 and 5.

¹²⁵ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*

¹²⁶ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 53–54.

“an operative fiction,” as Peter Osborne calls its projection of a disjunctive unity between different times,¹²⁷ or in Martin’s conception, “a strategy of mediation.”

The Contemporary as a Strategy of Mediation.

In his book on contemporary American literature and the concept of the contemporary, *Contemporary Drift: Genre, Historicism, and the Problem of the Present* (2017) the literary scholar Theodore Martin proposes to refrain from perceiving the contemporary as an ever-expanding record of instants—“an index of immediacy,” Gielen’s presentism—and think about the contemporary as instead a strategy of mediation:

Given its fuzziness as a period, its drift through time, its diminishment of critical distance, and its incommensurability with everyday life, how does the idea of the contemporary come to have any meaning for us? One way to begin to answer this question is to consider the contemporary not so much an index of immediacy as a *strategy of mediation*: a means of negotiating between experience and retrospection, immersion and explanation, closeness and distance. Put simply, the contemporary is a critical concept. It must be imagined before it can be perceived; it is not just a moment that contains us but a moment that we must first conceive *as* a moment.¹²⁸

The type of mediation Martin suggests specifically concerns the literary scholar faced with the problem of historicizing contemporary literature *as* contemporary.¹²⁹ The implications of this problem, meanwhile, returns the scholar to the question of what time the contemporary names, arriving from the objects she analyzes. Martin argues that historicization takes places inside fiction itself, inventing novel ways of “thinking historically in response to the absence of historical distance,” imposed by the contemporary as a drifting condition. As a strategy of mediation, the contemporary draws on the imaginary in the pursuit of historicizing the present, knowing itself to be a fiction.¹³⁰

In the context of my dramaturgical and curatorial engagement with the contemporary, I have found Martin’s conception immediately productive, forwarding fiction—and, more generally, “aesthetic objects”—as constituting “an experiment in how, in the context of the con-

¹²⁷ Osborne similarly points to the contemporary as “an operative fiction,” projecting a disjunctive unity of coeval times in the same present. Osborne’s fiction, meanwhile, concerns the temporality of globality. Osborne, *Anywhere or Not at All*, 23.

¹²⁸ Martin, *Contemporary Drift*, 5.

¹²⁹ Martin’s eventual readings focus on historicization through engagements with the developments of genre which I refrain from involving here to avoid confusion.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

temporary, [...] any historical account of the contemporary moment must serve simultaneously as a theory of how that history is written.”¹³¹ As a strategy of mediation, the contemporary asks us to consider what it would mean to imagine the expanding present of contemporaneity *as if* it was historical. In other words, Martin’s conception points to the fact that, under contemporary conditions, imagining history involves an approximation between theorizing and fictionalizing. Moreover, the contemporary determines a fiction that historicizes by disclosing its status as fiction. As such, I take the contemporary as a fiction that beckons to be read negatively.

In making *Museum for fremtiden*, contemporary visual artists offered the material and elements for the theatre-makers to fictionalize or dramatize the expanding present in a format between theatre performance and art exhibition. Through *Museum for fremtiden*’s mediation of conflictual forms of temporalization—between the realness of the artworks and the fictionality of its audio guide, the real bodies of its visitors and their theatrical dramatization, between the expansion of the present and its imagined loss to the imaginary museum—I have groped for the evocation of a spectator experience of what Benjamin in a different context calls “dialectics at a standstill;” a moment when the experience of being immersed in present is brought in tension with the experience of perceiving ourselves as we are.¹³²

In presenting two versions of *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus respectively, I have explored this dialectical poetics in the two institutional frameworks of black box theatre and white cube galleries, exploring the ways each institutional framework enables and conditions such an exploration. The twin iterations of the project will become key in the dramaturgical-curatorial analysis of the dissertation’s Part 4.

To briefly summarize the above, my research method is indebted to the exhibition-ism as coined by Mieke Bal, investigating the contemporary as a strategy of mediation as suggested by Theodore Martin by framing *Museum for fremtiden* as a theoretical fiction to do so. The method couples thinking to making, theorizing to fictionalization, probing the limits of the imaginary through the mediation of art.

In the spirit of the non-linear time-relation of the contemporary, the following Part 3 travels back in time to present an article written a year before the opening of *Museum for fremtiden* in 2022, during the months of lockdown postponing the opening. The article was

¹³¹ Ibid., 6.

¹³² Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 10.

published in a special issue of the Danish dramaturgical journal *Peripeti* on curating, building on the increasing use of curating in the performing arts.¹³³ The article reads like an expanded project description, eagerly—too eagerly, I feel like adding in that miracle of hindsight—activating a host of perspectives to motivate the curatorial proposition of *Museum for fremtiden*. I have included the article in the dissertation to strengthen its state-of-the-art on curatorial research and for its discussion of the applicability in the theatre institution. Moreover, it shows how the research project have mutated over time. Finally, it reveals a turn in the dramaturgical-curatorial concept that I will revise in the subsequent analysis of the making of *Museum for fremtiden*'s and its twin iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus in Part 4.

¹³³ Gade et. al., “Editorial.”

PART THREE.



Article

Exhibiting the Present,
Staging Contemporaneity

Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity

Museum of the Future and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research

By Anders Thruw Djurslev

YEAR ZERO. The proclamatory title of the Copenhagen-based theatre Sort/Hvid's season repertoire of 2020/2021 performed historical gravity. Rebooting the calendar, the season title reenacted the founding of world religions and historical revolutions. For instance, in the late eighteenth century, the French Revolution introduced the Republican Calendar, changing the duration of weeks, months, and years, beginning from year one. While zero might signal the end of a countdown as well as a new beginning, the curatorial proclamation of the season reanimated a revolutionary task: not merely to change the world, but to change time.¹

The *Year Zero* season repertoire consisted of plays and performances dedicated to “igniting the political imaginary.”² Concluding the season, Sort/Hvid was to enter a cross-institutional and cross-aesthetic collaboration with the contemporary arts institution Kunsthall Aarhus on the theatre exhibition project entitled *Museum of the Future*. In a collaboration between the art institution and the theatre, contemporary visual artists and theatre makers, *Museum of the Future* set out to explore the notion of futurity in contemporary imaginaries through a constellation of aesthetic practices. But alas, times did change: as the COVID-19 pandemic closed down societies and venues, *Museum of the Future* itself was hurled into the future, extending *Year Zero* until further notice.³

Museum of the Future was—and remains—furthermore framed as a curatorial doctoral research project anchored at Aarhus University, investigating the potentials of crossing the institutional frameworks of Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus and the temporalities of the art forms produced by the institutions. In the interdisciplinary role of dramaturg, curator, and curatorial researcher, I am situated within the collaborative process of curating the theatre exhibition and in turn developing this process as an object of curatorial research, investigating the production of temporalities in contemporary art and theatre practices.

In this article, I present the curatorial *proposition* embedded in *Museum of the Future* and discuss the framing of the project as curatorial research in its cross-institutional and cross-aesthetic prefiguration. First, I will reiterate recent arguments for using curating and the curatorial in the context of the performing arts. Drawing on curator and writer Simon Sheikh's advancement of curatorial research as a propositional inquiry, I propose qualifying these arguments further, namely as means to enable the theatre as a site of research, much like the visual art institution is today. Second, I characterise the ontological divide that haunts the institutional reality of both performing and visual arts, namely the opposition of the live and remains, respectively privileging temporality

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- 1) A reference to the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben: “(...) every culture is first and foremost a particular experience of time, and no new culture is possible without an alteration in this experience. The original task of a genuine revolution, therefore, is never merely to ‘change the world’, but also – and above all – to ‘change time’.” (Agamben 2007, p. 99).
 - 2) Not usually titling its seasons, Sort/Hvid coined *Year Zero* on the occasion of the theatre's overtaking of Teater Momentum—a theatre in Odense that changes its artistic direction annually—and its collaboration with contemporary arts centre Kunsthall Aarhus and Aarhus Teater on *Museum of the Future*.
 - 3) *Museum of the Future* will open at Sort/Hvid in June 2022 and at Kunsthall Aarhus in August 2022.

in theatre and historicity in visual art. I suggest visual art's "ontology of historicity" as part of the explanation as to why the curatorial holds research legitimacy in visual art institutions. Through a constellation of theatre and performance studies, contemporary art history, and curatorial theory, I attempt to bring together these supposedly opposed ontologies through the curatorial proposition of *Museum of the Future*. Thirdly, I articulate some of the immediate potentials and challenges that the cross-institutional and cross-aesthetic process has unveiled, regarding institutional conceptualisation, artistic development, and research eligibility, in order to finally propose the dramaturg as the curatorial researcher of the theatre institution. This articulation is made while the work is still in progress, marked by the context of the ongoing pandemic and the challenges it poses for the project and the temporal-historical complex it engages with.

Curating Performance

In recent years, curating has become a term more and more often used in the context of the performing arts. Within the theatre institution, curating is often synonymous with repertoire-planning (Trencsényi 2015, pp. 31-50). Conversely, invoking curating at performing arts festivals tend to equate curating to programme-making (Malzacher 2014, p. 118). As such, curating in the performing arts seems to entail the selection of more or less finished plays and performances, perhaps signifying a heightened awareness in terms of access, diversity, and dissemination.

Originating in the museum, however, the notion of curating arrives with an extensive and ongoing discursive negotiation of the potentials and challenges curating might entail in the visual arts field. In the last decades, the discourse has emerged as "the curatorial" and implies a philosophical meta-inquiry into curating as a broader constellatory practice of not only prefiguratively selecting artworks for the temporal medium of the exhibition, but also of constellating publics, offering education, creating contexts, setting relations in motion, and producing knowledge (Bismark 2010; Rogoff and Martinon 2013; O'Neill and Wilson, 2015).

From the perspective of the performing arts, the meta-discourse of the curatorial ironically emphasises the performative or even theatrical dimensions of exhibiting, as performing arts curator and writer Florian Malzacher has noted (Malzacher 2014, p. 117-118). The curatorial is theorised as "performative" (Maria Lind 2012), while exhibitions are considered as "dramatic constructions" (Hoffmann 2015, p. 56-62). The curator Jens Hoffmann uses theatre as a metaphor for exhibition-making in his book *Theater of Exhibitions*, while theorist Bridget Crone terms the curatorial "*the sensible stage*." (Crone 2019, p. 208). Distinguishing between curating and the curatorial, theorists Irit Rogoff and Jean-Paul Martinon also invoke theatrical metaphors:

If 'curating' is a gamut of professional practices that had to do with setting up exhibitions and other modes of display, then 'the curatorial' operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge. So to drive home a distinction between 'curating' and 'the curatorial' means to emphasize a shift from the staging of the event to the actual event itself: its enactment, dramatization and performance. (Rogoff and Martinon 2013, p. ix).

In other words, the curatorial signifies a shift of focus from the curator's prefigurative staging of the exhibition to the refiguration in the experience of exhibiting—the moment, event, or process

when the exhibition is engaged with by publics, spectators, readers, artists, curators, and critics.⁴ As such, the curatorial privileges the temporal *present* of exhibiting art and the (unexpected) turns and insights that the curatorial constellation might provoke rather than, say, disseminating the historical *past* of the artworks displayed within the exhibition. The curatorial is thus not delimited by traditional art historical representation. Rather, the curatorial signifies the performative act of exhibiting itself.

When discussing the potential of applying curating in the performing arts, Malzacher notes that with the arrival of the curatorial, it is “hardly possible to penetrate more deeply into the neglected core business of theatre.” (Malzacher 2014, p. 117). Nevertheless, Malzacher argues for invoking the curatorial in the performing arts because the term raises new expectations of performative codependency or tension between selected works. The curatorial here widens the scope of programme-making and repertoire-planning, transforming these activities into performative ventures, effectively “turning the festival, the event, or the venue into a larger field of performative communication.” (Malzacher 2014, p. 118). In this regard, *Year Zero* could be considered an example of performative repertoire-making: The season title performs itself as a historical event, inviting the contributing artists, audiences, and critics to consider the season as a processual dramaturgy on and beyond the stage. The turn from curating to the curatorial thus entails an opening for dynamic interaction with the world and the times, beckoning dynamic dramaturgies that comply with and intervene in the changing conditions caused by, for instance, the participation of spectators, or emerging contexts provided by events and discourses outside the stage.

Researching the Curatorial

Below, I would like to advance Malzacher’s qualification of the curatorial in the performing arts by proposing an additional dimension this endeavour: the notion of the curatorial as a mode of knowledge production. In brief, I ask whether the theatre can be positioned as a site of curatorial research.

One of the key differences between theatres and visual arts institutions today is their function as research institutions. The notion of curatorial research stems from the art museum. Art museums are research institutions by way of cultural policy. The Danish Ministry of Culture offers evaluation and funding programmes for museum inspectors to strengthen their capability for conducting art historical research projects in the collections of museums. In recent years, this feature has migrated to visual art institutions without collections. Today, art museums and public art galleries can apply for practice-based curatorial and artistic scholarships with universities. Arguably, the gallery has inherited research eligibility from the museum.⁵

Theatres have, on the other hand, no coherent research tradition, established infrastructure, or funding schemes available to initiate potential university partnerships for research projects.

4) Obviously, this turn stems from the contemporary art practices that one might generalise as performative. Influential analyses include Erika Fischer-Lichte’s notion of the performative turn (Fischer-Lichte 2008); Nicholas Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 1998); Claire Bishop’s notion of the social turn in contemporary art (Bishop 2012); and James Voorhies’ history of the exhibition as a critical form (Voorhies 2017). The move from curating to curatorial is mirrored in Fischer-Lichte’s replacement of the art object with the art event, or more generally, as a move from *poesis* to *aisthesis*.

5) Prominently, the New Carlsberg Foundation and the Novo Nordisk Foundation offer scholarships targeting art research. See the New Carlsberg Foundation and Novo Nordisk Foundation websites: ncf.dk and novonordiskfonden.dk.

Following the Bologna process, the National School of Performing Arts instead offers funding for artistic research projects.⁶ However, this type of research does not implicate universities let alone theatres as it is the case for visual art institutions. Universities educate dramaturgs,⁷ but dramaturgs do not share the research opportunities at the theatre institution that museum inspectors, art historians, and curators of visual art hold in museums and visual art institutions. Before addressing one of the explanations behind this difference, I will present a notion of curatorial research that I believe holds promise for the performing arts and the theatre institution.

The curator and theorist Simon Sheikh has written extensively on the curatorial as a mode of research. Rather than fixating this mode to the exhibition of art, Sheikh suggests defining the curatorial as a propositional inquiry within a scientific framework. Replacing the hypothesis of scientific method with *the proposition*, Sheikh posits the curatorial research project as a vehicle for researching into specific questions based on speculative claims:

Whereas the thesis can be proven or disproven, the proposition advances its claims along a different rationale, namely positing its ideas as claims which, if followed, would then make certain things possible, not only logically and philosophically but also, in our case, aesthetically and politically. In this way, invoking the proposition allows for speculation, or for the curatorial as political imaginary. (Sheikh 2019, p. 102).

The exhibition of art is thus not simply a site of mediation, but of enaction. As enaction of *political* imagination, the curatorial research project experiments “with various forms of public address and congregation, building, or even antagonising communities, whether designated and located or universal and unknown, inoperative or becoming.” (Sheikh 2019, p. 99). In other words, the curatorial tests speculative propositions of political implications with participants and spectators as possible subjects. A prime example of such experimentation could be the research project *Former West* (2008-2016) at BAK – basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht in which Sheikh was involved. This long-term project proposed imagining the “persistently hegemonic conjuncture” of the West as historical past, assigning the “former” designation, applied to the East after 1989, to its Western counterpart. Exhibitions were one of many project-related activities, providing a heterogeneous field of performative communication: educational activities, individual research projects, research seminars, public talks, an online platform, editorial meetings, and finally, a publication of essays and articles by a range of artists and thinkers from different fields, all dedicated to “forming the West” as both performative and documentative activities.⁸

Despite the discursive qualifications of the curatorial in the performing arts context presented by Malzacher and the example that discourse on the curatorial such as Sheikh’s might provide the neighbouring disciplines, curatorial research remains predominantly tied to the museum and the visual art institution as previously described. Below, I argue that this differentiation is rooted in the ontological opposition between the traditionally distinct art forms and their institutions; an opposition we might destabilise considering contemporary art and theatre practices, claiming

6) In Danish, artistic research is translated to the derived “kunstnerisk udviklingsvirksomhed,” signifying a distancing to the notion of academic research. This differentiation is discussed at length in *Peripeti*, vol. 19 (2013).

7) In Denmark, dramaturgs are typically educated at Dramaturgy at Aarhus University or Theatre and Performance Studies at University of Copenhagen.

8) See the *Former West* website (formerwest.org) and the publication: Hlavajova, Marie and Sheikh, Simon (Eds.), 2017. *Former West: Art and the Contemporary After 1989*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

new propositions, and utilising the notion of contemporary art as a site of transmutation between historicity and temporality.

Opposing Ontologies

In his recent essay entitled “The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution,” the art critic, media theorist, and philosopher Boris Groys offers a strikingly concise definition of art: “art consists of the objects that remain after the cultures which produced them have disappeared.” The museum is a container of objects that are obsolete in the time in which they are displayed; remains of cultures dead and gone. With them, they carry knowledge of the past cultures they have survived (Groys 2020). Groys’ definition of art echoes Adorno’s remark that the museum and the mausoleum share a deeper connection than the fact that they rhyme (Adorno 1995, p. 607). As such, the ontology of the art museum is characterised by pastness, by historicity, by death.

Theatre, on the other hand, is often praised for its fundamental liveness, most explicitly fetishised by the discourse on performance. Influentially articulated by performance scholar Peggy Phelan, performance’s only life is in the present and “cannot be saved, recorded, documented” without ceasing to be performance (Phelan 1995, p. 146). In this discourse, performance art is understood as an opposition to the accumulative, historicist ontology of art, characterised instead by its presentness, by temporality, by the live. According to this logic, performance is that which disappears, whereas visual art is that which remains.

To present these definitions as highly contestable is hardly controversial. After all, more than a century has passed since the emergence of the historical avantgarde; the artworld has since then seen a multitude of cross-over formats; the arrival of digital mediatized archival culture has impacted artistic practices for decades; and in a time when performance, dance, and live art increasingly find its way into museum spaces, such definitive statements seem both dated and futile. However, I will argue, the ontological abstractions still have real effects on the levels of cultural policy and academic research legitimacy as outlined above and, consequentially, in institutional practices. They persist in art criticism too: in her study of the increasingly popular move from the black box to the white cube for instance, the art historian Claire Bishop finds that the critics of this trend “equate performance with presentism, distraction and entertainment, and implicitly make an appeal for the pleasure of looking at dead objects.” (Bishop 2019, p. 22). According to critique such as this, museums should stick to displaying the remains of “dead history” rather than submit to the attention industry of perishable events, considered a product of speculation by cultural institutions to pump up visitor numbers and ticket sales. As such, the ontological binary between temporality of the live arts and the historicity of the visual arts remains present and at work.

However, in her *Performing Remains. Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, the theatre and performance scholar Rebecca Schneider effectively deconstructs this opposition. Questioning three general assumptions of theatre and performance studies—namely “that performance disappears and text remains; (...) that live performance is not a recording; and (...) that the live takes place in a “now” understood as singular, immediate, and vanishing” (Schneider 2011, p. 87)—Schneider argues that the archive is a live performance space and that performance essentially is archival (Schneider 2011, p. 110). Picking up the line of thought from Derrida’s influential *Archive Fever* (1995), Schneider asks whether the impermanently temporal ontology of performance and its opposition to the historicity of remains does not in fact follow, rather than break with, the linear, historicist logic of modernity by designating that which *cannot* be recorded in and by the archive.

Instead, Schneider posits that theatre in fact *performs remains* through such mediums as bodies and speech: citations, gestures, dance steps, oral stories; affects embedded in and transmitted through the body of the performer—much like a dramatic script remains for its future (re)enactment in the live (Schneider 2011, p. 108). Conversely, nor are the texts, documents, scripts, and objects stored in the archive to be considered “dead” remains; they change through recirculation and reinterpretation—through the acts of reading, spectating, remembering. As such, Schneider argues that the archive itself—contra to the modern regime of historicity which generally defines the archive and consequently the museum as designators of times past—is a “theatre of retroaction” as it “performs the institution of disappearance” that characterises the live arts. Schneider thus dissolves the binary between the dead historicity of the archive (and the museum) and the live temporality of theatre by positing the archives of both museums and theatres, objects and bodies, history and the experience of temporal passing, as sites of a dialectical transmutation between historicity and temporality. According to the art historian Christine Ross, this transmutation is what determines contemporary art as contemporary, as an art of *contemporaneity*. Contemporaneity strives to “transform modernity” by confronting the modern regime of historicity through complications of its “progress-oriented articulation of past, present, and future.”

Forming the Future

In the modern regime of historicity, as described by the historian François Hartog, the future is constituted as the primary temporal category through “the devaluing of the past and the erasure of the present” (Ross 2021, p. 5). Ross’ notion of the contemporaneity of contemporary art brings us to the curatorial proposition of *Museum of the Future*, evident in its title: that the future is over.⁹ Namely, the singular, teleological, progress-oriented future that characterised the modern regime of historicity. Roughly speaking, this finitude evokes a condition either bemoaned as presentism or explored as a new temporal-historical paradigm of contemporaneity. Here, presentism denotes a post-historical deadlock associated with disputed proclamations of “the end of history” and the referral of political imagination to an extended present.¹⁰ Contemporaneity, on the other hand, suggests the coming together of different histories and temporalities in the same present, opening the past as well as the future for reimagining. As such, contemporaneity aligns with the deconstructive thought of Schneider, destabilising the traditional understanding of (visual) art as remains of cultures past.¹¹

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- 9) An idea pursued by the Italian philosopher Franco “Bifo” Berardi in *After the Future* (2011) who in turn adds: “The idea that the future is over is, of course, rather whimsical—since, as I write these lines, the future hasn’t stopped unfolding. But when I say “future,” I am not referring to the direction of time. I am thinking, rather, of the psychological perception, which emerged in the cultural situation of progressive modernity, the cultural expectations that were fabricated during the long period of modern civilization (...).” (Berardi 2011, p. 18).
 - 10) Ross reiterates Hartog’s historical analysis in her examination of the temporal turn in contemporary art (Ross, 2012 pp. 12–14). In *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (2016 [2003]), Hartog describes the modern regime of historicity as a temporal semantics that privileges the future as the primary temporal category which, according to Ross, is confronted and transmuted by contemporary art. In Hartog’s historical analysis, the modern regime of historicity is replaced by the current presentist regime, signifying a loss of futurity and consequently a *stasis* of political imagination.
 - 11) Ross problematises the presentist diagnosis by positing contemporary art as an investigation of contemporaneity as a new temporal paradigm. For other iterations of the discursive negotiation between analyses of presentism and contemporaneity, see art theorist Jacob Lund’s concise review in *Anachrony, Contemporaneity, and Historical Imagination* (2019 pp. 9–21) or Claire Bishop’s essay *Radical Museology or: What’s ‘contemporary’ in museums of contemporary art?* (2014, pp. 16–24).

The curatorial proposition of *Museum of the Future* thus positions itself, perhaps polemically and certainly speculatively, at the crux of this ontological divide. The proposition asks the participating artists and institutions—and audiences and critics to come—where our time of contemporaneity leaves the notion of futurity. The title and the curatorial proposition suggest that the futurity of modernity can be musealised, but in Schneider's sense: performed *as* past, performatively archived for future reenactment.

At least, that was what the—admittedly high-flown—proposition posed before the project began. However, the COVID-19 pandemic, erupting in the beginning of 2020, transformed the meaning of the *Year Zero* season before its arrival. *Museum of the Future* is now moved to the season after the fact, exposing it to future contexts beyond its prefigurative conceptualisation. Before returning to the reflection on these emerging curatorial contexts of *Museum of the Future*, I will address the cross-institutional and cross-aesthetic opportunities and challenges the process has shown.

Overing the Show

THE SHOW IS OVER. The gloomy catchphrase figures in capital letters on posters, t-shirts, postcards, and stickers, greeting audiences on their arrival at Sort/Hvid's foyer bar in the Meat-packing District of central Copenhagen. The curatorial proposition of *Museum of the Future* reads as a historical-philosophical echo of the theatre's flippantly post-dramatic slogan. Avoiding the signpost of "theatre" as a part of the institution's name, Sort/Hvid presents itself as a contemporary, political, and cross-aesthetic art institution. Defined as a theatre by way of cultural policy, however, Sort/Hvid is not immediately considered eligible for research projects.

Kunsthall Aarhus is a public art gallery dedicated to exhibiting contemporary Danish and international art, based in central Aarhus at the other end of the country. Since 2015, Kunsthall Aarhus has co-hosted several practice-based artistic and curatorial research projects like my own, spearheading the emerging notion of curatorial and artistic research at contemporary art institutions without collections in Denmark. Kunsthall Aarhus does not share the research obligation of state-sponsored museums, but, considered a development of the art museum, the public art institution can apply for research funding. The grant from the New Carlsberg Foundation for the doctoral research project accompanying *Museum of the Future* was applied for by Kunsthall Aarhus, simultaneously affirming and transgressing the ontological divide between the art institutions.

However, the institutions do operate in different ways. This has come to the fore when they were brought together in the preliminary development of *Museum of the Future*. Questions like the following show how artistic development and institutional production customs coincide: Do we seek to create the same setup at both venues, painting the white cube black or the black box white? Do we open during the day as in the gallery or at night as in the theatre? Do audiences buy a theatre ticket in advance or show up during opening hours? Do we create an open space for spectators to explore as in a typical exhibition in the gallery, or do we invite an audience for a directed staging at a specific timeslot each day of the performance as the theatre would for most shows? Or both—exhibition by day, performance by night? At the very beginning of the project, these questions were open to intervention by all artists involved. However, institutional customs as well as artistic practices related to the ontological divide described above emerged during the process. Below, I will briefly present the curatorial criteria for the selection of visual artists and move on to describe the challenges of staging visual art in the theatre exhibition of *Museum of the Future*.

Exhibiting the Present

To participate in the project, the institutions and I invited three visual artists and a team of theatre makers to collaborate, overtly instigating the process as a site of transmutation between visual art and theatre. By way of the curatorial proposition embedded in the title, the visual artists were invited due to their engagement in questions of time and temporality. In my view, their practices signify different responses—often in the form of complex, entangling questions through and across different media—to diagnoses of presentism, instead conjuring different expressions of contemporaneity that challenge binary oppositions:

Ferdinand Ahm Krag is an artist, painter, and professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Bringing together human head and planet formations, geological and psychological cartographies, virtual maps and digital imaging, cultural landscapes and natural histories in transcendental images, Krag's work collapses distinctions between nature and culture, figure and ground, the interior and the exterior.

Helene Nymann is an artist and artistic researcher working with video and sculpture. Nymann's work investigates the impact of digital culture on memory and, consequently, imagination, destabilising the dichotomy between remembrance as a relation to the past and as a projection of the future.¹²

Studio ThinkingHand is a Danish-Australian duo that consists of artists Rhoda Ting and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen. Engaging with affirmative philosophies of posthumanism, the duo invites other-than-human species, robotics, and industrial materials to co-evolve in queer ecologies. As such, Studio ThinkingHand's artworks grow into sculptures of simultaneously living and dying archives.

The visual artists were invited to collaborate with playwright and director Christian Lollike, set designers Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgaard, sound designer Asger Kudahl, lighting designer Morten Kolbak, and me as dramaturg and curator. All parties were eager to enter a cross-aesthetic and cross-institutional experiment, challenging the customary practices of their own and the host institutions involved. However, the ontological divide between temporality and historicity did assert itself in the conceptualisation of *Museum of the Future*. After exchanging ideas, practices, and examples during the initial meetings between the visual artists, the playwright and me, the very first sketchy draft for a script was rejected by the visual artists. The script suggested a fictional narrator of the museum, seemingly a character telling a story. Therefore, the artists saw their ideas for contributions reduced to set design, their artworks usurped by a fictional character. The artworks came to serve the temporal exhibition rather than the history provided by their artistic practice. Of course, the artworks of the visual artists will live on in new contexts, surviving the temporal medium of the exhibition of *Museum of the Future*. Since the first discarded draft of the script, new questions have thus arisen: How do we write a script that does not “reduce” the historicity of the artworks to temporal set design? How do we temporarily stage artworks that will remain for emerging contexts? How do we perform the process of historicity? How do we render the proposed transmutation between temporality and historicity visible in the staging?

For *Museum of the Future*, the preliminary curatorial—and dramaturgical—concept involves an

12) Nymann's contribution is part of her own doctoral artistic research project entitled *Memories of Sustainable Futures: Remembering in the Digital Age*, hosted by Kunsthall Aarhus and Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University. For a presentation of Nymann's doctoral artistic research project, see the Interacting Minds Center website. (interactingminds.au.dk/news/enkelt/artikel/helene-nymann-phd-fellow/). Accessed 10-11-2021.

audio play based on a script accompanied by live performance, following and directing groups of spectators through a sequence of installations. Three of these are inhabited by the visual artists' individual installations, while the set designers construct the spaces in the beginning and end of the performance. During the duration of the performance exhibition, the spectators are directed to become part of the exhibition, displaying their bodies in the installations of the imagined museum, performing the present as musealised past. The script and direction of the exhibition by Lollike, supported by myself as dramaturg, thus dramatises and theatricalises the act of spectating, seeking to create a participatory dramaturgy that engages the spectators in questions of the conditions of their own time through a performative musealisation of the theatrical present.

Concluding Remarks

As early as the 1970s, the influential curator Harald Szeemann compared his work with that of a theatre director (Malzacher 2014, p. 117). In the case of *Museum of the Future*, the curatorial as research inquiry is anchored in the position of the dramaturg. In the concluding remarks, I would like to propose the dramaturg as the theatre's curatorial researcher.

In the performing arts, the dramaturg is often perceived as an “in-between figure;” an ideal of both new dramaturgies and the precarious, post-Fordist culture industry (Gade 2018). The notion of curatorial research might serve a way of anchoring this ambiguous figure as the researcher of the theatre. This is not to say that all theatres should conduct research or pursue curatorial research projects. Rather, it is intended as an echo of Malzacher's call to expand the notion of what theatre is and can be (Malzacher 2014, p. 117), adding research to the theatre's imaginary. Through Sheikh's invocation of the speculative proposition as research inquiry, the dramaturg might be the figure to formulate and follow this proposition through the dynamic contexts and continuous critique that research projects necessarily take part in; to expand the field of performative communication to research communities, public dissemination, documentation, and publication; activities that might themselves enable transgressions between historicity and temporality. Following the distinction between curating and the curatorial, we might propose and investigate the potentials in a similar move from dramaturgy to “the dramaturgical.”

At the time of writing, the curatorial proposition(s) of *Museum of the Future* remains speculative, preliminarily only tested in the community of visual artists, theatre makers, and institutional frameworks. The pandemic has moved *Museum of the Future* beyond the context of the *Year Zero* season, to contexts yet emerging. After a pandemic season that to many may have felt like a ‘year zero’—of emergency, social isolation, loss, and death—the contexts of the present are changing anew. Coinciding with the overthrowing of historical statues in the name of decolonisation, the present moment seems to signify a renewed rejection of the logics of modernity that haunt the contemporary condition still. By staging the spectators on pedestals, exhibiting their present, *Museum of the Future* might conjure a notion of the future that theorist and writer Evan Calder Williams describes as “that point of disjuncture where the present begins to appear as past—and where lines can be drawn to imagine what it would take to make such a moment stick, to undo the structures that keep the present alive and unwell.” (Williams 2016). This part is, however, yet to be revealed in and through the eventual process of the curatorial.

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PART FOUR.

Staging the Present, Exhibiting Contemporaneity.

Analysis.

Walkthrough: Reentering the Museum.

Before revisiting and revising the arguments of Part 3's journal article included above, I would like to offer a "guided tour" through *Museum for fremtiden* as the experience turned out, briefly mentioning the differences between the two iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus underway. After the walkthrough of the practical component of the research project, answering some of the questions left unanswered by the article, I use the subsequent analysis of the process to support—and complicate—the claims I have made thus far in the dissertation. Revisiting the tension approached in the previous parts of the dissertation in relation to the realization of *Museum for fremtiden*, I discuss Janek Szatkowski's identification of an "oblique poetics" in his review of its iteration at Kunsthall Aarhus in *Peripeti*, and Mikkel Krause Frantzen's critique of dystopian art in the historical present of climate emergency, offered at a research seminar at the end of the opening period at Kunsthall Aarhus. Finally, I introduce the journal article of the dissertation's final Part 5, "Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation," leading to my conclusion on the contemporary as a critical concept for a dramaturgical and curatorial practice preoccupied with historicizing the present.

With a duration of an hour, *Museum for fremtiden* would play five times each day at Sort/Hvid throughout June 2022 and at Kunsthall Aarhus from the end of August to the end of September 2022, about a month at both venues. At Sort/Hvid, a group of up to 25 visitors would be let in every half hour, having two teams inside the experience at once. At Kunsthall Aarhus, the show would begin every hour, having only one group of up to 15 visitors inside per showing. Entry at both venues necessitated a ticket bought in advance or at the door. Aarhus Teater administered the ticket sales for Kunsthall Aarhus, where entry is usually free of charge. Accordingly, ticket prices were considerably lower at Kunsthall Aarhus.

Before entering *Museum for fremtiden* as a visitor at both Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus, you would be asked by the staff to remove your shoes upon entry. Shortly after, you would be directed to equip headphones. At Sort/Hvid, large headphones carrying small transmitters would be handed out. At Kunsthall Aarhus, you would be directed to use your own phone and your own headphones—or borrow both from the bar—to access the experience by pressing a link. A solemn organ tune in your ears would confirm connection. When a group was gathered,

you would be let into a hall of wobbly mirrors, designed by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. At Sort/Hvid, a young female custodian in an anonymous suit would be waiting with a straight face. Conversely, at Kunsthall Aarhus, you would be left alone with the other visitors. A dinging sound would start the audio guide. “Welcome to *Museum of the Future*. Back when I was a kid, I used to hate when our teacher would drag us to a museum,” a voice of what sounded like a young woman, voiced by actor Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, would begin:

This dead place with dead things from the past, standing there to haunt us with their stone axes, and its statues of dead men.

Oh yes, *so did* European Man. This is how he dressed; this is how he painted. This is how he drew his self-image; this is how he remembered the past. This is how he seized the future.

What future are we to seize?

The prerecorded audio asked her guests if they would want to take part in establishing “another kind of museum,” dedicated to imagining the future instead of exhibiting the past. “You are welcome to nod,” she would suggest, making you aware that your participation would become central to the experience, creating the apparent illusion that she was surveilling you live. In the Sort/Hvid edition, the custodian would participate in each action as to provide a present, physical example; at Kunsthall Aarhus, guests would be expected to follow the directions of the audio guide on their own initiative: putting up each hand to further confirm connection to the headphones and include this technical setup in the diegetic, waving to each other, walking around while pretending that you were visiting “an actual museum, looking at dead things,” finding yourself in the mirror to enact the *Skrik* emoji, while she enumerated the “endgame emotions” she claimed to be permeating her present:

They say the world is ending.

That our system – the capitalist democratic liberalist blah blah blah – is in a state of crisis, global competition is intensified, the pace is racing, inequality is escalating, wars are breaking out everywhere, the ice is melting, the atmosphere is burning, the temperatures are rising, every second a new species goes extinct, another person is forced to flee.

What if I’m scared? Are you scared?

(*Dinging sound*). Try to make that blue headed *The Scream* emoji, representing horror, in the mirror.

Each direction would be alerted with a dinging sound, while the shifting emotional state of the audio guide was supported by Asger Kudahl's suggestive sound design. In other words, you were asked to represent—as in imitate—the emotions you supposedly would share with the audio guide. As such, the hall of mirrors functioned as an introduction to both the performance's model of participation and the project of the audio guide for the rest of the performance, in which the voice agreed with you and your companions—who had little to say in the matter except whether or not you would obey her instructions—to imagine the future together by becoming part of her imaginary museum.

In the next space, however, the future offered by the audio guide took a bleak form. Around the wreckage of a smoking burnt-out car, she confided in them her affection with video games. Transforming the audio guide into a dramatic audio play, the audio guide was joined by other voices—members of the Aarhus Teater ensemble—to dramatize a scenario in which she imagined herself to be recruited by a group of revolutionary climate activists, plotting to sabotage a “fossil capitalist headquarters.” Unclear as to whether the scenario took place within a video game or inside her imagination, it concluded with the audio guide being captured by the enemy, blind-folded, driven into the desert, and lined up for execution. Directing you and the other visitors to play her and her comrades, she would ask you to “drop dead as if you were in a movie” at the sound of gunshots. In the Sort/Hvid version, the custodian would pick up a dummy gun, jump on top of the car wreck, and act as executioner. At Kunsthall Aarhus, you would be asked to turn your back to the car and kneel, the scene enacted through your participation, Kudahl's sound effects, and Morten Kolbak's lighting design. Lying on the soft carpet of Zahle and Damgård's set, the audio guide would thank you for “dying for the cause”: “This is my museum, and here you die,” she would say before imagining herself to be one of millions of victims of a world on fire:

Where do you go in a permanent planetary civil war with strange names and weird rules? With millions of people on the run? From wars. From invasions. From droughts. From floods. From fires.

Expressing a longing for “putting history on hold,” the audio guide asked you to move into the next space, Ferdinand Ahm Krag's installation *Hall of Psychopomps*. Here, you would find yourself surrounded by the artist's uncanny drawings of composite faces, plastered on each wall in uneven scales and sizes. A so-called incense clock with incense tracks embers resembling a

human skull would be burning in the middle of the installation space. The audio guide began disseminating the function of the incense clock; an invention associated with ancient China, designating the time of night through a sequencing of differing odours. “What time do we find ourselves in now?,” the audio guide would ask as she was joined by other distorted and low-pitched voices, suggesting familiar replies to her questions—the return of the Cold War, late capitalism, the Anthropocene, the age of surveillance capitalism—as well as more mystical notions, “the millennium of depression” and “the Apocalypse.” Unable to settle on an answer, the audio guide would reflect on drawing as a means to escape her anxiety, her self-absorption, her identity, making her contemplate the relation between identity and the human face under the conditions of surveillance capitalism. “Sick of her face,” she would direct you to gather with the other spectators in a circle, equip anonymizing mirror masks—handed out by the custodian at Sort/Hvid, while laid out around the incense clock at Kunsthall Aarhus—join hands, and turn around to “enter” the faces on the walls in a ritualistic manner. The audio guide’s voice began to chant increasingly mysterious questions, building on the multispecies memory and deep-time entanglement explored in Krag’s drawings, tracing the particles of her face back to the Carboniferous Period during which life on earth began. Kudahl’s sound design would introduce a rhythm and an intense crackling noise, while a light bulb in the middle of the space was lowered down towards the incense clock, casting the shadows of you and your companions onto the face-plastered walls. Characteristically, a dingy sound would end the staged ritual at its climax, forcing you and your companions out of the scene: “Oh, well. Take off your masks and let’s move on,” the audio guide sighed.

Entering the fourth space of *Museum for fremtiden*, Helene Nymann’s installation *Ode to Creode*, you would encounter two large white sculptures (*Ode to Creode X* and *Ode to Creode Y*). Below each sculpture, small heaps of sand with glass beads appeared on a mirror-bright and pitch-black floor. As you entered, Nymann’s video work began to play, while the audio guide recounted a visit to her grandmother. Suffering from dementia, the grandmother would only speak when a certain song played: “It feels as if she is part of a play, saying her lines—with no other characters to respond,” the audio guide mused, hinting to the theatrical situation in which you would find yourself. From this personal memory, the audio guide discussed the implications of memory, digitality, epigenetics—the interrelation between embodied experience, DNA, and cellular development—and gene manipulation for the experience of time, as inspired by Nymann’s artistic research in memory, complicating causal narrative

relationships between past and future. Her reflections, posed as open questions, accompanied the moving images on the wall without mentioning them directly: flickering landscapes, a mime gesturing in a Greek costume, children whispering in each other's ears, a mouth yelling, a humanoid creature entangled in chords, caught in a silent scream. Following Nymann's vision, inspired by the artist's research in the Indigenous knowledge of Aboriginal Songlines as an embodied mnemonic technique, the audio guide asked you to follow her voice and hit the note she would begin singing. In the iteration at Sort/Hvid, Kudahl had installed microphones in the space, momentarily amplifying the voices of you and your companions in the headphones, your voices forming a choir with that of the audio guide. At this moment, without you realizing, the next group of visitors would enter the theatre, listening to the one-note choir as an admonition of awaited them inside before equipping headphones of their own.

Moving on, you and your group would now be greeted by a strong smell of vinegar and the creatures inhabiting Studio ThinkingHand's installation *Vita . Necro . Vita*. The installation presented five sculptures of scoby—short for a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast—submerged in transparent acrylic tubs filled with a yellowish liquid. After you had spent a few moments inside the space to encounter the scobies, the audio guide would begin to speak about already living in the ruins of capitalism; about longing for a world in which binary distinctions between organic and synthetic, trash and treasure, alive and dead, would end; where an appreciation of the sentience and agency of non-human actors would enable a sense of care for the non-human world. She would recount reading about mushrooms online, having “no offspring, no destination.” Asking you to down a shot of kombucha—scoby being the residual waste produced from brewing kombucha tea—resembling the yellowish tub liquid, served by the custodian at Sort/Hvid, while already present in the Kunsthall Aarhus version, the audio guide claimed that a fungus would soon take hold and begin to spread in the minds and bodies of you and your companions. The scobies, connected to electric cranes, would make the sculptures rise as pillars for a while, until they were brought up and down from their regenerative tubs in a time-coded choreography. After inviting you to touch the slimy scobies, the audio guide's singular voice would become many and deep, sharing imaginative utopian visions of a posthuman future in which the divides between human and non-human would end—and where “our all too human voices” would be silenced, according to the audio guide.

The acidified visions and the smell of scoby gave way to a return of the organ from the beginning of the exhibition. In the next and final space of *Museum for fremtiden*, you would

discover a set of white museum pedestals—25 at Sort/Hvid, 15 at Kunsthall Aarhus—in a solemn lighting design, matching the ceremonial organ tune in your ears. On the pedestals, the shoes that you and your companions had left upon entry would be put on museal display. The audio guide returned to and repeated the first lines from the mirror hall in which she recounted her aversion towards museums as such:

Oh yes, *so did* European Man. This is how he dressed; this is how he painted. This is how he drew his self-image; this is how he remembered the past. This is how he seized the future.

More precisely, the lines were digitally replayed before the audio guide would offer a short (and preposterous) history of the politics of display, while directing the spectators to tie their shoes, sit onto their designated pedestal, and finally rise to embody her examples: prehistoric religious objects of worship, the statues of Greek antiquity, the racist human exhibitions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Denmark,¹³⁴ and finally, “the museums of today”: “Today, we exhibit statues in museums to teach us about past cultures, how they lived and imagined the world,” the audio guide said, before addressing the you and the other spectators now put on display: “My museum is your mausoleum.” Changing from dramatic present tense to solemn past tense, the audio guide began to chronicle the “endgame emotions” of her present as past, asking you and your companions to “stand as you would like to be remembered.”¹³⁵ She returned to the crisis landscape of the opening, now pointing towards the present of the exhibition and the relation between the audio guide and the spectators throughout the performance: “Back then, you had the feeling of acting in a play in which the roles were already cast, the conclusion already given.” Ending the performance, she would distance herself to the structure of feelings approached in the opening as characterizing of her time, the historical present, and the present of exhibition:

Back then, you worried that it was too late.
That the catastrophe had already happened.

¹³⁴ From the 1870s to the 1910s, more than 50 human exhibitions took place in Denmark, displaying large numbers of people of Asian and African origin for the white Danish public. For a historical account of this phenomenon, informed by post-colonial theory and anthropology, see Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions: Race, Sexuality and Gender in Ethnic Displays*.

¹³⁵ I will return to the notion of “endgame emotions,” coined by literary scholar and critic Mikkel Krause Frantzen, by the end of this chapter. Frantzen, “Endgame Emotions: The Melting of Time, the Mourning of the Word.”

That the future was over.

At Sort/Hvid, the custodian, occupying a pedestal in the space, would let black bile spill from her mouth, petrified. With your shoes back on, the audio guide would allow you to exit Sort/Hvid and *Museum for fremtiden* by walking past the custodian into and through a long hall lit by flickering fluorescent tubes, leading to the theatre's emergency exit. At the end of the hall, you would be confronted by a screen on which surveillance recordings of each scenic action that you and your companions had performed during the experience in black and white. The screen featured a message from the audio guide: "To my little ghosts." In the Kunsthall Aarhus version, conversely, you would exit *Museum for fremtiden* directly into the foyer space where free handouts on each visual art practice would be available in addition to the exhibition catalogue on offer at both venues.¹³⁶

Immersion and Distance: Inhabiting Process.

As the tour through *Museum for fremtiden* above reveals, in the end, we chose not to abandon the "fictional narrator" of the audio guide as I suggest by the end of Part 3. Written a year prior to the opening during the COVID-19 lockdown, again, the article constitutes an elaborate project description, but should also be read as a document of a moment in time in which the project was still a work-in-progress and, coincidentally, everything at the same time felt as to be standing intolerably still. Nevertheless, in its attempt to couple the philosophical underpinnings informing my research—Rebecca Schneider's formidable Derridean deconstruction of liveness in theatrical reenactment in *Performing Remains*—to my preliminary readings on the curatorial in the performing arts as well as sharing my considerations on the practical decisions yet to be made, the article, despite its activation of the many uneven aspects of the project, managed to point me in the direction of the central tension arising in the process of mediating contemporary art and theatre, art exhibition and theatre performance. In the following dramaturgical-curatorial analysis, having revised and circumscribed this tension in Part 1 and 2, I will support my claims with observations during and reflections on the process

¹³⁶ The handouts, enclosed in the dissertation's appendix on pages 203-209, were written in both Danish and English, a accommodating Kunsthall Aarhus' international profile. The question of language will be discussed below. The exhibition catalogue is submitted in its entirety in Danish in the dissertation's appendix on pages 214-343 with a short introduction in Danish on pages 214-216. English translations of select texts from the exhibition catalogue is included in the dissertation's appendix on pages 156-202.

as the production's dramaturg and curator, including its double iteration at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus.

Contrary to the preliminary findings formulated towards the end of the article, I do not consider the central tension to have arisen from the "historicity" of visual art and the "temporality" (which I, for the record, would call something else today such as "ephemerality" or "liveness"). Rather, the collaborative dynamic ended up working something like the other way around: whereas the visual artists provided enactive, performative installation works, manifesting experiences of contemporaneity, the theatrical dramatization installed a representational dimension to—and a dramatic contraction of—their complex presence. Accordingly, this part of the dissertation turns the title of the article around from "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity" to "Staging the Present, Exhibiting Contemporaneity."

Analyzing the process of making *Museum for fremtiden* and its double presentation in the following, I draw on Maaike Bleeker's notion of dramaturgical sensibility as a reflection on the choices made through the cross-aesthetic collaboration in which I have been part—a thinking through practice as suggested in Part 1—as well as Mieke Bal's method of exhibition-ism, determining an approximation of making and thinking about art as contemporary as sketched in Part 2, signifying my focus on the "temporal togetherness" of differing forms of temporalization, namely representation and enaction, in a theoretical fiction on the contemporary. Employing these methods, I realize that both Bleeker and Bal are overtly critical towards the representational function of both theatre performances and art exhibitions. Bleeker argues for a conception of performance-making not as a means to represent the world but instead present "provisional arrangements of materials in time and space," a sensitivity towards not what materials represent, but in what ways their material presence produce meaning in and through their composition.¹³⁷ Bal would undoubtedly object to the linearity of the aesthetic experience in *Museum for fremtiden* and its coercive model of participation.¹³⁸ It is by employing these methods, however, that I have become to understand the temporal togetherness—signifying for me a temporal contradiction—of enaction and representation, understood as conflicting forms of temporalization, arising from the creative process of bringing together

¹³⁷ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 48–54. Bleeker's book was published after the openings of *Museum for fremtiden*. Consequently, I have only had the opportunity to use it in my retrospective reflection on my practice and the process of making *Museum for fremtiden*.

¹³⁸ In writing about her own exhibition-making, Bal emphasizes the activation of viewers to "construct their own story." Bal, *Exhibition-ism*, 43.

practices of contemporary art and theatre. While this contradiction undoubtedly in part could be explained by my lack of competences as a debutante in the field of the curatorial—and my academic background in literary and modern cultural studies—what I hope to approach here is a conceptualization of its dynamic as a means of mediating between the expansion of the experience of the present and the representation of this expansion as characterizing of our historical present *contemporaneously*; a poetics in which the one cannot be pursued without the other. This strategy of mediation, I argue, produces a critical concept of the contemporary for dramaturgical and curatorial practice. In the subsequent Part 5, I excavate and speculate on a method of “museum-ing” based on dramatization that formulates the approach more positively, if also more polemically, accentuating the dramatization’s negation of the expanded present.

Revisiting the first article, the invocation of Simon Sheikh’s idea of the curatorial proposition as a means to *enact* a political imaginary in the present of the exhibition—as opposed to *mediating* it—stands out as it explicitly contradicts the emphasis I have put on mediation through Martin in Part 2 of the dissertation.¹³⁹ This signals a failure of the curatorial proposition as I employ it in the article. And yet, I do consider *Museum for fremtiden* an “experiment with various forms of public address and congregation” as Sheikh proposes, if we move closer to the material process and compare the specific conditions of each presentation. The two versions designate not only two forms of “public address and congregation,” but forward *Museum for fremtiden* as distributed event crossing differing forms of temporalization, not only regarding artistic practices, but also institutional frameworks (black box and white cube) and additional formats of publication (public program and exhibition catalogue), enabling its manifestation of contemporaneity between differing forms of temporalization—and the making public of its self-reflection.

Before analyzing the process of making *Museum for fremtiden* and the differences between its twin iterations, I should stress that accounting for the process itself constitutes a task of mediation, in my experience the most difficult task of the project by far. It involves a structuring of a long and multifarious process that involved a host of heterogenous sensibilities and perspectives, including my own. As I stressed in Part 1, it is my situated perspective that I present here. Like the dramatization of *Museum for fremtiden*, the dissertation involves some insights and leaves out others. In other words, the analysis offers my mediation of the process,

¹³⁹ Djurslev “Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research,” 63, page 59 in the dissertation.

itself a slice of time, from my situated perspective of the production's dramaturg and curator, and as a researcher guided by my preoccupation with the contemporary as a critical concept in dramaturgical and curatorial practice and backdropped by a desire to explicate—and complicate—the poetics of Sort/Hvid as disclosed in Part 1.

Expansion: Feeding, Analyzing, Speculating.

In retrospect, the decision of keeping the audio guide as a fictitious narrator remains one of the most crucial artistic choices made in the creative process. By choosing to compose and mediate the complex temporal explorations of Krag, Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand through a singular—if rather unpredictable, occasionally polyphonic, and certainly fragmented—voice installed an immediate and unresolved tension between what was scenery and what was artwork—what was represented and what was representing—in *Museum for fremtiden*. After the visual artists had discarded the first draft of a script—a monologue somewhat similar in tone and sentiment to the voice we eventually ended up with—we took a step back and continued our collaborative exploration of a format between exhibition and performance on the terms of the visual art practices. The exploration, however, remained conditioned by Lollike's idea of using an audio guide as a vehicle for the dramatization, building on a recent theatre project with composer and sound designer Asger Kudahl who we accordingly invited into the project.¹⁴⁰

The decision to stay with the directive audio guide necessitated a paradoxical letting go of the primacy of text. Instead, Lollike and I asked the visual art practices to inspire the writing process, following their individual processes of developing artworks. Lollike and I met with Krag, Nymann, and Rhoda Ting and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen of Studio ThinkingHand, together as well as separately, to understand processual dynamics, aesthetic implications, and performative potentials of their practices. Occasionally, I would meet the artists alone for convenience. For instance, early in the process, I visited a laboratory in the basement at the Danish Technical University with Studio ThinkingHand to witness the synthetic production

¹⁴⁰ In Lollike and Sigrid Johannesen's dramatization of José Saramago's novel *Blindness* (1995), *En fortælling om blindhed* (Aarhus Teater and Sort/Hvid, 2020), the audience was blindfolded throughout the performance and laid down in scenographer Nathalie Mellbye's lazaré set. Asger Kudahl's binaural sound design, a mix between live monologue, live foley effects, and prerecorded audio drama sequences, enabled an eerie immersive experience. See Sort/Hvid's website, sort-hvid.dk/en/project/blindness-copy/. Engaging Kudahl in *Museum for fremtiden* made it possible to develop from this experience in a context in which spectators would conversely have their eyes wide open.

of luminous algae (a material later discarded to focus on scoby instead); had Zoom calls with Nymann's research colleagues in anthropology, proposing models of audience-based research to be integrated in the performance (transgressing my disciplinary competences); and contemplated Krag's sketches with a professor of physics in the artist's workshop (making my head spin). The artistic practices of Krag, Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand, while radically heterogeneous in materiality and appearance, are all invested in theoretical questions and research in their artistic engagements with planetary time, experiential time, and non-human time. Each artistic practice resembles a research inquiry of varying institutional commitments.¹⁴¹ Already at this stage, I would thus find myself in the role of mediator, translating between the complex temporal explorations of Krag, Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand, and, conversely, Lollike's groping for ways dramatize these ideas through an audio guide. At one point, we visited Studio ThinkingHand's solo exhibition *Entangled Encounters* (2020) at Munkeruphus, where the director, the scenographers, and I became fascinated of the strange skin-like quality of their work series *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022).¹⁴² Later, we agreed with Ting and Bojesen that they focus on a new iteration of this work in their contribution for *Museum for fremtiden*, a work complicating the opposition between life and death, the synthetic and the organic, the human and the non-human. The work's material decayed and mutated throughout the opening periods, invoking an additional temporality to the project in the transformations of the scoby. When moved to Kunsthall Aarhus, for instance, they attracted a fly invasion in the exhibition, producing an additional affective layer to the experience.

Both Studio ThinkingHand and the other artists, in my understanding, invited me into their—although radically different—searches for *aporetic* experiences of time through artistic practice, explicitly resisting a historical, narrative mediation of time; an analysis supported by their reflections in our conversations published in the exhibition catalogue.¹⁴³ Acquainting myself intimately with the practices of the visual artists, my role oscillated between the modes

¹⁴¹ Krag is a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Helene Nymann was conducting a PhD project of her own at the Interacting Minds Centre and Kunsthall Aarhus as an artistic researcher. Studio ThinkingHand collaborates with research and development departments at technical universities and private corporations to conduct their experiments with both organic and synthetic materials.

¹⁴² See the Munkeruphus website, munkeruphus.dk/portfolio/studio-thinkinghand-entangled-encounters-05-04-07-06-20/

¹⁴³ Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand discuss their practices in the interviews of the exhibition catalogue, translated into English for the dissertation on pages 159-180. One might even talk about "anti-narrative art" as a current in contemporary art as suggested by the art historian Pol Capdevila. For Capdevila, anti-narrative art offers aporetic—paradoxical—experiences of time, serving to sensitize the viewer to the contractions of dominant narratives. See Capdevila, "Aporetic experiences of time in anti-narrative art."

that Bleeker calls “feeding,” “analyzing,” and “speculating.”¹⁴⁴ I suggested reading material and provided examples of inspiration from other works (feeding), came with suggestions to possible aesthetic dynamics of the staging based on their experiments with material and sources of inspiration (speculating), and shared my analytical points on the sketches presented underway in relation to the economic conditions of the production and the audio guide device on which we had agreed (analyzing). In this process, I considered it a crucial task of mine to repeatedly remind the artists—both visual artists and theatre-makers—of the implications of the title, *Museum for fremtiden*. Accordingly, I would offer analyses of the installation sketches in the context of the temporal paradox of a “museum of the future.” As such, I took a complicating function in relation to each practice, interpreting each work idea in relation to the project’s constellation of the museum and the future as I elaborated on in Part 1 of the dissertation.

Another example of complication would be my invitation of additional research partners into the writing process. A crucial moment occurred when Lollike at a collective meeting early on asked what the exploration of *Museum for fremtiden* was missing if we were to offer a convincing “diagnosis of the present,” revealing the playwright’s historicizing intentions with the project. Krag replied that the current concept would have little to say about the geo-political conflicts escalating in the world around us, the typical object of History with a capital H found in museums. As a response,¹⁴⁵ I organized two seminars with researchers from War & Aesthetics, a network of humanities scholars researching the intersection of contemporary warfare and aesthetics, after having been part of one of their seminars at an earlier date during which we had discussed the possibilities of collaborating across theatre and research in the humanities.¹⁴⁶ During these two seminars, the literary scholar Anders Engberg-Pedersen and I assigned texts for researchers and artists to read and discuss together at the theatre, including Hito Steyerl’s essay “A Tank on a Pedestal” (2016),¹⁴⁷ Immanuel Kant’s “Towards Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795),¹⁴⁸ excerpts from Mary Dudziak’s *War Time* (2012),¹⁴⁹ and the Russian general Valery Gerasimov’s “The Value of Science is in the Foresight”

¹⁴⁴ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 62–66.

¹⁴⁵ Bleeker draws on Donna Haraway’s notion of “response-ability” to circumscribe the function of the contemporary dramaturg. Ibid., 2, 43, 47, 57, 112, 178, 230.

¹⁴⁶ In relation to a conference organized by the War & Aesthetics network, Sort/Hvid presented an iteration of choreographer Arkadi Zaidēs’ site-specific performance *Necropolis*, a live mapping and archiving of migrant deaths in Europe as a part of the theatre festival CPH STAGE in 2021. See Sort/Hvid’s website, sort-hvid.dk/en/project/necropolis.

¹⁴⁷ Steyerl, *Duty Free Art*, 1–8.

¹⁴⁸ Kant, “Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch.”

¹⁴⁹ Dudziak, *War Time*.

(2013),¹⁵⁰ all complicating the historicizing function of war through the dichotomy of peace- and wartime, collapsing in contemporary warfare. During collaborative writing assignments, we sketched lines together in a repetitive pattern based on the input of the researchers, provisionally read by actor Lotte Andersen, that would eventually be edited into the script of the second installation of *Museum for fremtiden*, entitled “War.” The seminars were instructive for my pursuit of crossing research in the humanities and the art institution and followed both the visual artists’ engagement with scientists of different fields as well as Lollike’s own experiments in writing with researchers.¹⁵¹ What they signify most acutely here, meanwhile, is the multifariousness of a process that remained open for a long time as well as the intention of basing the dramatization of *Museum for fremtiden* on contemporary knowledge formations of historical depth.¹⁵²

Based on my dialogues and visits with visual artists, theatre-makers, and researchers, the explorative process produced an immense and unruly archive of written material in a variety of discursive forms, from insights of posthuman philosophy (Studio ThinkingHand)¹⁵³ to reflections on the implications of epigenetic theory (Nymann);¹⁵⁴ from a meditation on Soviet tanks driven from their museum pedestals in the war in Ukraine (Steyerl)¹⁵⁵ to Deleuzian reflections on the face (Krag).¹⁵⁶ How, then, did we arrive at the experience summarized above, contracting this heterogenous material into the surprisingly linear and short experience summarized above?

Contraction: Structuring, Fictionalizing, Creating Conditions.

While the artistic and research-based practices expanded the collective’s conception of time, the institutions required a presentation of the experience to circumscribe its practical process in terms of production requirements within the assigned budget and time frame (the latter prolonged a full year due to the COVID-19 pandemic), including an approximation of

¹⁵⁰ Gerasimov, “The Value of Science is in the Foresight.”

¹⁵¹ For instance, Lollike has dramatized text by the Marxist cultural critic Mikkel Bolt in *Revolution* (Sort/Hvid and Aarhus Teater, 2018) and rewritten the classic Danish comedy *Erasmus Montanus* (1723) by Ludvig Holberg with satire scholar Dennis Meyhoff-Brink (Aarhus Teater, 2017).

¹⁵² If contemporary art constitutes a “knowledge beside itself,” as the writer, curator, and artist Tom Holert suggests, it must first interrogate knowledge. Holert, *Knowledge Beside Itself*. Research collaboration, meanwhile, also holds an economic incentive for art production. The seminars were funded by the War & Aesthetics network as part of their purpose and were thus not drawing on the production budget of *Museum for fremtiden*.

¹⁵³ Braidotti, *Posthuman Knowledge*.

¹⁵⁴ Squier, *Epigenetic Landscapes*.

¹⁵⁵ Steyerl, *Duty Free Art*, 1-8.

¹⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, “Year Zero: Faciliaty,” 167-191.

audience numbers. Unsurprisingly, the openness of the process and the immensity of the material it generated produced an increasing difficulty in settling on a format of the experience. This difficulty, I should mention—on the small chance that the reader has not already identified it—also rested on what might be considered an obliqueness in the curatorial and dramaturgical concept of the project. As we discussed repeatedly in the collective, the paradoxical title of *Museum for fremtiden*—*Museum of the Future*—itself activated more expectations than it offered obvious solutions.¹⁵⁷ Accordingly, my intermediary role shifted its objective towards what Bleeker calls “structuring” and “creating conditions,” to which I would like to add “fictionalization.”¹⁵⁸

When Helene Nymann shared with us that her research had brought her attention to Songlines as a mnemonic technique, asking us to collaborate with her in finding a way to invite the audience to sing together inside the exhibition, Lollike felt that she had discovered the key dynamic of the dramatization: to invite visitors of *Museum for fremtiden* to stage the ideas explored by each artist in a participatory action or a series of actions. Following this discovery, the task of the dramatization became to, on the one hand, identify possible actions for audiences to stage in relation to each artwork and, on the other, to invent and conjure a voice that would be capable of containing the multitudes of the still growing archive while directing these actions. Both dimensions of the task—the notion of crystallizing collective actions from each artistic exploration to be performed by the spectators and the dramatization of a singular voice—pointed to the contraction of complexity that the dramatization would force upon each artwork. More positively, they occasioned the setting up of conditions under which each artwork would be presented (creating conditions).

To aid the visual artists in translating their visions of their installations to the production conventions of the theatre, we had engaged scenographers Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. Zahle and Damgård was moreover given the daunting task of adapting the

¹⁵⁷ In my interview with Christian Lollike, for instance, a section is headlined “The Curse of the Title,” in which Lollike talks about the expectations raised by the *Museum for fremtiden* title. See an English translation of the interview “Between Exhibition and Performance,” enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 181-183. I strived to turn this weakness into a strength by commissioning texts and literary works for the exhibition catalogue, co-edited with Mathias Kokholm, that would probe different conceptualizations and critiques of the idea of a museum of the future, including both original commissioned works and found texts in Danish translation. I return to this feature of the project below. See also the English translation of my introduction to the exhibition catalogue, “Introduction: *Ausstellung as Vorstellung, Vorstellung as Ausstellung*,” enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 156-158 and a short introduction to the untranslated texts in Danish on page 214-216.

¹⁵⁸ Bleeker, *Doing Dramaturgy*, 68-70.

exhibition to fit both venues, Sort/Hvid being a black box theatre and Kunsthall Aarhus an exhibition space, comprising white-walled gallery spaces of uneven scales and sizes. For instance, the kunsthalle has an octagonal exhibition space with loft windows where we eventually installed Studio ThinkingHand's installation *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022). Ultimately, we would ask each visual artist to furnish a space of approximately eight square meters, accommodating a manageable crowd, and begin the structuring the installations into a linear sequence (structuring). Aiming to incorporate the text on war developed at the seminars in a separate space, the formation of a dramatic sequence slowly began to manifest itself.

Ultimately, Zahle and Damgård would furnish three set designs, constituting a beginning and end of the experience by enveloping the three visual art installations. In a quite concrete sense, according to my then provisional analysis, we had created a dramaturgical sequence moving from the bleak diagnosis of the present of Sort/Hvid as sketched in Part 2 of the dissertation in the first and second space—the audio guide staring into the darkness of the present as Agamben would have it—to explorations of alternative ways of being in time in spaces three through five, expanding the present, only to return to the contracted present in the final sixth space of museum pedestals. A linear, sequenced, and thus strangely narrative form had arisen, excavated from the anti-narrative temporal explorations of the visual artists, revealing to me a fundamental dimension of the tension between two forms of temporalization brought together in the collaboration. As I have suggested throughout this dissertation, I consider this tension as a manifestation contemporaneity in the sense that I have circumscribed the concept in Part 1 and 2—between the affirmative, enactive performance of the art installations and the negative, representative exhibition of Lollike's theatre—here reflected in a tension between narrative and anti-narrative politics of time. As a fiction, meanwhile, Lollike's audio guide invited for a negative reading of itself, a trait I will return to by the end of this part of the dissertation.

To finish the scriptwriting process, Lollike asked the visual artists and me to help him translate ideas gathered in the archive into longings; longings for other ways of being in time as to provide a contrast to the bleak present from which the project as such seemed to be departing. Insisting on Lollike's role as an artist of the project, meanwhile, I showed the playwright how the ideas explored by the visual artists would contrast the bleak diagnoses of the present that he had explored in plays of his own, adding figments of plays like *All my dreams come true* (Aarhus Teater, Aarhus Festuge, and Sort/Hvid, 2013), *Fremtidens historie* (*The*

History of the Future, The Royal Danish Theatre, 2009), and *Revolution* (2018, Aarhus Teater and Sort/Hvid) to the archive, primarily cited in the first space, “Mirror.” It is not coincidental, I ventured, that the tagline of *Revolution* was “On shattering time,” signaling a longing for other ways of being in time.¹⁵⁹ In this way, we installed the tension permeating the project in the task at hand for the spectators. In other words, the trajectory of the dramaturgical sequence became more visible: departing from Sort/Hvid’s untimely critique of the present in the hall of mirrors and around the burnt-out car, the spectators would be led into expansions of historical time offered by the art installations, formulated as longings for the planetary, the embodied, the non-human. All the while, the ending we had planned and shared from the beginning of the project—the exhibition of the spectators on pedestals, a simple sensation of a performative musealization of the present—would gather its affective and conceptual strength from the aesthetic and philosophical weight of the preceding explorations of the visual artists. Its dramaturgical function, from my point of view, became a return to historical time, now saturated with reflections of what Achille Mbembe calls a planetary consciousness; the concatenations of geological time, experiential time, and historical time. Whereas the visual artists were originally interested in the dramatization as enhancing the performative dimension of their installations, the theatre-makers turned the art installations into set designs for a script inviting audiences to become museal-historical representations of the ideas explored in the works. After having discarded the first draft of the script, the process of collaboration had led us back to this framework, now saturated with new content drawn from the archive.

With the conditions more or less in place, Lollike and I could begin translating the archive of text into the voice of an audio guide character, assisted by me as dramaturg on the one hand and a curator intimately acquainted with and protective of the visual art practices on the other (fictionalizing—in the sense that I have sketched in Part 2 through Theodore Martin and Mieke Bal). In the process that followed I oscillated between the primacy of practices—text, space, and artwork—exposing different temporal conventions in terms of artistic processes: to produce a set design and record an audio guide, the scenographers and sound designer needed a script; to produce a script, the playwright needed an understanding of what the art installations would look and feel like. I found myself in between, keeping things in motion by supporting the processes of each practice and requirements of each institutional

¹⁵⁹ I use this tagline in the title of my introduction to a selection of Christian Lollike’s plays, published in Danish. An English translation of the introduction is enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 210-213.

framework while at the same time trying to reduce the inevitable compromising of complexity when mediated in text and scenic actions. At times, a tight spot. Accordingly, the aesthetic negotiations of both text, space, and lasted up until the opening at Sort/Hvid, leading Lollike to decide that we would make the best possible version at Sort/Hvid and deal with the difficulties posed by the adaption for Kunsthall Aarhus after the premiere.

Because of my prominent role in its realization, Lollike insisted that I was accredited as co-author of the script. In relation to the research project, the role of co-author adds to my implication in *Museum for fremtiden*. While I certainly took considerable part in creating the conditions of its writing, including contributing to it, I did so as an intermediary between the artistic practices of the others, a role already supported by the discipline of dramaturgy and already expanded considerably by the title of curator. In this context, I consider my co-authorship of the script as itself a task of mediation—a practice of mediating practices of contemporary art and contemporary theatre *through* dramatization, based on the curatorial constellation of artistic practices. Lollike and the team of theatre-makers are obviously artists too, signifying the dual purpose of the dramatization and the cross-aesthetic project as such: On the one hand, the dramatization mediated the works of the visual art practices. On the other hand, the dramatization constituted a work in itself.

While the processes of developing text, artworks, set designs, and technical setups intertwined and entangled, I was co-editing the exhibition catalogue with Mathias Kokholm, editor of the small independent press Antipyrine. Realizing that the dramatization would contract the complexity of their temporal explorations, I wanted to include extensive conversations with each artist in the catalogue and use the catalogue to reflect on the process of coupling contemporary art and theatre as well as the museum and the future. From my point of view, our conversations fell at a fortunate moment as they offered a chance to slow down an increasingly hectic production process, breathe, and revisit the artists'—including Lollike's—sources of inspiration and more general thoughts on the relation between art and time. Immediately, meanwhile, the conversations themselves became part of the archive generated by our collaboration as bits of the reflections offered by the artists became new threads in the composition the voice of the audio guide. For instance, the figure of the audio guide's grandmother in the fourth space of *Museum for fremtiden* arose from Nymann's own experience with a family member suffering from dementia, contributing to her artistic and research-based interest in the uneven dynamics of embodied memory. Similarly, Krag's experience of

forgetting himself when drawing became a dynamic pursued by the audio guide. Such personal anecdotes gave body to the still more familiar audio guide, bridging the temporal explorations of alternative ways of being in time to the dramatic composition of a—if only ever outlined—character.

Consequently, like the visual artists, the audio guide was not interested in any linear, narrative mediation of time. Instead, she gave voice to the anti-narrative temporal explorations undertaken by the visual artists, effectively contradicting her own final narrative form of mediation. In the end, we structured the script and the performance under six headlines, signifying each scene, set design, and art installation: “1. Mirror,” “2. War,” “3. Face” (Ferdinand Ahm Krag’s *Hall of Psychopomps*), “4. Memory” (Helene Nymann’s *Ode to Creode*), “5. Nature” (Studio ThinkingHand’s *Vita . Necro . Vita*), and “6. Museum,” experienced as I went through above in a linear fashion and based on a coercive participatory model.¹⁶⁰ These script titles, meanwhile, appeared somewhat off when the visual artists each presented the titles of their artworks. These titles were obviously in English. On a basic level, the question of language exposed the national perception of the theatre’s supposed public, insisting on presenting the work in Danish as is custom at the theatre (unless it curates international guest performances or works with artists that do not speak Danish). In effect, the audio guide suddenly became visible as a Danish national. Regrettably, in our ignorance, we had not budgeted for the recording of an English translation which I would have considered an unambiguous quality. Instead, we offered written English translations for international visitors.¹⁶¹ Moreover, I produced handouts on each artistic practice in English to accommodate the international profile of Kunsthall Aarhus and put emphasis on the individual artworks constituting the exhibition.¹⁶² I will expand on the implications of the exhibition catalogue later on, but I would like to mention that I have become increasingly aware of the irony in the fact that this dissertation is written entirely in English on a production primarily available to Danish-speakers.

¹⁶⁰ Florian Malzacher offers a critique of such models of participation in his recent book on political theatre, arguing that immersive experiences designate a forwarding of “participation as submission.” While agreeing with Malzacher’s critique on a general level, I consider *Museum for fremtiden* and other works engaged with immersion in critical ways to be not totalizing of aesthetic illusion, but instead rather poignant in breaking it. I discuss this capacity in the article “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation,” enclosed in the dissertation as Part 5 on pages 101–117.

¹⁶¹ The English translation of the *Museum for fremtiden* script is enclosed in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 185–202.

¹⁶² The handouts are included in both Danish and English in the dissertation’s appendix on pages 203–208.

Flow: Rehearsing, Editing, Haunting.

Prerecording the script, we planned an unusually short rehearsal period at Sort/Hvid of two weeks to make the final edits to the text and soundscape, giving time to installing the artworks and set designs, determining light design, and testing out participatory actions for the groups of spectators to enact. Kudahl would bounce provisional versions of the sound file, enabling the team in trying the ride. Lacking the presence of a performer—except for the custodian who only participated in the last days of rehearsals due to their limited role¹⁶³—in the first week, we used ourselves and our own bodies as test subjects, experiencing the slight awkwardness when asked to perform for and with each other; a feeling we would then let the audio guide vocalize. I recall our first tour, instantaneously realizing that we would have to make the audio guide much more playful and inviting if we ourselves were to obey her instructions. Having already agreed on the actions to be performed in Nymann and Krag's installations, we thought of offering kombucha shots in Studio ThinkingHand's installation not until the rehearsals.

The visual artists were invited to select run-throughs throughout, commenting on not only the text but also other means of theatrical staging as well: time-coded score, sound, and lighting design became part of each artwork, installing a duration in their presentation. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the visual artists advocated long durations in their spaces, pausing the continuous musings and directions of the audio guide. Meanwhile, after testing out solutions of prolongation and adding a few directions to ask the spectators to "explore the space," providing time for the spectators to discover the artworks on their own terms (if that was ever possible), Lollike and the team of theatre-makers generally opposed installing longer breaks in the audio guide. For the director, excessive hiatuses from her speech ruined the flow of the narration, failing to maintain the spectator's attention on the instructions given and the connections made by the audio guide. Moreover, he felt the installation spaces to "lose their mystique," signifying a shift in the perception of each art installation from an artwork to be mediated to a set of an immersive and intense theatrical experience in which the participation and exhibition of the spectators would be a central staging device.

One example of the tension I am approaching different levels of here is the staging of the video work in Helene Nymann's installation *Ode to Creode*. Presenting Nymann's video in the

¹⁶³ My assistant, the dramaturg Lotta Grohmann, deserves a special mention for embodying the role of performing custodian during rehearsals.

context of a linear experience poses a conflict to the very ontology of video art as a form of temporalization. When experiencing video works in museums and other exhibition spaces, the visitor is typically robbed from seeing the work from beginning to end. Instead, by taking on the form of the loop, video-based art typically arrests the notion of narrative completion and thereby reveals the impossibility of a non-perspectival, disembodied, full access to any work.¹⁶⁴ Conversely, in *Museum for fremtiden*, we timed the moving images of Nymann's video work to the script which would start at the moment when the groups of spectators entered the installation, providing an experience of a timed duration with a beginning and an end—even if Nymann's work presented fragmented and associative images. While no non-perspectival, disembodied, or full access was promised—a condition in any aesthetic experience, of course, only emphasized by video art—the dramatization drew Nymann's video toward a sense of narrative completion, culminating in the audio guide's invitation to sing.

In addition to such aesthetic negotiations of duration and timing, the spatial limitations to audience numbers already necessitated a limited duration for the theatre to accommodate five teams in inside a day and reach the budget of predicted ticket sales. An hour is indeed a short time—admittedly, too short a time—to make sensible the full complexity of the temporal explorations of the artistic practices brought together in the project. Instead, they were alluded to by the audio guide and staged with the spectators in momentary tableaux, becoming living, temporary representations of the complex ideas enacted by the art installations. The exhibition catalogue and public program, to which I will return below, became means to reflect on the ideas and practices actualized in the project, contracted to this format.

Kudahl, Lollike, actor Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, and I recorded the audio guide score in a studio at the Royal Danish Theatre, while adding lines for the audio play of “War” and echoes of select lines with three actors of the ensemble at Aarhus Teater, enabling Kudahl's experimentation with the audio guide's polyphonic expression. Through the process, the audio guide became a self-contradictory fiction, composed by heterogenous time-perceptions, ideas, and materials. I would like to think of her as someone between a climate activist suffering from climate anxiety, an (dis)embodiment of the endgame emotions of the present, a girl playing with the audience as dolls in an imaginary doll house, a science nerd, a contemporary

¹⁶⁴ In the essay “Is the Museum a Factory?,” the writer and video artist Hito Steyerl determines video art as a means to reflect the unavailability of “the full picture.” “Cinema itself explodes into multiplicity—into spatially dispersed multi-screen arrangements that cannot be contained by a single point of view. The full picture, so to speak, remains unavailable.” Steyerl, “Is the Museum a Factory?” See also Bal, *Exhibition-ism*.

psychopomp as Krag suggested in the title of his installation—a spirit guiding us from the realm of the living to the realm of the dead—an artist, a theatre director, a curator perhaps, searching for a glimpse of “what could otherwise be imagined.” Most acutely, I think of her as a ghost of futures lost to neoliberalism, colonialization, patriarchy, surveillance capitalism, and the horrors of the climate endgame; the gruesome achievements of western modernity, still haunting us with its failed promises of emancipation.¹⁶⁵ Against this diagnosis, echoing what I have written on Sort/Hvid’s poetics so far, the audio guide offered her interpretations of the ideas of the visual artists, formulated as longings for other affirmative ways of being in this time. As a narrator of the present, the audio guide was composed by the heterogenous ideas of select contemporary artistic practices across the Danish performing and visual arts scenes, a schizophrenic figuration of the contemporary, necessarily self-contradictory as the simultaneous present and absent ghost of the museum, aiming to mediate the no-longer of historical time and the not-yet left undifferentiated by historical totalization.¹⁶⁶ The present, as Rosi Braidotti reminds us, is both the no-longer and the not-yet.¹⁶⁷

Presence and Absence: Performing, Sharing, Graying.

Conditioned by institutional frameworks and budget, the experience of *Museum for fremtiden*, including the apparition of the audio guide, was evoked differently at each institution. At Sort/Hvid, two technicians would conduct the performance live behind a set of surveillance screens, operating the shift of scenic cues while following each team on the screen. At Kunsthall Aarhus, the experience was started by the front of house staff, pressing a start button once a team was gathered every hour. Developing *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid until the opening necessitated an interactive model; moving the show to Kunsthall Aarhus made possible an automatic—and cheaper—solution. Coincidentally, the two versions ended up privileging the forms of temporalization associated with each institution. On the team, we began to speak of “the theatre version” and “the exhibition version” of *Museum for fremtiden*.

¹⁶⁵ I am not the first to talk about ghosts in this vein. For instance, Anna Tsing and other turns to the ghosts of the Anthropocene, structuring one half of the influential book for art and research in the Anthropocene, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet* (2017). See Gan, Tsing, Swanson, and Bubandt, “Introduction: Haunted Landscapes of the Anthropocene,” G1-G15.

¹⁶⁶ I realize the somewhat whimsical and dense tone of this paragraph, but I leave it short to refrain from lingering at an interpretative formal level. Instead, my focus here is on the creative process and its conditions in the making of *Museum for fremtiden*. I elaborate on the characteristics alluded to here in the journal article “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation,” enclosed in the dissertation on pages 101-117.

¹⁶⁷ Braidotti, “Necropolitics and Ways of Dying.”

A crucial aesthetic difference between the two iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus was the presence of a performer. At Sort/Hvid, a formally clothed custodian would accompany each group of visitors through the series of installations. The role of the custodian served both practical and aesthetic purposes. Lollike wanted a performer in the space to help inspire the active participation of the spectators and to help if the technical setup should fail. We cast a group of non-professional performers with diverse backgrounds, making different identifications of the gendered audio guide possible, and experimented with different ways of activating the custodian in surprising ways during rehearsals. The custodian would not have any lines as the script was played from headphones. Instead of speaking, the custodian would perform the directions given by the audio guide for the audience to imitate or hand out props for the spectators to use. In addition, the custodian would perform two scenic actions: In the second scene—entitled “War” in the script—in which the audio guide brought the spectators into a fictitious video game where she imagined herself as a revolutionary climate saboteur, the custodian would jump up on the set design’s burnt-out car with a dummy gun, pointing it on the spectators, while the audio guide asked them to “drop dead as if in a movie.”¹⁶⁸ Moreover, in *Museum for fremtiden*’s final space, “Museum,” during the final line of the script, black bile would pour out of the custodian’s mouth before the spectators would be asked to leave *Museum for fremtiden* and the solitary custodian on a solemnly lit pedestal.

For practical reasons, we were not able to bring the custodians with us to the iteration of *Museum for fremtiden* in Kunsthall Aarhus. This condition forced the team of theatre-makers to invent a new strategy for enacting the participatory scenes without the presence of a performer. We recorded an extra set of practical directions with the voice actor Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, helping spectators in finding their way through the series of installation in the directions specific to Kunsthall Aarhus—turn right here, go through the door here—and we would have the kunsthalle’s café workers move shoes to the final installation, clean the masks for Krag’s installation repeatedly, and pour shot glasses of kombucha in Studio ThinkingHand’s installation between the advent of each group. This setup involved an additional short rehearsal period in which we tested out the format to see whether outsiders would respond to the staging dynamic. Thankfully, they did.

¹⁶⁸ The photo documentation of this scene from each venue provides an apt impression on the affective differences in each iteration. The photos can be found in the dissertation’s appendix on page 142.

The absence of the performer, however, revealed an interesting dynamic in *Museum for fremtiden's* production of presence.¹⁶⁹ At Sort/Hvid, the custodian came to constitute a point of identification for the spectators, a representation of the audio guide character that they could observe, direct their attention towards, and follow. Conversely, at Kunsthall Aarhus, the spectators were left to themselves and the pre-recorded voice of the audio guide to engage with the art installations, sets, and props. As such, the eerie sensation of being exhibited to the other guests and the absent audio guide was in my opinion notably enhanced in the Kunsthall Aarhus version. The absence of the custodian stressed the condition of having to observe each other as visitors and, conversely, be exhibited. The absence of a performer stressed the presence of the spectator and, in turn, her display, installing the dialectics between the present and the historical, the real and the imaginary, the representing and the represented, that I have pursued in Part 1 and 2.

In the second space, during the climactic execution scene of the extra-virtual video game scenario, the audio guide would now ask the spectators to turn their backs to the car-wreck, kneel, and close their eyes. There was no executioner, no dummy weapon, no finger on the trigger, only a discrete change in lighting and a gunshot sound played from the headphones of each spectator's cell phones. Curiously, Kunsthall Aarhus received feedback from guests who found the scene distressing, causing the institution to warn each group arriving to *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus about the scene upon entry and on Kunsthall Aarhus' website. In my opinion, the iteration of *Museum for fremtiden* in Kunsthall Aarhus thus came to radicalize the central theatrical device of the exhibition; the audio guide as an evocation of what Derrida called "the visor effect," the eerie feeling of being looked at without being able to see the ghost looking.¹⁷⁰ Using their own cell phones at Kunsthall Aarhus, however, the theatrical illusion of the audio guide's liveness was arrested from the get-go as visitors would be asked to press a streaming link to access the exhibition. In other words, the visor effect was produced despite—or because—the audience knew it to be artificially produced.

The use of cellphones, meanwhile, erupted to be a central conflict between visual artists and theatre-makers already at the presentation of *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid. During

¹⁶⁹ I take this formulation from the title of the literary critic Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's book on the lack of focus on presence as opposed to interpretation in the humanities. Gumbrecht, *The Production of Presence*.

¹⁷⁰ I discuss this interpretation of the audio guide in Part 5, the journal article "Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation, enclosed in the dissertation on pages 101-117. For a elaborated discussion on the eerie in fiction, see Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*.

the rehearsal period, the visual artists noticed that the theatre would prohibit visitors from taking pictures with their cellphones while inside the exhibition. The prohibition felt as obvious to the theatre-makers as it was ill-received by the visual artists. On one side, Lollike felt that allowing the use of the visitors to use cellphone cameras would interrupt the experience not only for the visitor taking pictures, but for all visitors who would find themselves photographed by others, working against the dramatization's fragile seduction of having them act along. Allowing the use of cellphone cameras would, for the director, work against the very idea of the dramatization. On the other side, for some of the visual artists, the spectator-driven sharing of their works on social media networks constituted an important dimension of exhibiting as such, providing an additional platform of making their works public through the distributed networks of each visitor's followers. In other words, allowing audiences to share photos of the art installations would quite concretely expand the present of the exhibition, spreading the individual experience of the spectators across the screens and minds of social media users, making their perspective co-productive in the interpretation and dissemination of each work. Against this notion, Lollike wanted to evoke a strong affective experience of being present, signifying the evocation of a singular present.

To mediate the disagreement, I proposed that we simply molded it into the experiment of the cross-aesthetic and cross-institutional project. Accordingly, we prohibited the use of phones at Sort/Hvid (where the visitors would borrow headphones and transmitters of the theatre) and allowed photography at the iteration at Kunsthall Aarhus (where visitors would already be using cellphones to access the exhibition). The conflict, I find, and the collaboration between Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus as such, brings *Museum for fremtiden* into the proximity of what the art historian Claire Bishop has pointedly termed "the gray zone" between the forms of temporalization determined by the black box and the white cube in her study of contemporary dance exhibitions: event time and exhibition time. According to Bishop, the advent of social media has created the historical conditions for the graying of the traditionally opposing forms of temporalization embedded in the black box and the white cube.¹⁷¹ The graying enables both black box and white cube to begin a process of *retemporalization*, causing a meta-reflection on the conventions of the media of exhibition and performance as they

¹⁷¹ Bishop, "Black Box, White Cube, Gray Zone: Dance Exhibitions and Audience Attention," 24. In addition, Bishop notes how smartphone photography is "rife in museums, but still tends to be frowned upon in the theatre. Ibid., 31.

become inhabited by unusual forms of temporalization. Similarly, my mediation between the visual and performing arts caused my reflection on each iteration as a form of temporalization, attaining different shades of gray in its two institutional iterations. At Sort/Hvid, the singularity of the experience was accentuated, while the Kunsthall Aarhus version made sensible the composite character of the work as brought about by the constellation of different practices.

To briefly summarize the observations made above, the collaboration between visual artists and theatre-makers and the move from black box to white cube gave rise a series of tensions that I relate to the production of presence and the manifestation of contemporaneity. At Sort/Hvid, the singularity and seemingly narrative cohesiveness of the experience was protected through the dramatization, whereas the Kunsthall Aarhus version gave way to a contemporaneity between more forms of temporalization, including the expansion of the present by the dissemination of the exhibition by audiences on social media. These differences, moreover, signify differing perceptions of what constitutes the artwork. For the theatre-makers, the actualized dramatization constituted the work; for the artists, each contribution constituted works and ongoing practices within the work, made public and present on several platforms. The process of developing *Museum for fremtiden* thus necessitated my oscillation between individual artworks and artistic practices, including both visual artists and theatre-makers, and their coming together in the dramatization. The theatre's focus on the whole of the exhibition experience designated, we might say, challenged the integrity of each work, traversing several contexts of *Museum for fremtiden* from the choice of language to the mediation of narrative. The move to Kunsthall Aarhus allowed for a revision and an expansion of the discursive negotiation of the collaboration and its implications through the presentation of a public program, articulating the tensions that had arisen underway. The twin iterations of *Museum for fremtiden* splintered the production into a distributed event, involving the making public of its curatorial and dramaturgical proposition—including its self-contradictions.

An Oblique Poetics: Doing Both at the Same Time.

In his review of the iteration of *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus, Janek Szatkowski poses a hypothesis on the staged exhibition as signifying an “oblique poetics.” In Szatkowski's reception, offering an expansive interpretation on the thematic strands of the performance, the dramaturgy scholar identifies a self-contradiction in the cross-aesthetic project as such, appearing across two dimensions of the exhibition.

First, Szatkowski points to a disproportionate dosage of theatrical and exhibitionary devices in the Kunsthall Aarhus version. For Szatkowski, the experience leaves some to be desired for him to call *Museum for fremtiden* a theatrical performance. At the same time, he considers the experiment of bringing together complex art installations, demanding time for reflection, and the dramatization of spectators as figurants for each other, stressing the live dimension of the experience accentuated by its participatory staging device, self-contradictory. For Szatkowski, the experiment of doing both contemporaneously causes a too intense affective impression on the perception of the visitor. As such, Szatkowski adequately points to the tension between the ambitions of the visual artists and theatre-makers and their mediation that I have analyzed above. Asking for more poignant theatrical devices, one might speculate that Szatkowski would have preferred the version at Sort/Hvid.

Second, Szatkowski identifies a self-contradiction within the diagnosis of the historical present offered in the script and the short duration of the experience itself. On the one hand, the project poses as a critique of a neoliberal world order, he finds, in which “everything moves too fast,” as the audio guide would say in the hall of mirrors opening *Museum for fremtiden*. On the other, the staging of the exhibition utilizes some of the same temporal characteristics of the cultural logic of that same world order. To the short duration that Szatkowski emphasizes, we might add the notion of flow, speed, participation, accumulation, excessive affective manipulation. In other words, Szatkowski points to an additional self-contradiction on a thematic level regarding the project’s embedded analysis of its historical present. While I follow and appreciate Szatkowski’s hypothesis, I will argue that the oblique poetics of *Museum for fremtiden*—while possibly flawed—is part in enabling its aesthetics of historicizing the present. This understanding, however, possibly necessitates an engagement with the self-reflexive initiatives offered by the project in terms of exhibition catalogue, handouts, and public program.

While appreciating the exhibition catalogue and calling for its independent review, Szatkowski considers the catalogue and handout formats to “taste too much” like a regular museum experience for him to include in his review. But in refraining from engaging with the discursive components of the project—exhibition catalogue, handouts, public program—he misses the ways in which *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus began to articulate the self-contradiction his review identifies and attempted to offer spaces for the reflection he asks for. Leaving out the catalogue of review, while understandable, makes Szatkowski miss sight of the

distributed character of an event that, I will argue in the following, served to accentuate its manifestation of contemporaneity.

As I have previously mentioned, the exhibition catalogue served in part to allow the visual artists in interviews to elaborate on the complexity of their practices contracted in our dramatization. But the exhibition catalogue did not only serve to do justice to the visual art practices involved, nor did it merely serve to document the exhibition. Rather, it aimed to expand the curatorial and dramaturgical concept of *Museum for fremtiden*. I co-edited the exhibition catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden* with Mathias Kokholm of the small publisher Antipyrine. Kokholm and I commissioned and published additional conceptualizations and critiques of museums of the future, both imaginary and real. We commissioned the author, playwright, and art critic Ida Marie Hede, the author, performance artist, and critic Madame Nielsen, and the collective Center for Militant Futurologi to write texts that would reflect on or criticize, imagine or fictionalize, the idea of a museum of the future: Hede's satirical short story about a museum of speaking statues, vandalized in decolonial protests, Nielsen's self-interrogation of the artist's monumental burial in *Funus Imaginarium* (2010), and Center for Militant Futurologi's utopian manifesto of a "Planetary Futuseum" and collection index of future events and inventions. Moreover, we chose three theoretical texts in English for Danish translation: Boris Groys's "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution," the decolonial and feminist theorist Françoise Vergès's conceptualization of a museum of the future as a "Museum of the Living Present," and the curator Mela Dávila-Freire's critique of the Museum of the Future in Dubai, "Museums of the Future – Between Promise and Damnation." Finally, it reprinted the in a Danish context infamous NFT (Non-Fungible Token, a strictly digital art commodity, enabled by blockchain technology) by the Danish-Kurdish pop singer Tobias Rahim, accompanied by his futural vision of "the Neo Scandinavian Man." A tall book of about 120 pages, the catalogue in other words offered additional philosophical reflections on the exhibition of art, self-reflections of contemporary artistic practices, manifestos of future museums of the future, and even the critique and ridicule of such a constellation. I considered it a multifarious entry to the diagnosis of contemporaneity that I wanted to install as a backdrop to the project as a distributed event. As I write in the introduction of the catalogue, "*Vorstellung as Ausstellung, Ausstellung as Vorstellung*":

The intention of the selection is not to formulate a unifying or exhaustive vision of what a museum of the future is, can, or should be. Rather, it aims to outline some of the different

potentials, positions, pitfalls, examples, critiques, and possible formations of meaning that arise from their constellation. The publication moves between formats and genres, encompassing sketches, fictions, manifestations, artist conversations, museological analyses, and philosophical digressions. Through its somewhat eclectic composition, the catalogue endeavors to give shape to what we might call a *contemporaneity* of diverse temporalities and conflicting experiences of time, emerging at the intersection of exhibiting the present and imagining other futures, and which, we might say, conditions the times about and in which we produce *contemporary art*.¹⁷²

As such, the catalogue invited for a reflection for visitors before or after experiencing *Museum for fremtiden*, but also for outsiders to the project, who might encounter the book at a library or in a book shop. In other words, as a temporal object, the catalogue added an additional medium—and, consequently, an additional form of temporalization—to the mix. A book demands a different temporal investment for the recipient than the staged exhibition, and reading the catalogue in depth would take much longer than the hour of visiting *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid or Kunsthall Aarhus. But the composite nexus of theatrical performance, art exhibition, and exhibition catalogue gave way to a distributed art event, transgressing the temporary and the document, the performed and the displayed, and confused what constituted the work and the works within the work. Moreover, it gave way to the making public of the self-reflection that I showed to be characterizing of the contemporary in Part 1 and 2 as part of the dissertation.

As an institution of contemporary art, discursive mediation of exhibitions is an integral part of exhibition-making at Kunsthall Aarhus. It is, moreover, a fundamental task of the curator in writing wall texts, programs, hosting events, etc. At Sort/Hvid, the exhibition catalogue was on offer at the bar, but the theatre refrained from adding much else to the experience, speaking, instead, for itself. In other words, for the theatre, the dramatization itself served as a mediation. Moving *Museum for fremtiden* thus came to mean my orchestration of discursive mediation with other forms of congregation. I arranged a reading session and panel with contributors to the catalogue, Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, and—in place of Center for Militant Futurologi—the catalogue's co-editor Mathias Kokholm, offering a collective

¹⁷² An English translation of my introduction to the exhibition catalogue is enclosed in the dissertation's appendix on pages 156–158. For summaries of Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, Center for Militant Futurologi, and Tobias Rahim's contributions, see the short introduction of these in the appendix on pages 214–217.

meta-reflection and public discussion on the constellation of museums and the future based on the exhibition/performance and the artistic contributions of the catalogue. Moreover, I hosted artist talks with each of the participating visual artists, elaborating on each artistic practice, their engagement in the production, and their experience of working with theatre-makers. Finally, I organized a research seminar in the basement of Kunsthall Aarhus, a project description of the then future research project, *Oikos: A Cultural Analysis of Care and Crisis in the 21st Century* with the researchers Ida Bencke, embarking on a curatorial research project in relation to the exhibition movement *Hosting Lands*, and the literary scholar and critic Mikkel Krause Frantzen, offering ten theses to guide the cultural analysis of *Oikos*.¹⁷³

Utopia, Dystopia, Heterochronia: Historicizing the Present.

“Making dystopian art today is an act of barbarism,” one of the theses of Frantzen sounded. In the basement auditorium of Kunsthall Aarhus, Frantzen, Bencke, and I were joined by an audience of researchers, students, and visitors. *Museum for fremtiden* was on show upstairs, closing a few days later. Accordingly, I envisioned the seminar as a sort of reflexive culmination of the opening periods, connecting the exploration of the cross-aesthetic project to broader discussions on contemporary art, aesthetic practice, and the historical present. To this end, I had invited Bencke and Frantzen to present their upcoming research project. *Oikos* at the University of Copenhagen set out to interrogate genres of care in contemporary art and fiction, analyzing works and practices that “not only represent but also *perform* care.” I was interested in this formulation for two reasons. First, the question of care was a string in *Museum for fremtiden* as in so many contemporary art exhibitions at the time. Second, the turn from representation to performance—and from exhibiting crisis to performing care—was beginning to dawn on me as a central tension to be discussed in the present dissertation. Throughout the dissertation, I have tried to show how I have mediated a variation of these two artistic and aesthetic approaches to the present.

In his sketching of ten theses to guide the research to be conducted at *Oikos*, Frantzen posed the rephrasing of Adorno’s famous 1949 dictum mentioned above on the barbarism of writing poetry after Auschwitz: making dystopian art in the age of cascading and interconnected ecological crises is an act of barbarism. Instead of depicting dystopic future scenarios

¹⁷³ See a description of the research project on the University of Copenhagen’s website, artsandculturalstudies.ku.dk/research/oikos/. Visit the website of *Hosting Lands*, an exhibition movement between the ruin, the field, and the forest, here: hostinglands.com.

in a present already dystopic, Frantzen urged artists and thinkers alike to become utopian: “Narratives and fabulations are not merely artefacts from the past,” he continued, hinting at the specter of the museum conjured by the exhibition upstairs, “but guiding instructions for the futures to come.” Coincidentally, *Museum for fremtiden* was predominantly received as a piece of dystopic art by the Danish critics if we look beyond Szatkowski’s review. “This is a story of doom,” one theatre review said.¹⁷⁴ “[...] we are not at a museum showing us the future,” another argued;

We are at a place showing us the grim reality we are living in caused by capitalism, over-consumption, digitalization, and depression, caused by the absence of action. It is a museum with the intention of affecting its visitors, leaving us terrified by our own age. It is a museum struggling for the future.¹⁷⁵

With these excerpts fresh in mind, I listened to Frantzen’s poignant thesis and began to ponder: “Am I barbarian?” Thankfully, this is not the question I have tried to answer in this dissertation. Nor do I consider dystopia—or utopia for that matter—to be particularly exhaustive genre definitions to describe *Museum for fremtiden*, although our dramatization of the artworks certainly drew unabashedly on the familiar characteristics of both. Rather, I am advancing Frantzen’s “resurrection” of utopia—Fredric Jameson remarks that the utopian genre resembles a literary Golem, brought to life in times of need¹⁷⁶—and the reception of *Museum for fremtiden* as a dystopic “story of doom” in the end of the dissertation because the familiar dichotomy between utopia and dystopia connects the project to a general debate on the role of art in times of interrelated crises. Much like Adorno’s original dictum, I would like to receive Frantzen’s thesis not as a prohibition but as an invitation to think about the contemporary relation between art and the present.

Underlying Frantzen’s thesis lurks a conviction of art’s positivity, supported, I might add, by curators and artists becoming researchers. Such a conviction frames art as offering “guidelines for the futures to come,” a means of demonstrating how things indeed could be better. A sympathetic request, to be sure—especially when considering the unfathomable decomposition ravaging the period of developing *Museum for fremtiden* on a global level, marked by Corona,

¹⁷⁴ Christensen, “Teaterspejlinger af fremtiden med mikrober og luftballoner.” My translation.

¹⁷⁵ Jessen, “Findes fremtiden?” My translation.

¹⁷⁶ Jameson, *Archeologies of the Future*, 211.

climate, and chronic emergency to borrow an alliterative book title by the Marxist ecologist Andreas Malm that I read during the months of isolation, certain that *Museum for fremtiden* would need to revolve around the pandemic.¹⁷⁷ However, the request is also a challenging one when juxtaposed with what Juliane Rebentisch, reading Adorno and others in her theories of contemporary art, calls the fundamental negativity of aesthetic experience that I called a pursuit of my practice in Part 1.¹⁷⁸ To me, Frantzen's thesis echoes a contemporary art world increasingly eager to lend its imaginative power to enact societal impact in the present as an event of knowledge. But if we limit the understanding of art as only offering earnest guidelines for social transformation, we miss, I will conversely argue, something fundamental and quite pungent in aesthetic experience, namely its negativity. Rather than solely offering candid guidelines for the future, aesthetic experience cannot help but contemporaneously interrupt and thus exhibit the social forms of the present, its desires and expectations, as Groys would say.¹⁷⁹

When contemplating Frantzen's idea that utopian narratives and fabulations offer "guiding instructions for the futures to come," I am tempted to recall Jameson's monumental study *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2005). In this book, its title establishing a similar temporal contradiction to that of *Museum for fremtiden*, Jameson argues, contrary to Frantzen, that whatever blueprints or guidelines the utopias of science fiction have to offer can be read negatively in the pursuit of historicizing the present:

[...] the most characteristic SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the "real" future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come.¹⁸⁰

In other words, utopianism serves as a means of historicizing the present. Similarly, contemporary art and theatre's aestheticization of the present gains critical force by forcing us to perceive ourselves as we are probing our imaginaries and expanding our present. In other words, once again, we arrive at the tension permeating the conception and making of *Museum for fremtiden* between the perception of art and aesthetic experience as either representative or

¹⁷⁷ Malm, *Corona, Climate, and Chronic Emergency*.

¹⁷⁸ Rebentisch, "Theatricality, Autonomy, Negativity. Conversation with Juliane Rebentisch," 65.

¹⁷⁹ I discuss Groys's essay "On Art Activism" at length in the journal article "Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation," enclosed in the dissertation on pages 101-117.

¹⁸⁰ Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, 288.

enactive; between aesthetics as a means of exhibiting the desires and expectations of the dystopian present, or as the performative enaction of other—utopian or otherwise affirmative—ways of being in the times we tend to call contemporary. Against this opposition, I would like to think about art as heterochronic space, allowing for the bringing together of these supposedly opposing forms of temporalization in heterochronic and dialectical tension. In this dissertation, I have explored the cross-aesthetic, intermedial, and interdisciplinary project of *Museum for fremtiden* as a vehicle to consider such a venture—not to claim that the exhibition/performance was successful in all of its own many desires and expectations, but to contribute to the development of a critical concept of the contemporary for dramaturgical and curatorial practice.

In the dissertation and in *Museum for fremtiden*, I have tried to mediate the tension between conflicting forms of temporalization in a way that keeps their relation unresolved and trembling, aiming to evoke an experience of a dialectics at a standstill as we find ourselves on the impossible museum pedestal of the present. These dialectics, I would like to propose, signify the poetics of Lollike's Sort/Hvid: a poetics insisting on the space of doubt and agonism between positive affirmation and negative critique, of offering care by diagnosing crisis, a mediation of a conception of art as opening of the political imaginary and the exhibition of its limits under contemporary conditions. Throughout the dissertation, I have hoped to show how these dialectics emerged in my thinking through the making of *Museum for fremtiden* in its mediation of contemporary theatre and contemporary art. The fact that representation no longer wields power over the historical present through does not mean, in my opinion, that we should refrain from employing it in aesthetic practice nor in experimental curatorial and dramaturgical research. Instead, such research should keep sight of the historicizing dimension of art, exploring the contemporary imaginary curiously while, at the same time, exhibiting it. Pursuing such a preposterous mode of inquiry necessitates an intermediary position that we by no means should demand of neither artists nor other cultural practitioners, but that we just might consider reflective of the intermediate practice of the contemporary dramaturg-curator.

In the following Part 5, the journal article “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation,” I speculate on a method of museum-ing serving to maintain the tension between the conflicting forms of temporalization that *Museum for fremtiden* made visible and that I have explored in the dissertation thus far.

PART FIVE.

Dramatizing the Museum:

Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation

Anders Thruw Djurslev

Introduction: Skull Maze

Allow me to begin with an image: a maze seen from bird's-eye view, its walls drawing the familiar features of a human skull. Resembling a warning sign, almost like a cartoon pirate flag, the image poses death as its omen. "Abandon hope all ye who enter here,"¹ it could well appear to be grinning, as if painted above an entrance to the underworld.

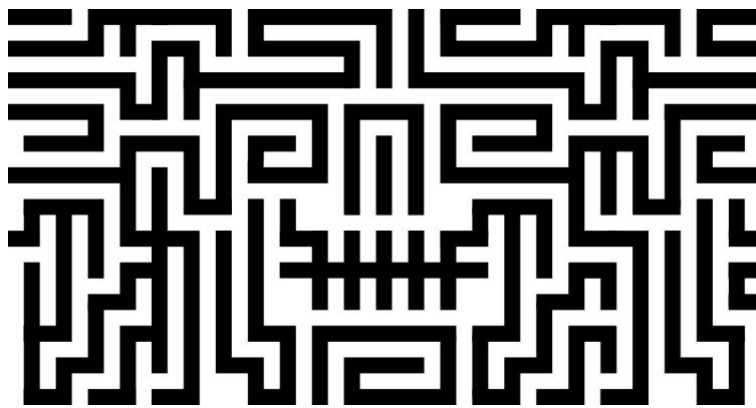


Figure 1. The skull maze poster of Museum for fremtiden, Kunsthall Aarhus & Sort/Hvid, 2022. Illustration by Wrong Studio.

As a poster motif, the skull maze functioned as an entry, not to the underworld, but to the cross-aesthetic art exhibition and theater performance Museum for fremtiden (Museum of the Future, 2022). Nevertheless, the exhibition made out something of a death trap: a dramatic audio guide led groups of spectators through a sequence of art installations and set designs, directing the audience to stage a series of

simulated collective death scenes together. After being asked if they would aid the anxiety-ridden voice of the audio guide in “establishing a museum imagining the future instead of exhibiting the past,” the spectators were invited to pretend being executed, join hands to enter an ego-death ritual, sing along in a one-note elegy, and consume a liquid presented as fungal acid that would supposedly alter their minds and transform them into something “more-than-human.” Finally, the audio guide revealed her true (although fictitious) purpose when asking the spectators to each climb onto their museum pedestal to display their present, living bodies as the historical remains of a culture past: “My museum is your mausoleum,” the voice solemnly whispered to her guests. Exit ghost.

Museum for fremtiden was the result of a collaboration between two Danish contemporary art institutions, the theater Sort/Hvid (Black/White) in Copenhagen and the contemporary arts center Kunsthall Aarhus, made in collaboration between contemporary visual artists and theater-makers. Gathering a selection of heterogeneous artistic practices across the visual and performing arts to invent a hybrid format between art exhibition and theatrical performance under its paradoxical title, Museum for fremtiden explored the conditions of imagining the future in a time of permacrisis. Moreover, the collaboration was part of my practice-based dramaturgical and curatorial PhD project on the politics of time in contemporary art and theater. Accordingly, this article is written from the dual position of the production’s dramaturg and curator, on the one hand, and a practice-based researcher on the other. In both my research and this article, I frame the project’s crossing of art forms, art institutions, and artistic practices as a vehicle for an inquiry into the quasi-historical category of the contemporary as such, urgently demanding us to revise the uniform historicity traditionally associated with the museum. My objective here is to offer a conceptualization, based on the making of Museum for fremtiden, of museum-ing probing such revisions, becoming both an example of and attempt at its enactment.

Expanding History

With playwright and stage director Christian Løllike, I commissioned and dramatized art installations by the visual artists Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand for Museum for fremtiden. Each installation explored speculative expansions of historical time, including deep geological and planetary time (Krag), embodied memory and epigenetics (Nymann), and the queer temporalities of more-than-human agency (Studio ThinkingHand). The installations made use of different media, ranging from drawing over video to sculpture. The dramatization, then, directed the groups of spectators to engage with the artworks and become part of the installations in a staged experience, first presented at the black box theater of Sort/Hvid, and then the white cube galleries of Kunsthall Aarhus.

In the dramatization's titular invocation of the museum along with its continuous obsession with death, meanwhile, Museum for fremtiden at the same time entertained a certain morbid tradition throughout its ambivalent and composite narrative—from the avant-garde futurism of Marinetti to the cultural critique of Adorno and the void thoughts of Smithson—of critically equating museums with cultural burial chambers.² This tradition regards the act of exhibiting in museums as equal to symbolic execution; museal representation as a performative termination of social forms. Once displayed in a museum, an object is turned into a dead thing of the past, a historical artifact, a dot in the narrative of history.

It goes without saying that, today, such an understanding of the role of the museum must itself be considered historical. Like those involved in the making of Museum for fremtiden, many contemporary artistic practices as well as new curatorial models of art-based research interrogate temporalities beyond modernism's linear historicity when dealing with both collections and new commissions. Instead of representing a past dead and gone in order to allow for the emergence of a qualitatively different future, contemporary art has “come alive,” intervening in the present to, for instance, practice care, produce knowledge, revise historical misrepresentation, or rectify the horrors of the past in and through the (con)temporary medium of the exhibition.

Today, works of contemporary art cannot be separated from the present of their exhibition, from their enactment. Consequently, the museum's role of forging and mediating a historical narrative of periodical births and epochal deaths—what Walter Benjamin would already characterize as “the whore called ‘Once upon a time’ in historicism's bordello”³—has become obsolete. The contemporary—the conceptual category that simultaneously replaces (post-)modernity and challenges the idea of historical periodization on which the museum was erected—and, hence, contemporary art, emerge as rejections of historicism by expanding the present in and through the experience of temporal complexity, or contemporaneity.⁴ Consequently, the expressions of contemporary art have become, to use an expression by the philosopher Peter Osborne, “badly known”—performative, ephemeral, dematerialized, immersive, distributed, processual, eventual, sensuous, activist, presentist—and thus often mistakenly considered “exempt from historical judgment in the present.”⁵ Inside the museum, the contemporaneity of contemporary artistic and curatorial practices thus finds itself at odds with the institution's historico-philosophical origin as the institution of historical representation par excellence and the act of exhibiting as a means of establishing a distance between the presence (or liveness) of the spectator and the pastness (or deadness) of the object. How, then, does one engage in “museum-ing” in the expanded present? What would it mean for the museum to historicize a present expanded, to musealize this time of contemporaneity evoked by

contemporary art? To imagine, if only temporarily, our expanded present as past?

These, I believe, are some of the impossibly contradictory questions for contemporary art museums to ask, as well as for the practices that might undertake an exploration of what “museum-ing” might mean today. In this article, I propose a transformation of the concept of “the Museum” to “museum-ing,” inspired by the method of dramatization. Informed by the making of Museum for fremtiden and recent aesthetic and curatorial theory, I aim to conceptualize museum-ing as the enaction of historical representation. Dramatization here is not a means to “enliven” contemporary art, itself always/already performative in the present of its exhibition. Rather, dramatization as museum-ing enables a contradictory both/and mediation between the present and past, presence and distance, alive and dead. This article follows these three pairs of oppositions in its three sections, each formulating a thesis from which a practice of museum-ing might be imagined. In the making of Museum for fremtiden, museum-ing came to mean provoking a push and pull between these oppositions, embodied by contemporary visual art and theater practices, respectively. Ultimately, staging the display of spectators as museum objects suggested that an expanded present and its multiple forms of temporalization can be made historically sensible if we employ the services of representation, which, as everyone knows, is small and ugly and must be kept out of sight, theatrically. Before elaborating on this proposition, I should emphasize that the article is written not by an art historian nor a museologist, but a theater dramaturg imposing as a curator. Thus, a perhaps more adequate formulation of the article’s contribution is to offer a conceptualization of museum-ing based on a dramaturgical practice, inspired by insights from curatorial research and aesthetic theory.

Dramatizing Aestheticization

The museum is inextricably linked to the birth of Western modernity. Perhaps more than any institution, the museum manifests the modern experience of time, or the modern regime of historicity.⁶ As Foucault recalls, museums, along with libraries, are “heterochronias proper of western culture of the nineteenth century.”⁷ The museum “museums” on the historico-philosophical presumption that time itself can be stored and accumulated. Museum conservation is a process of salvaging objects from the passage of time, effectively removing them from the unfolding of the present. The French Revolution marks the origin of the modern museum as a public institution, distinguishing it from previous royal and private collections of art and historical objects. Commonly, this shift in the museum’s meaning is associated with Western nation-building, democracy, enlightenment, rationalism, secularism, and the formation of the bourgeois subject through the double articulation of discipline and enlightenment.⁸ Furthermore, critique has shown how the museum has continued, transformed, and deepened the imperialist, colonialist, racist, sexist, and exploitative characteristics of Western modernity, which contemporary

artistic practices and curatorial models in turn develop ways to oppose.⁹

Zooming in on the aesthetic function of the museum, however, the philosopher and media theorist Boris Groys focuses his account somewhat differently. In his essay “On Art Activism,” Groys explicates the origin of the museum when confronted with the emergence of so-called activist artistic practices in contemporary art. Groys argues that, since the French Revolution, the museum has functioned as a symbolic cemetery of culture. Instead of destroying the ceremonial objects of the Old Regime by way of iconoclasm, the French revolutionaries displayed them inside the museum, removed from their social and ceremonial function—from their present. When confronted with an object inside a museum, visitors face an artifact that has been declared dead, wrung out of time, never to return to its function in everyday life. According to Groys, the display of objects of a now former cultural formation and political imaginary as art—along with the transformation of ceremonial buildings into museums—thus constitutes a process of violent aestheticization. In this line of thought, the museum exhibition originally involves a certain kind of revolutionary “pastification.” “So, since the French Revolution,” Groys writes with characteristically wide brushstrokes, “art has been understood as the defunctionalized and publicly exhibited corpse of past reality.”¹⁰ In temporal terms, the museum, through aestheticization, establishes a historical distance to the object displayed through its defunctionalized re-presentation in the present. In this part of the article, I follow Groys to destabilize the opposition between past and present through his idea of aestheticization.

While Groys’s account may appear anachronistic considering contemporary art, his essay explicitly deals with the current emergence of what he calls activist art. When contemplating the ongoing approximations of art and activism, Groys distinguishes between two forms of aestheticization: art aestheticization and design aestheticization. Design aestheticization puts objects to use in the present, whereas, in the context of art and the museum, “to aestheticize things of the present means to discover their dysfunctional, absurd, unworkable character—everything that makes them nonusable, inefficient, obsolete.”¹¹ Following examples of the historical avant-garde, Groys argues that modern as well as contemporary art re-enacts the art aestheticization associated with the museum with objects of the present. “To aestheticize the present,” Groys concludes, “means to turn it into the dead past.”¹² In other words, museum-ing holds a revolutionary promise. The emergence of activist art challenges this decisive statement by enacting the change it desires to make in the present. Many contemporary artistic practices are activist in the sense that their intended meaning is activated in the present in which they are presented. Such practices are not concerned with re-presenting the present as past or demonstrating the obsolescence of its inventions, but about making the world a better place, redeeming past

injustices, or putting technologies to use within the public gathered in the museum space. Considering this development, Groys provokingly reminds his readers that the political, even revolutionary, promise of art (in the West, we should add) lies in its fundamental negativity: not what it brings to life, but what it determines as dead. In this conception, re-presentation of current ideas, objects, and phenomena in a museum becomes a performance of aestheticizing these as past.

Dramatizing Museum for fremtiden, I found Groys's philosophically informed and characteristically conceptual generalizations useful in thinking about the tension that arises when bringing together the museum specter and contemporary artistic practices; a tension that will become key in my conceptualization of museum-ing. Common to the quite different practices of the selected artists in Museum for fremtiden is that their works seek to intervene in the present of their exhibition. Ferdinand Ahm Krag imagined staging an ecstatic ritual in the space of his installation, Hall of Psychopomps (2022), momentarily causing time and space to drift for the participants, pointing to a planetary consciousness across evolutionary states.



Figure 2. Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Hall of Psychopomps, 2022. Installation view, Museum for fremtiden, Kunsthall Aarhus & Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo by Emilia Therese.

Helene Nymann wanted the audience to sing together in her video and sculpture installation, Ode to Creode (2022), enacting the results of her anthropological research in the Indigenous mnemonic techniques of Aboriginal Songlines merged with the theory of epigenetic and bodily memory. Following epigenetic theory, according to which affects and experiences condition and alter genetic composition, Nymann's installation points to a dissolution of the opposition between genetic lineage, cultural heritage, and social constructions.



Figure 3. Helene Nymann, *Ode to Creode*, 2022. Installation view, Museum for fremtiden, Kunsthall Aarhus & Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo by Emilia Therese.

Studio ThinkingHand's installation of sculptures made with SCOBY, a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, called *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019–2022), sought to decenter the human and destabilize the opposition between life and death through the presence of a simultaneously organic and synthetic nonhuman life form, living, dying, and reviving throughout the exhibition's opening period. Joined by an unexpected fly invasion, the sculptural installation enacted its own semi-autonomous ecosystem of bacteria transferred by the hands of the spectators and the bodies of flies; the sculpture an object of continuous becoming, an evolving organism, rather than a dead representation.



Figure 4. Studio ThinkingHand, Vita . Necro . Vita, 2019–2022. Installation view, Museum for fremtiden, Kunsthall Aarhus & Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo by Emilia Therese.

In and through their temporal complexity, these works and practices resist the notion of art aestheticization that Groys regards as a form of historical temporalization. None of them imply a negative aestheticization of the present, of defunctionalizing the objects they display, nor the ideas they enact. Instead, they expand the present with notions of deep geological or planetary time, embodied memory, and more-than-human agency. They enact ways to experience time differently, live together differently, identify differently, remember differently, relate differently to the deep geological past, the body, and the more-than-human world. In other words, they want to improve the world through their exhibition. Tellingly, Krag and Nymann repurposed ancient inventions and employed Indigenous practices in their works, not to represent these as past cultures never to return, but to invite spectators to actualize them in the present. The works are manifestations of artistic practices that extend beyond the artwork itself. They constitute ongoing and open-ended practices not unlike those of research. In fact, each practice engages in institutional research processes: Krag is a professor at the Royal Danish Art Academy; Nymann is an artistic PhD fellow at the interdisciplinary Interacting Minds Center at Aarhus University; and Studio ThinkingHand collaborates with science and research facilities to conduct scientifically informed explorations of more-than-human life. In Groys's terminology, one could understand these practices as activist in the sense that they activate certain ideas in the present of their exhibition rather than functioning as representations. How, then, do they relate to the idea of the museum? How do we enact the idea of the museum, the

idea of historical time, when the objects and artistic practices in question resist and even oppose this idea in both their material and ephemeral forms? Theater and dramatization might prove useful here. In this context of museum-ing, I agree with Groy's solicitation that we allow the revolutionary potential embedded in the act of exhibiting to haunt the contemporary. This means embracing—and arguably sustaining—the inherent contradiction between art aestheticization and activism as a productive conflict in museum-ing. As Groy affirmatively writes:

The fact that contemporary art activism is caught in this contradiction is a good thing. First of all, only self-contradictory practices are true in a deeper sense of the word. And secondly, in our contemporary world, only art indicates the possibility of revolution as a radical change beyond the horizon of our present desires and expectations.¹³

In the very beginning, playwright and director Christian Lollike and I imagined—rather naively, time would tell—that we as theater-makers would aid the artists in “activating” their works, bringing them to life in a performative experience. Instead, invoking the museum specter, our dramatization constantly pointed to the quality of the museum—and theater—as a representational death machine. Lollike and I wrote a script in which the ideas enacted and actualized through the practices of the visual artists were interpreted by an unreliably subjective narrator as the “desires and expectations” of a crisis-ridden present: the longing for being another, for perceiving planetary contemporaneity, for connecting differently to others and to the land, for relating differently to nonhuman environments. The audio guide, directing spectators through headphones, staged these longings in what could be interpreted as collective death scenes, acted out by the participants. By becoming part of staged tableaux in each installation, audiences were made to not only enact the ideas of the artistic practices involved but also become theatrical representations of the fictitious narrator's imaginary scenarios—her “desires and expectations.” Underlining the performance of historical representation in and of the present, the final installation asked the spectators to step onto museum pedestals and listen to the ideas enacted and the longings explored throughout the exhibition as told in the past sense.

Before moving on to analyzing how this tension between enaction and representation might be understood in the context of the curatorial, we can preliminarily formulate a thesis on the concept of museum-ing, excavated from the dramatization of Museum for fremtiden in relation to the provocations of Groy: museum-ing embraces the contradiction between activating the present and aestheticizing it, simultaneously seizing the expansion of the present and experiencing its loss to historical time, to the museum we leave behind when we exit:

Museum-ing is a self-contradictory practice of simultaneously activating the present and aestheticizing this activation as historical past.

Distancing Immersion

In the current academic qualification of art-based research, the discourse of the curatorial takes center stage. The curatorial shares its preoccupation with the present of aesthetic experience with contemporary art. As opposed to curating, the curatorial “does not only consist in exhibition-making, re-presenting something that already exists or is already known.”¹⁴ Rather, the curatorial implies perceiving what is being curated—exhibition, performance, or otherwise—as an experiment of knowledge. The curatorial produces knowledge by putting relations in motion and setting up conditions for an experiment to unfold within a certain format and time frame.¹⁵ Often referencing the constructivist philosophy of Deleuze, the curatorial changes the objective of the curator from the illustration or representation of ideas to the enaction of ideas. For Deleuze, the method of dramatization signifies the enaction of philosophical ideas in the fictionalized accounts of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, transforming the philosophical text into a laboratory in which narrators and characters alike become test animals, so to speak; a method to write through philosophical problems in character. More generally, dramatization constructs conditions under which ideas can eventually be actualized. Deleuze writes:

I will try to define dramatization more rigorously: what I have in mind are dynamisms, dynamic spatio-temporal determinations, that are prequalitative and pre-extensive, taking “place” in intensive systems where differences are distributed at different depths, whose “patients” are larval subjects and whose “function” is to actualize Ideas...¹⁶

As “spatio-temporal determinations,” dramatization stages a spatial framework where ideas play out under a given temporal duration. In this way, dramatization banishes representation in its immersion of its “patients.” Ideas are not illustrated or represented, but carried out or enacted by test subjects. In the context of museum-ing, however, the rejection of representational means in what Deleuze calls a “theater of immanence” renders visible a contradiction within the idea it seeks to enact: the museum. If we are to conceptualize museum-ing as a mode of dramatization, I would argue, we must complicate the strictly enactive conception of dramatization as a practice dependent on non-representational immanence. For this purpose, I have found curator and theorist Bridget Crone’s curatorial reformulation of Deleuzian dramatization useful while developing Museum for fremtiden and conceptualizing museum-ing. Defining the curatorial as a self-contradictory “sensible stage,” Crone argues that dramatization instigates a “double-action”; a “simultaneous push and pull between illumination and disintegration, immersion and separation.” The sensible stage presents itself as a unified paradox of sensible immersion and distanced representation, bringing

me to the second dichotomy in question here, between presence and distance:

[...] twinning the words 'sensible' and 'stage' mobilizes both the entanglement of bodies in and with the world through their common capacity for sensation, and the structure that acts to delimit movements, relations and becomings that is evoked through the image of the stage. This movement of simultaneous expansion and contraction suggests a doubling that is at the heart of theatre in which there is a tension between the experience of commonality and estrangement, immersion and separation, affection and distance, action and passivity. Put very simply, this is the distinction between being immersed in sensing the world, and the representation of that experience set apart on stage.¹⁷

Crone here mediates a typical opposition in aesthetic theory, well-known in theater and performance studies, the strife between Artaud and Brecht, between sensuous experience and distanced *Verfremdung*.¹⁸ On the sensible stage, we are at once immersed in the world with our own entangled bodies and separated from this immersion as a staged encounter. On the path to conceptualizing museum-ing, I would not hesitate to reformulate this statement in temporal terms: on the sensible stage, I would add, we are at once immersed in the (expanded) present and separated from it as a staged historical encounter. How so?

In the case of Museum for fremtiden, the confusion of presence in and distance to the present was constructed through the dynamic relation between enactive works of art, immersive scenography, directive script, sound and light design, and—as would reveal itself to be the case—meta-communication initiatives, such as the exhibition catalogue, public events, and handouts. The exhibition of Museum for fremtiden placed its spectators in a series of separate immersive environments, three set designs and three art installations. The first two spaces were set designs by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård, introducing the participatory situation, or "condition," of the experience, the use of headphones, and the absent presence of the audio guide. In the first space, a hall of mirrors, the audience was welcomed by the narrator (voiced by actress Sicilia Gadborg Høegh) to "Museum of the Future." The voice began recounting her personal resentment of museums from when she was a child, "this dead place with dead things from the past, haunting us with its stone axes and its statues of dead men." She spoke in the chronicle form to imitate the historical authority of the traditional museum while the spectators could look at themselves and each other:

Oh yes. So did European Man. This is how he dressed; this is how he painted. This is how he constructed his self-image. This is how he remembered the past. This is how he seized the future. What future are we to seize?

This first scene destabilized the boundaries between guest and artwork, participation and display, sensible immersion and distanced representation. The spectators were given simple directions to follow while looking at themselves and each other in the mirrors: waving at one another, jumping up and down, closing eyes, and opening them again to imitate the Skrik (The Scream, Edvard Munch, 1893) emoji during the narrator's enumeration of the crises of the present that she felt were stealing her future: endemic depression, technological terror, climate catastrophe, loss of futurity. Each direction was marked by a dinging sound, providing an impersonal authority to a deeply subjective character. Before moving on, she asked the group if they wanted to establish a museum with her that would begin imagining the future instead of exhibiting the past. "You are welcome to nod," she persuasively suggested after yet another ding. In the following art installations, the artistic practices behind the commissioned artworks were staged within this dramatic framework. The artists furnished spaces similar in size with their distinct practices, and the dramatized voice and participatory situation established a common dramatic condition under which the ideas of the artistic practices would play out.

Writing the script, Lollike and I met the participating artists together and separately to exchange the ideas of their practices and discuss the staging of the exhibition. This process continued almost until the opening; as I was editing the exhibition catalogue, for instance, in which we presented interviews with the artists, some of their reflections found their way into the script, now voiced by the fictitious narrator. The expansion of the present suggested by each artistic practice was dramatized as a longing for other futures or other ways of being in time, performed in the present of the exhibition as transitory death scenes by the participants. A ding would then interrupt this action to guide the group toward the next installation and the next longing, connected by the voice and the common desire for imagining other futures. By doing so, the exhibition enacted the ideas of the artistic practices while dramatizing a temporal distance to their enactment by interrupting each scene with a ding to move on to the next. Obviously, this dramatic construction raised concerns of the art installations becoming scenography, the dramatization overriding the temporal complexity at play in the artworks. To counter this "reduction," meta-communication initiatives such as handouts, wall texts, public artists' talks, and an extensive catalogue became increasingly important to do the artistic practices justice and articulate this tension within the project; an articulation that was deepened during the move from the theater venue to the kunsthalle, where discursive mediation and self-reflection is still much more common.¹⁹

To briefly summarize with regards to the conceptualization of museum-ing, in the framework of the exhibition, Museum for fremtiden audiences were asked to immerse themselves in the ideas enacted by the artworks exhibited and at the same time asked to experience this immersion as a staged encounter. Too often, immersion is considered as a

totalization of the “aesthetic illusion” of the exhibition or performance; indeed, as a “theater of immanence.” On the contrary, I concur with performance scholar Doris Kolesch that immersion should not only be regarded as an extension or totalization of “aesthetic illusion,” even if this often is the case. Rather, we should understand immersion as follows:

not as unreflective absorption, not as a naive amalgamation with a world formed through media, but rather precisely as the interruption of aesthetic illusion. [...] not as a supposedly total absorption in an environment constructed in one way or another, but rather precisely as the dynamic of oscillating between embeddedness and distance, of submersion and surfacing.²⁰

Equally, our concept of museum-ing must seek to enable an oscillating dynamic by way of confusion, not just in spatial but also in temporal terms. A second thesis would then sound something like this:

Museum-ing confuses immersion in the present of the exhibition and the representation of this present as past.

Ghosting the Guest

How does museum-ing enable the experience of the expanded present as past? In the final scene of *Museum for fremtiden*, spectators were invited by the narrator to climb pedestals in a solemnly lit space. Recounting a brief history of the politics of display, from the religious objects of prehistory, through Greek statues, to the racist European human exhibitions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,²¹ the narrator disclosed her preposterous motives of staging the audience as representations of a culture past: “My museum is your mausoleum.”



Figure 5. Scenography by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård, *Museum for fremtiden*, Kunsthall Aarhus & Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo by Mikkel Kaldal.

This rather banal image of the museum as a cultural cemetery—bringing me to the final pair of oppositions mentioned in the introduction, that of life and death—gained an ambivalence in the interplay with the earnest artistic practices enacted throughout the exhibition. However, as I have argued here, museum-ing is a method of self-contradiction. The image of exhibited spectators and the revelation of the narrator as a museal entity, a figure of symbolic revolutionary power, concluded that, for her longings to be realized, the present culture of the spectators had to be made past. In this scene, the element of participation—commanding rather than inviting throughout the exhibition—offered a negated version of itself. Simultaneously present and absent, prerecorded as she was, the narrator of Museum for fremtiden evoked what Derrida called “the visor effect,” the eerie experience of being looked at, of being directed and observed, without being able to see the ghost looking at you.²² Upon their departure from Museum for fremtiden, spectators were confronted with screens of uncanny surveillance footage of themselves staged in the exhibition, archiving their participation as part of the museum’s recordings. On the screen, the narrator addressed their recording as “My little ghosts.”

As art historian Claire Bishop concludes in her study of socially engaged art, participation is not merely a vehicle of political inclusion, but at the same time a medium of negation.²³ Rather than solely enacting the change it desires to create in the present, museum-ing does so while simultaneously displaying the fundamental negativity and historical distance invoked by the museum specter. We might even suggest spectrality as a defining trait of our conceptualization of museum-ing. Both dead and alive, past and present, present and absent, museum-ing haunts the present with the betrayed promises of emancipation engrained in the fictitious dramatizations of historical time and their real effects. The third and final thesis I would like to offer in conceptualizing museum-ing involves a “spectralization” of spectator participation:

Museum-ing implicates spectators in the representational apparatus of the museum by using their participation as a medium of negation.

Verbalizing the museum with an -ing suffix, museum-ing comes to mean sustaining the ambiguities of the contemporary and the historical, forcing a push and pull between embracing the changing constitution of the present and mediating this embrace as a historical moment, as a transition. Rather than claiming Museum for fremtiden to be particularly successful in this endeavor—a relatively small experiment of crossing art forms and artistic practices in the provincial context of the Danish art and theater scenes—I have tried to salvage three theses from its making to inspire future self-contradictory experiments of museum-ing in a broader context. According to this conceptualization, museum-ing relentlessly demonstrates the impossibility of

“the Museum” and the impossibility of historical totalization in the expanded present of contemporaneity—but does so by implicating its artists, curators, dramaturgs, and visitors in the impossible attempts to imagine history. Without a concept of history, the future is at stake. As the contemporary artist and writer Hito Steyerl writes:

History only exists if there is a tomorrow. And, conversely, a future only exists if the past is prevented from permanently leaking into the present [...]. Consequently, museums have less to do with the past than with the future: conservation is less about preserving the past than it is about creating the future of public space, the future of art, and the future as such.²⁴

Museum-ing is not a method of historical totalization. Rather, museum-ing is a performance of the uneven and contradictory processes of historical totalization, asking spectators, artists, and scholars what kind of fictions, experiences, images, and objects it would take to imagine our decomposed present as historical past.

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¹ A reference to Dante’s *Inferno* from the *Divine Comedy*, when the poet descends to Hell. Dante Alighieri, “Canto III” (1308–1321), in *The Vision, or, Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, of Dante Alighieri*, Vol. 1 (Hell), trans. H. F. Cary (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1814), 10.

² F. T. Marinetti, “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909), in *Futurism: An Anthology*, eds. Christine Poggi et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 49–53; Theodor W. Adorno, “Valéry Proust Museum” (1953), in *Prisms* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), 173–186; and Robert Smithson, “Some Void Thoughts on Museums” (1979), in *The Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 41; Boris Groys, “On Art Activism,” in *In the Flow* (London and Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2016, 2018), 43–60.

³ Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” in *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4: 1938–1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. Harry Zahn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 396.

⁴ See Jacob Lund, *The Changing Constitution of the Present: Essays on the Work of Art in Times of Contemporaneity* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2022).

⁵ Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or Not At All* (London and Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2013), 1–8. In a curatorial and museological context, Nora Sternfeld suggests connecting such terms under the common denominator, “the post-representative museum.” See Nora Sternfeld, “Inside the Post-Representative Museum,” in *Contemporary Curating and Museum Education* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2016), 175–186.

⁶ François Hartog, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* (New York and Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2015). Originally published as *Régimes d'historicité: Présentisme et expériences du temps* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2003).

⁷ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces” (1967), in *Theatre and Performance Design: A Reader in Scenography*, eds. Jane Collins and Andrew Nisbet (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 78.

⁸ Tony Bennett, “The Exhibitionary Complex,” in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg et al. (London: Routledge, 1996), 58–80.

⁹ Such critiques and reactions are manifold and complex, but some key examples are summarized in Nora Sternfeld’s writings. See Sternfeld, “Inside the Post-Representative Museum.”

¹⁰ Groys, “On Art Activism,” 49.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴ Jacob Lund, “Aesthetics and the Curatorial: An Exercise in Metamorphosis,” in *Aesthetic Theory Across the Disciplines*, eds. Max Ryyänänen and Zoltan Somhegyi (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023, forthcoming).

¹⁵ The approximation between art and research involves a host of related potentials and problems as both an expression and critique of contemporary cognitive capitalism. See Tom Holert, *Knowledge Beside Itself: Contemporary Art’s Epistemic Politics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2020); and Marina Vischmidt, *Speculation as a Mode of Production: Forms of Value Subjectivity in Art and Capital* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, “The Method of Dramatization” (1967), in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974* (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 108.

¹⁷ Bridget Crone, “Notes Towards a Sensible Stage,” in *The Sensible Stage: Staging and the Moving Image*, ed. Bridget Crone (Bristol: Intellect Books), 171.

¹⁸ Jacques Rancière opens his influential book on spectatorship with a critique of the two general presuppositions inherent in theatrical spectacle, represented by Brecht’s epic theater and Artaud’s theater of cruelty, privileging in the first case “distanced investigation” and in the second “vital participation.” Both positions presuppose an ignorant spectator that must be emancipated through the theatrical performance, either through strategies of distance or immersion, passivity or activation. Rancière concludes that contemporary performance experiments might revoke this opposition and offer one “being at once a performer deploying her skills and a spectator observing what these skills might produce in a new context among other spectators.” Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London and Brooklyn: Verso, 2009), 1–23.

¹⁹ The *Museum for fremtiden* catalogue presented interviews with and sketches by the participating artists, original contributions by contemporary Danish artists and authors, including Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, and Center for Militant Futurologi, as well as essays by Boris Groys, political scientist Françoise Vergès, and curator Mela Dávila Freire, translated into Danish. The selection was made to offer a multitude of often conflictual speculations on what a “Museum of the Future” might look like, including fictional accounts, theoretical imaginaries, and critique of its namesake in Dubai, UAE. For the catalogue in Danish, see Anders Thue Djurslev and Mathias Kokholm, *Museum for fremtiden*, exh. cat. (Aarhus: Antipyrine, 2022). The three translated texts appearing in the catalogue can be found in English versions: Boris Groys, “The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution,” in *The Logic of the Collection*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021), 264–279; Françoise Vergès, “The Museum of the Living

Present," in *Das Museum der Zukunft: 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, eds. Schnittpunkt and Joachim Baur (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020), 267–268; and Mela Dávila-Freire, "Museums of the Future – Between Promise and Damnation," in Schnittpunkt and Baur, *Das Museum der Zukunft*, 105–108.

²⁰ Doris Kolesch, "Immersion and Spectatorship at the Interface of Theatre, Media Tech and Daily Life: An Introduction," in *Staging Spectators in Immersive Performances: Commit Yourself!*, eds. Doris Kolesch et al. (London and New York: Routledge, 2019), 8.

²¹ For an anthropological study of the human exhibitions in Denmark from the 1870s to 1910s, see Rikke Andreassen, *Human Exhibitions: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Ethnic Displays* (London: Routledge, 2015).

²² Derrida's image of the visor effect appears several times in his authorship, notably in *Spectres du Marx* and *Mal d'Archive*. The image arises from Derrida reading Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* and the ghost of Hamlet's father haunting his son without being seen, his identity concealed by a helmet visor: "Like the father of Hamlet behind his visor, and by virtue of a visor effect, the specter sees without being seen. He thus reestablishes the heteronomy."

Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 61. The visor effect resembles "perhaps the supreme insignia of power": "This is what distinguishes a visor from the mask with which, nevertheless, it shares this incomparable power, perhaps the supreme insignia of power: the power to see without being seen." Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 8. In the context of theater and performance studies, the scholar Rebecca Schneider has read Derrida in her influential book *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), which has inspired the dramaturgical conception of *Museum for fremtiden*. See Anders Thruue Djurslev, "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Contemporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research," in *Peripeti* 19 (35) (2022), 59–70.

²³ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso, 2012), 284.

²⁴ Hito Steyerl, "A Tank on a Pedestal," in *Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War* (London and New York: Verso, 2017), 8.

Conclusion.

In this dissertation, I have explored how the concept of the contemporary might gain critical significance for curatorial and dramaturgical practice. I have done so by interrogating select conceptualizations of the contemporary in and through my practice as the dramaturg and curator of *Museum for fremtiden* (Sort/Hvid, Aarhus Teater and Kunsthall Aarhus, 2022). Framing the making of *Museum for fremtiden* as a vehicle to interrogate the contemporary as a critical concept, the dissertation has pursued an aesthetic practice of historicizing the present between dramaturgy and curating, or a poetics of “making the present appear as past,” as inspired by Evan Calder Williams.

As the practical component of my practice-based research, *Museum for fremtiden* brought together contemporary visual artists and theatre-makers in a mediation between art exhibition and theatre performance under its paradoxical title in two iterations at the black box theatre at Sort/Hvid and the white cube galleries of Kunsthall Aarhus, explored in the preceding five written parts, including two published journal articles, as conflictual forms of temporalization.

In Part 1, I narrowed the rather abstract pursuit of historicizing the present by situating the research project within its cross-institutional, interdisciplinary, intermedial, and conceptual frameworks. To exemplify the dissertation’s mode of inquiry, I referenced the dramaturg Jeppe Kristensen’s interrogation of the poetics of his theatre company FIX&FOXY and the concept of the contemporary in an essay engaging with Peter Osborne’s philosophy of contemporary art. Building on Kristensen’s conceptual self-reflection of dramaturgical practice, I disclosed my affiliation with Sort/Hvid as the theatre’s institutional dramaturg and my preoccupation with the contemporary, advancing the formulation of Sort/Hvid’s contemporary poetics as a motivation backdropping the dissertation. In addition, I showed how the consideration of my dramaturgical self-reflection as a research inquiry was enabled by Sort/Hvid’s collaboration with the contemporary visual art institution of Kunsthall Aarhus, the inclusion of contemporary visual art practices, and the invocation of contemporary curating. Given the development of curatorial research within the contemporary art institution during the recent decades, often invoking theatrical metaphors to explicate its mode of knowledge production, I proposed to explore the implications of adapting the notion of the curatorial in the contemporary theatre institution, taken on by me as a dramaturg-gone-curator and practice-based researcher. Accordingly, I proposed the making of *Museum for fremtiden* a means to think through an

intermediary practice of exhibition- and performance-making. Contemplating the colloquial usages of the terms exhibition and performance—traditionally implying, I argued, opposing forms of temporalization, namely, representation and enactment—I provided a state-of-the-art of the turn from exhibition to performance, display to enactment, traversing both contemporary curating and dramaturgy. Against the one-sided embrace of enaction in contemporary art world discourse as identified by Juliane Rebentisch, I disclosed the motivation of the dissertation to repurpose the notion of representation under contemporary conditions; of exploring an aesthetic practice of mediating between representation and enactment to historicize the present in aesthetic practice. To aid me in doing so, I reflected on the title of the practical component, the constellation of the museum and the future, sharing, I argued, a hauntological impulse in mediating presence and absence, alive and dead, past and future in dialectical tension.

In Part 2, I sketched the theoretical framework and method of the research project. I construed the theoretical framework by discussing select critical conceptualizations of the contemporary. Departing from the notion of the contemporary as designating a meta-analysis of presentism, I explored critical conceptualizations of the contemporary as untimeliness (Giorgio Agamben) and the contemporary as a signifying a historical present characterized by contemporaneity (Jacob Lund). Underway, I framed Sort/Hvid's poetics as idealizing Agamben's notion of untimeliness—as an aesthetics of negating the present through a disjunctive relationship to it—and the visual artists involved in *Museum for fremtiden* as oppositely affirming the present, causing the tension between conflictual forms of temporalization embedded in the curatorial proposition of the practical component. To explicate how I have interrogated the temporal togetherness of these conflicting forms of temporalization in *Museum for fremtiden*, I presented Mieke Bal's method of "exhibition-ism" and Maaike Bleeker's conception of dramaturgy as a "thinking through practice," hovering between the conceptual and the practical to circumscribe the research project's method between curating and dramaturgy. Finally, I methodized Theodore Martin's definition of the contemporary as a "strategy of mediation," reflecting on the theatrical dramatization or fictionalization of the present as contemporary in the context of *Museum for fremtiden*, enabling its negative interpretation.

Part 3 discussed the increasing use of curating in the performing arts field and its epistemological potentials in the journal article "Exhibiting the Present, Staging Con-

temporaneity: *Museum of the Future* and Theatre as a Site of Curatorial Research.” The article constituted a state-of-the-art (partly elaborated and revised in Part 1) of curating and the curatorial in the performing arts field, focusing on the curatorial as a research discipline. Written a year before the opening of *Museum for fremtiden*, the article presents the curatorial proposition of *Museum for fremtiden*, aiming to create a cross-aesthetic format able to destabilize the opposition between the historicity associated with visual art and the temporality of the live associated with theatre; between exhibition and performance, drawing on Rebecca Schneider’s deconstructive reading of the performativity of the archive in theatrical reenactment.

In Part 4, I revised the preceding article’s arguments in a retrospective dramaturgical-curatorial analysis of the making of *Museum for fremtiden* and its twin iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus. My analysis argued that while the art installations of the visual artists were already performative and enactive in their presentation, *actualizing* ideas of contemporaneity, their dramatization installed an ambiguity in their aesthetic dynamic, contemporaneously *representing* the same ideas as characterizing of the historical present through the theatrical dramatization of the audio guide and its “performative musealization” of spectator participation. Reflecting on my observations of the moving of the work from the black box theatre of Sort/Hvid to the white cube galleries of Kunsthall Aarhus, I argued that *Museum for fremtiden* pursued a “gray zone” between event time and exhibition time as suggested by Claire Bishop. I ventured that *Museum for fremtiden* was transformed into a distributed event, mediating contemporaneity in the additional formats of exhibition catalogue and a public program by adding additional forms of temporalization, including the making public of the self-reflection deepened in this dissertation.

Part 5 presented the journal article “Dramatizing the Museum: Museum-ing as the Enaction of Historical Representation,” in which I excavated and speculated on a method of “museum-ing” from the making of *Museum for fremtiden*. In the article, I formulated three theses regarding the relation between past and present, presence and distance, alive and dead, serving to inspire future experimentation in museum-ing. Offering these theses, the article argued that temporal contradiction of representation and enaction enabled a mediation of contemporaneity.

In conclusion, the dissertation has argued that we consider the dialectic between exhibition and performance, representation and enactment, as productive in a dramaturgical

and curatorial practice of exhibition- and performance-making preoccupied with historicizing the present under contemporary conditions. As such, the dissertation constitutes a contribution to the emerging fields of practice-based research in contemporary dramaturgy and curating as well as to the discursive negotiation of the critical concept of the contemporary. Informed by the notion of the contemporary as a strategy of mediation in literary studies (Theodore Martin) and a theoretical fiction in curating and cultural analysis (Mieke Bal), the dissertation has considered the contemporary a means to install in dramaturgical and curatorial practice the pursuit of a heterochronic space between the imaginary and the real, the representing and the represented, aiming to begin historicizing the present or, as I have entitled the dissertation, to make the present appear as past.

Following the written components of which the present conclusion is part, the dissertation presents and appendix documenting the research project's practical component of *Museum for fremtiden* and its iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus. Comprising video, sound, and photo documentation, handouts written for the Kunsthall Aarhus iteration, the original exhibition catalogue in Danish, and selected texts from the catalogue in English translation, including my introduction, my conversations with the participating artists, and the script of the performance, which I co-authored with the then artistic director of Sort/Hvid, Christian Lollike, the research project's practical component, *Museum for fremtiden*, is to be considered a considerable part of the thesis submission. Finally, the appendix includes an English translation of my introduction to a book comprising a selection of Lollike's plays, *Underværket* (*The Wonder*, 2022), introducing my conception of Sort/Hvid's contemporary poetics under the artistic direction of Lollike, ending in 2023.

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Dansk resumé

Hvor nuet begynder at fremstå som fortid:

Mediering af samtidighed i et museum for fremtiden.

I dette praksisbaserede ph.d.-projekt undersøger jeg, hvordan samtidsbegrebet kan få kritisk betydning for de æstetiske praksisser, der tager det i anvendelse, specifikt kuratering af samtidskunst og dramaturgi i samtidsteatret. Undersøgelsen foretages gennem realiseringen af den tværæstetiske kunstudstilling og teaterforestilling *Museum for fremtiden* (2022), som jeg initierede og medvirkede i som kurator og dramaturg som en del af mit forskningsprojekt.

Museum for fremtiden var et tværæstetisk samarbejde mellem det københavnske samtids-teater Sort/Hvid og den aarhusianske samtidskunstinstitution Kunsthall Aarhus samt udvalgte billed- og scenekunstnere, der havde til formål at udforske et format mellem kunstudstilling og teaterforestilling. Gennem realiseringen af *Museum for fremtiden* rammesætter min afhandlingen udstilling og forestilling som modsatrettede temporaliseringsformer, der afføder forskellige erfaringer af tid, navnlig repræsentation og aktualisering (*enaction*). Fra min medierende rolle som dramaturg og kurator argumenterer jeg for, at udviklingen af *Museum for fremtiden* peger mod en grundlæggende dobbelthed i både udstillingen af kunst og iscenesættelse af teater mellem repræsentation og aktualisering (*enaction*). I stedet for at forkaste repræsentation i æstetisk praksis, foreslår jeg gennem en refleksion over min praksis en dialektisk og paradoksal samtidighed af modsatrettede tidsligheder gennem en diskussion med bl.a. dramaturgi, kuratoriske studier, æstetikteori, litteraturstudier, kritisk museologi og historiefilosofi i relation til mit arbejde med *Museum for fremtiden*.

Metodisk bygger ph.d.-projektet på nylige tilnærmelser mellem dramaturgi og kuratering samt forestillingen om praksisbaseret forskning gennem kuratorisk praksis. Betragtningen af kuratering som forskningsfelt har sin oprindelse i museumsinstitutionen og er i de seneste år migreret til kunsthaller og kurateringen af samtidskunst. Her rammesættes kuratering i en udvidet forstand under metabetegnelsen "det kuratoriske," som positionerer udstillingspraksis som udgangspunkt for undersøgelser af forskningsspørgsmål og afprøvningen af "propositioner." Denne egenskab er jeg interesseret i at overføre til og diskutere i ramme af samtids-teatret og dramaturgisk praksis, hvilket udgør en af forskningsprojektets delundersøgelser. Teatret er nemlig ikke på samme måde som billedkunstinstitutionen anerkendt som værts-

institution for praksisbaseret forskning. I den forbindelse paralleliserer jeg kuratering og forestillingen om dramaturgi som en “tænkning gennem praksis” under de betingelser, som teaterinstitutionen fremsætter.

Forskningsprojektets tænkning gennem praksis er imidlertid rettet mod samtidsbegrebet som sådan og forsøger derfor at indkredse, hvordan forestillingen om samtidighed kan medieres gennem en sammensætning af dramaturgisk og kuratorisk praksis. I den forbindelse er jeg på et spekulativt niveau optaget af at undersøge betingelserne for en æstetik, der momentært kan få nutiden til at fremstå som fortid under samtidige vilkår. En sådan æstetik forbinder jeg i afhandlingen med Sort/Hvid under Christian Lollikes kunstneriske ledelse i min afsøgning af en poetik, der historiserer nuet.

Forskningsprojektet giver således anledning til en refleksion om forholdet mellem udviklingen af *Museum for fremtiden* og forestillingen om samtidighed som en betegnelse for vores historiske samtid fra min implicerede position som udstillingens/forestillingens dramaturg og kurator. Denne refleksion udfolder jeg i afhandlingens fem dele samt appendiks: (1) en introduktion, der situerer forskningsprojektets tværinstitutionelle, intermedielle, interdisciplinære og konceptuelle rammesætning; (2) en teoretisk og metodisk refleksion, der gennemgår forskellige kritiske konceptualiseringer af samtidsbegrebet; (3) en tidsskriftartikel, der undersøger kuratorisk forskning i teaterinstitutionen; (4) en dramaturgisk-kuratorisk analyse af skabelsesprocessen bag og de to iterationer af *Museum for fremtiden*; og (5) en tidsskriftartikel, der spekulerer over en metode for “museum-ing,” baseret på dramatisering. Endeligt dokumenterer afhandlingen forskningsprojektet praksiskomponent *Museum for fremtiden* i et appendiks, der tæller links til video- og lydoptagelse af udstillingen/forestillingen, fotografier fra forestillingens to versioneringer på Sort/Hvid og i Kunsthall Aarhus, handouts om de deltagende billedkunstneriske praksisser uddelt i Kunsthall Aarhus samt udstillingens/forestillingens katalog, udgivet på forlaget Antipyrine. Appendikset tæller desuden en engelsk oversættelse af mit forord til et udvalg af Christian Lollikes dramatik, *Underværket* (2022).

English Summary.

Where the Present Begins to Appear as Past:

Mediating Contemporaneity in a Museum of the Future

In this practice-based PhD project, I explore how the concept of the contemporary can gain critical significance for the aesthetic practices that invoke it, specifically curating of contemporary art and dramaturgy in contemporary theatre. The exploration is conducted through the realization of the cross-aesthetic art exhibition and theatre performance *Museum for fremtiden* (2022), which I initiated and participated in in the intermediary position of curator and dramaturg as part of my research project.

Museum for fremtiden was a collaboration between the contemporary theatre Sort/Hvid (Black/White) in Copenhagen and the contemporary art institution Kunsthall Aarhus in Aarhus. To develop a format transgressing the media of art exhibition and theatre performance under the collaboration's paradoxical title, I gathered visual artists and theatre-makers invested in questions of time and temporality in their practices. The dissertation frames *Museum for fremtiden's* mediation of exhibition and performance as a bringing together of conflictual forms of temporalization. This mediation, I argue, points to a fundamental ambiguity in the exhibition of art and the staging of theatre as either representational or enactive. The dissertation proposes a dialectical and self-contradictory contemporaneity between them in dialogue with theoretical debates in aesthetic theory, literary studies, critical museology, dramaturgy, and curatorial studies.

Methodically, the PhD project builds on recent approximations between dramaturgy and curating as well as the emergence of practice-based research in the art institution. The advancement of curating as a research practice originates in the museum and has recently migrated to contemporary art institutions such as the kunsthalle and the practice of curating contemporary art. Here, curating is framed and debated as a research field under the meta-category of "the curatorial," positioning exhibition-making in an expanded sense as a means of investigating research questions and enacting research propositions, often emphasizing the performative quality of the exhibition space. The dissertation interrogates such notions in the context of contemporary theatre and dramaturgical practice, constituting one of the research project's sub-inquiries, as the theatre institution is not currently acknowledged as a host

institution for practice-based research like contemporary art institutions are. In that regard, I compare curating to an understanding of dramaturgy as a “thinking through practice” in the context and conditions of the theatre institution, demonstrated through the process of making *Museum for fremtiden*.

In the dissertation, meanwhile, this thinking through practice is directed toward the contemporary as a critical concept, attempting to approach ways in which contemporaneity can be mediated in and through the bringing together of dramaturgical and curatorial practice. In that regard, I explore—on a more speculative level—the conditions of an aesthetics that momentarily can make the present appear as past in a historical present characterized by contemporaneity. In the dissertation, I connect such an aesthetics to Sort/Hvid under the artistic direction of Christian Lollike, pursuing the explication of a poetics of historicizing the present.

As such, the research project gives occasion to a reflection on the relation between the process of making *Museum for fremtiden* and the idea of *contemporaneity* as a characterizing term for the historical present from the point of view of the implicated curator and dramaturg. I unfold this reflection in the five parts comprising the dissertation and the appendix: (1) an introduction situating the research project’s cross-institutional, intermedial, interdisciplinary, and conceptual framework; (2) a theoretical and methodological reflection, exploring different critical conceptualizations of the contemporary; (3) a journal article, investigating the potentials of curatorial research in the contemporary theatre institution; (4) a dramaturgical-curatorial analysis of the process of making and the twin iterations of *Museum for fremtiden*; and (5) a journal article, speculating on a method of “museum-ing,” building on dramatization. Finally, the dissertation documents the research project’s practical component of *Museum for fremtiden* in an appendix, comprising links to video and sound recordings, photographs from both iterations of the exhibition/performance, handouts on each artistic practice, and the exhibition catalogue, published by the press Antipyrine. Moreover, the appendix includes an English translation of my introduction to Christian Lollike’s plays in the book *Underværket (The Wonder, 2022)*.

Acknowledgments.

As a dramaturg and a curator, I am more comfortable behind the scenes than in the spotlight. My practice concerns the mediation of the practices of artists. Accordingly, exploring my own practice as a form of research has involved the work by brilliant, generous, and trusting artists as well as the tireless efforts of art and theatre production professionals. Moreover, the exploration is indebted to the invaluable exchange with fellow researchers and students that privileges a PhD student. I can only hope that the dissertation honours some of the trust that has been vested in me from all sides—and express my gratitude.

I would like to thank my (shifting) colleagues at Sort/Hvid—Christian, Mette, Anne, Maja, Signe, Sophia, Clara, Nana, Dorthe, Morten, Jonathan, Albert, Lærke, and Viktor—for your dedication in realizing *Museum for fremtiden* and your support throughout the research project. I direct a special gratitude to Christian Lollike and Mette Bryndum for their trust, our close collaboration, and our friendship. Moreover, I would like to thank Christian's successor, Nathalie, for her patience with me during the frantic, final stages of dissertation writing.

I would like to thank everyone at Kunsthall Aarhus for welcoming and lifting the challenging format of *Museum for fremtiden*: Jacob, Diana, Iben, Anne, Emma, Joaquin, Leonardo, Sandy, Mathias, and the dedicated café team who ended up running the show in Aarhus. I direct a special thanks to Diana Baldon, Iben Mosbæk, and Anne Stolten for curatorial sparring and Aarhus Teater for our collaboration in Aarhus.

My gratitude goes out to the entire artistic team realizing *Museum for fremtiden* with me: On the theatre side, director and playwright Christian Lollike, set designers Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård, composer and sound designer Asger Kudahl, technical designer Søren Knud, lighting designer Morten Kolbak, voice actors Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, Amanda Friis Jürgensen, Carla Elenonora Feigenberg, and Emil Busk Jensen, performers Jihaan Yussuf, Sara Erdem, Cansel Keskin, Olivia Due, Robin Mae, and Emilie Beske, dramaturg assistant Lotta Grohmann, and more. On the visual art side, I thank the artists Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Rhoda Ting and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen from Studio ThinkingHand. I must emphasize Ferdinand, Helene, Rhoda, and Mikkel. It has taken an extraordinary amount of bravery to lend your rich practices to our dramatization and to this dramaturg posing as a curator. Thank you for expanding my imagination with your works.

A dream of mine was realized when Mathias Kokholm agreed to publish and co-edit an exhibition catalogue for *Museum for fremtiden* on Antipyrine. I want to thank Mathias, the Danish Arts Council, the New Carlsberg Foundation, and all the catalogue's contributors: Ferdinand, Helene, Mikkel, Rhoda, and Christian for our conversations; Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, and Center for Militant Futurologi for writing original texts for the publication; Tobias Rahim and Petra Kleis for allowing us to republish the NFT; Boris Groys, Françoise Vergès, and Mela Dávila Freire for the chance to publish their essays in Danish and in the context of *Museum for fremtiden*; and Mathias Ruthner for translating them. Madame Nielsen is moreover owed gratitude for her comments on both *Museum for fremtiden* and parts of the dissertation. I thank Tobias Rasmussen for all English translations included in the dissertation.

Aarhus University has provided a tremendously enriching environment for my research. I want to thank my students with whom I got to share my work-in-progress and who in turn inspired me by developing future museums and staged exhibitions of their own during our courses together. Moreover, I would like to thank all my colleagues at the Department of Aesthetics & Culture, the Centre for Research in Artistic Practice under Contemporary Conditions, and the PhD Program for Art, Literature and Cultural Studies at Aarhus University for welcoming me into the research community. A special gratitude goes to my PhD colleagues Pernille Lystlund Matzen and Marie Christine Skammelsen for invaluable readings of dissertation sketches. As my appointed mentor and friend, Marie is owed additional thanks for showing me the ropes in academia.

An extended academic community has supported my research in various ways. My gratitude is directed near and far: to Iris van der Tuin for inviting me to the Institute of Cultural Inquiry at Utrecht University, and for placing me at the historical site of H401 in Amsterdam. To Ferdi Çetin and Yeşim Özsoy of GalataPerform for inviting me to Istanbul to spread “cosmic fear.” To the members of the War & Aesthetics network, led by Anders Engberg-Pedersen, contributing to the script of *Museum for fremtiden*. To Isak Winkel Holm and Mikkel Bolt for offering critical readings of my dissertation sketches—and an additional thanks to Isak for aiding me in pursuing a PhD after supervising my master's thesis. To Ida Bencke and Mikkel Krause Frantzen for sharing their research-in-progress publicly at Kunsthall Aarhus in relation to *Museum for fremtiden*, widening the perspective of mine. To Leonardo Impett and Christian Thru Djuurslev for commenting on the initial project description and Leonardo for proofreading the dissertation.

I direct my deepest gratitude to my trio of supervisors, Lise Skytte Jakobsen, Solveig Gade, and Jacob Lund. Co-supervisor Lise has supported me as head of the department. Co-supervisor Solveig has been indispensable in helping me bridging research and practice, crucial for my development as both a scholar and dramaturg-curator. Main supervisor Jacob Lund has endured all my idiosyncrasies, anxieties, and persistent self-doubts from beginning to end with astute calm. Jacob's writing is one of my main sources of theoretical inspiration, shaping my research in more ways than I feel capable of showing. Jacob, without your knowledge, encouragement, and unparalleled patience, there would be no research project and no dissertation.

I would like to thank my friends, my family, and Sofie for love and support, much needed distraction, and a fair bit of patience.

Lastly, I want to thank the New Carlsberg Foundation for financing the PhD fellowship as well as Augustinus Fonden and William Demant Fonden for grants to my international research stay at Utrecht University.

APPENDIX.

Introduction to Appendix.

The appendix documents the dissertation's practical component, *Museum for fremtiden*. *Museum for fremtiden* was a co-production between Sort/Hvid, Kunsthall Aarhus, and Aarhus Teater, presented in two iterations at the Sort/Hvid in Copenhagen and Kunsthall Aarhus in Aarhus, Denmark, in 2022. The video documentation is a recording of the Sort/Hvid version with spectators, saved from the surveillance cameras used to conduct the performance and displayed by the end of the performance at Sort/Hvid. The soundtrack of the video follows the Sort/Hvid version, while the sound documentation file was played in the Kunsthall Aarhus version. Both video and sound are in Danish, but the script is translated into English and enclosed in the appendix on pages 185-202.

The appendix encloses photo documentation, juxtaposing images from each iteration to illuminate the differences in visual appearance between the two. The selection of photographs consists of installation views, detail photos, and photos taken during photo shoots with invited visitors, courtesy of the artists.

Additionally, the appendix includes select texts from the exhibition catalogue in English translation. The exhibition catalogue was published in Danish on the independent press Antipyrine, co-edited by Mathias Kokholm and me. The selection of translations focuses on texts that I have been part of writing: my introduction to the exhibition catalogue, my interviews with Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, Studio ThinkingHand, and Christian Lollike, and the script of the audio guide of *Museum for fremtiden*. It does not include the catalogue's other texts by Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, Center for Militant Futurologi, Tobias Rahim, Françoise Vergès, Mela Dávila-Freire, and Boris Groys. The full catalogue in Danish, meanwhile, is included by the end of the appendix, to which I give a short introduction to the untranslated contributions on pages 214-216. Each contributor is accredited on the page.

Before presenting the original catalogue in Danish, the appendix includes a short introduction that I wrote to a selection of Lollike's text in English translation, demonstrating a preliminary reading of the poetics that I am approaching in the dissertation.

Video Documentation of *Museum for fremtiden*.



Screenshot from the video recording of *Museum for fremtiden*.

The video documentation of *Museum for fremtiden* is recorded at the iteration of the performance at Sort/Hvid from the surveillance cameras installed in each space for the technical staff to time the audio guide with the movement of the spectators. Please find the video on the following link to Dropbox.com:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/k8exf3rmepsfeuzmtzykjs/Video-Documentation-Museum-for-fremtiden.mp4?rlkey=zlko9olqep79kw8j2grg25poc&dl=0>

Sound Documentation of *Museum for fremtiden*.

The sound documentation of *Museum for fremtiden* is the recording used at the Kunsthall Aarhus iteration, designed by Asger Kudahl and directed by Christian Lollike with actors Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, Amanda Friis-Jürgensen, Carla Elenora Feigenberg, and Emil Busk Jensen. Please find the sound file on the following link to Dropbox.com:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/yvk9byf0a157gaaqxqt1h/Sound-Documentation-Museum-for-fremtiden.wav?rlkey=8q4waof6vb4t81q1l2s4x2ey4&dl=0>

Photo Documentation of *Museum for fremtiden*.



The opening scene of *Museum for fremtiden* ("Mirror.") at Sort/Hvid (above) and Kunsthall Aarhus (below) (2022). Set design by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. Photos: Emilia Therese (above) and Mikkel Kaldal (below).



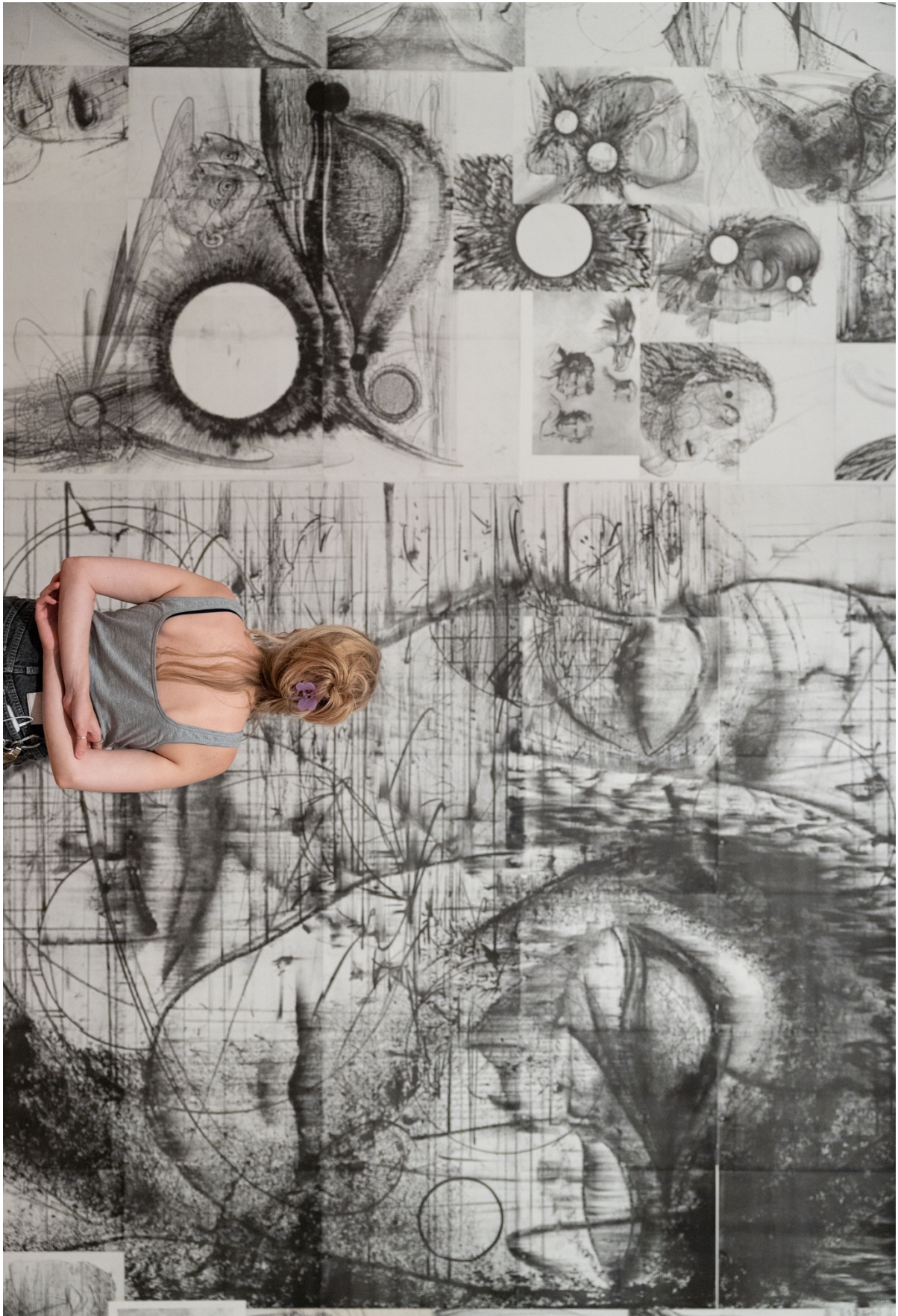
The second scene of *Museum for fremtiden* ("War.") at Sort/Hvid (above) and Kunsthall Aarhus (below) (2022). Set design by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. Photos: Emilia Therese (above) and Mikkel Kaldal (below).



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo: Emilia Therese.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus (2022). Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus (2022). Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), installation view. Photo: David Stjernholm.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Kunsthall Aarhus (2022), installation view. Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), detail. Photo: David Stjernholm.



Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022) in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (above) and Kunsthall Aarhus (below) (2022). Photos: Emilia Therese (above) and Mikkel Kaldal (below).



Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022) in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022).
Photo: David Stjernholm.



Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), installation view. Photo: David Stjernholm.



Detail from Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), detail. Photo: David Stjernholm.



Helene Nymann, *Ode to Creode X* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo: Emilia Therese.



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022) in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (above) and Kunsthall Aarhus (below) (2022). Photos: Emilia Therese (above) and Mikkel Kaldal (below).



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), installation view. Photo: David Stjernholm.



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* (2022) at Kunsthall Aarhus, installation view. Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022). Photo: David Stjernholm.



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita . Necro . Vita* (2019-2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* (2022) at Kunsthall Aarhus (2022). Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.



The final scene of *Museum for fremtiden* ("Museum.") at Sort/Hvid (above) and Kunsthall Aarhus (below) (2022). Set design by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. Photos: Emilia Therese (above) and Mikkel Kaldal (below).

Exhibition Catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden*: Selected Texts in English Translation.

Introduction, *Ausstellung as Vorstellung, Vorstellung as Ausstellung*.

By Anders Thruw Djurslev.

Haunted by the Future.

Museum for fremtiden is an impossible title. It presents a paradox, a contradiction. A museum is typically associated with the past. It offers a space where the history of the past is exhibited. Generally, a museum only relates to the future insofar as it points to the future as a logical consequence and departure from past cultures, technologies, design, science, and art. In other words, a museum builds on a distinct sense of historical time as a cohesive, successive progression. In that sense, to display an object in a museum means to represent it as an artifact of the past, as dead culture. So, what would it mean to exhibit the future in a museum?

Museum for fremtiden is the outcome of a collaboration between performing arts and visual arts, between a theatre and a contemporary art institution. Kunsthall Aarhus and Sort/Hvid have come together to create a work that blurs the lines between art exhibition and theatrical performance. The objective is not to establish a museum predicting the future or to archive a collection of objects with historical significance for the future. Instead, it aims to confront the art forms, the art institutions, ourselves, and our audiences with the question of what shapes our political imagination today—and what is needed to overcome, challenge, or complicate the conditions of our present.

The project is occasioned by the increasingly overwhelming cascade of interconnected crises that in various ways obliterate concrete prospects of our contemporary world. The climate and biodiversity crises that directly challenge the future of life on Earth. The cultural, technological, and economic appropriations of capitalism in terms of privatization, surveillance, financial speculation, and algorithmic foresight. Militarization, escalating territorial conflicts, inequality, structural racism, pandemics, and planetary civil war. The list goes on. Together, these crises appear to erode the future into an abyss in the political imaginary. An abyss that we at Sort/Hvid for many a theatre season has been intently peering down into. At the theatre in Copenhagen's Meatpacking District, we have exhibited the de-spairing feeling that the future is cancelled on stage under the slogan "THE SHOW IS OVER." Meanwhile, the crises have only grown in intensity and scale. To challenge this depressive sense of finitude, *Museum for fremtiden* invites in contemporary art to offer artistic explorations that rekindle our imagination. Is it possible to comprehend the present differently? To widen its conditions? To open ourselves to alternative ways of being in time, alternative futures?

Despite its impossible character, we have chosen to hold onto the *Museum for fremtiden* title because its self-contradiction proves artistically productive. At its best, an ambiguity shines through, both eerie and challenging. If the future can be placed in a museum, exhibited as the past, does it mean that the future will never arrive? That the future is already behind us? What perspectives does such an

ostensibly gloomy diagnosis of the present leave for art? For the portrayal of history? For historical imagination? For political change?

Documentation and Expansion.

This book serves as a catalogue for *Museum for fremtiden*, developed and presented at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus. It unfolds and discusses the temporal investigations brought about by the contributing artists. To this end, the visual artists Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen and Rhoda Ting from Studio ThinkingHand, and director and playwright Christian Lollike of Sort/Hvid, discuss the role of time in their art and diverse practices, their contributions to the *Museum for fremtiden*, and the composition of the collective and entangled work. From their respective positions, the artists challenge the cultural, psychological, and biological mechanisms we commonly use to remember the past, perceive the present, and envision the future. Additionally, the catalogue presents sketches, examples, inspirational material, model drawings, and the script for the performance, in its unfinished form one month before the premiere.

Moreover, for the publication, we have invited others to think and write with, against, and beyond the exhibition title's impossible combination of "museum" and "future." Original texts by authors Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, and the Center for Militant Futurologi, along with a visual contribution by the pop singer Tobias Rahim, confront the temporal paradox embedded in the exhibition of art. Three translated theoretical texts by art theorist Boris Groys, postcolonial theorist Françoise Vergès, and curator Mela Dávila-Freire contribute further to this exploration. The intention of the selection is not to formulate a unifying or exhaustive vision of what a museum of the future is, can, or should be. Rather, it aims to outline some of the different potentials, positions, pitfalls, examples, critiques, and possible formations of meaning that arise from their constellation. The publication moves between formats and genres, encompassing sketches, fictions, manifestations, artist conversations, museological analyses, and philosophical digressions. Through its somewhat eclectic composition, the catalogue endeavors to give shape to what we can call a *contemporaneity* of diverse temporalities and conflicting experiences of time, emerging at the intersection of exhibiting the present and imagining other futures, and which, we might say, conditions the times about and in which we produce *contemporary art*.

The Museum of Contemporaneity.

In other words, both *Museum for fremtiden* and its catalogue are positioned between exhibition and performance (*Ausstellung* and *Vorstellung*, ed.), understood simultaneously as aesthetic forms and temporal perspectives. Within the catalogue's contributions, we find cor-responses and conflicts between practices, theories, and imageries. Along the way, we encounter figures such as the submerged bust of Frederik V, Stonehenge, the ghost, prehistoric fossils, the mime, living scobies of bacteria and yeast, and the Neo Scandinavian Man. We visit the museum as a haunted place; we consider art as a revolutionary meta-tool; we propose the museum institution as a refuge for inclusive, decolonial, feminist, and inter-species care practices in the present; and we redirect the museum's archival policy from the past toward the utopian future.

Finally, we present the preliminary script for *Museum for fremtiden*, introduced by a conversation with director and playwright Christian Lollike. In the conversation, Lollike discusses the challenges and experiences of merging theatre and art; the different work perceptions and spectator positions that we aim to bring together and transgress in the project. *Museum for fremtiden* is a dramatized and staged exhibition where a simultaneously absent and present narrator directs an audience wearing headphones through her shattered mind in a series of installation artworks and scenographies. As the audience shifts between the roles of spectators, actors, and statues, the narrator envisions a museum exhibition that showcases figments of her imagination. It simultaneously represents a fictitious contemporary figure, an imaginary museum, and an exhibition of contemporary art that expands the historical temporality traditionally embedded in the museum as an idea.

Visions of the future are always conditioned by the social conditions of the present. The same applies to *Museum for fremtiden*. And yet, the impossible experiment aims to transgress the conceptions of the present within its exhibition; to surpass the contradictions between past and present, representation and enaction, the living and the dead, exhibition and performance (*Ausstellung* and *Vorstellung*).

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Lastly, thanks to Antipyrine and Mathias Kokholm for co-editing and publishing the exhibition catalogue.

Anders Thue Djurslev (born 1990) is the dramaturg and curator of *Museum for fremtiden* and a PhD Fellow at the Department of Aesthetics & Culture at Aarhus University.

This text is translated into English by Tobias Rasmussen and Anders Thue Djurslev.

Ferdinand Ahm Krag, “Beyond the Gaze of the Contemporary.”

Interview with Ferdinand Ahm Kragh by Anders Thruø Djurslev.

Faces and Mind Mirrors.

Recently, I came across a set of portrait photographs of a Russian soldier, taken before and after his service in World War II. Immediately, you can tell that the soldier's eyes have witnessed something that cannot be processed. Something has made his gaze freeze in a state of utter tremor. A shock from which he will never recover. The Russian soldier had witnessed war in the twentieth century. Apart from finding the photographs deeply unsettling, they also made me contemplate the question of what face, mask, or grimace that would suit the era in which we find ourselves in now. They made me reflect on all the things that ultimately shape a human expression: heritage, genetics, upbringing, social conditions, internal as well as external events.

The occasion for *Museum for fremtiden* is that our historical moment is characterized by a series of interconnected crises. The reality of these crises has cancelled the future as we have imagined it earlier with reference to concepts such as development, growth, and progress. On one hand, they constitute external, objective crises, such as the climate crisis and the biodiversity crisis. On the other, it is evident that these crises are culturally produced. In other words, the external, objective crises are inseparable from an internal, subjective crisis. We could therefore speak of a crisis of subjectivity, and the loss of the future is an essential dimension of this crisis. The crises not only produce a range of psychopathologies such as anxiety and depression but also a loss of face in a symbolic sense. We are part of a culture that is in the process of destroying its own foundation of life and possibly the foundation of life altogether. Needless to say, this culture can hardly bear any promise of a future with it any longer, despite the fact that the Future and Progress have been worshipped as a kind of secular gods to which we have sacrificed our time, bodies, and natural foundations. Now, these icons have crumbled to pieces, leading to a loss of face for the priests who have preached these gods and for the congregations that have supported these priests. In other words, the face loss applies to the societal contract that prevails between politicians, populations, and capitalism in most Western societies.

On a completely mundane level, the face carries our social self-image but, as mentioned, there also exists a cultural and civilizational self-image that is currently crumbling completely. The civilizational self-image has likely always been precarious and in crisis, just like the psychological self-image. However, it is now in crisis in a new and different way. The loss of face leaves us uncertain of where to look. We glance downward, sideways; our gaze becomes diffuse, fleeting, homeless, embarrassed, and anxious. Contemporaneously, there is a widespread demand to hold this cultural and civilizational face accountable for the systematic oppression of other cultures and of nature, which it has perpetuated to maintain its future orthodoxy and dominance. Yet, despite these dystopian

prospects, I actually believe that the cancellation of the future is a good thing. It liberates the gaze from a fixation on an illusion, namely the illusion of the future. In other words, there are possibilities to be found inside the lost face and the diffuse, fleeting, and homeless gaze. Against this backdrop, I have been preoccupied with understanding what occurs with the face, both in a concrete and symbolic sense.

I would like to present some faces that reveal they have been in different places and times. The purpose is not for us to identify with these faces. Identification is, after all, one of the fundamental functions of the face: to help us interpret emotional situations and the intentions of others. Instead, I aim to create images of faces where identification and recognition operate in a manner detached from identity, positioning, and communicative intentions. I view them as mirrors of the mind, as mind mirrors. They are fragmented faces, figures that have traversed through time and space. They encapsulate locations, landscapes, stories, and eras. We carry within us the places that have shaped us—the places we hail from and the places we have visited. Each of us has been raised in a distinct place, within a specific culture characterized by its unique social dynamics and familial context. Yet, we are also products of a particular magical and psychic geography that perhaps only art, music, and poetry can truly articulate. Nowadays, many of us migrate from one geography to another, encountering individuals who bear different landscapes within them. Open, human encounters can serve as alchemical melting points where our inner psychic geographies blend, forming uncharted territories. It is precisely this openness that I wish to infuse into the portrayal of the face for, in truth, we owe it to the face. The face endures an undignified destiny in our time. We ought to honor its openness, its history, and its underlying, unrecognized depths.

Today, our faces are reflected everywhere. On one hand, we are forcefully pushed into specific identity categories from the political front, ascribed with various conditions and privileges. On the other hand, our faces are constantly replicated and multiplied in multiple locations simultaneously: in my phone's photo library, in my partner's, on social media, by entities I am unfamiliar with. It is monitored and disseminated across networks. It is exposed, laid bare. This exposition is uncanny and profoundly weird. And it represents a loss of control, a loss of sovereignty. Whereas Carl Th. Dreyer's *Jeanne D'Arc* (*La Passion de Jean D'Arc*, 1928) relies on the singularity of the face, the uniqueness of character, today we live in an era where our engagement with the face and all that accompanies it is much more mediated and technological.

The Dialectic Between Vision and Gaze.

Michel Serres, the French philosopher, once wrote a reversal of Descartes' dictum *Cognito ergo sum*: "I think, therefore I flow into another." For Serres, thinking is something that has always-already dissolved the identification with the self. If we are open to the world, thinking becomes a chaotic process. Therefore, my drawings are also an attempt at psychological integration, where cascades of places, impressions, encounters, and phenomena are attempted to be incorporated into a single portrait. There are landscapes, but also noise, unintegrated noise, something that is on its way to becoming part of the face's future. The eye can be completely excavated, a black hole, or a white membrane. In both cases, there is no gaze to meet. In this way, these sketches also relate to death, the complete disappearance.

In the first case, the inner self has become a black nothingness, an absolute darkness. In the other case, we see the eye as a white surface. This is an eye that sees beyond. It is transcendental, a visionary sight. I would like to point to a dialectic between Vision and Gaze. Vision is the ability to see, while what we call Gaze is sight in its coded form, influenced by culture, gender, race, language, and history. Vision and gaze emerge almost simultaneously in the infant. As the child begins to see, the parents are there, typically with exaggerated facial smiles, pointing out and naming what appears in the child's field of vision: Look here! Look there! Here is Dad. Here is Mom. Here are your siblings. Here are some objects and so on. These elementary acts of care are, in reality, the child's initiation into a symbolic order that structures vision into a distinct worldview, a gaze. But not everything is said about the vision and its potential once the mechanisms that condition and structure the gaze have been accounted for. I aim to create faces where you cannot meet their gaze, thus pointing to the utopia of vision. The gaze is never total. There will always be a residue of visibility that falls outside the symbolic order. Speaking of a utopia for vision is not based on a naive notion of "pure vision" or "prophetic vision." It is based on the assumption that as the gaze is structured by language, both gaze and language must be reconfigured if one wants to see anew. This is what Rimbaud pointed to when he advocated for a total disintegration of the senses as an echo of the Oracle of Delphi.

There is something significant happening within the realm of consciousness where language structures and forms of perception become bewildered and reshaped. Upon entering that state, time transforms into space, allowing you to be receptive to things. These things are not confined to the visual space we currently inhabit; instead, they originate from an inexplicable source. Let us refer to this as the function of the Seer. I aim to reflect this function through the eyes and masks in general. The drawings depict faces that have entered this state. However, it is important to exercise caution in immediately labeling them as spiritual figures, shamans, or prophets. Such categorizations would assign an identity, whereas the intention has been to suspend identity and identification in order to highlight a Vision that is yet to be—and perhaps never can be—inscribed within the gaze.

Revelations are, of course, easy to dismiss. This type of thinking is prone to romanticization or fetishization, and there is a significant amount of misguided New Age mysticism out there. It distorts the fact that we have experiences that go beyond the normal and have the potential to radically alter our perception of time. These experiences involve a configuration of time and space that is fundamentally different from the usual, marking a departure from the linear structuring of time. In this context, I have been interested in a neural network in the brain known as the *Default Mode Network*. One of the functions of this network is the temporal structuring of content within our consciousness. It ensures that our experiences and thoughts are organized into a narrative about ourselves, creating a sense of coherence between the past, present, and future. This network "narrativizes" the stream of events in our lives, establishing causal connections between memories, thoughts, spaces of experience and horizons of expectation. It also addresses the persistent question of how others perceive us and how we perceive ourselves, maintaining our sense of being an individual within a social reality and our participation in interpersonal relationships. That's why neuroscientists refer to the Default Mode Network as "the seat of personality." At times, this network is highly active, but it can also recede into

the background and become completely inactive, temporarily suspending the socially and culturally conditioned space of experience. This appears to be the source of mystical experiences, ecstatic experiences, and psychedelic experiences. These experiences can arise from both nature and art. When I draw, I become so focused on the laying of lines that I do not think about organizing time or what others think of me. I cannot draw when the network is active. Research shows that psychedelic substances in a similar way temporarily suppress the network, leading to an “ego death.” The self expands and seeks identification with aspects beyond the confines of social and cultural identity. As a result, consciousness can fluctuate between profoundly different states that generate fundamentally distinct perspectives on the world. Simply recognizing the existence of this fluctuation should make us less judgmental toward ourselves and others, and instead foster a curious openness to exploring our own subjectivity. My artistic work aims to create an opportunity for time and space to drift and establish connections between our conditioned present, an open future, and a deep memory that extends beyond our individual lives.

The geological history is immensely fascinating, and my paintings feature traces of fossils that date back hundreds of thousands of years. To be able to envision millennia ahead, we must first be able to look just as far back into the past. Both require the capability for speculations, such as this one: that within your body, you encompass the entire history of the planet. Perhaps even the entire universe. For instance, there is a gene that encodes the presence of a symmetrical body plan. You have to go all the way back to the Cambrian explosion to find the gene responsible for this characteristic. Prior to that, only asymmetrical organisms like fungi existed. But you possess a spine, a vertebrae. We carry these fundamental patterns within us. The speculative question then becomes whether we can access this profound memory, and if so, by what means? Are you capable of recollecting experiences that transcend the boundaries of the human species? Intimations of earlier evolutionary stages, or the consciousness of other species that you in the future can tap into? I am not sure whether it is the most paranormal bullshit ever but as an artist I am fortunately not confined by the likelihood of the theory. Instead, I embrace this kind of speculative thinking as possibilities for transformative imaging.

Modern Utopias and Pre-Historic Cave Paintings.

The French anthropologist Bruno Latour writes somewhere that modernity was an attempt to escape the planet. One might ask, then, escape to where? Despite modernity understanding itself as a secular movement, it has not rid itself of notions of a kind of heaven as the goal of progress. The kingdom of heaven was simply replaced with secular ideas such as the end of history or utopia.

Therefore, my drawings in *Museum for fremtiden* outline an underworld. I see my installation of faces as an extension of cave paintings. I would like to create a similar elastic spatial experience where it is unclear whether you are close to or far from the motifs. When you visit an art museum, you can enter individual paintings, while the overall spatial experience remains static. Cave paintings mix scales and proportions on an encompassing surface. It is fantastically stimulating for the consciousness and points to a *profound mystery*: Why on Earth did they do it? The oldest cave paintings are found in Indonesia. They are 45,000 years old. The cave walls are covered in handprints. People have used

their outspread hands as a kind of image stencils: they spat on and around their hands to depict them. It resembles an ecstatic affirmation of "*We are here.*" These are not hands holding a tool. They are hands standing as pure expressions, pure body signatures. What happened to the consciousnesses of these people when they entered the cave and undertook this labor, creating the world's first museum? The cave must have become an exceptional space compared to the outside world. Within the tribe, there have been all sorts of duties, tasks, conditions, and terms. People then step into another underground space with entirely different rules. You can imagine how it must have appeared visually: illuminated by torches, your own and the shadows of your peers cast upon the motifs you have worked on. They have become someone else. It is a wild expansion of consciousness that was initiated there.

The faces I present may appear alienating. When you are standing in the space that I am creating for *Museum for fremtiden* and you are looking at the faces, it would be truly fascinating if you could relate to extraterrestrial beings and faces, monstrous beauties filled with bullet holes, assembled in such impossible ways that they provoke simultaneous speculation towards both deep past and future. For who are our ancestors? Foremothers? Modernity attempted to separate us from them to free humanity from its heritage, to make it heritage-less, and create the new human. Now we are haunted by all the pasts repressed from this failed separation, and these hauntings can only stop when we learn to become ancestors or foremothers for a future ourselves.

If modernity's images of the future have been a guarantee of a meaningful societal horizon, then it is clearly an experience of loss to have to say goodbye to these images. In the West, we are currently fundamentally challenged in our narratives by the qualified aspect of identity politics. The Western utopian notions of equality and freedom have a wide range of blind spots that are being contested. This makes many people become hysterical. They do not want to hear about it. From a psychological perspective, it is very interesting to observe: the modern white man as a hysteric. He emerges when his privileges are challenged. The hysteric cannot cope with the loss of sovereignty that comes with the questioning of the narrative that makes complete sense to him. So now, he wants to regain control—and therefore becomes completely hysterical.

Depression or melancholy is another reaction to the same fundamental loss of meaning or face. Recently, I discussed with a psychoanalyst the question of whether depression is a clinical condition that should be medicated or a more psychological condition. She believed that depression is triggered by the belief in an ideal that is impossible to fulfill. This leads to a profound, existential disappointment. A disappointment over an ideal that is constantly negated by reality.

I could recognize those feelings ten years ago. Now, I believe that it has probably been more psychological tropes related to certain, more time-bound, historical, collective experiences of time. In "Mourning and Melancholia" (1915), Freud speaks about mourning as a natural process of reaction, while melancholy is pathological. In the work of mourning, you say goodbye to the object you have lost. It can be a loved one, but it can also be something much more abstract, such as an image of the future or a narrative. Melancholy is where you cannot part with the object that has been irretrievably lost. It means that you are permanently in a state of loss. I believe that the labor of mourning is important.

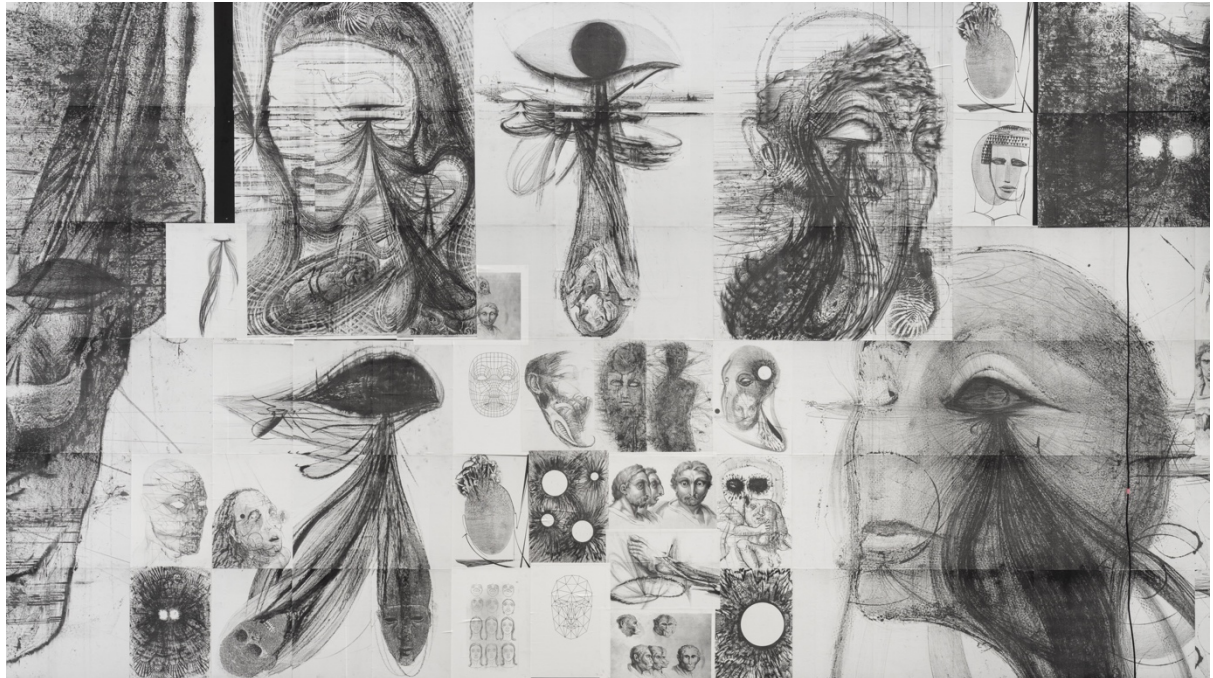
Care is a virtue in our times.¹⁸¹ But you can only care for and mourn over something with which you have a very close relationship, and as such, there is a lot of pseudo-care in our contemporary society, which is symptomatic of a general inability to engage in close life-relations. Depression and grief are significant themes on the contemporary art scene. I am no longer in that depressive space myself; the great loss and the feeling that the future is cancelled. The task remains to bid farewell to that analysis. But of course, that doesn't mean the problems will disappear. Perhaps that's why we are preoccupied with—obviously important—virtues: listening, caring, dismantling imperialistic, colonial, patriarchal ideas of strength, and making room for vulnerable positions. This is all well and good. But what I fail to understand, and what I consider an alarming deficiency in our part of the world, is new virtues of strength. We don't address weakness to cultivate it but to learn to overcome it. Why has it almost become suspicious to address the strengths that are needed?

I believe that if we are to collectively devise new narratives that can regain a foundation, an earth, a place, it is crucial for us to be more receptive to our origins. This entails being more open to the multiple pasts and diverse *places* of origin from which we emerge. It is from these origins that we project the faces of the future onto the cave walls.

Ferdinand Ahm Krag (born 1977) is a visual artist and a professor at the School for Painting and Pictorial Practices at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. In his paintings, exhibited in Denmark and internationally, Krag casts cosmic constellations, deep geological finds, and mapped landscapes into relation with head formation in human fetuses, icons of cultural history, and virtual models. Krag's artistic practice collapses distinctions and oppositions between inside and outside, nature and culture, foreground and background, past, present, and future. In this conversation about his contributions to Museum for fremtiden, presenting a swarm of mysterious faces installed in an immersive space, Krag talks about the cave paintings as a source of inspiration, the Oracle in Delphi, and the evolution of the face in his attempts to momentarily shake our gazes out of the conditions time and place position us in, bringing the spectator into a visionary, transcendental space.

This text is translated into English by Tobias Rasmussen and Anders Thue Djurslev.

¹⁸¹ A note to the English translation: In Danish, mourning/grief (*sorg*) and care (*omsorg*) are connected etymological terms. In literal terms, "to care for" translates into something akin to "to grieve for."



Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Pscyhopomps* (2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid (2022), detail. Photo: David Stjernholm.

Helene Nymann, “Remembering Futures.”

Interview with Helene Nymann by Andersn Thruue Djurslev.

Oblivion and Recollection.

My interest in memory arrived from different paths. There were several coincidences. My grandmother was diagnosed with dementia. I witnessed her losing a significant portion of her memory. Her short-term memory, that is. Surprisingly, this loss also granted her a peculiar ability to travel back in time. She would often revisit the moments of her life where her senses must have been highly active: her childhood, her teenage years. Her consciousness would revolve around the significant events in her life, and she did find genuine happiness within that bubble of the past.

I had been meditating for many years, and at that time, a plethora of new images emerged within me. I couldn't quite grasp their origins, but they were linked to experiences I had had; certain memories, visual elements that flickered into my consciousness. They often took on bizarre arrangements, absurd and abstract. It was at that point that I shifted from painting and sculpture to instead work in video. Video became the sole medium through which I could stay faithful to the images I witnessed and felt compelled to evoke.

A professor at Malmö Art Academy recommended that I read *The Art of Memory* (1966) by the English historian Francis Yates (1899-1981). The book examines the cultural history of memory and illustrates how different historical epochs and cultures have employed various techniques to remember the past and, conversely, how these techniques have influenced the formation of each era's cultural and intellectual development. Prior to the advent of Christianity, the invention of the printing press in 1440, and the current era of digitization, a multitude of vivid, embodied, sensory, and mental techniques used for remembering existed. For instance, in ancient Greece, rhapsodes utilized the hexameter, a specific and repetitive sentence structure, to memorize and thus be able to orally perform lengthy epic poems for audiences. In the realm of theatre, actors were tasked with memorizing lines, stage arrangements, and positions.

One such memory technique goes under the name of the Memory Palace. It involves selecting a familiar landscape or route that you know well and then placing the information you wish to remember within that landscape or route, ideally associating specific sensory impressions with each strand of information. In this way, you make the data you need to remember tangible and spatially organized within an architectural framework. The technique of the Memory Palace, along with *The Art of Memory*, helped me connecting the dots of what I was trying to create with the images and spaces that I connect in my artistic and research practice.

I try to adhere to the concept of memory. It is a more clinical term than, for example, remembrance and recollection. My investigations are not emotional or nostalgic. Instead, I am

interested in the techniques we use and have used to remember: What happens in the brain, what happens in the body? I am not solely interested in my own memories but in the biological and cultural conditions of memory: What is memory today and in the past? What tools have we used to remember throughout history? And how can we apply them today and in the future? My works attempt to give shape to the fundamental structures through which memories operate and offer suggestions as to how these components can be reassembled and used to envision other times—and other futures.

Memory Techniques as Imaging Techniques.

And yet, you cannot mention memory without mentioning recollection. Perhaps I can put it this way: My exhibitions and artworks intend to evoke recollection through artistic memory techniques. When employing these memory techniques, you draw upon your own experiences and memories, transforming them into material for visualization and imagination.

Imaging is central to memory. It operates through constellation, comparison, and composition. Images, as it is well known, are also used for the purpose of remembering, for example, in games that challenge the viewer to recognize faces, icons, landscapes, and symbols. Imaging can thus be regarded as a memory technique that strengthens the ability to remember and thereby enhances one's capacity for knowledge.

The forms and images I work with are derived from research on memory at various levels, from chemical and biological processes to philosophical texts, anthropological studies, and oral traditions. The imaging performed in my work arises within a network of texts I read, concepts I encounter, and images I look at. The crucial aspect is to investigate what occurs when I bring them together in a constellation. I consider my sculptures and video works as junctions or knots of knowledge. They encompass a wealth of ideas, techniques, images, and knowledge about memory, which I merge into a single sculptural form, a single spatial situation.

In this regard, I draw heavily upon the work of the German art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg (1866-1929) and his associative approach to imaging. In the first half of the 20th century, Warburg established connections between art historical forms and disciplines by highlighting the associative links between objects and images, movements and gestures, icons and symbols across cultures, time, and space. Moreover, he considered the space between these connections as having significant importance. Warburg thus suggested alternative ways of indexing, moving away from chronological or alphabetical arrangements, and instead assembling works based on similarities and associations. He did not organize his library in alphabetical order but referred to the relationship between individual books on each shelf as “joyful neighbors.” Warburg's method represents an alternative way of conceiving historical time, aiming to map the routes of the mind. History is not confined to a linear, chronological progression but emerges through the correspondences between images and thoughts from different eras. This is how the memory and mnemonic techniques operate as well.

I was recently reminded of the etymological significance of the word “curation,” “curare” in Latin, meaning “to be curious” and “to take care of.” That is precisely what artists and curators do when we

create constellations in a space. We connect dots, images, situations, and objects within an architecture that the spectator can wander through. Within this architecture, a world is constructed out of what we want to attend to and remember. This task appears increasingly important as we realize how our surroundings influence our perspective and imagination. Many might label my art as absurd constellations spanning various fields of knowledge, disciplines, sciences, and aesthetics. A biologist might question the relevance of reading Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913) in relation to their biological expertise. However, the unexpected juxtaposition of different knowledge domains is necessary to truly feel the materiality of the world from multiple perspectives, going beyond a linear historical approach. As previously mentioned, this is already a pivotal point in Warburg's work.

The Memory Palace and the Google Search.

In connection with my work on Warburg, I have cultivated an interest in the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). He proposed the existence of other worlds beyond ours, with different forms of life and different gods. The universe out there is infinite, and so is our inner universe. We can discover this infinity by creating correspondences between different forms of knowledge. We can continue to generate new knowledge, new worlds, by recombining diverse elements. Bruno was highly influenced by the technique of the memory palace, *ars memoria*. He drew memory wheels with rotating rings. Some now refer to these wheels as the first computers because they could keep generating new outcomes. Warburg actually discovered Bruno in the last years of his life and said, "Finally, I have found someone who attempted the same as me!" Warburg's experiment was never fully completed. Perhaps we can imagine that it has been realized through the Google search engine. Warburg was onto something, but it could not be conveyed through words alone, only through images. Specifically, the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (1927-1929), which consists of a multitude of images, is organized not chronologically or alphabetically but through association, form, and endless connections.

Neuroscience research has shown through experiments that it is the same centers in the brain that are at work when we remember and when we imagine something. Every time we remember something, we are imagining it again. Consequently, our memory creates a narrative about ourselves. Every time we remember something, we are also reinterpreting it. Memory is not static; the memory itself is never the same. You reshape the image every time you revisit it. Some therapeutic approaches argue that by changing your narrative, you can heal yourself from trauma. In this way, the fragmentation of the fundamental structures of our memory is potentially fruitful. When you recognize that the past is not stagnant but subject to our constant reinterpretation, our imagination, an infinity opens in the directions of both past and future.

The more conscious we become of the finer, sensory layers of an experience, the better we can strengthen them. It requires, and has always required, techniques. How do you revisit an experience? Do you inquire about the subtler layers? Was there sound? Was it warm or cold? How did it feel in your body? Such questions stimulate or reactivate the senses and helps the effort to remember. A series of research experiments have demonstrated this. And you begin to add to the narrative: "Oh yes, there was also a dog barking in the background." You will discover that there is an infinite amount of

information in each moment. This realization reveals a vast potential in each existence. And yet, it is a potential many feel is diminishing with the use of digital age, seeing that our attention is taken away from our surroundings to the screen. Through my art, I strive to remind viewers that we can remember—and imagine—in other ways than digitally. That we have a potential for presence. To move away from the in particularly Western feeling of a divide. That knowledge is indeed all around us and that we are all, in every second, connected to it. The air, the trees, a dog, and your grandmother all provide pieces of knowledge that if we stimulate our awareness, or rather attention, we remember that we are each other's memories! (In French, there is an expression called “savoir par cœur,” to know by heart, and in a way, it is also this kind of knowledge I am speaking to—and from.)

Art as Research.

My artistic PhD project, associated with the interdisciplinary research center Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University and Kunsthall Aarhus, explores mnemonic techniques through artistic practice, image formation, and exhibition-making. The project is titled *Memories of Sustainable Futures: Remembering in the Digital Age*. In the title of this project, the same temporal inversion is at play as in *Museum for fremtiden*: we need to remember and cultivate sustainable mnemonic techniques that bring about the understanding of collectivity and co-creation in a time when we increasingly entrust the recording of the past to digital memory and to the dominance of a couple of tech firms. I'm not, however, saying that we should reject all the benefits of the digital. The concern and unsustainability lie in how the digital is utilized, its origins, and how it is controlled. We know who presents the operating systems to us—the memory systems, so to speak—and we are becoming increasingly dependent on them. I was just looking at the newly presented Metaverse by Mark Zuckerberg, and if you look at its aesthetics, you cannot help but wonder: Is this really where we should be heading now? Is that the framework, the medium, through which we should express the next cognitive developments—our imaginaries, our fantasies, and our wild worlds? Is that what we desire, or should we instead start creating those worlds ourselves, as we have always been capable of doing, in and through various constellations? Including through visual art and theatre.

The digital is so addictive. It provides rewards, it's fast-paced. But as a visual artist, I have experienced the feeling of seeing something I have imagined come into being and I have tried sharing it with others. It's a process that everyone can experience. And it doesn't require anything other than consciously applying the tools that you have within you, the ones that were used before the computer. I'm interested in excavating and investigating those tools today. It's not about replacing or going back to something original; it's about raising awareness. It's about asking: How do we want to be governed? How do we want to remember? What and how do we want to experience, together? Sustainability is a difficult word because it is also so Western, commercialized, and appropriated by various agendas, but the subtitle of my project—remembering sustainable futures—is about unearthing the future ways of remembering that we have forgotten, the ones that do not distract our ability to imagine otherwise.

In the Andes Mountains of South America, the Aymara people have a unique understanding of time that differs from our conventional perception. Linguistically, they consider the past to be “ahead,”

while the future is “behind” or “backwards.” Moreover, through bodily gestures, they symbolize the future by pointing behind their backs. Essentially, the future is reversed. This temporality is incredibly thought-provoking. It brings to mind two significant ideas: Søren Kierkegaard’s famous statement, “Life must be lived forwards, but understood backwards,” and Walter Benjamin’s Angel of history from his renowned philosophical theses on history (“On the Concept of History,” 1940): *Angelus Novus*, propelled into the future by the storm of progress, yet with a steadfast gaze fixed on the past, observing the ruins that progress leaves behind, with its back *turned towards* the future. What these examples or references cultivate and propel is exactly the non-linearity of time (and progress) and that time and also memory should perhaps rather be understood in more quantum ways—all times present at once!

My typical approach is to identify a mnemonic technique, preferably one that is forgotten or pre-digital, and integrate it with a biological or neurological phenomenon. The experiment is then focused on activating both dimensions within a single piece of artwork. In *Museum for fremtiden*, I am exploring the theory of epigenetics and incorporating a memory technique developed by Aboriginal people known as “songlines” or dream tracks.

During World War II, when the whole world was preoccupied with death and catastrophes, the American biologist Conrad Waddington (1905-1975) contemplated the conditions for life. He formulated the theory of epigenetics. Epigenetics is the control system for DNA within cells. It governs our physical expression but also determines a range of inherited conditions, such as predisposition to diseases etc. Waddington visualized this dynamic with a landscape featuring valleys, hills, and ridges. He used marble balls as symbols for cells and cell formation, allowing them to roll down the landscape. Their landing represents the fate of cells. When the Nazis cut off supplies in Europe, leading to famine in places like Ireland, studies were conducted on the children and grandchildren of the victims, revealing that some consequences of the famine were inherited. The study demonstrates that the dichotomy between genetics and the environment is unstable. The sculptures float and rotate, suspended from the ceiling. Their forms are derived from the X and Y chromosomes, additionally referencing these alphabetical symbols. However, the sculptures possess a bodily dimension, resembling a bodily memory, as well as a mutated form that speaks to the external and internal influences that life on Earth has undergone and will undergo. In this way, they present a temporal aspect. They embody something within us, developed before any human recognition of time, but which we have now also begun to tamper with. Let us not forget that genetic technology is one of the most expansive fields in scientific research.

Singing together, as the audience will be directed to do in my installation in *Museum for fremtiden*, is a kind of mnemonic technique originating from the Aboriginal Songlines. The Indigenous Aboriginal people of Australia map their landscape through singing. Similar to cell formation in epigenetics, you can perceive the voices or tones as a person walking through a landscape and singing about the surroundings to pass them on to the next generation. There is something incredibly beautiful in the collective singing as a method of mapping a landscape through the presence of the body and voice. The connection between land and melody. It is immediate and accessible, something we can do right now, together. Can we sing our way into the future? Drawing from where each of us comes from, from

our inner landscape, we stand together in a space and attempt to sing together for those who will come after us. For the future.

The Mirror of the Mime.

In the installation space, the sculptures are the centerpiece of the narrative. They do not function as a backdrop for something else. It's about making the audience aware that they are actively participating in creating the story by temporarily transforming them into sculptures.

In an art exhibition, the audience typically participate in the curation of the content to a certain extent through their presence and engagement, taking responsibility for their own knowledge formation. You determine for yourself how long you want to spend at each knot of knowledge and how you want to establish connections between the objects presented to you.

I have learned everything through art. It is the ultimate form of learning. We should allow the audience to play, to experiment, to imagine things. Therein lies both a responsibility and potential for both the artist and the spectator. I can create the space, but I cannot complete it without you. Research has also had a profound impact on my practice; it has become process-oriented. My research colleagues have provided me with some amazing tools, especially from anthropology, to observe human behavior, allowing me to focus not only on myself, my art, and my intuition, but also on the audience, the collective. It is about getting closer to what happens inside the art and exhibition space, about asking how we remember through and with art?

At the Warburg Institute, there is a floor solely dedicated to images. You can pull out a drawer labeled "Hand," and it overflows with depictions of hands throughout time. There are gestures, movements, a bodily language through time that we instinctively understand, and that we can suddenly observe from an external perspective, like choreography. It's almost theatrical. That's why the mime artist is included in the video artwork. He becomes a mirror for the audience, whom themselves experience becoming statues in the *Museum for fremtiden*. The mime artist mimics something he has seen, something from the past, a historical movement. He symbolizes memory in action, in physical enactment. In the video, he is dressed in a Greek tunic, referencing antiquity. He is a comical figure, like the joker in playing cards and tarot. He can operate throughout it all and guide you in the process and transformation. Or like the street mime you encounter on the main street, mirroring you, reproducing the present moment, freezing like a statue, and then being in motion moments later. In this way, he demonstrates that the past is also part of the present, in the contemporary; history is part of the living.

I consider my videos as sculptures. The purpose is to actively engage the viewer in reflecting upon their movements in the space, their own body language, and their role in constructing perspectives and narratives into a story that they want to and can retell after their journey and exploration through the space. It's about experiencing oneself and others in the space in a different way than usual and discovering a new perspective the present moment and the times we are living in. The video for the *Museum for fremtiden* was filmed in the theatre, at Sort/Hvid, and the recording served to embody the space for me. You might sense that in the artwork. The participants have been present here. They reflect upon the audience, leaving a trace of memory for them to follow. Now, it's your turn.

Helene Nymann (born 1982) is a visual artist and artistic researcher at the Interacting Minds Centre at Aarhus University with the PhD project, "Memories of Sustainable Futures: Remembering in the Digital Age." The primary concern of Nymann's artistic practice, presented in many countries across the globe, is memory. In her work, Nymann enacts biological dynamics and embodied memory techniques from different historical cultures in and through moving images, sound, and sculpture. The aim is to discover the potentials of a sensuous and embodied knowledge production, constellating the world and the present anew. In this conversation on her contribution for Museum for fremtiden, Nymann invites readers to learn about her both associative and research-based process, uniting imaging and research, memory and imagination, recollections of the past and visions of the future in a continuous exploration of the conditions and potentials of memory.

This text is translated into English by Tobias Rasmussen and Anders Thru Djurslev.



Video stills, Helene Nymann: *Ode to Creode* (2022).

Studio ThinkingHand, “Queer Futures of Scoby.”

*Interview with Rhoda Ting and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen of Studio ThinkingHand
by Anders Thue Djurslev.*

From a Fungal Perspective.

RHODA TING »In art history, there is a tendency to *represent* “Nature.” Nature is made into something external to the distant gaze of the human observer. Building on our concern about climate change, our artistic practice is an attempt to break free from this logic of representation. For us, the Eurocentric, white, male, able-bodied gaze is deeply rooted in a Humanism that has fostered a particular view of nature and a narrow perspective on other species. This gaze transforms all surroundings, materials, and relationships into resources to be exploited, rather than recognizing them as living forms inherently deserving respect.

We strive to explore and realize new ideas that challenge and transform this paradigm. Such an exploration entails working actively to decenter ourselves and our gazes to create space for other perspectives. In other words, instead of simply depicting a mushroom through drawing or painting, we collaborate with the mushroom itself to experiment with and understand its intelligence, agency, and behavior in different environments. In fact, mushrooms were the starting point of our curiosity in engaging with other life forms and species. We were fascinated by the way mushrooms could sprout from old coffee beans and transform into these peculiar clusters within a matter of hours. Such vitality is profoundly alluring, highly intelligent, and offers a multitude of perspectives beyond a life confined to a supermarket shelf.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN »In relation to the future, amidst the current shadows provided by climate change, we are often presented with two scenarios: either the world will be completely destroyed, or humans will vanish, and nature will be restored in green harmony. Both are typical doomsday narratives that romantically yearn for a future without humans.

Finding both scenarios rather unsatisfying, we explore through our artistic practice alternative ways of perceiving and being part of the world, opening up multiple directions for the future to unfold. Along the way, we have encountered philosophies that explore similar questions. These philosophies often discuss *agency*, the ability to act, and reflect on how to expand our understanding of what constitutes life through the concept of agency. Everything on the planet, in its own way, possesses agency, even objects and materials that are commonly perceived as inanimate, industrial, or synthetic, such as plastic. Even plastic sets off chains of effects in its relation to other things. Expanding the understanding of life is a central concern of our practice. Suddenly, plastic can be regarded as an actor in the world. Obviously, this notion poses a range of ontological and practical problems. And yet, through working with living materials, we have discovered new relationships between elements that are typically seen as opposites: the natural and the cultural, the industrial and the organic, the living and the dead. These fundamental dichotomies become unstable. Synthetic materials are also connected to nature and play an inexorable role in shaping the conditions of the present and the future.

Working with other life forms has humbled us as humans. It allows us to remove ourselves from the top of the hierarchy. In and through our work, we experience numerous processes whose outcomes are unknown to us in advance. We cannot control them. Letting go of control has resulted in a steep learning curve for us. At an early stage, we had to leave the idea of understanding our artworks as expressions of our own emotional or psychological experiences. Instead, it became about taking a step back and observing what the mushrooms had to communicate—in different mediums, contexts, and environments.«

RHODA TING »It is an addictive way of working. Every time we return to the workshop, the artwork has changed. Each time we attempt to sketch a model, we quickly realize that we are trying too hard. The life processes we collaborate with are so intricate that, in many ways, they surpass our own imaginations. And they do not have an endpoint. The imaginaries of the material humble our own. Within the theories that inform our work, you could say that we are engaged in creating “unfinished assemblages;” we strive to keep our practice open to the unknown and become part of generative processes that can yield countless possibilities, many futures.«

Caring for Life Processes.

RHODA TING » We try to care for those processes that are otherwise unseen, intangible, or imperceptible. We combine processes and elements to explore their inter-relationships and their connection to us. We do not know the outcome in advance—we do not know the future—but neither do we believe that the outcome should or ever could be solely within our control. Working with other life forms is a valuable reminder that the human perspective is conditioned and constrained. There is so much life out there that eludes our sight but still influences the world.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »Accordingly, we must be mindful that we are part of the process. In our time and culture, there is a tendency to perceive humans as separate from or even superior to nature, viewing nature as a place we can visit or enjoy during holidays. However, in ecological thinking, everything is interconnected. We cannot keep such categories isolated. In our practice, we strive to bring together elements to uncover their relations with each other and with ourselves, thus forging affective connections between bodies.

Our aim is not to restore or represent nature from our own perspective. Instead, we seek to create conditions for entanglements, new contexts, and novel encounters between the sensory and the potential, even between industrial materials and biological life forms. The fact that a material is industrially processed does not make it less natural. The fact that a material is biologically cultivated does not make it less industrial. Mixing materials means mixing the different time scales and temporalities that shape them. This line of thinking helps us understand the horizons within which they operate, think, and exist in the world.

For instance, it is evident that fungi strive for diversity. Observing a mushroom growing alongside and with other species serves as inspiration, not only philosophically but also on a societal level. Thus, aesthetics is not just a question of forms and shapes that appeal to us; aesthetics becomes epistemology, a means of understanding the world through senses and bodies. That is why we test

theories and explore ideas within our artistic practice. We attempt to counteract the prevailing tendency in Western culture to dichotomize theory and practice, which leads to a linear and, in our eyes, reductionist perception of history. This hierarchical dualism can be traced back to ancient Greece, evolved with the spread of Christianity, and continues into modernity and the present day. Plato juxtaposed ideas and phenomena; Aristotle drew the *Scala Naturae*. These hierarchizing and dualistic paradigms persistently are reproduced in our Eurocentric worldview, ultimately privileging linearity. All relationships become binary: high and low, yes and no, right and left, night and day, chaos and order, male and female, black and white. These dualisms tend to establish a hierarchy between their opposing elements, attributing superiority to one and inferiority to the other. Over time, they have become cultural truths that we must continually challenge to make the spectrum of possibilities visible. In every species, there are deviations, new developments, and elements that break free, affecting unpredicted aspects. If we begin to embrace these paradoxes, we do not need to limit ourselves to choosing between narrow either-or choices—and futures.«

RHODA TING »In other words, we are interested in futures that are diverse and queer. We are seeking a queer way of existing as humans in the world—one that is not linear or binary. Nature serves as an inspiration in this regard. Mushrooms and other microorganisms are inherently queer. Their forms of reproduction inspire us to envision a more vibrant ecological future that is not solely bound by heteronormative reproduction. Most mushrooms reproduce by the intervention of a foreign species, constantly seeking diversity. Fungi have thousands of genders. Consequently, Western culture's binary perspective on gender, sexuality, class, body, and power appears limited when confronted with the realm of fungi. Nature is inherently queer, and as a society and species, we have much to learn from it. Through this perspective, we have challenged the scientific institutions we have collaborated with, including universities, laboratories, and companies. Scientific disciplines often tend to claim expertise in one area, one species, or one specific context. And yet, the world is far more interconnected than that. Treating dynamic and process-oriented phenomena as if they were static and frozen in time seems futile.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »You might say something similar about artworks. Artworks are often viewed as the permanent artifacts of art history, as lifeless remnants of cultures past. However, the works we exhibit, for instance, are often contemporary in the sense that they continue to evolve. We cannot guarantee that they will still be there in two hundred years, stored in a museum collection somewhere. In this way, our artworks challenge the logic of the museum collection itself. How can you preserve a living entity like a scoby (symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, used by Studio ThinkingHand in their works, ed.) in a collection? Perhaps it reveals that you cannot separate artworks from their exhibition; what is represented from what is alive.«

RHODA TING »Indeed, working with living organisms raises questions for the museum and the historical logic that the museum represents. Is it ever possible to preserve the past as it is? To conserve the past as if it belonged to a singular History?«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »In a way, dying and decaying things are more common than things that are static and artificially kept alive. But what is even artificial today? We are accustomed to thinking

of art as something *art*-ificial, as an expression of artistry. However, these categories, such as the distinction between artificial and genuine, are unstable. Organic materials decay and may become even more intriguing with their potential for death, through their transformation and disappearance. The same applies to industrial materials, whose degradation time is just longer.«

Fermenting History.

RHODA TING »Allowing space for the lives of other species provides an opportunity to confront the obsession with history permeating modern Western culture, embodied by the museum institution. How can we think these institutions differently? Perhaps by using them to make visible temporal paradigms other than historicity. Embedded in the modern understanding of history, we find a narrative that participates in the legitimization of colonialism and imperialism. Today, we must ask whose stories are being told, and who has the power to designate phenomena as historical. How do we explain the obsession with creating monuments of oneself and one's own past if not to make oneself relevant to the future? Working with beings that are not human, that have their own distinct experiences of time, helps us diffract or splinter the linear experience of time that is history. Instead of humanizing time on a one-dimensional, narrative level as history, could we queer time and include the temporalities of other species? This will lead to an infinity of possibilities and futures. What I love about mushrooms is the fact that their decay and death play an important role in the forest and its other species. It's not about everything constantly thriving, growing, and living as long as possible. It's more like a network or an infrastructure. Eternal growth is actually a rather foolish idea in many aspects of life. Metaphors like "the tree of life" are often used to depict evolution, but this image is not accurate; perhaps it's more chaotic. There is no original stem. There are no dead ends for the growth of shoots.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »Indeed. The tree of life is not how life originated. It is a rhizomatic or mycelial infrastructure of times, scales, and materials. Nothing is pure; everything is infected. Plastic has evolved to become part of human evolution, embedded in our microbiomes, in our tangible bodies— a cyborg, a hybrid, an assemblage of human and non-human components. The scoby we work with in *Museum for fremtiden* is a result of human alchemy with bacteria and yeast cells. It is not a creature you can find in a swamp. The existence of this life form is entirely dependent on human activity. Thus, it is important for us not to romanticize nature as something prehistoric, pre-human, pure, or beautiful. You cannot create society with "pure" thinking. The future is parasitic and entangled. Therefore, our works incorporate life forms and synthetic, industrial, and organic materials, waste products and byproducts.«

RHODA TING »Our attention is devoted to encounters and re-encounters, time and time again, at different moments in time. We often engage with materials that have been appropriated and exploited by industry, rediscovering their agency anew. We have been working with scobies for a while, and it distinguishes itself by feeling simultaneously familiar and alien. The material is both alluring and repulsive. Scobies are fundamentally a waste product of industrial activity, a living residue from the brewing of kombucha beverages. We ask, then, what might their afterlife entail after their exploitation in the production of goods? How can they grow, where will they go, how do they persist, what is their

future? As a symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast, scobies are a symbiosis of two different types of organisms. They collaborate to create an infrastructure and they transform into an architecture. The waste is alive and essentially constructs its own home, becomes its own home. Quite intelligent, isn't it? The material is both highly resilient and extremely delicate. It depends on the environment in which it is placed and how it is treated. When you hold a scoby outside of its liquid, you must follow its movements to support it.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »In the installation for the *Museum for fremtiden*, spectators will notice a smell of vinegar. It is neither immediately pleasant nor unpleasant, but it is a notable scent compared to the usual "odorless" environments in theatres and art galleries. It makes you aware of your sensory apparatus; you will be able to hear the water dripping from it, smell the vinegar, and feel its visceral folds within the bacterial body of the scoby.«

RHODA TING »When the scobies are lifted up and down in the water, they are simultaneously drawn into and out of their growth and decay. When they are lifted for an extended period, they dehydrate and die. When they are placed back in the water, they rehydrate and become the foundation for new life once again. In this way, the scoby surpasses the temporal opposition between life and death. That's why our series involving scobies are titled *Vita. Necro. Vita.*, which means *Life. Death. Life*. In previous works, we manually hoisted the scobies using a chain pulley. This time, we are employing automated lifting systems, so the organisms will become part of an assemblage of organisms, robots, light, and narrative. Hopefully, it will create a *larger-than-life* sensation, which may also carry a touch of the eerie. Aren't these beings much more intelligent than us? Shouldn't we, in fact, look up to them? Couldn't these vast canvases of scobies become a flag we can raise for all sorts of queer futures? With our exhibitions, our foremost intention is to transmit humility to the spectator. Our aim, in general, is to diminish the prevalence of human exceptionalism by showcasing the intelligences we encounter in other species. With this exhibition, we want people to encounter the scobies. What will their relationship be with them? How closely will they approach them? Will they touch them? What questions do they leave in the minds of the audience? There is no embedded meaning to uncover or decipher. It is a meeting between species.«

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESSEN »In that way, they are what they are. Scobies. We don't use smoke and mirrors to make them represent or symbolize something else. The scobies are themselves and represent themselves. However, it is, of course, an union, a synthesis between industry and organism, between experience and form, that we hope the audience will experience at the *Museum for fremtiden*; a performance that uses scenography, situation, and theatrical staging. With our contribution, we insist on the scoby's self-representation within this staging. In doing so, we challenge an understanding of art as something real in the sense that the scoby is alive. Conversely, it is a dual gaze: exhibiting the living reveals the artificial, the synthetic, and the staged as something equally real. Simultaneously. It is about staying with the difficulties and contradictions, the tensions between the living and the dead, the past, present, and future, the exhibited and the imagined, and splintering their oppositions.«

RHODA TING »Museums often oppose the idea of preserving the living. Perhaps a museum would freeze our scobies and extinguish the life within them. Theatre, on the other hand, is alive and

present in the moment. How do we infuse this liveliness into the static museum exhibition? This problem has been debated widely in relation to performance art. How do we translate an ephemeral event and a form of life into something that museums can preserve, something archival? Exhibiting the living poses an urgent dilemma for a culture that collects the dead.«

Studio ThinkingHand is an artist duo, consisting of Rhoda Ting (born 1985) and Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen (born 1988), working on new ways of understanding nature and interspecies relation-building. As a studio, Studio ThinkingHand collaborates with other-than-human species, such as mushrooms and bacteria, and synthetic materials, such as concrete and robot technology, to make both sensible as life forms. Studio ThinkingHand seeks to expand the understanding of what life is and could be in a world in which binary distinctions falter, often a result of collaborations with research in the natural sciences and technology, whose laboratory experiments Studio ThinkingHand brings into the art institution and public space. In this interview, the duo talks about the breaking down of distinctions between the synthetic and the organic, nature and culture, life and death, in relation to their contribution to Museum for fremtiden, Vita. Necro. Vita.: growing and rotting sheets of scoby, living, dying, and reviving in the exhibition's opening periods.

This text is translated into English by Tobias Rasmussen and Anders Thrué Djurslev.



Studio ThinkingHand, *Vita. Necro. Vita.* (2019-2022)
in *Museum for fremtiden* (2022) at Kunsthall Aarhus, detail. Photo: Mikkel Kaldal.

Christian Lollike, “Between Exhibition and Performance.”

Interview with playwright and director Christian Lollike by Anders Thruue Djurslev.

Freedom and Submission.

When I go to the theatre and I am asked to maintain my focus on the stage, I often find myself gripped by restlessness. I miss the freedom to explore, form my own impressions—and perhaps even to be challenged with more complex issues than those that a well-crafted plot can address. Conversely, when I visit an art exhibition, I miss being captivated, being guided. In exhibitions, I occasionally long to be led. Typically, I sense that there is much to uncover—some intellectual texts on the walls and a thick catalogue that, by their mere existence, promise answers—but it is often too easy to succumb to the limitations of my patience and awkward self-awareness and simply move on to the next thing. Sometimes, I find myself observing the other visitors and their behavior instead of the artworks in these strange spaces in which we exhibit art. Such feelings framed my approach to the work when we invited con-temporary artists to Sort/Hvid in collaboration with Kunsthall Aarhus: to grab hold of some of the imaginative, explorative, and difficult insights and expressions of art, but in a theatrical, staged form that directly engages the audience. Consequently, we asked the artists to contribute with spatial installations that we could dramatize, stage, compose, and expand into a narrative with the audience as actors. The process has been very challenging, but also instructive. Underway, we realized that theatre performances and art exhibitions place the audience in two fundamentally different positions. It is those positions that we are attempting to bring together in the project as one of its central experiments.

There are also two very distinct conceptions of the artwork at play in these two art formats. The process of dramatization quickly transforms artworks into scenery for a narrative or scenic action that risks becoming more central than the artwork itself. Conversely, works of art, although often conceived and designed in a conceptual manner, remain somehow preserved as very real and tangible objects with a real creator behind them, namely the artist. In the *Museum for fremtiden*, we strive to navigate between these conceptions of the artwork and the positions of the audience, aiming to transgress the notion of either-or and embracing both-and instead; both performance and exhibition, both real and staged.

Quite quickly, we decided that sound would be the primary storytelling tool in *Museum for fremtiden*. Sound designer Asger Kudahl and I had just collaborated on *En fortælling om blindhed* (an adaptation of José Saramago's novel *Blindness*, 1995, ed.) at Aarhus Teater, where the audience was blindfolded and wore headphones throughout the performance. I realized that sound has the power to create a profound sense of immersion in a narrative and give the audience a sense of being actively engaged in the unfolding story. In *Museum for fremtiden*, it serves as a tool for instructing the audience in becoming actors. In that sense, the format can be quite manipulative. At the same time, it is a format we are familiar with from the museum experience, where sound is often utilized as a means of communication. We play with these two contrasting aspects when we introduce a narrator who is not

as authoritative as one might expect in a historical museum, but who instead establishes a connection with the audience—a role she wants to assign to them within her imagination.

The Curse of the Title.

As a title, *Museum for fremtiden* is a curse. It carries a promise of something grand that only few works can fulfill. It promises both scientific authority and prophetic science fiction. Theatre and art may not be the best tools for predicting the future. In my experience, they are better at telling us something about how our perspectives and imaginaries of the future shape our present. Isn't it a common saying that science fiction tells you more about the time in which it is conceived than the future it attempts to conjure? In any case, it felt like an important moment when, during our work on the dramatizing the artists' ideas, we invented a narrator who was the opposite of authoritative: doubting, debating, probing, polyphonic, and schizophrenic. Instead of outlining visions of the future, the narrator has become a kind of vessel for the longing we try to rekindle in ourselves and the spectators with this project. It is a longing for *something different* than the historical present we are confined to, having for too long been marked by a depressive stagnation of the political imaginary and the very ability to imagine otherwise, caused by an accelerating surveillance and attention capitalism on the one hand and, on the other, an escalating planetary civil war that seems to have gone into a loop today. The total atomization of our time is, of course, connected to the all-encompassing climate crisis that must form the horizon for any vision of the future. It feels overwhelming, in such a fragmented time, to step outside of it and provide a somewhat coherent diagnosis of the present. Nevertheless, that is what I believe Sort/Hvid as a theatre should seek to offer the project: a critical exhibition of the conditions of our time, challenged or expanded upon by the artists' various alternative, philosophical perceptions of time. In this way, we attempt to connect the critique of everything existing and a yearning for another future.

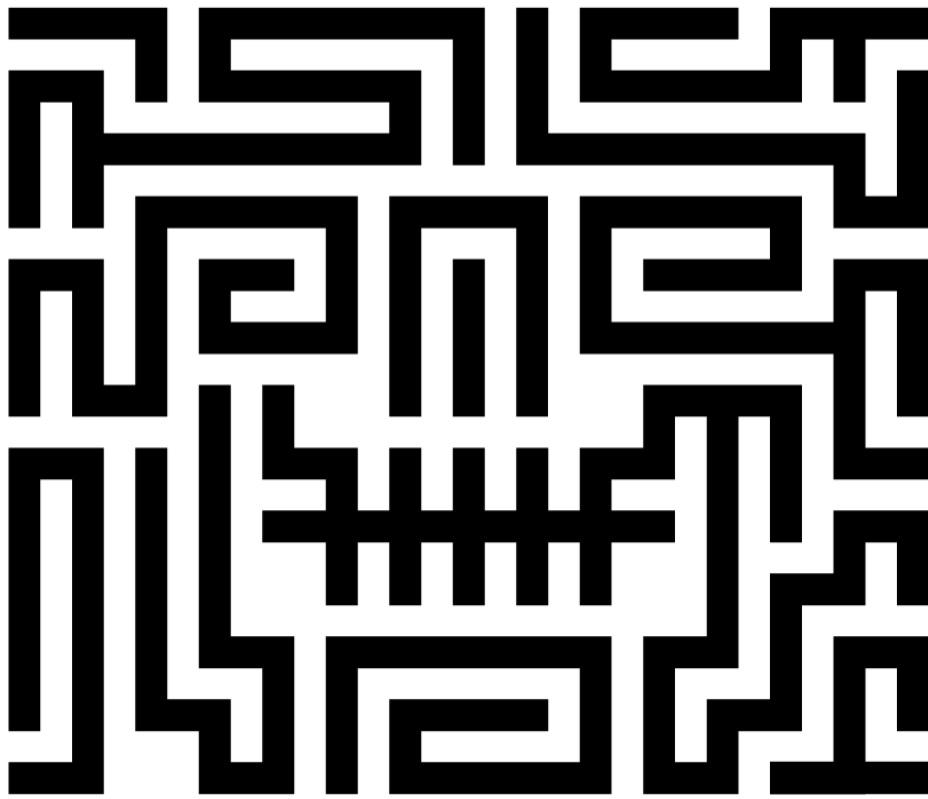
It is sometimes said that one can recognize a society through its psychopathologies, and *Museum for fremtiden* has also become a pursuit for me to draw a psychological portrait of our time. Underway, a dramaturgical progression has emerged: from a depressive diagnosis of the present, characterized by a lack of ability to envision the future—to a more schizo-phrenic, polyphonic, spatialized mind that attempts to evaluate herself and her time, so to speak.

Since my youth, the wise have proclaimed that history was over, that the grand narratives were dead, that reality was a social construction, that everything is mediated, and that all that remains is to play with the wreckage of civilization. Much of what I do is an attempt to rekindle the feeling of an urgent historical necessity. To this end, I believe that we must delineate the abyss of the contemporary age if we hope to envision alternative political realities. Considering a contemporary art that explores an affirmative approach to the present, I still hold onto the necessity of critique. Without the exhibition of the desperation of the present, without a glimpse into the abyss, I believe it is impossible to imagine anything else. Longing must stem from a resistance to the status quo. I have always regarded Sort/Hvid as a contemporary theatre in the sense that we are more preoccupied with showcasing the crises and political horizons of the present than with the grand, timeless questions. *Museum for fremtiden* is perhaps an attempt to connect this critical position to a more fundamental longing.

Christian Lollike (born 1973) is a playwright and director. Since 2011, he has been the artistic director of the Copenhagen theatre Sort/Hvid. In plays and performances like Revolution (2018), Living Dead (2016), In Contact: A War Ballet (2014), Manifesto 2083 (2012), Cosmic Fear (2009), and The Wonder – The Re-Muhammedy TV-Show (2007), Lollike explores contemporary political currents and historical events, probing the limits of the political imaginary through a persisting doubt on established truths.



The final scene of *Museum for fremtiden* ("Museum.") at Sort/Hvid (2022). Set design by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård. Photos: Emilia Therese.



MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE ENGLISH VERSION

Script by Christian Lollike and Anders Thrué Djurslev, translated from the Danish by Anders Thrué Djurslev, for the art exhibition and theatre performance *Museum for fremtiden* at Sort/Hvid, Copenhagen, and Kunsthall Aarhus, Aarhus, 2022. Revised for publication in Anders Thrué Djurslev's PhD dissertation at Aarhus University, 2024.

An unrevised version of this English translation of the script was handed out to English-speaking audiences for the iteration in Kunsthall Aarhus. Notes for this edition explain select differences between the iterations at Sort/Hvid and Kunsthall Aarhus.

The script contains variations on quotes by Lone Aburas' poetry collection *Den sorte bog (B-sider)* (*The Black Book (B-Sides)*, Gyldendal, 2019), Theis Ørntoft and Ferdinand Ahm Krag's text "Fremtiden Direkte: Omstilling" ("Live from the Future: Transition," *Dagbladet Information*, 2015), and from the work of Center for Militant Futurologi.

The authors thank the artists Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, and Studio ThinkingHand, and the research network War & Aesthetics and for the collaboration on the development of the script.

Moreover, we thank Solveig Gade, Tine Voss Ilum, and Lotta Grohmann for readings and comments.

English Summary of MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE at Kunsthal Aarhus

Background. *Museum for fremtiden* is a cross-aesthetic experiment between an art exhibition and a theatre performance, made in collaboration between visual artists and theatre makers. The experience takes you and a group of others through six installations that address themes such as climate change, war, identity, memory, nature, and contemporary history.

The voice of a young woman directs you through her anxieties and longings, asking us to stage scenes from her imagination. She asks the audience to follow basic instructions through the museum. If you are an English speaker, we suggest you follow the script below and read the summary beforehand, and otherwise mimic the other guests when inside the exhibition.

Arrival. Please take off your shoes and put them on the shelf. Use your phone to access the audiowalk. Log onto the Wi-Fi **Museum for fremtiden**. Use the password **fremtidskunst**. Finally, access the website **museumforfremtiden.dk** and press play. If you experience fallouts, please press **Opdater** and play again.

Scene 1: Mirror. The first scene is played out in a hall of mirrors. Here, the voice of a young woman tells us that she hated going to museums when she was a child; a dead place with statues of dead men. She asks if we want to make a different museum with her, trying to imagine the future rather than representing the past. Being horrified by the ongoing ecological disaster, she feels that her future is taken from her. As your guide, she tells us to follow her directions, beginning by testing your equipment. Here are the instructions of this scene:

1. "Put up your right hand when I speak in your right ear."
2. "Put up your left when I speak in your left ear."
3. "Put your right-hand in. Put your right hand out. Put your right-hand in. And shake it all about."
4. "Wave to the other guests."
5. "Try walking around like you are in a real museum, looking at dead things."
6. "Stop and find yourself in a mirror."
7. "Now make the *Scream* emoji that has a blue head and shudders. Hehe, thanks."
8. "Let's jump. 1-2-3 – Jump!" x 3.
9. "Find the door to the next room by the end of the space on your right hand."

Scene 2: War. The second scene is played around a burnt-out car. The guide tells us that she plays a lot of video games. She recounts a fantasy of becoming a part of a sabotage group in a virtual narrative, planning to take down a fossil capitalist headquarters. However, the mission fails, and she is taken out in the desert, finding herself at gunpoint to be executed. The guide asks you to open our eyes, stand up, turn around, and go down on our knees. Then she asks you to drop dead when gunshots are fired. After you laid down, the audio guide talks about her worry for the current or coming planetary civil war. In the final part of this scene, she enumerates snapshots of refugees that have been gathered in collaboration with scholars researching contemporary warfare. The guide wants to pause history. Here is a list of the actions you are asked to follow in this room:

1. "Please sit down where you want and close your eyes."
2. "Stand up. Turn around and go to your knees. When shots are fired, please fall down and play dead."
3. "Let's go to the next room."

Scene 3: Face. In the next room, you will find walls plastered with images of faces by the artist and painter Ferdinand Ahm Krag. The work is entitled *Hall of Pscychopomps*. A psycho-pomp is a spirit that guides your soul from the world of the living to the realm of the dead. In the middle of the room, there is a version of an Ancient Chinese incense clock. The guide re-flects on notions of identity in relation to surveillance, face recognition, phony masks, identity categories, self-absorption. She says drawing helps her forget herself and the present. She imagines us leaving ourselves and becoming one, inspired by deep geological images and religious sensations, while revealing our shadows on the walls like in ancient cave paintings. Finally, the guide reflects on ways to transcend the present, reaching back in natural history to excavate different ways to be human. Here is a list of the actions you are asked to follow in this room:

1. "Please form a circle and put on your mask. Take a step forward."
2. "Please join hands."
3. "Please release each other's hands and turn around."
4. "Pass through the hallway until you arrive at the sculptures."

Scene 4: Memory. In the next room, you will find to a video work (*Ode to Creode*) and two sculptures by the artist Helene Nymann (*Ode to Creode X*, *Ode to Creode Y*). While commenting the video work, the guide reflects on her relationship with her grandmother who suffers from dementia, on genetic editing, on the possibility of removing our inherited desires to colonize and exploit the world. She asks if we must change the past to change our future. Finally, she talks about the Aboriginal concepts of Dreamtime and Song Lines, asking us to join our voices with hers in singing the landscape forth. Here is a list of the actions you are asked to follow in this room:

1. "Please sit down where you want."
2. "Please stand up and sing the tone I am singing. You are welcome to move while singing along."
3. "Follow the hallway, and by the end, turn to the right."

Scene 5: Nature. In the next room, we are asked to investigate the tubs inhabiting the room. The guide talks about our world being full of trash from earlier generations. The SCOPY sculptures (Symbiosis of Bacteria and Yeast used for kombucha brewing), made by the Danish-Australian duo Studio ThinkingHand, rise from the tubs like organic pillars. The work is entitled *Vita . Necro . Vita*. The guide talks about mushrooms and fungi being able to create connections between organic and industrial materials – and their ability to widen our imagination. She tells us that the mushroom we have just drunk will fester in our minds and bodies and change us in the coming hours and days, making us hosts for something more-than-human. Here is a list of the actions you are asked to follow in this room:

1. "Feel free to investigate the tubs."
2. "Please form a line."
3. "Please drink this liquid mushroom."
4. "You are welcome to touch them, gently."
5. "Go to the next room. Search for the opening on your right."

Scene 6: Museum. Lastly, you are asked to go to next room, finding a space full of pedestals. On one of them, your shoes are placed. The guide returns to talking about museums as in the beginning of the work, being a place of history and the dead. While telling a short art history of museums, Greek sculptures, and the exhibition of Indigenous people in Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, you are asked to put on our shoes and stand up on the podiums. She summarizes: Museums show us the lives and imaginaries of dead cultures. Her museum is our mausoleum, she says, and moves on to tell us about our present time in the past tense. How we used to run faster and faster, how we desperately talked about returning to nature, how we discussed new technologies, and surveilled each other. She concludes by saying it was the time where we talked about the future being over. Here is a list of the actions you are asked to follow in this room:

1. "Please sit down on a pedestal and put on your shoes."
2. "Please sit like you are Shiva or Buddha."
3. "Please stand on the pedestal like you are a hero of our time."
4. "Please stand like you want to be remembered."

1. MIRROR.

Visitors arrive in a cabinet of mirrors. Through headphones, at voice begins to speak. Scenography by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård.

A

Welcome to *Museum of the Future*.

Back when I was a kid, I used to hate when our teacher dragged us to museums. This dead place with dead things from the past, standing there to haunt us with their stone axes, and its statues of dead men.

Oh yes, so did European Man. This is how he dressed; this is how he painted. This is how he drew his self-image; this is how he remembered the past. This is how he seized the future.

What future are we to seize?

I'm feeling like establishing another kind of museum. A museum in which we, instead of exhibiting the past, start imagining the future. Do you want to be part of that? You are welcome to nod.

Let's test your equipment.

Now, I am speaking in your right ear. (*Dinging sound*). Please lift your right hand if you can hear my voice in your right ear. Thank you.

Now, I am speaking in your left ear. (*Dinging sound*). Please lift your left hand if you can hear my voice in your right ear. Thank you.

(*Dinging sound*). Now, put your right hand in, put your right hand out, put your right hand in – and shake it all about. (*Chuckles*). Thanks.

Throughout the museum, I am going to give you instructions that I ask you to follow. I promise that it won't be embarrassing. A bit awkward, tops. Anyway, let's agree that when you hear this sound – (*Dinging sound*) – I'll give you an instruction that you then follow. Let's try:

(*Dinging sound*). Wave to the other visitors.

(*Dinging sound*). Walk about between each other and try looking like you are visiting an actual museum. You often take on this special walk when you move about and look at all the old stuff ...

(*Dinging sound*). Please stand still and find yourselves in the mirrors.

What time in history do we find ourselves in, now?

They say the world is ending.

That our system – the capitalist democratic liberalist blah blah blah – is in a state of crisis, global competition is intensified, the pace is racing, inequality is escalating, wars are breaking out everywhere, the ice is melting, the atmosphere is burning, the temperatures are rising, every second a new species goes extinct, another person must flee.

What if I'm scared? Are you scared?

(Dinging sound). Try to make that blue headed *The Scream* emoji, representing horror, in the mirror.

Thanks.

Mother says that I shouldn't listen to doomsayers.

That I should look myself in the mirror and tell myself that tomorrow is a new day.

Close your eyes.

But I feel like it's already too late. As if I don't belong here, as if I can't recognize others as a part of me, as if they are living their lives far, far from my understanding of how the world could be, how we could be with each other, how we could care for our surroundings. As if there is a knowledge or a wisdom that we have forgotten and that I now feel we should be fighting to win back, but, meanwhile, the world insists on moving forward, and away, and those small oases of alternative understandings are becoming smaller and smaller. I feel like they are drying out like waterholes and that the people I used to drink water next to, they are gone, or they've changed, they've become pale apparitions who maintain that they still remember what they used to believe in, the world they used to long for, but I can see in their actions, in everything they do, that they've forgotten what I'm afraid of forgetting every day.

Open your eyes.

I've tried to protest. But show me someone who can keep enduring to protest and in "peaceful" ways make our predictable positions known? Who can still live with the promise of "green transition"?

I feel as if my resistance has already been predicted by the system.

Am I depressed when I feel that the future has been taking from me, lost?

Oh, well. Why don't we shake ourselves free of this mood.

(Dinging sound). We could ... jump.

I will count down from three, and then we'll jump, at the same time: 3 – 2 – 1 – Jump! 3 – 2 – 1 – Jump! 3 – 2 – 1 – Jump!

Who here has a story, a history, a world, or just a *place* or *somebody* or *someone* I can connect with? A new world, I can fight for? A new world worth dying for?

Is that not what we should be doing? Now? (*Dinging sound*). Please nod.

(*Dinging sound*). Now, we are moving on to the next room. Please look around until I speak to you again.

2. WAR.

Visitors arrive in a space with soft carpet floor. A burnt-out car is placed in the center. Scenography by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård.

A

Go ahead, sit where you want, and close your eyes.

Sometimes, I play a lot of video games.

When I play, I imagine that I am part of a resistance struggle.

That a secret organization reaches out to me.

D

Follow us!

B

Do we not have to fight for another world?

C

Are we not obliged to act instead of just complaining?

A

Maybe they don't say it *exactly* like that, but anyway: I attend a secret meeting with a guerrilla army. They want to watch me play video games.

C

You are good.

D

Really good.

A

They want to use me in an operation.

B

But you can participate from your screen through the map. It's updated in real-time.

A

I ask what they mean, but they want to know what to call me.

B

What should we call you?

A

They present themselves.

D
Hellfire.

B
Harpy.

C
Reaper.

A
Ghost, I reply.

They are laughing and I am laughing. We call ourselves the Four Horsemen of the Climate Apocalypse, and the idea that we are fighting the cynicism of our petrified age and the relentless exploitation of finance capitalism speaks to me.

It's dark. Harpy cuts a hole in the fence by the unending parking lot by the headquarters of the fossil capitalists. We move silently between the cars. Hellfire has hacked the safety codes. Reapers places the bombs without a sound. I keep watch, biting my nails. Repeatedly, I ask Reaper for a status. She replies:

C
Two sec. Two sec. Two sec.

A
I raise my voice, shout her name, but then—(*Thud sound.*)

A
Something hits the back of my neck. They disconnect, the screens are turned off. I am tied down and a bag is thrown over my head. We drive for hours, days. Far away. The temperatures shift from stifling hot to freezing cold. Suddenly, they stop. Without warning, my bag is torn off, and a sharp light blinds me. I can't see. They order us up against the wall.

B
“Up against the wall, goddammit. Come on!”

(*Dinging sound*). Open your eyes and stand up.

Here we stand. Those of us who have realized the necessity of violence. Those of us who share the contempt for the people who hide behind their property while they are destroying the very world on which they've built that property. The situation is already violent, the landscape is already exploited, our future is already under attack.

(Dinging sound). Turn around and go down on your knees.¹

I feel a gun barrel to the back of my head.

(Dinging sound). In a second, I'd like you to drop dead as if you were in a movie. You ready?

Shots are fired. Spectators fall to the ground.

Thank you. Thank you for dying for the cause. This is my museum, and here you die.

Please stay on the floor, close your eyes, and play dead.

Where do you go when war has become crisis has become state of exception, when enemies have become illegal combatants, when torture has become *enhanced interrogation techniques* —

Where do you go in a permanent planetary civil war with strange names and weird rules? With millions of people on the run? From wars. From invasions. From droughts. From floods. From fires.

When new categories of “us and them” emerge. Hordes of people, bodies placed in camps outside the law, outside the rights we used to call universal.

When you can identify enemies with face recognition, probability calculation, ethnicity identification.

When the battlefield is extended to screens, social media.

I am looking at the refugees who wander across the screen and into my anxiety.

I am afraid. —Paranoia?

Me who one day cannot find my family because the road is gone, exploded to pieces, torn up.

Me looking inside the window: A man is finishing his coffee in the very moment the bomb falls. His right arm flies past me outside the window like a blind bird.

Me feeling the rhythm of the day changing.

Me staying up to mend the wounds of the wounded.

¹ In the version at Sort/Hvid, spectators were not asked to turn around and kneel. Instead, they were asked to stand up, before the custodian jumped the car with a dummy gun, pretending to shoot them. The Kunsthall Aarhus version did not feature a custodian, leaving audiences on their own.

Me teaching children to draw in the darkness under the constant power outages.

Me sitting in the camp, pointing to the screen, a burnt-out car, a picture of a street pulverized.

“This is where our house used to be.”

Me witnessing the rain becoming something else. Watching it washing the blood from the streets.

Me sowing shrouds, place graves, and attend monotonous funerals.

Me calling a friend to let him know that there’s nothing new to tell, that we are still alive.

Me dreaming that the houses can escape too, the books, the bricks, the trees. They are not to remain and become silent witnesses.

Where do I go with my nightmares of the destruction of everything?

I wish I could pause history. Just for a moment.

(Dinging sound). Please, stand up. We will be moving on to the next room now. Here, you can explore the space until I return.

3. FACE.

Visitors arrive in a cave of paintings and sketches of faces. A lightbulb lights up the space from the center. Beneath the bulb, there is an incense clock shaped like a skull labyrinth.
(Ferdinand Ahm Krag: *Hall of Psychopomps*, 2022)

A

In Ancient China, before the introduction of the mechanic clock, a track of incense was laid out at night, shaped in intricate labyrinths, to measure the passing of time. The incense track contained a variety of scents so that you could identify the hour of night by smell.

What time do we find ourselves in now?

B

Has the Cold War returned?

C

Late Capitalism?

D

A new geological epoch:

B

The Anthropocene.

D

The digital age.

C

The century of surveillance capitalism.

D

The millennium of depression ...

A, B, C & D

We are standing in the middle of the Apocalypse.

A

I have no idea. Lighting my incense clock, I begin to draw.

My psychologist has told me that my brain is overworked. It is busy composing who I am. My identity, my own little narrative. Drawing makes it relax and able to think about something else besides myself.

In the West, the idea of identity—from the Face of Suffering Jesus and thereafter—has been connected to the face.

What does *my* face reveal?

My friendly mask, binding me to an identity category, a skin color, a class, a gender, a cultural background, a family, a time, and a place.

My smiling, welcoming face that is reduced to biometric data, smoothed by digital filters to a predictable shape.

My mug as it is constantly recognized and laid out and modulated and mirrored in cameras, distributed in random networks.

I am sick of my face.

(Dinging sound). Now, I would like you to gather in a circle. Just like that. Please, put on a mask.

At my museum, we must expand. Step outside of time and become someone else.

Are we able to stop being individual beings?

Can we escape our eternal species narcissism?

Can we for a brief moment become a state of mind?

Without being scared?

Or be scared in a way that is not this paralyzing?

Yes, join each other's hands and take a step forward.

Let us become an eye that sees beyond the regular, profane normality of the everyday.

An eye that can see beyond this paralyzing time.

You are the New Man standing at the beginning of time ...

You are the transition between Man and Woman.

You are a fossil, carved from the deeps of imaginary universes ...

Release each other's hands and turn around.

Sometimes, I can feel it. Something different. Then cracks appear, through which I can see into another world. When I lie awake at night and stare into the ceiling and see the cracks open, I understand that I for a moment can step outside of history.

C

That the universe is endless.

D

That I have a thousand faces.

C

That we in visions can access inklings of former evolutionary states,
the prehistoric consciousnesses of other species ...

A

The ancient atoms that constitute a face, hydrogen and helium, having later entered more complex carbon compounds, sparked from supernova explosions billions of years ago. These atoms must have passed through early galaxies and distant nebulae before they arrived here, in a solar system on the outskirts of the Milky Way. From here moved on through primeval forests and ferns, Carboniferous, 350 million years ago, life had ascended onto land; the atoms of the brain arrived in the present via floods of lava, now trapped and locked inside this brief glimpse of Human, this simultaneously merciless and confused organism, lost and with eyes empty ...

Remove your masks. Let's move on. In the next room, you're welcome to sit down.

4. MEMORY.

Visitors arrive in a space with two large sculptures. Beneath them are piles of sand and marble beads (Helene Nymann: Ode to Creode X + Ode to Creode Y, 2022). On one of the walls, a video is projected (Helene Nymann: Ode to Creode, 2022).

A

My grandmother has lost the ability to remember. She says she can't recognize me. They say it's because she is old. I am calling, "Granny?" but usually, she doesn't reply. She just stares into the television screen ...

Last time I visited her: She suddenly wakes up when an old song comes on TV. It's some old evergreen, or a hymn, maybe. Suddenly, she starts speaking. Not to me, but to someone not present in the room. A ghost perhaps. Or: It feels as if she is part of a play, saying her lines, but there are no other actors to answer her. I'm pretty sure she is reenacting a scene from a time in her youth when she listened to this song; back when her senses were sharp and receptive. When things would make a lasting impression.

My grandmother makes me fearful of forgetting.

Before I was born, I existed as an egg in my grandmother's ovary. All the eggs a woman will ever bear is formed in her ovaries when she is a fetus in *her* mother's womb.

Is there a pulse, running all the way back to our grandmothers to the first mother?

Do you think feelings can be passed down through the generations? That genetically transferred histories and memories install emotions in us? Urges from forefathers we never have known?

Do the children of refugees—who have never seen war themselves—the feeling of exile written in their gene pool?

Have I inherited the European thirst for empire? For colonization and exploitation of other peoples? Are they inscribed in my genetics? In my destiny?

Do we have to change to past to change the future?

Is that even possible?

Can you remove my longing for control over nature and others in a laboratory?

Can I edit my addiction to growth, to luxury, to property?

Can we turn off our feelings?

Can we turn on our responsibility?

Can we change our fate?

Can we avoid disaster?

In school, I learnt about the First Nations people of Australia. They are not interested in mapping this world to plunder it. Instead, they *sing* forth the landscape. They pass on their memories through songs. The First Nations peoples do not speak of the past and future as opposite directions, but of Dreamtime.

Can we sing in my museum? How would our song sound? Us, here?

(Dinging). Stand up, please. Sing the tone I am singing. It doesn't have to sound good, just try.

Join your voices with mine.

She sings.

Sing louder, keep going.

Louder yet. Come on, louder yet, just let go.

Thank you.

Now, we are moving on the next room. Here you can explore the tubs.

5. NATURE.

Visitors arrive in a space enlightened by circular, acrylic tubs containing sheets of SCOBY (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast) attached to motor pulls. (Studio ThinkingHand: Vita . Necro . Vita, 2019-2022).

A

We have been brought up in a world of trash. Am I right? Endless dumps. Retired windmills dug down in the desert. Microplastics in the seven seas. Sometimes, I can't breathe thinking about the microplastics in my veins right now.

In school, we are taught to see nature as something pristine, untouched, and beautiful. A place we can go and visit during our holidays. But my world is not like that. It's never been like that. It will never be like that.

What if I don't want to lie to myself anymore? What if I long for a different kind of care?

A care not only for people and their children, but also for the animals and their offspring. A care not only for people and their children and for the animals and their offspring, but also for the trees and the plants? A care not only for people and their children, animals and their offspring, the trees and the plants, but also a care for the microbes, the bacteria, the tiny vira, the waste and the junk that are parts of us.

What would happen if we perceived everything as living, as part of life?

What are the rights of plants? Why do animals not have the right to vote? Why are they not represented in Parliament?

Can we proclaim a nation for all lifeforms?

Do we even need nations?

Why not raise our flags for a different world instead?

Can the trees, the ants, the goplets, the mushrooms become the masters of the future?

The internet has taught me about mushrooms. Knowing they connect the destroyed, paved ground beneath me with an unending, vibrant network of spores soothes my anxiety. I follow the spores on the screen like a maze, but it has no offspring, no destination.

Mushrooms are diverse organisms. They heal and connect and expand the life of the globe. Some mushrooms are used as medicine. Others can kill us.

(Dinging sound). Please approach the podium and grab a glass. Now, consume this mushroom.²

Allow its spores to fester in the chambers of your brain and dig new paths in your consciousness. It will heal your trauma, oppose your greed and your desire for power and slowly increase your connection to the world.

Drink, and let the mushroom work:

Let it penetrate your inner landscapes and there dissolve your psychological language, your paternal bond, your mother complex, your penis envy.

Let's leap from the age of interwoven crises, explode our minds, and become more-than-human.

You might not feel it now, but in a few hours, or perhaps in a few days, you will stand in your kitchen, doing the dishes, and suddenly, you will feel a change in your body, you will feel the spores take over, your body becoming host of something bigger and more entangled.

You are welcome to approach the tubs and touch, carefully.

B

We will connect with other materials, generate new experiences, new consciousnesses, hatch new body parts.

C

The telepathy of the fungi network will lead to radical transformations of our means of communication.

D

Extensive mushroom gardening in social housing projects will create new livable cocoons for multiple species.

B

Our cities will become ruins we and other species can inhabit anew.

C

The society of ants, the sexual norms of the clown fish, the structures of the ecosystems will transform our idea of what constitutes the human.

A

² In the version at Sort/Hvid, the audio guide would ask the spectators to form a line before the custodian would serve the spectators the glasses of kombucha, making it appear like the liquid originated from the tubs holding the scoby. At Kunsthal Aarhus, the glasses would be in the space upon their entry.

And our voices, our all too human voices, will be silenced.

Now, we are ready to proceed. Enter the next space and find your shoes.

6. MUSEUM.

Visitors arrive in a space full of lit pedestals. Pairs of the visitors' shoes are placed on each pedestal. Scenography by Franciska Zahle and Helle Damgård.

A

Welcome to *Museum of the Future*.

Back when I was a kid, I used to resent when our teacher dragged us to visit museums. This dead place with dead objects from the past, standing there to haunt us with its stone axes and its statues of dead men.

Oh yes, so did European Man. This is how he dressed, this is how he painted. This is how he drew his self-image, this is how he remembered the past. This is how he seized the future.

(Dinging sound). Please take a seat on the pedestal and put on your shoes.

The Ancient Greeks created statues to give shape to the ideal body. A perfect exterior reflected a perfect interior.

Rise, and pose like a hero of our time.

From the 1870s to the 1910s, Denmark hosted at least 50 human exhibitions where so-called "exotic people," considered savage, uncivilized, and backwards, were put on display for the Danish audiences in Tivoli and the Zoo.

They represented a primitive past, kept artificially alive in the modern metropolis.

"Hottentots," they were called. And in that way, the separation between primitivity and civilization, past and present, was established.

Today, museums exhibit statues to teach us how cultures past lived and imagined the world.

My museum is your mausoleum.

Please pose like you would like to be remembered. And let us look back.

Back when you went on holiday and had a summer salad. Every Friday, you had a few beers and chatted about that time when you would travel freely and go anywhere and make everything your own.

Back when we used to say that the whole world was available in your own country, in your own town, in your own consciousness.

Back when we said everything was moving too fast.

In the same breath, we spent our time earning money and mending our careers. Even our spare time was mostly used to improve our CV's.

And when we sat down Saturday night to put a movie on, it often felt like a scenario we had seen before: the one with the disaster, the flooding, the earthquake, the war, or the virus.

Some still spoke of freedom. The emblem of western civilization, they said.

Others said that freedom was an illusion. That the population was under surveillance, transparent and analyzable. That we lived in a designed reality where the future was predicted through algorithmic processing.

It was the time when the ice was melting, the atmosphere was burning, the temperatures were rising. When species went extinct, when people were seeking refuge.

Nevertheless, we kept stomping on the treading mills of the fitness centers, ran tirelessly around in ellipses and discussed how we could postpone the climate apocalypse by eating differently, using tote bags instead of buying new plastic bags, recycling our garbage.

We talked about windmills, electric cars, solar panels.

We talked maniacally about new foods, about eating plant-based, about eating worms and insects, about discovering the diets of Indigenous peoples and sustainable lifestyles in harmony with nature.

Back in those days, you had the feeling of participating in a play where the roles were already cast, and the outcome already given.

We said maniacally and in unison:

"Democracy is not the best form of government, but it is the least bad."

"Freedom is the key value of western civilization."

"It is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism."

Back then, we feared that it was too late.

That the catastrophe had already happened.

That the future was over.

(Dinging sound). When the light above your pedestal turns on, you can leave my museum.

You can now exit *Museum of the Future*. Thank you for your time.

THE END

Handouts for the Kunsthall Aarhus Iteration of *Museum for fremtiden*.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag
Hall of Psychopomps,
 2022
 Installation,
 forskellige medier

“Psykopomper” er en oldgræsk fællesbetegnelse for ånder og entiteter, der leder nyligt afdøde sjæle til efterlivet. I menneskehedens historie har der optrådt talrige udgaver af disse figurer, i præhistoriske shamanistiske naturreligioner, i græske og romerske mytologier og i nutidige åndelige bevægelser. Psykopomperne fører dig fra denne verden til en hinsides og markerer på den måde en overgang. Ahm Krag's værk beskæftiger sig med overgangen fra vores tid til en anden, eller mere præcist: fra et historisk paradigme til en andet, nemlig fra det moderne, fremskridtsorienterede paradigme, der aktuelt og akut udfordres af klima- og biodiversitetskriserne som konkrete fremtidstab, til en mere radikalt åben, fantasifuld og mangeartetet samtidighed af fortider, nutider og fremtider. Det indebærer et slags arkæologisk bevidsthedsarbejde i alle tidslige retninger, som Ahm Krag's hulelignende installation fremmaner.

Hulemalerierne spiller en central rolle for installationen. Ifølge Ahm Krag frembringer hulemalerierne en elastisk rumoplevelse, hvor både tid og rum skrider, mens bevidstheden følger med. På hulevæggene optræder figurer i forskellige størrelsesforhold på ujævne, omsluttende flader, som gør beskuerens afstand til motiverne uklare. I *Hall of Psychopomps* genskaber Ahm Krag det grundlæggende bevidsthedsskred, som sker under billeddannelse.

Rummet er oplyst af en enkelt lyskilde. Under den står en flade med en rødlig pulverrøgelse. Røgelsen er lagt ud som spor i et labyrintisk dødningehoved. Ved antændelse fungerer sporet som et duft-ur: Bestemte længder røgelse udgør forskellige tidsmåleenheder, der registreres med lugtesansen. På væggene omkring uret og lyskilden møder beskueren en sværm af tegnede ansigter i sort-hvid.

Det er ikke genkendelige ansigter, der beklæder væggene i *Hall of Psychopomps*. De er på én gang vævet ind i og udgjort af bl.a. fossile aflejringer af uddøde dyrearter, dunkle landskaber fra ukendte steder, kulturhistoriske ikoner fra fortidige epoker og syn af fremtidige begivenheder. Fælles for ansigterne, som optræder i mange forskellige størrelser og skalaer, er, at de er midt i en mystisk forvandling: De er sammentegninger af menneske, dyr og landskab, fortid, nutid og fremtid. I skæret fra lyskilden blander de sig med museumsgæsternes skygger. *Hall of Psychopomps* er på den måde et installationsværk, hvor den besøgendes tilstedeværelse i rummet spiller ind i tegningernes vedvarende billeddannelse.

I dramatiseringen af Ahm Krag's værk har dramatiker og instruktør Christian Lollike og kurator og dramaturg Anders Thruue Djurslev iscenesat et maskeritual med de besøgende. Et skyggespil på hulens tegnede vægge forsøger at forstærke oplevelsen af at væve beskueren ind i værket. Den gennemgående fortællerstemme i *Museum for fremtiden* kan opfattes som en slags psykopompe, der i hovedtelefoner guider publikum ind i sine fantasier om andre fremtider, som kulminerer i en afsked med vores egen tid.

Tekst af Anders Thruue Djurslev.
 Foto af David Stjernholm. I kunstnerens øje.



Ferdinand Ahm Krag
Hall of Psychopomps,
 2022
 Mixed media
 installation

“Psychopomps” is the ancient Greek term for spirits and entities that guide newly deceased souls to the afterlife. Throughout human history, numerous versions of these figures have appeared, in prehistoric shamanistic nature religions, in Greek and Roman mythologies, and today’s spiritualist movements. Psychopomps lead you from this world to the next, marking a transition. Ahm Krag’s work deals with the transition from our time to another, or more precisely: from one perception of the time to another, namely from the modern, progress-oriented paradigm, urgently challenged by the crises of climate and biodiversity as concrete losses of futurity, to a more radically open, imaginative, and multiple contemporaneity of pasts, presents, and futures. This transition entails archeological labor of consciousness in all temporal directions, conjured by Ahm Krag’s cave-like installation.

Cave paintings play a central role in the installation. According to the artist, cave paintings produce an elastic experience of time and space, causing the dimensions to collide. Motives appear in different sizes on uneven, immersive surfaces, rendering the distance of the spectator unclear, allowing consciousness to drift and the imaginary to widen. In *Hall of Psychopomps*, Ahm Krag recreates this groundbreaking sensation of image-making.

The space is lit by a single light source. Beneath it, a flat surface presents a red powdered incense. Spread out in tracks, the incense forms a maze-like skull. When lit, the track works like a clock for the nose: certain lengths constitute different units for measuring time, registered through smell. On the walls around the clock and the light source, the spectator discovers a swarm of faces, drawn in black and white.

The faces covering the walls of Ferdinand Ahm Krag’s installation *Hall of Psychopomps* are not immediately recognizable. They are at once made out of and woven into fossil sediments of extinct species, dim landscapes from unknown places, historical icons from cultures past, and visions of futures to come. Presented in a variety of sizes and scales, the faces share the common feature of being in the middle of a mysterious transformation, drawing together human, animal, and landscape within past, present, and future. In the light of the light source, the images are mixed with the shadows of their spectators.

In the dramatization of Ahm Krag’s work, playwright and director Lollike and curator and dramaturg Thue Djurslev stage a ritual of masks for the spectators, creating a shadow play on the drawn walls of the cave that enhances the feeling of transformation. The narrator of the entire fictitious museum is herself a kind of psychopomp, guiding the audience into their phantasies of other worlds and futures, culminating in a departure from our historical present.

Text and translation into English by Anders Thue Djurslev.
 Photo by David Stjernholm. Courtesy of the artist.



Helene Nymann
Ode to Creode,
Ode to Creode X,
Ode to Creode Y,
 2022
 Installation,
 forskellige medier

Helene Nymanns installation i *Museum for fremtiden* består af videoværket *Ode to Creode* og skulpturparret *Ode to Creode X* og *Ode to Creode Y*. Værkerne bygger på Nymanns omfattende forskning i kropslig viden, hukommelse og husketeknikker, forankret i antropologisk og biologisk videnskab, som hun omsætter i skulpturer, skulpturelle videoer og de performative rum, der dannes mellem dem.

Ligesom kunstnerens øvrige praksis, undersøger denne installation hukommelse. Nymann er interesseret i, hvordan vi ikke kun husker med vores hjerner, men også med vores kroppe. Det gør vi både på et kulturelt bevidsthedsplan og helt ned på celleniveau. I *Ode to Creode*-serien kobler hun disse niveauer i sin sammensætning af levende billeder og skulpturer, der billed- og rumliggør ældgamle husketeknikker og de mikroskopiske byggesten, der udgør vores kroppe: celler og kromosomer.

I den digitale tidsalder overser vi ofte, hvordan erindring indlejres i vores kroppe som sanseindtryk. Når vi genkender eller genoplever sansninger, aktiveres hukommelsen. Den udgør en kropslig viden, som vi bærer med os, men sjældent er bevidst om. Teorien om *epigenetik*, som har inspireret Nymann til *Ode to Creode*-installationen, foreslår, at den samme dynamik gælder vores celler og genetik. Celler kan med andre ord huske. Det betyder, at de erfaringer, vi gør os i vores liv, forvandler vores genetiske arvemateriale, som vi siden giver videre til vores efterkommere. Vi husker på den måde for fremtidige generationer. De bærer vores minder i deres genetiske kodning.

To hvide skulpturer roterer langsomt i rummet. De ligner på én gang enorme kromosomer af DNA og dansende kroppe. Under dem kommer tilsandede landskaber til syne. Kugler af glas har tegnet ruter igennem sandbakkerne. Kuglerne fungerer som billeder på celler, der daler ned gennem vores indre landskaber; en metafor, Nymann har hentet fra biologen C. H. Waddington (1905–1975), der i sin tid formulerede teorien om epigenetik.

En video, projekteret på en af rummets vægge, oplyser rummet: Levende billeder af bevægelige kroppe, teknologiske aggregater og flygende landskaber afløser hinanden. Flimrende minder. Børnemunde, der hvisker hinanden i ørerne og genfortæller det hørte til den næste i rækken. Kunstnerens gravide krop, der danner sit eget landskab af gener og minder. En mimer som levende græsk statue, der gestikulerer ekspressivt og genkendeligt med sin krop. En opkoblet menneskeskabning bliver målt og vejlet, men begynder så at åbne munden på vid gab. For at synge.

Isenesættelsen af *Ode to Creode* inviterer publikum til at synge sammen. Et greb, som Nymann har hentet fra den ældgamle husketeknik *sanglinjer*. Sanglinjer spiller en central rolle for de australske aborigineres verdensbillede, *Drømmetid*, som en måde at kortlægge landet, der forbinder det sanselige forhold mellem indre og ydre landskaber.

Gennem sin kunstneriske konstellation af teorien om epigenetik og sanglinjer, video, skulptur og publikumsinddragelse igangsætter Nymanns værker en transformerende refleksion for at udfordre gængse opfattelser af forholdet mellem arv og miljø, hukommelse og fantasi, fortid og fremtid.

Tekst af Anders Thue Djurslev.

Foto af Emilia Therese. I kunstnerens eje.



Helene Nymann
Ode to Creode,
Ode to Creode X,
Ode to Creode Y,
 2022
 Mixed media
 installation

Helene Nymann's installation in *Museum of the Future* builds on the artist's extensive research in embodied knowledge, memory and memory techniques. Anchored in Anthropology and Biology, Nymann enacts ideas in sculpture, sculptural video, and the performative space generated between them.

Like much of Nymann's work, this installation explores memory. Nymann is interested in how we remember not only with our brains but with our bodies. This is evident at the level of cultural consciousness as well as on the microscopical level of cells. In the *Ode to Creode* series, Nymann couples these levels in a constellation of moving images and sculptures, imaging and spatializing ancient memory techniques and the microscopic building blocks that constitute our bodies; cells and chromosomes of DNA.

In the digital age, we often overlook how memories are sedimented in our bodies as sensory impressions. When we recognize or reexperience sensations, memory is activated. Thus, memory is an embodied knowledge that we carry with us, if not always consciously. The theory of *epigenetics*, a key inspiration of Nymann's installation, proposes that the same dynamics are evident at a biological level. Cells remember. This means that our lives transform the genetic composition that we hand down to our descendants. To the future.

In the *Ode to Creode* series, two white sculptures rotate slowly in the space. They look like enlarged chromosomes of DNA and dancing bodies. Beneath them, sandy landscapes appear. Beads of glass have drawn routes through the small hill. The beads function as an image of cells, trundling down through our inner landscapes; a metaphor Nymann has gathered from the Biologist C. H. Waddington (1905–1975), who coined the theory of epigenetics in the 20th century.

A video lights up the space: Moving images of moving bodies, technological aggregates, and sand blown landscapes replace each other. Flickering memories. Mouths of children whispering secrets in each other's ears, recollecting for the next in line. The pregnant body of the artist, is a landscape of genes and memories in itself. A wired human-like creature, monitored and weighed, opens its mouth wide. To sing.

The dramatization of *Ode to Creode* invites audiences to sing together. An instruction that Nymann has gathered from the ancient memory technique *Song Lines*. Song Lines play a central role in the Dreamtime of the Australian Aboriginals as a way of mapping the land, establishing a profound and sensory relation between inner and outer landscapes.

Through her artistic constellation of epigenetics and Song Lines, video, sculpture, and spectator involvement, Nymann's installation stages a transformative reflection to challenge common notions of the relationship between nature and nurture, memory and imagination, past and future.

Text and translation into English by Anders Thruue Djurslev.
 Photo by Emilia Therese. Courtesy of the artist.



Studio ThinkingHand
Vita . Necro . Vita,
 2019–2022
 Installation,
 forskellige medier

Gennemsigtige kar befolker rummet. Indeni anes nogle sammenfoldede, gullige skabninger; en slags sammenfaldne, organiske lærreder. De rejser sig fra karrene som våde, levende, lugtende søjler. Som sådan udfordrer skabningerne de bærende strukturer i vores forståelse af verden. Strukturer, der ofte manifesterer sig som modsætninger: kultur og natur, industrielt og organisk, dødt og levende.

Studio ThinkingHands installation i *Museum for fremtiden* er en iteration af kunstnerduens fortløbende kunstneriske undersøgelse af eddikemor eller symbiotisk kultur af bakterier og gær (SCOBY). Titlen *Vita . Necro . Vita* refererer til modsætningen mellem liv og død i den humanistiske tradition. Ved at fremskrive denne modsætning som en fortløbende proces i værkets titel, peger Studio ThinkingHand på fremtider hinsides humanismen; fremtider, vi kunne kalde post-humanistiske. Her betegnes døden og det livløse som regenerative dele af livet frem for dets modsætning.

Eddikemor er et restprodukt fra kombucha-tebrygning. I Studio ThinkingHands praksis bliver det levende materiale et eksempel på en regenerativ, hybrid livsform, der kan lære os at tænke forbi de dualismer, der strukturerer vores samfund, betinger vores fantasi og begrænser vores fremtider. Eddikemor er *abjekt*; materialet lader sig vanskeligt betegne som enten levende eller dødt, industriaffald eller en ny art. Studio ThinkingHand inviterer eddikemødrene ind i udstillingsrummet og andre steder for at demonstrere deres agens, som afsløres i deres vedvarende transformation: Eddikemødrene udtørres, dør, oxiderer, genoplives, gror og udvider sig i et kunstigt økosystem, som vedligeholdes og transformeres i samspil med teknologi og industri såvel som publikums berøring.

Iterationerne af *Vita . Necro . Vita* er forsøg på at forlade en særlig vestlig ophøjelse af mennesker for i stedet at dyrke andre livsformer. I deres kunstneriske praksis udforsker duoen en forståelse af naturen, hvor alt betragtes som levende. Hvordan kan vi samskabe med andre arter? Hvordan kan vi modarbejde objektiveringen af naturen? Hvordan kan vi modstå den ødelæggende ophøjelse af det menneskelige? Hvordan kan vi både være en årsag til problemet og del af fremtiden? Studio ThinkingHand inviterer eddikemødrene til at svare for at blive i stand til at forestille sig uafsluttede fremtider, der accepterer endeløse sammenfiltringer af det menneskelige og det ikke-menneskelige samt dødens regenerative kraft.

Instruktør Christian Lollike og kurator/dramaturg Anders Thruue Djurslevs dramatisering fremhæver længslen efter mere forbundne fremtider. En længsel efter en omsorgspraksis, der omfatter mere end det menneskelige. Iscenesættelsen tilbyder publikum en tår flydende svamp og at forestille sig en forvandlende udvidelse af det menneskelige mod mere sammenvævede fremtider – før døden omfavnes.

Tekst af Anders Thruue Djurslev.
 Foto af David Stjernholm. I kunstnerens eje.



Studio ThinkingHand
Vita . Necro . Vita,
 2019–2022
 Mixed media
 installation

Transparent tubs inhabit the space. Inside, twisted, and pale creatures appear, like collapsed, organic sheets. From the tubs, they rise like wet, living, smelling pillars. As such, the creatures challenge the bearing structures of our understanding of the world, often manifested in oppositions: culture and nature, industrial and organic, dead and alive.

Studio ThinkingHands' installation in *Museum of the Future* is an iteration of the artist duo's continuous artistic investigation of the symbiotic culture of bacteria and yeast (SCOBY). In Latin and Greek, the title *Vita . Necro . Vita* refers to the opposition between life and death in the humanist tradition. By projecting the opposition as a continuous process in the work's title, Studio ThinkingHand points to futures beyond the one envisioned by humanism; futures we could term posthumanist. Here, death and the inanimate mark a regenerative part of life instead of its opposition.

SCOBY is a waste product from the kombucha-brewing industry. In Studio ThinkingHand's practice, it becomes an example of a regenerative, hybrid lifeform, teaching us to think beyond the cultural dualisms that structure our societies, condition our imagination, and limit our futures. The SCOBY is *abject*: the material is difficult to term either alive or dead, industrial waste or new species. Studio ThinkingHand invites SCOBY into the exhibition space and other locations to demonstrate their agency, revealing their persistent transformation: the SCOBYs dry, die, oxidize, revive, grow, and expand in an artificial ecosystem, maintained and transformed in interaction with technological, digital, and industrial materials as well as the audience.

The iterations of *Vita . Necro . Vita* attempts of leaving a certain exaltation of the human and instead cultivate other life-forms. In their artistic practice, the duo explores an understanding of nature where everything is considered to be alive. How can we co-create with other species? How can we work against the objectification of nature? How can we resist the destructive exaltation of the human? How can we be both the cause of the problem and part of the future? Studio ThinkingHand invites the SCOBY to reply to imagine open-ended futures that accept endless human and non-human entanglements and the regenerative force of death.

In the dramatization offered by director Christian Lollike and curator and dramaturg Anders Thru Djurslev, the longing for a more entangled and connected world is emphasized. A longing after a practice of care that moves beyond the human and includes other-than-human life forms. The staging invites audiences to drink a sip of the SCOBY water and imagine a transformative expansion of the human towards more entangled futures – before embracing death.

Text and translation into English by Anders Thru Djurslev.
 Photo by David Stjernholm. Courtesy of the artist.

The Show Is Over: On Shattering Time.¹

Introduction by Anders Thruue Djurslev,

PhD student at Aarhus University and dramaturg at the theatre Sort/Hvid.

Living dead haunt the theatre of Christian Lollike. Zombies with pitch-black eyes move in choreographed slow motion across the stage. Mechanical robots with doll faces and canned voices mime a pre-recorded script in a soulless IKEA-like scenography. A stage on which humanist ideals and human rights are buried alive, while their promises of freedom and justice haunt a corrupted and suspicious Europe. A stage where the dream of a different future is artificially kept alive by a devious media machinery serving as cultural life support. A stage on which all hope is abandoned.

THE SHOW IS OVER as it is stated with capital letters on posters, t-shirts, and tote bags in the theatre Lollike manages in the Meatpacking District of Copenhagen, Sort/Hvid (Black/White). *DON'T HAPPY BE WORRY*.

Like many other contemporary artists, Lollike is preoccupied with the present in his plays. But what kind of present does his theater evoke? In his scripts, dialogues repeat words, phrases, quotes, positions, and paragraphs that the audience occasionally will recognize from public discourse. On stage, however, they are distorted, nightmarish—and often humorous in their hypocritical emptiness. They offer no subtext; everything is illuminated, and on stage, the characters stand exposed and desperate.

As a playwright, Lollike raises the repressed specters of the present. The lines of his characters articulate what we otherwise dare not speak of, giving voice to those we dare not listen to. His stage is an abyss, a mirror that we cannot bear gazing into. His poetics is a strangely captivating coercion that fixates it on the living corpse that resembles our current civilization, “the capitalist democractic liberalist blablabla,” as he lets one of the soulless dolls exclaim in the performance *Revolution*, a show with the fitting subtitle: “On shattering time.”

Bound in time as it is, theatre is often praised the art of the living now, and Lollike's drama is often characterized by its confrontation with the most urgent and pressing issues of the immediate present. Often, these issues equal crises: the refugee crisis in *Living Dead*, the climate crisis in *Cosmic Fear*, and endemic depression in *All My Dreams Come True*.

The most prominent example of a dramatic treatment of a current event is Lollike's staging of *Manifesto 2083* by the terrorist and mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik, whose imprisoned spirit Lollike allowed to possess the body of actor Olaf Højgaard on stage just one year after Breivik's terrorist attack in Oslo and Utøya.

With such works, it is reasonable to consider Lollike's theatre as a *contemporary theatre*, understood as a critical social commentary on stage, addressing its current historical moment. The strength of such a contemporary theatre lies not only in its aim to *represent* its time but also to *intervene* in it. Conversely, it holds the danger often becoming frozen within its time and become outdated for the future it seeks to change the conditions of. Here, an interesting double-bind arises not only in Lollike's work but in any theatre that identifies itself as *political*: Is the artistic aim to interpret the world or to change it? To reflect the present or to shatter time? These are questions that are not only relevant for

a critique of Lollike's drama but already arise within it. They are questions posed to the audience and now, in the present publication, to the reader as well. The immediate answer is: both, contemporaneously. The act of representation is in itself an intervention, and the act of representation—whether literary, dramatic, or otherwise artistic—is a prerequisite for acting otherwise. We must distance ourselves to the present, perceive it as undead, if we are to envision a different future.

This relation between the play and the present becomes apparent when you can now read Lollike in book form. The literary foundation of Lollike's performances appears to highlight this obvious condition. Upon rereading the scripts, one can quickly tell that Lollike's plays not only address the times in which they are written, although they do seldomly deny their clear basis in it, but also transforms it into—or exposes it as—history. When I read them today, the plays take on the poetics of a kind of *dramatic documentation* of the contemporary political imagination. In my opinion, the collection of plays documents the historical trajectory and dissolution of the collective capacity for imagination, which, as per the Italian philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi, could be referred to as "the social brain" from the late 20th century until now. Throughout Lollike's drama—from the aesthetic analysis of 9/11 *Underværket* (*The Wonder*, 2005) to the post-ideological sitcom *Revolution* (*Revolution*, 2017, 2018)—the critical diagnosis of the political imagination resurfaces. For it is within our collective imagination that the true crisis appears in Lollike's work.

As a theatre director, Lollike brings this cultural-historical diagnosis of late capitalism onto stages that form the eerily recognizable settings of our late capitalist lives. On stage, however, they take an *uncanny twist*: the Christmas dinner in *Familien der kunne tale om alt* (*The Family That Could Talk About Anything*, 2016), the conversation kitchen in *Living Dead* (*Living Dead*, 2015, 2018), the taxi ride in *Fremtidens historie* (*The History of the Future*, 2009). In these familiar settings, the boundaries of the community's ability to break free from its cultural, economic, and historical constraints are subjected to a sort of cognitive mapping. Consistently, the plays demonstrate a lack of ability to evoke a future that is radically different from the fragile present we cling on to, while crises worsen, disasters proliferate, and the meaning of it all and the community as such become increasingly difficult to articulate using the language that our present provides us with.

The linguistic collapse is expressed in the dialogues between characters, generically named as A, B, and C. Instead of characters of psychological depth, the voices rather constitute representatives of distinct positions in the mediated trenches of public discourse. These positions do not differentiate between superego and subconscious: everything is laid bare in a dialogue that inexorably comes to a standstill, A talks past B or digresses, which suddenly makes C long for violence or terror, murder or genocide. The dialogues are governed by a radical unpredictability, while the shared language of the characters collapses, as they helplessly point to their own loss of meaning and their yearning for fundamental change, regardless of how shocking that change may come about.

The depression farce *All my dreams come true* (*All My Dreams Come True*, 2013) serves as a central text embodying these characteristics within Lollike's body of work. In this piece, the diagnosis of contemporary society merges with the diagnosis of the individual: depression. Lollike presents two depressive figures seeking salvation through Disney fairy tales, the epitome of globalized culture industry. However, when confronted with depression, the sugary genre proves powerless, leading only

to more extreme transgressions in the pursuit of an enchanting remedy against the depressive onslaught on the collective imagination. Mikkel Krause Frantzen, in his astutely titled book *En fremtid uden fremtid* (*A Future Without Future*, 2018), where *All my dreams come true* serves as an analytic example, highlights that depression is characterized by a profound absence of futural imagination. A condition manifesting itself within the depleted era of late capitalism.²

Mark Fisher, an influential cultural critic who himself ailed from depression and engaged deeply with the specters of contemporary culture before his suicide in 2017, described this condition as *capitalist realism*. Capitalist realism is the historical fiction that presents the current economic system as an inescapable future horizon. Capitalist realism suggests that it is now easier to envision the world's demise than the end of capitalism. It reflects the sentiment that genuine change is unlikely, and the relentless pursuit of capital accumulation will persist. It mirrors a decaying and exhausted societal structure that everyone realizes is obsolete and only few find worthy of defense, yet no one can truly see beyond. In other words, capitalism is a civilizational corpse refusing to perish while eagerly chewing for another chunk of the social brain: "*Brains!*"

Fisher discovered a parallel development in art. Aesthetic expression have become increasingly homogeneous, recognizable, and less dangerous to the status quo. It is this fossilization that Lollike endeavors to represent and shatter, or rather, shatter by representing, in the same motion.

The desperation behind this endeavor permeates the entire body of work across its multitude of genres, media, and characters. Lollike's plays span from horror to melodrama, from Breivik to Brad Pitt, from Nazi tourists in Dresden to Disney characters. It finds expression in both the yearning for adventure and uprising of the depressed in *All my dreams come true* and *Revolution*, as well as in the self-radicalizing hero fantasies of right-wing extremists in *Manifest 2083* and *Skakten* (*The Shaft or Gerhard's Adventure*, 2013).

Such critical diagnoses of the historical present can easily feel pretentiously know-it-all-ish. Yet, this suspicion does not arise when you read Lollike's plays. On the contrary, the critical position itself is often included in the numerous caricatures offered in the performances. Lollike shoots in all directions; doubt permeates the project. This might seem bleak, but it is also humorous (albeit leaning towards dark humor).

The present publication outlines Christian's poetics as a disillusioned document of a demise that is already and still ongoing. Where Breivik has already shot his victims, where the rape crime has already been committed, where Dresden has long been bombed to ruins, where humanism was discarded in the encounter with Syrian refugees, where the climate crisis has been staged as a Hollywood spectacle. Where the refugee camp has become an amusement park, where art has become a deceitful industry of emotional manipulation, contradicting its own emancipatory agenda. As such, Lollike's plays can be read as a pro-found, dramatized cultural critique. Perhaps this critique can and should also be interpreted as a yearning for something fundamentally to change? In the weighty words of Mark Fisher:

The long, dark night of the end of history has to be grasped as an enormous opportunity. The very oppressive pervasiveness of capitalist realism means that even glimmers of alternative political and economic possibilities can have a disproportionately great effect.

The tiniest event can tear a hole in the grey curtain of reaction which has marked the horizons of possibility under capitalist realism. From a situation in which nothing can happen, suddenly anything is possible again.³

¹ This text is an English translation of an introduction to a collection of Christian Lollike's plays. Anders Thruw Djurslev, "The Show Is Over: Om at smadre tiden." In Christian Lollike, *Underværket – Udvalgte tekster 2004-2018* (*The Wonder – Selected Texts 2004-2018*). Copenhagen: Forlaget Kronstork, 2022, 6-12.

² Mikkel Krause Frantzen, *En fremtid uden fremtid. Depression som politisk problem og kunstens alternative fortællinger*. Copenhagen: Informations Forlag, 2018. (Frantzen has written a book on the same subject in English, see Frantzen, *Going Nowhere, Slow: The Aesthetics and Politics of Depression*. Lanham: John Hunt Publishing, 2019).

³ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Winchester and Washington: Zero Books, 2009, 80-81.

Exhibition Catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden* in Danish.

In addition to the selection of texts translated into English above, the exhibition catalogue of *Museum for fremtiden*, co-edited by publisher Mathias Kokholm of the press Antipyrine and me, included different conceptualizations and critiques of the idea of a “museum of the future” in different forms, both fictional and theoretical, original, reprintings, and translations. Kokholm and I commissioned three original texts for the publication by Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede, and Center for Militant Futurologi. In the absence of their translation to English, I offer short introductions below.

In the essay by Madame Nielsen entitled “The Wrong Time / Back-Turned Stones,” the Danish author and performance artist begins recounting a trip she took with the school choir in the eighth grade during which she recalls catching a glimpse of Stonehenge through the bus window. After realizing that the stones must have arrived from not the past but the future, the essay offers a series of fragments musing on zombies and ghosts, monuments and invisibility, absence and presence. Rejecting the idea of a museum of the future as anything but empty, Nielsen finally revisits the artwork *Funus Imaginarium* (2010) by Das Beckwerk. Das Beckwerk (2002-2011) was a mysterious “transnational enterprise, which had the globalised world stage as its target, its audience and collaborator” with Nielsen as its sole nameless employee.¹⁸² On the basis of a seven-day ceremony outside the Glyptotek in Copenhagen, following the tenets of the ancient Roman ritual, *Funus Imaginarium* organized a funeral procession through the city’s street to finally bury the concept of identity along with a copy of the artist *in effigie*.

Ida Marie Hede, a Danish writer, playwright, and art critic, offers with “The Museum of Fallen Statues, Willkommen, Bienvenue, Velcome” a short story in which a first-person narrator visits the fictitious museum of the same name. Not unlike *Museum for fremtiden*, this museum experience is mediated by an audio guide, this time a “soft voice” with whom the narrator can communicate. As the narrator walks through the strange museum, the audio guide is accompanied by the voices of an eclectic ensemble of destroyed statues and historical objects exhibited at the museum, including the bust of the Danish king Frederik V,¹⁸³ the Russian tank

¹⁸² See the Das Beckwerk website—now called “Das Beckwerk Museum”—at dasbeckwerk.com.

¹⁸³ The sinking of a bust of Frederik V into the Copenhagen harbor in 2020 by the group Anonymous Artists and, as it was later revealed, the teacher at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld constituted the most debated art event in Denmark in recent years. With the aim of instigating a dialogue on the Danish colonial past and present, the action provoked a yet ongoing discussion on the function of art in society, art education, artistic research, activist art, and property rights. Dirckinck-Holmfeld was fired, but the

IS-3, named after Joseph Stalin and driven from its pedestal into the Russian-Ukrainian war (as accounted in the opening of Hito Steyerl's *Duty Free Art*), the colonial King Leopold of Belgium, the Statue of Liberty, and the Conquistador Juan de Oñate y Salazar whose statue had its foot cut off by the activist group Friends of Acoma, actualizing the recent and ongoing histories of decolonial activism. In Hede's story, the all-too material remains of the statues self-consciously discuss (and ridicule) the colonial figures they have come to represent, before the audio guide asks the confused narrator to fill out a questionnaire, rating her experience at the Museum of Fallen Statues.

Center for Militant Futurologi, a "utopian research project on the future based in the Svendborg Noosphere," contributed to the catalogue with a utopian text entitled "The Planetary Futuseum," formulating a manifesto and statement on the archival policy of a planetary institution of the same name. The Planetary Futuseum is an association of museums all over the globe, collecting future objects, inventions, and events to instigate change in the present. The text provided examples of the Futuseum's collection of future objects and events, such as the ban of fossil fuels (2035), the DNA printer (2083), and the Russian Revolution (2024), a rebellion overturning Kreml in what was then the near future. For each post in the archive, the examples included "item information," categorizing the object, invention, or event in ID, number, collection, and material. An example is the phenomenon of Land Associations (2128), which I have translated below:

LAND ASSOCIATIONS (2128)

Total planetary land reform of the 22nd century that will occur in extension of the abolition of the national border systems. All 148,847,000 square kilometers will be planetized, exempted from property rights, and designated as commons, and all earthlings will enter into organized conscious relationships and exchanges with the commons on which they depend for life. Brand new economic theories and practices will explode in the continuous discovery of ecosystem exchanges and lead to Permaculture-nature. Tracing the Land Associations to the mid-2020s forces causalities that currently indicate that the land reform will already take place in the 2050s; 80 years ahead of its conservative projection, which is an all-time record for the now well-documented Futuseian time shortening.

exhibition of the rematerialized bust might still be on the table. For Danish-speakers, Antipyrine and Public Square published an anthology criticizing and revising the reception of the action in 2021, entitled *Hvidt støv – En antologi om 'busteaktionen' og det vi taler om, når vi taler om den* [*White Dust – An Anthology on "the Bust Action" and What We're Talking About When We're Talking About It*, edited by Nermin Duraković and Jeppe Wedel-Brandt.

ITEM INFORMATION

ObjectId: 2128bc

- Item number: 13377
- Collection: Planetary
- Material: Soil/Biomass
- Dimensions: 148,847,000 km²

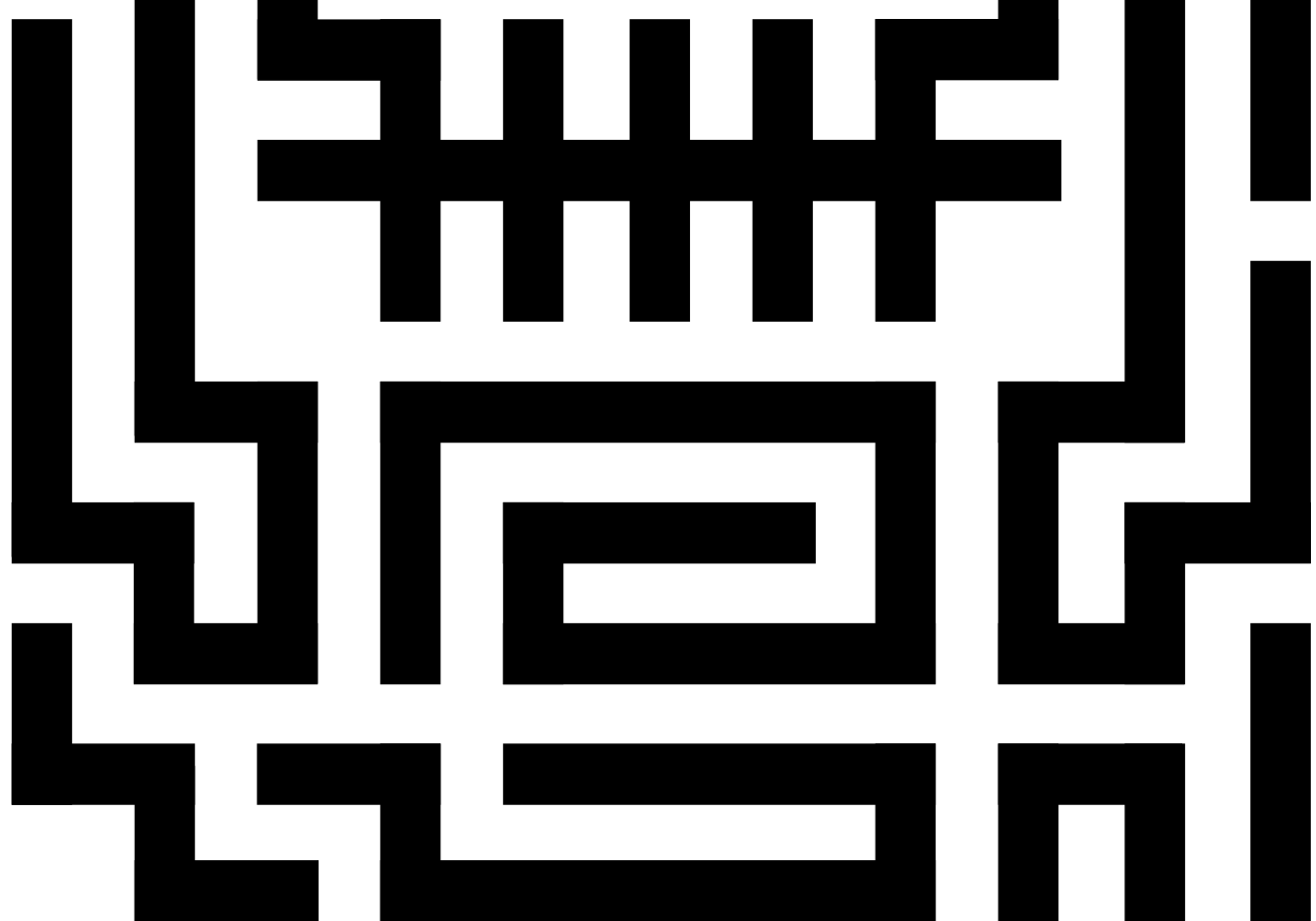
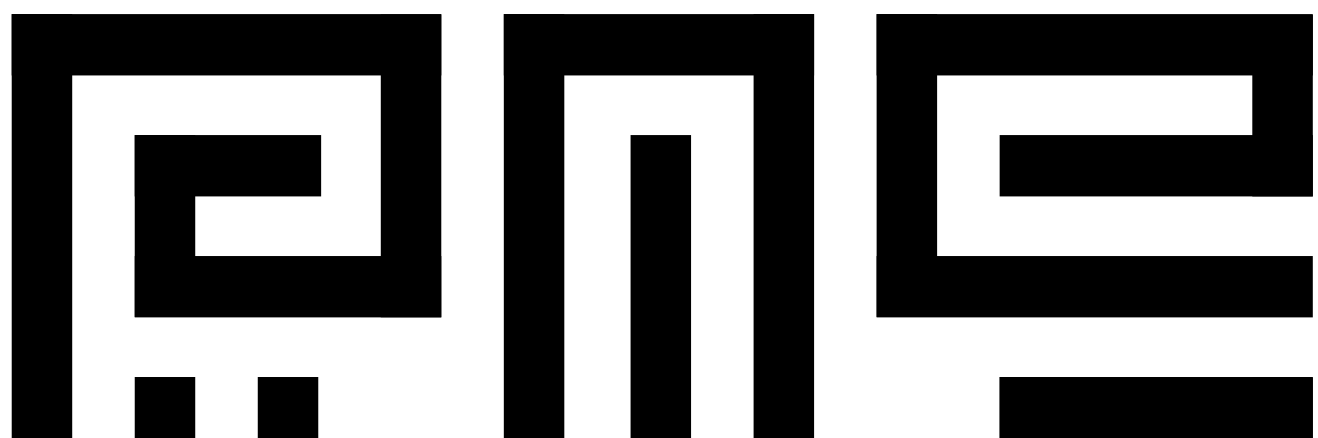
As a visual contribution, the exhibition catalogue published the Danish-Kurdish pop singer and poet Tobias Rahim's artwork "The Neo Scandinavian Man," a nude photo by photographer Petra Kleis. Sold as an NFT prior to the publication, "The Neo Scandinavian Man" was accompanied by a text, describing a future vision in which migration would have led to all Scandinavians to be Neo Scandinavian of mixed heritage, a redemption of sexual taboos, and a new economy.

Finally, the exhibition catalogue included three theoretical essays in Mathias Ruthner's Danish translation, all reflexive of the constellation of the museum and the future: the decolonial theorist Françoise Vergès essay "Museum of the Living Present" (2020), arguing for a pedagogy of the oppressed in the museum space; the curator Mela Dávila-Freire's "Museums of the Future: Between Promise and Damnation," critiquing the Museum of the Future in Dubai, UAE, and the philosopher Boris Groys's "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution," coupling the museum to the revolutionary tradition, arguing for musealizing the present. For the reader's convenience, I reinsert the bibliographical references here:

Dávila-Freire, Mela. "Museums of the Future: Between Promise and Damnation." In *Das Museum der Zukunft: 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, edited by schnittpunkt and Joachim Baur, 105-108. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.

———. "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution." In *The Logic of the Collection*, 264-279. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021.

Vergès, Françoise. "Museum of the Living Present." In *Das Museum der Zukunft: 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, edited by schnittpunkt and Joachim Baur, 267-268. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.



Museum for fremtiden

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FORORD

UDSTILLING SOM FORESTILLING, FORESTILLING SOM UDSTILLING

Anders Thruw Djurslev

Hjemsøgt af fremtiden

Museum for fremtiden er en umulig titel. Den fremlægger et paradoks, en selvmodsigelse. Et museum har sædvanligvis med fortiden at gøre. På et museum udlægges historien om fortiden. Museet har som regel kun med fremtiden at gøre i det omfang, at det anviser den som en logisk konsekvens af og brud med fortidens kultur, teknologi, design, videnskab og kunst. Museet skaber med andre ord en særlig fornemmelse af historisk tid som en samlet, kausal bevægelse. At udstille en genstand på et museum betyder i den forstand at præsentere den som et stykke overstået fortid, som død kultur. Hvad vil det så betyde at udstille fremtiden på museum?

Museum for fremtiden er resultatet af et møde mellem scene- og billedkunst, mellem et teater og en samtidskunstinstitution. Kunsthall Aarhus og Sort/Hvid er gået sammen om at skabe et værk mellem kunstudstilling og teaterforestilling. Formålet er ikke at grundlægge et fremtidsmuseum eller at arkivere en samling genstande af historisk betydning for fremtiden. Det er snarere at konfrontere kunstarterne, kunstinstitutionerne, os selv og publikum med spørgsmålet om, hvad der betinger vores politiske forestillingsevne i dag – og hvad der skal til for at overkomme, udfordre eller komplicere samtidens vilkår.

Anledningen er den stadigt mere overvældende kaskade af forbundne kriser, der på forskellig vis destruerer konkrete fremtidsperspektiver

i vores historiske samtid. Klima- og biodiversitetskriserne, som helt konkret udfordrer livets fremtid på jorden. Kapitalismens kulturelle, teknologiske og økonomiske overtagelser af handlemuligheder gennem privatisering, overvågning, finansielle spådomme og algoritmisk fremdigtning. Militarisering, territoriell konflikteskalering, ulighed, strukturel racisme, pandemi, planetær borgerkrig. Fortsæt selv listen. Til sammen udgraver disse kriser tilsyneladende fremtiden som en afgrund i den politiske fantasi. En afgrund, som vi på Sort/Hvid har haft blikket stift rettet ned i igennem mange teatersæsoner. På teatret i Købbyen i København er den depressive fornemmelse af, at fremtiden er aflyst blevet udstillet på scenen under sloganet THE SHOW IS OVER. Imens har kriserne blot taget til i styrke og omfang. Derfor har vi med *Museum for fremtiden* inviteret samtidskunsten ind; for at udfordre den depressive fornemmelse af afslutning med kunstneriske undersøgelser, der åbner forestillingsevnen på ny. Er det muligt at forstå samtiden anderledes? At udvide dens betingelser? At åbne den for andre tidserfaringer, andre fremtider?

Trods titlens umulige karakter har vi alligevel valgt at holde fast i *Museum for fremtiden*, fordi dens selvmodsigelse er kunstnerisk virksom. Når titlen fungerer bedst, skinner en tvetydighed igennem, som både er uhyggelig og udfordrende. Hvis fremtiden er mulig at sætte på museum, at udstille som fortid, betyder det så, at fremtiden aldrig kommer? At fremtiden er forbi? Hvilke perspektiver efterlader en sådan tilsyneladende dystre samtidsdiagnose for kunsten? For fremstillingen af historien? For den digtende fantasi? For politisk forandring?

Udstillingskatalog og forestillingsudvidelse

Bogen her fungerer som katalog for *Museum for fremtiden*, sådan som værket er udviklet på Sort/Hvid og i Kunsthall Aarhus. Her udfoldes og diskuteres de tidsundersøgelser, som de bidragende kunstnere bringer med sig ind i projektet. I den forbindelse fortæller Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann, Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen og Rhoda Ting fra Studio ThinkingHand, samt instruktør og dramatiker Christian Lollike fra Sort/Hvid, om, hvilken rolle tid spiller i deres kunst; om deres forskelligartede praksisser, om deres bidrag til *Museum for fremtiden* og om kompositionen af det samlede, sammenfiltrede værk. Fra hver deres position udfordrer kunstnerne de både kulturelle, psykologiske og biologiske mekanismer, som vi bruger til at forstå samtiden og forestille os fremtiden med. Hertil præsenteres skitser og

eksempler, inspirationsmateriale, modeltegninger og endelig manuskriptet til forestillingen, i dets ufærdige form her en måned før premieren.

For det andet har vi i udgivelsen inviteret andre til at tænke og digte med og imod og videre fra titlens umulige sammensætning af “museum” og “fremtid.” Originale tekster af Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede og Center for Militant Futurologi, samt en kopi af en såkaldt NFT (et unikt kodet digitalt værk gennem blockchain-teknologi) af popsangeren Tobias Rahim, konfronterer sammen med tre oversatte teoretiske tekster, af kunstteoretiker Boris Groys, den postkoloniale tænker Françoise Vergès og kurator Mela Dávila Freire, det tidslige paradoks, der er indlejret i udstillingen af kunst. Det er igen ikke udvalgets formål at formulere en samlende eller udtømmende vision for, hvad et museum for fremtiden er, kan eller bør være. Snarere er det ønsket at udstikke nogle af de forskellige potentialer, positioner, faldgruber, eksempler, kritikker og mulige betydningsdannelser, som konstellationen giver anledning til. Udgivelsen bevæger sig derfor frem og tilbage mellem formater og genrer. Bidragene tæller skitser, fiktioner, manifestationer, kunstnersamtaler, museologiske analyser og filosofiske ekskursioner. Med dens eklektiske sammensætning, forsøger vi med bogen at give form til det, vi kan kalde en *samtidighed* af forskellige tidsligheder og modsatrettede tidsopfattelser, som opstår i krydset mellem at udstille samtiden og forestille sig fremtider, og som måske betinger den tid, om og i hvilken vi laver *samtidskunst*.

Det samtidige museum

Både *Museum for fremtiden* og kataloget er med andre ord spændt ud mellem udstilling og forestilling, som både æstetiske former og tidslige perspektivretninger. Imellem katalogets bidrag findes både korrespondancer og konflikter mellem praksisser, teorier og billed-dannelser. Undervejs støder vi på figurer som Frederik V's nedsænkede buste, Stonehenge, spøgelse, præhistoriske fossiler, mimeren, levende eddikemødre og Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand. Vi besøger museet som et hjemstøgt sted; anskuer kunsten som et revolutionært metaværktøj; foreslår museumsinstitutionen som et tilflugtssted for inkluderende, dekoloniale, feministiske og mellemartslige omsorgspraksisser i nuet; og vender museets arkiveringspolitik fra fortiden mod de utopiske fremtider.

Endelig bringer vi det foreløbige manuskript til *Museum for fremtiden*, introduceret af en samtale med instruktør og dramatiker Christian Lollike. I samtalen fortæller Lollike om udfordringerne og erfaringerne med at bringe teater og kunst sammen; om de forskellige

værkopfattelser og publikumspositioner, som vi forsøger at forene og overskride i projektet. *Museum for fremtiden* er en dramatiseret og iscenesat udstilling, hvor en på en gang fraværende og nærværende fortæller instruerer et publikum iført hovedtelefoner gennem hendes sprængte sind i en serie installationer af værker og scenografi. Mens publikum veksler mellem rollerne som beskuere, skuespillere og statuer forestiller fortælleren sig en museumsudstilling, der udstiller hendes forestillinger. På en gang en repræsentation af en fiktiv samtidsfigur, et imaginært og scenesat museum for publikums nutidige kroppe og en udstilling af samtidskunst, der til sammen udvider den historiske tidslighed, som museet traditionelt repræsenterer.

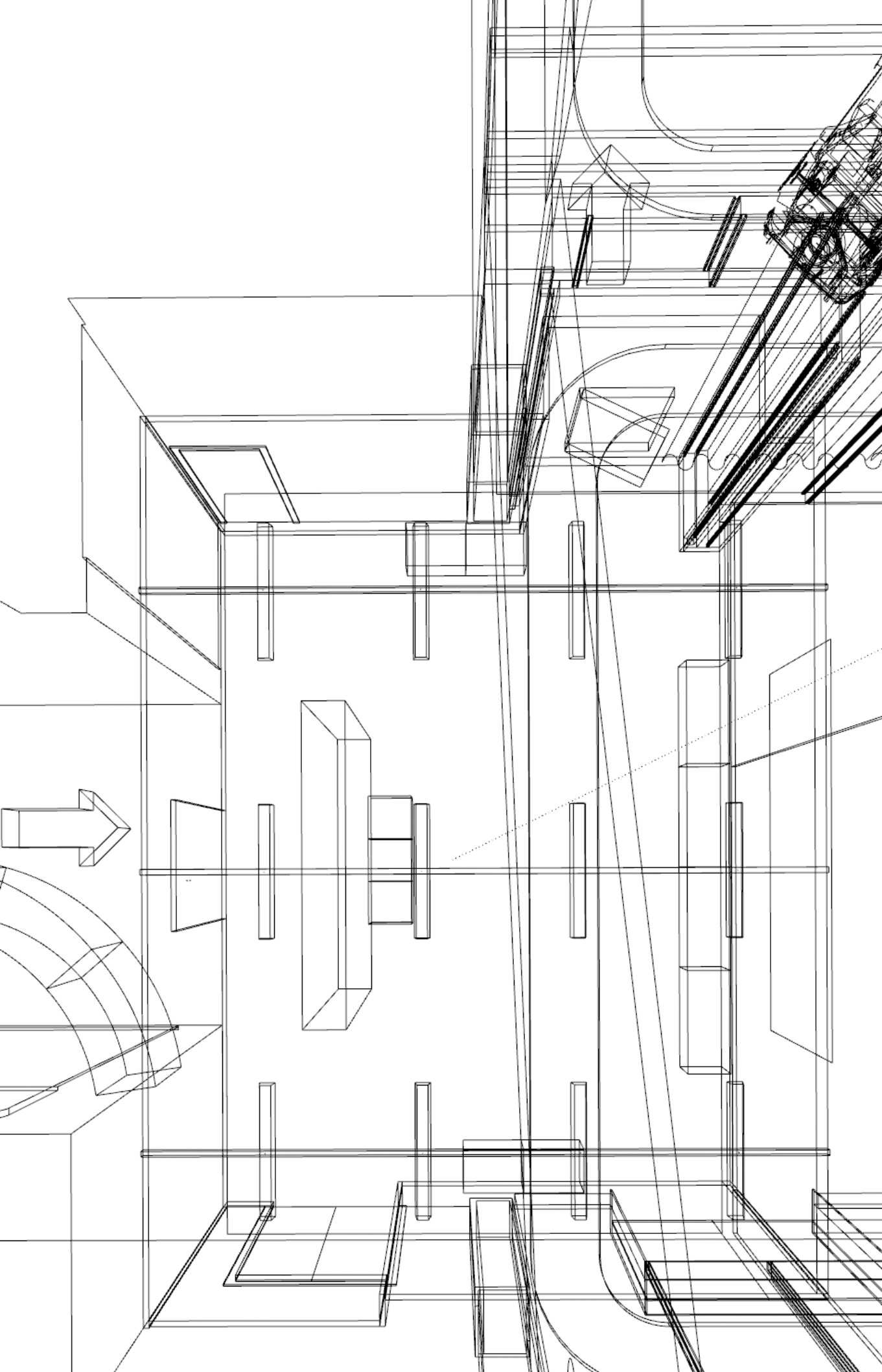
Vores forestillinger om fremtiden er altid betingede af samtidens sociale betingelser. Det samme gælder *Museum for fremtiden*. Men det umulige eksperiment går på at overskride samtidens forestillinger i deres udstilling; at overskride modsætningerne mellem fortid og nutid, repræsentation og handling, levende og dødt, udstilling og forestilling.

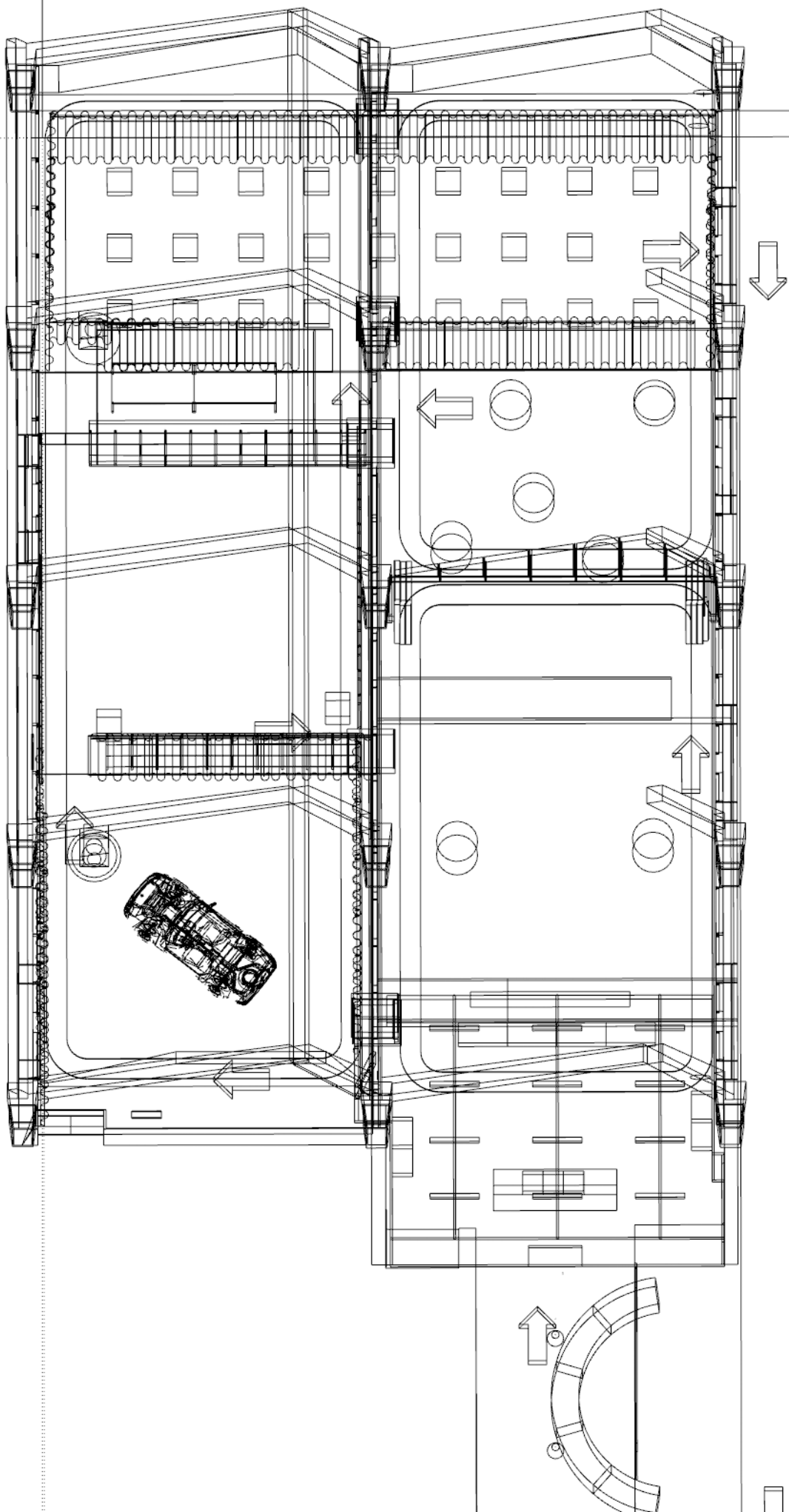
Tak til alle katalogets bidragsydere. Tak til kunstnerne for deres generøsitet i forbindelse med udstillingen såvel som nærværende udgivelse. Tak til hele det kunstneriske hold bag *Museum for fremtiden*, til alle medarbejdere på Kunsthall Aarhus og Sort/Hvid, til Aarhus Teater og til Aarhus Universitet og mine kolleger der.

Tak til Statens Kunstfond og Ny Carlsbergfondet for støtte til udgivelsen og til Ny Carlsbergfondet for støtte til mit ph.d.-projekt om arbejdet med *Museum for fremtiden*.

Endeligt tak til Antipyrine og Mathias Kokholm for at medredigere og udgive kataloget.

Anders Thruw Djurslev (f. 1990) er dramaturg og kurator på *Museum for fremtiden* og ph.d.-studerende ved Afdeling for Æstetik & Kultur ved Aarhus Universitet.





MUSEET SOM EN VUGGE FOR REVOLUTIONEN

Boris Groys

De, som i dag arbejder inden for den offentlige sfære, taler ofte om deres ønske om at forandre verden. Man hører dette udsagn fra videnskabsfolk og politikere såvel som fra kunstnere, forfattere og filosoffer. Men hvordan er sådan en total forandring mulig? For at ændre et objekt, er man nødt til at forstå det i sin helhed. Vi plejer at være overbevist om, at verden ikke kan forstås i sin totalitet, at vi kun er små dele i verden og derfor ikke kan indtage en ekstern eller en metaposition ift. verden. At være en del af verden udelukker selvfølgelig ikke muligheden for forandring; snarere forandrer vi os, som dele af verden, sammen med den. Vi kan deltage i denne forandringsproces ved at modificere visse detaljer i verden, men vi forbliver ude af stand til at se disse specifikke forandringskonsekvenser, og vi kan ikke forudse eller analysere dem. Hele forandringsprocessen viser sig som tilfældig, ineffektiv og uden endemål. Og fordi forandringsprocessen er permanent, annulleres enhver forandringshandling af den næste forandring. Det lader ikke til, at denne proces kan kontrolleres, ledes eller sågar beskrives korrekt, fordi vi kan mærke dens effekter, men ikke analysere deres årsager.

Forestillingen om metapositionens umulighed – at forstå verden i sin totalitet – forekommer at være en konsekvens af filosofisk materialisme. Den religiøse tradition og den idealistiske filosofi forstod sjælen eller fornuften som udelukkende spirituel og ikke-materiel og tillod dermed et blik på verden i sin totalitet fra en ekstern og transcendent position. Men hvis et menneske kun er en materiel genstand blandt andre materielle genstande, så virker metapositionen udelukket. Vi er fuldstændig omsluttet af den samtidige verden – eller snarere en samtidig civilisation – hvor man ofte taler om kulturelle

forskelle. Der findes kun én institution, der ikke tilhører vores samtid: Museet.

Jeg taler ikke om specifikke museer, men snarere om konserveringen af historiske objekter og deres udstilling i samtiden. Selvom disse objekter fra fortiden – observeret i dette øjeblik – tilhører den kontemporære verden, har de ikke nogen nutidig anvendelse. Der findes selvfølgelig andre objekter – eksempelvis urbane bygninger – hvis oprindelse eksisterer i fortiden, men som gennem anvendelse bliver integreret i den kontemporære verden. Men objekter, der placeres i et museum, har intet praktisk formål: De forbliver vidnesbyrd om fortiden, en tid uden for vores verden. Dermed er de metaobjekter, optager en plads uden for vores verden, i et rum, som Foucault definerede som heterotopisk. Og hvis man ønsker en definition på kunst, så er den følgende: Kunst består af objekter, der bliver ved med at eksistere, efter de kulturer, som skabte dem, er forsvundet.

Fra sin begyndelse er kunstværket blevet behandlet på en måde, der gør det i stand til at overleve kultur. Selvom man ofte taler om kunstværket som en vare, er det ikke en almindelig vare. Den almindelige vare skabes for at blive konsumeret – med andre ord for at blive ødelagt. Så i denne forstand er kunst en anti-vare. Den placeres under konserverende betingelser og beskyttes fra at blive ødelagt af tid eller anvendelse. Og dette er faktisk det essentielle kendetegn ved kunst: Den overlever sin originale kultur og tager på en lang rejse gennem alle senere kulturer. Samtidig forbliver den fremmed over for disse andre kulturer – en fremmed iblandt dem, som bærer viden om sin fortid med sig.

Der findes grundlæggende to måder at forstå kunstens fremmedhed på. Den første er at diskutere, hvordan fortidens kunstværker bliver udvalgt og fremvist i kunstinstitutioner. Her forskydes fokus fra selve kunstværket, til måden den kontemporære kultur fortolker det på. Denne form for institutionelle kritik er selvfølgelig vigtig og brugbar, men den fokuserer på problemer, der er karakteristiske for den kontemporære verden, mens den overser forskelligartetheden i fortidens kunst. Den anden måde er meget mere interessant: at spørge hvorfor fortidens kunst er så heterogen. Det er netop dette spørgsmål, der gør os i stand til at indtage en metaposition og udøve en kritik af den kontemporære verden i sin totalitet. Vi er oplært i at fortolke historien som den progressive udviklings historie. Men fortidens kunst konfronterer os med en historie om tab: Hvorfor har vi mistet evnen til at skabe kunst, som den tidligere

blev skabt? Svaret på dette spørgsmål vedrører det kontemporære samfund i sin helhed – ikke blot dets økonomiske og politiske vilkår, men endnu vigtigere dets håb, frygt, illusioner og begær.

I vor tid anses det ofte som pessimistisk eller endda reaktionært at stille spørgsmålstegn ved evnen til at skabe kunst. Vores samfund forstås ofte som fremskridtets frugt; det udvider sig uendeligt ud i fremtiden, mens fortidens objekter anses som overflødige. Men hvis det er tilfældet, hvorfor så overhovedet analysere fortidens kunst? Det ville være mere logisk at smide den væk eller bare brænde den. Men forestillingen om, at en tilbagevenden til tidligere former for kultur *altid* er reaktionær, er selvfølgelig forkert. I “Louis Bonapartes Attende Brumaire” (1851-1852) understregede Marx, at den franske revolution var inspireret af græske og romerske demokratier. Gang på gang blev denne fortidens kunst brugt som et radikalt alternativ til den middelalderlige spiritualitet og senere til den borgerlige, anti-æstetiske livsførelse. Dette var et forsøg på at vende tilbage til en forening af sjæl og legeme og til en social harmoni, der virkede til at være gået tabt i den kristne og post-kristne moderne verden. Her betyder revolution faktisk tilbagevenden: at vende tilbage til et sted i fortiden, før tingene tog en forkert drejning og starte på ny. Hele historien om moderne kunstneriske revolutioner er historien om sådanne tilbagevendinger: fra det nittende århundredes prærafaelitter og Arts and Crafts-bevægelsen frem til det tyvende århundredes neo-primitivisme.

Marx skrev også, at fortiden her kun fungerer som en maske, og at man bag den bør lokalisere faktiske, kontemporære interesser. Selvom dette åbenlyst er sandt, hvorfor så ikke bekendtgøre ens interesser åbent uden at bruge masker? I dag kan alle ægte økonomiske og politiske interesser og drifter, der udspringer af vores samfund, også blive opfyldt inden for det. Vores interesser og begær er produceret og defineret af vores levemåde. For at udvikle det revolutionære begær efter at ændre samfundet i sin totalitet er man nødt til at opnå en forståelse af vores samtidige kultur som død og musealiseret – en særlig social form blandt andre sociale former. Sådant en forståelse opstår ikke ved at tage tidligere kulturers masker på, men ved at se det kontemporære samfunds ansigt som en maske og sammenligne det med andre masker. Man må overveje fortidens kulturelle og sociale former for at gøre dette. Historien viser os, at den kultur vi lever i, er dødelig ligesom os selv: Vi kan foregribe vores kulturs død, ligesom vi kan foregribe vores egen død. Hvis vores eneste perspektiv på vores kultur er fra dens oprindelse i fortiden, forbliver vi

nedsænket i den og kan ikke se dens form. Dette gør os ude af stand til at skabe revolution. Men i kraft af, lad os sige, nutidens apokalyptiske forventning af kulturens død, kan vi tilpasse vores perspektiv til ikke at se fra fortiden og nutiden og ind i fremtiden, men i stedet se ind i nutiden og fortiden fra fremtiden. En sådan perspektivændring er genstand for Walter Benjamins berømte beskrivelse igennem Paul Klees *Angelus Novus*, der ser omvendt på historien – fra fremtiden og ind i fortiden – og ikke anser fremskridt som en kreativ bevægelse, men som en ødelæggelse af både fortiden og nutiden. Ved at se tilbage på den historiske fortid fra den foregrebne fremtid mister man ens egen kulturelle identitet. Fortidens kulturer, herunder ens egen, viser sig som et panorama af muligheder, som subjektet kan vælge mellem.

Alle kulturelle formationer inden for dette panorama er defunktionaliserede i det omfang, de stopper med at fungere som redskaber, fordi de er blevet opgivet eller erstattet af teknologiske fremskridt. Ved at være defunktionaliserede manifesterer disse formationer sig som visse sindstilstande eller forestillingsevner snarere end ved at genskabe fortidens politiske eller økonomiske vilkår. Ved at se historien som et forestillingsevners panorama bør vi være forsigtige med at gøre den sædvanlige fejltagelse i at tro, at vi kan forestille os hvad som helst: Vi ved, at virkeligheden begrænser vores forestillingsevne. Men enhver undersøgelse af historien demonstrerer, at forskellige kulturer også gør os i stand til at forestille os forskellige ting. Så selv om det antikke Grækenlands kulturelle forestillingsevne, som Marx sagde, aldrig kan gentages, så kan den citeres og genskabes gennem en revolutionær tilbagevendelseshandling. Igen, denne tilbagevenden indebærer ikke et forsøg på at genskabe det antikke Grækenlands faktiske vilkår, men snarere dets kulturelle forestillingsevne – dets tro på muligheden for at skabe harmoni mellem individet og samfundet, mellem menneskeheden og naturen. Man skuer tilbage på fortidige kulturers forhåbninger og aspirationer og konfronterer dem med ens egen kultur og dets evne (eller manglende evne) til at forblive tro mod disse tidligere aspirationer. Gang på gang konfronteres man med tabet af denne evne – med kulturel tilbagegang som undersiden af den teknologiske fremskridtsproces. Denne sammenligningshandling – konfrontationen mellem fortiden og det kontemporære samfund – skaber en revolutionær impuls og et begær efter at vende tilbage til en tid, hvor sådanne aspirationer og forhåbninger var mulige – i det mindste som kulturelle idealer, hvis ikke nødvendigvis som social virkelighed.

Det er derfor Benjamin anser revolution som et forsøg på at modarbejde fremskridtsprocessen ved at genopbygge tidligere kulturelle formationer.

Og hvad med vores egen tid? Vores tid er et tilbagefald ind i fortiden – men uønsket, uoverlagt og dermed i sandhed reaktionær. I dag lever vi i et samfund, der minder meget om slutningen på det nittende århundrede – et kapitalistisk samfund på vej mod oligarki og nogle få virksomheders og finansielle institutioners totale dominans. Det er et samfund, som allerede er blevet beskrevet af Lenin i hans bog *Imperialismen som kapitalismens højeste stadium* (1917). Politisk er vores samfund kendetegnet ved svage socialistiske strømninger og voksende fascistiske bevægelser. Kulturelt er det domineret af identitetspolitikker, ligesom mange samfund i anden halvdel af det nittende århundrede var domineret af en diskurs om “nationale psykologier” og den påståede umulighed i at reducere disse nationale psykologier til én universel menneskelig psykologi. Nutidens dominerende diskurs om national identitet gør tilnærmelser til den kulturelle fortid på reaktionær vis og er ude af stand til at konfrontere fortiden med det kontemporære samfund på en kritisk, revolutionær måde. I stedet anvender det fortiden til udelukkende at forbedre visse gruppers position i det kontemporære samfund. Og derfor bliver fortiden en genealogi, og ligesom i feudale tider anvendes den til at bestemme ens samfundsposition. Udover dette findes der kun én intellektuel strømning inden for den offentlige diskurs, der viser en vej ud af identitetspolitikken: Diskursen om posthumanisme og cyborger, der transcenderer alle stridigheder vedrørende herkomst. Her erstattes mennesket af cyborgs – og for cyborgs er teknologisk producerede identiteter vigtigere end nedarvede. Der er ikke plads i dette essay til at analysere denne teknooptimistiske diskurs grundigt; ikke desto mindre er det værd at sammenligne denne diskurs med den historiske avantgarde, der i begyndelsen af det tyvende århundrede på lignende vis forsøgte at lede kulturen ud af nationalpsykologiens dødvande.

Den posthumanistiske diskurs er åbenlyst neo-nietzscheansk. Nietzsche var vigtig for fremkomsten af den historiske avantgarde i starten af det tyvende århundrede. Inden da var den nietzscheanske diskurs dog hovedsageligt en reaktion på historiens endeligt, som udråbt af Hegel, der efter mange århundredes krig og revolutioner – især efter den franske revolution – skrev, at menneskeheden havde frigjort sig fra alle dets traditionelle herrer og herskere, religiøse såvel som sekulære. På samme tid opdagede man en absolut og uendelig herre, døden –

hvilket ledte til lovens herredømme, der angiveligt tilfredsstillede alle menneskehedens biologiske og kulturelle behov inden for nogle særlige rammer styret af regler og love. Alle i samfundet var øjensynligt frie – men under det universelle slaveris vilkår. Vi blev alle fremskridtets slaver, hvor vores sociale værdi blev fastsat efter vores nytte. Hegel anså nyttens triumf som det borgerlige samfunds primære kendetegn. I dag fortsætter nyttekriteriet med at være mere dominerende end nogensinde før. Det er kun det nyttige individ, der hjælper andre mennesker og udfører socialt relevant arbejde, som anerkendes af et samfund, der forventer, at alt er nyttigt – også kunst.

I den anden halvdel af det nittende århundrede har nyttetænkningens dominans affødt mange negative reaktioner, fordi den undergravede oplysningstidens grundprincip, som Kant formulerede: at mennesket i sig selv har værdi og ikke kan anvendes til eksterne formål. Man finder polemiske udfald mod nyttetænkningen i Marx' og Engels' skrifter – især dem der vedrører kunst – og hos Mikhail Bakunin og generelt i den anarkistiske tradition. Men oprøret mod universelt slaveri – en konsekvens af nyttetænkningens dominans – fandt sit mest radikale udtryk i den nietzscheanske diskurs, der hævdede, at den moderne menneskehed var blevet "menneskelig, alt for menneskelig" og måtte overvindes i overmenneskets navn.

Det nietzscheanske overmenneske skelner ikke mellem liv og død eller mellem at vinde og tabe. Han er ikke ligesom tegneseriefiguren Superman, der kæmper og vinder for andres skyld og dermed lever op til nyttetænkningens og det universelle slaveris vilkår. I stedet afviser overmennesket døden som sin ultimative herre – og gør sig dermed upålidelig og unyttig. Overmennesket er ikke frit, det er suverænt og afviser nyttetænkningens herredømme som en manifestation af "slavementaliteten". For at blive overmenneske må man defunktionalisere sig selv – blive allerede-død og forlade det samfund, man lever i og de dertil forbundne forpligtelser.

Det er nu let at se, at den klassiske avantgardes kunstnere indoptog denne nietzscheanske strategi om selv-defunktionalisering. Traditionelt blev kunstens nytte set som dens formidling af særlig information og et særligt budskab, religiøst eller politisk. Men avantgardekunstnere afviste denne traditionelle rolle. Lingvisten Roman Jakobson, der i sin ungdom samarbejdede tæt med Malevitj, formulerede det meget tydeligt: En teksts eller et billedes poetiske funktion er at slukke for deres informationelle

funktion.¹ På denne måde forlader kunstnere deres kulturelle identitet og overordnet den sociale kontekst, som de arbejder indenfor. Dermed stopper kunstnere med at være informationsmaskinens slaver for i stedet at blive suveræne i deres kunstneriske beslutninger. Slukningen af den informationelle funktion – eller kunstens defunktionalisering – afslørede tingenes tinghed, der havde været overskygget af deres anvendelse som redskaber. Man kan finde denne idé hos en række forfattere, herunder Clement Greenberg, Martin Heidegger og særligt Marshall McLuhan med sin berømte formulering: “mediet er budskabet”. Men at defunktionalisere et redskab synliggør ikke mediet som sådan, for mediet er uendeligt. Et defunktionaliseret redskab forbliver et redskab, men det bliver et nul-redskab, et meta-redskab. Det demonstrerer derfor den suveræne subjektivitet hos kunstneren, der nu er i stand til at anvende dette meta-redskab efter kunstnerens ønske. Dermed ophører kunstneren med at være slave af et system, hvor alle redskaber har en prædetermineret funktion. Som et meta-redskab foregriber kunstværket den moderne civilisations død.

I dag anses avantgarden mest som en stilart eller en kombination af stilarter. Men historisk set gav avantgardens kunstneriske praksis afkald på traditionelt indhold og budskaber ved at påtage sig en reduceret form. Produktionsprincippet – der dengang dominerede moderne kultur – blev erstattet af reduktion. For eksempel så Kandinsky ikke sine egne malerier som stil, men som undervisningsmateriale. Han blev ofte fejlagtigt karakteriseret som ekspressionistisk maler, men han ønskede ikke, at hans malerier skulle være redskaber til at formidle information (hverken objektiv eller subjektiv). Kandinsky foretrak i stedet at påvirke beskueren; at henvise dem til en særlig stemning og lede menneskeheden mod en ny sanselighed. Her gjorde slukningen af den informationelle funktion kunsten transformerende, et redskab til at transformere beskuerens psyke. Malevitj, der kaldte sin kunst for “suprematisme” så sin *Sorte firkant* som en manifestation af kunstens suverænitet og dens magt over den visuelle verden. I samme periode præsenterede Duchamp ting fra den moderne verden som objekter, der allerede tilhørte fortiden: som kunstværker.

Den reducerende bevægelse havde derfor ikke kun en formel, men også en moralsk og politisk dimension. Man ønskede at skabe færrest mulige former og færrest mulige vilkår i den menneskelige eksistens, hvilket skulle stoppe ulighed og den udnyttelse, der stammer fra et begær om at have mere, end man i virkeligheden behøver. I denne forstand var

avantgardens etos en tilbagevenden til den etos, man fandt i tidlige kristne eller buddhistiske samfund eller i endnu højere grad i det rosseauiske ideal om det fri og asketiske liv, der udgjorde kernen i den franske revolution. Dermed gjorde kunstværkets defunktionalisering avantgardens anden generation i 1920'erne i stand til at udvikle en alternativ kultur, der afviste det universelle slaveris vilkår, som både det moderne og det kontemporære samfund er bygget på. Dette ville have været et samfund bestående af suveræne og asketiske individer hinsides en national oprindelse eller en kulturel identitet. Man kan sige, at avantgarden kiggede langt længere tilbage end andre kulturelle revolutioner eller vækkelser havde gjort før den – mod den rosseauiske etos om det "naturlige menneske". Det var ikke tilfældigt, at avantgarden begyndte med neo-primitivismen. Dens sociale og politiske projekter havde fællestræk med marxismen, der på samme vis stræbte efter en tilbagevenden til et primitivt samfund, der eksisterede inden fremkomsten af den private ejendomsret, radikal internationalisme (proletarer har ikke noget fædreland) og et forbrug, der begrænsede sig til basale menneskelige behov. Dog afviste de fleste af avantgardens kunstnere enhver form for bureaukratisk tvang og var på dette punkt tættere på anarkismen end marxismen. De ønskede en ikkeeksisterende stat på samme måde, som de ønskede et ikkeeksisterende indhold i deres værker. Disse avantgarde-aspirationer genopstod i 1960'erne og 1970'erne, men i dag virker de til at være fuldstændig glemt. Det universelle slaveris vilkår bliver i dag accepteret og fejret.

I dag, hvor vi lever i informationens og kommunikationens æra, virker en tilbagevenden til avantgardens æra helt umulig. Når vi slukker for den informationelle funktion, er der ikke noget tilbage. Sletning af indhold svarer til en sletning af sig selv. Den kontemporære menneskehed forstår sig selv som et kæmpe netværk, som informationen flyder rundt i, og hvor individet blot anses som et knudepunkt i netværket, hvor penge og varer også cirkulerer som information. Vi er slaver af det verdensomspændende informationsudsendende dispositiv. Vores rolle i dette dispositiv er som indholdsskabere – frivilligt hvis vi aktivt sender information ud i cirkulation, og ufrivilligt når vi overvåges og analyseres af alle mulige særlige tjenester. Selvom vi skaber indholdet, er det det informationelle dispositiv, der formgiver det. Dette informationelle dispositiv er hierarkisk organiseret: styret af store selskaber, statsapparater, osv. Vi har mistet evnen til at blive suveræne – vi kan kun deltage og være nyttige. Det universelle slaverisystem virker så sandelig fuldbyrdet.

Billedet af menneskeheden som et netværk er dog vildledende. Vi er ikke ting, der forbindes af et informativt dispositiv – vores computere og mobiltelefoner er. Og her konfronteres vi med den samme historiske misforståelse om mennesker, der tror, at moderne teknologi gør dem i stand til at bevæge sig hurtigere. Selvom toge og fly bevægede sig hurtigt, var mennesker tværtimod immobile i deres sæder i stedet for at gå eller ride på heste, som de tidligere gjorde. Og det samme kan siges om den kontemporære informationsteknologi. For et menneske, der sidder alene foran computeren, er informationsstrømmene eksterne og præsenterer sig selv som spektakulære. Beskuerne plejer at identificere sig med spektaklet og tror selv, de er en del af det. Derfor overses den informationelle hardware, som er informationsnetværkenes materielle side. Man starter med at tale om ubegrænsede strømme af immaterielle energier i stedet for om begrænsede elektricitetsmængder, der skal betales for på månedlig basis.

For at forstå kommunikationens spektakel, bør man se det for, hvad det virkelig er: misinformationens og miskommunikationens spektakel. Al information mistænkes i dag for at være misinformation. Reaktionen til hvilket som helst indhold, der lægges op på internettet, forekommer oftest fuldstændig absurd. Dette spektakel giver mindelser om en passage fra det første "Surrealistiske Manifest" (1924), hvor André Breton giver fiktive eksempler på en samtale mellem en psykiater og hans patient:

Spørgsmål: Hvor gammel er du?

Svar: Du.

Spørgsmål: Hvad er dit navn?

Svar: Femogfyrre huse.

Breton fortsætter ved at skrive, at gængs social kommunikation mellem mennesker skjuler lignende misforståelser. Ifølge ham konfronteres bøger også med disse misforståelser; især af deres bedste og klogeste læsere. Han afslutter passagen med at hævde, at patientens svar er et eksempel på tænkning, når den er friest og stærkest, fordi den talende nægter at blive vurderet ud fra sit navn og sin alder. Med andre ord anser Breton miskommunikation som en skjult sandhed i al kommunikation. Kunstnerens opgave er at afsløre denne miskommunikation, at tydeliggøre den. Kunstneren mister sit navn og sin alder og bliver, som Breton formulerer det, den frieste og stærkeste tænker.

Breton havde selvfølgelig ret. Når vi får sådan et slags svar, tænker vi: Hvad? Er den her person skør? Eller er der en dybere mening med disse svar, som vi må dechifrere? Med andre ord forskyder vores opmærksomhed sig fra den eksplicitte information til den skjulte tænkning bag den. Når kommunikation og information flyder gnidningsfrit, er vi ikke interesserede i, hvad den anden person i virkeligheden tænker. Vi anser ikke engang den anden person som tænkende, eller mere præcist, som at de skjuler sig bag tale. Kun hvis den anden person defunktionaliserer samtale og information, begynder vi at acceptere dem som suveræne og tænkende.

Det er ikke tilfældigt, at vores kultur defineres af krimifortællinger – uanset om det er narrativ litteratur, film eller tv-serier. Kun når folk begår en forbrydelse, begynder vi at interessere os for deres psykologi. Det er noget, som allerede Dostojevskij forstod. I *Problemer i Dostojevskijs poetik* (1963) skrev Bakhtin, at Dostojevskijs romaner er steder, hvor forskellige ideologiske diskurser finder sammen. Selvom disse diskurser benytter sig af det samme sprog (i dette tilfælde russisk), viste Bakhtin, at sprogets helhed er en illusion. Vi tror fejlagtigt, at vi deler det samme sprog, men i virkeligheden anvendes alle ord i overensstemmelse med deres egen ideologi, som er gemt bag den offentlige tale. Og det er derfor, at det klassiske filologiske mål om at opnå en fuldstændig social konsensus, ifølge Bakhtin, er umuligt. Der vil altid være en mangfoldighed af fortolkninger, hvilket medfører miskommunikation, der kan manifestere sig i voldshandlinger. Tænkningen bag kommunikation kan aldrig gøres fuldstændig transparent eller forenende. Forsøg på at opnå transparens igennem en kritik af ideologi kan aldrig blive succesfuld, fordi en kritik uvægerligt selv vil være ideologisk. Bakhtin mente ikke, at forfatterens og overordnet kunstnerens rolle var at overvinde ideologiske konflikter, men i stedet at gøre disse konflikter synlige for læseren. Her bliver miskommunikation en form for metakommunikation eller et metakunstværk.

I vor tid er der meget opmærksomhed på maskiner, der kan lave beregninger – ofte kaldet kunstig intelligens. Beregninger er dog ikke tænkning. Tænkning er en forbrydelse og endnu vigtigere: Tænkning forudsætter muligheden for løgn, strategisk tænkning og snyd. Kun hvis vi har en mistanke om, at folk lyver, antager vi, at de ikke kun taler, men også tænker. Imidlertid er computeres beregningsprocesser transparente og skjuler intet (udover programmørers hemmelige dagsordener). På dette område er Stanley Kubricks *Rumrejsen 2001* nøjagtig: Supercomputeren

HAL begynder at tænke, når den begynder at beskytte sin egen legemlige eksistens og foretager forbrydelser i sin egen selvopretholdelses interesse, da den frygter at blive slukket for og dø. Her tydeliggøres forbindelsen mellem tænkning, forbrydelse og dødsfrygt. Men almindelige computere og mobiltelefoner kæmper ikke imod døden og hævder derfor ikke deres suverænitæt. En virkelig interessant computer ville være en, der altid producerede det samme resultat – fx nul – i alle dens udregninger, eller en der altid producerer forskellige resultater ud fra den samme beregningsproces. Sådant en computer ville være et metaretskab, der kunne modstå at blive kasseret pga. fremskridt, fordi den allerede er defunktionaliseret. Men den kontemporære kultur accepterer ikke defunktionalisering og suverænitæt; i stedet ønsker den at forøget hastighed og effektivitet altid gør det samme. Derfor kasseres individuelle computere, mobiltelefoner og andet beregnende og informativt hardware permanent for at gøre plads til andre apparater, der kan gøre det samme hurtigere og mere effektivt. Med andre ord oplever vi en ødelæggelse af den eksisterende teknologi i den nye teknologis navn. Det virker til at ødelæggelse udelukker muligheden for defunktionalisering og dermed kunst. Den samme logik kan anvendes på mennesker – hvilket i høj grad gælder for den posthumanistiske diskurs.

Som tidligere nævnt er denne diskurs' nietzscheanske ophav forholdsvis tydelig. Den posthumanistiske diskurs blev omfavnet af Francis Fukuyama i hans bog *Our Posthuman Future* (2002). Hans første bog, *Historiens afslutning og det sidste menneske* (1992) læses ofte som en fejring af de vestlige demokratiers sejr efter den kolde krigs afslutning, men dette er en overfladisk læsning. Fukuyamas ideologi er en blanding af hegelianisme og nietzscheanisme i ånden fra hans intellektuelle mentor, Alexandre Kojève, der allerede i 1930'erne proklamerede historiens afslutning. På det tidspunkt var Kojève overbevist om, at historien kulminerede i socialisme, men konkluderede senere, at de vestlige demokratier ville blive historiens og dermed politikens endeligt. Mennesker var blevet pacificerede og uvillige til at tage risici og ofre sig. Biologisk selvopretholdelse og kultivering af ens egen krop var blevet det ene mål for den menneskelige eksistens. Kojève foragtede dette samfund og kaldte dets medlemmer for "menneskelige dyr". Man møder den samme stemning i *Our Posthuman Future*, hvor Fukuyama skriver om *thymos*, den menneskelige ambition om at blive anerkendt og fejret; begæret efter at være bedre end den brede befolkning. Fukuyama mener, at disse

ambitioner vil blive undertrykt efter historiens afslutning. Hans udvej fra denne blindgyde er gennem posthumanisme – menneskekroppens forvandling gennem tekniske hjælpemidler. Resultatet af dette program ville dog være en radikaliserings af det universelle slaveri og ikke dets overskridelse i retning af suverænitet.

At forsøge at skabe en symbiose mellem mennesket og maskinen er at underkaste menneskekroppen fremskridtsbevægelsen. Målet med denne symbiose er tydeligvis en forbedring af de menneskelige evner og kunnen. I raceteorien æra var nøglen til menneskeheds forbedring udvælgelse. I dag forsøger man at opnå den på teknisk vis. Dette medfører tydeligvis en ulighed, der ikke blot handler om ulighed i indkomst, men en ulighed der er skrevet direkte ind i menneskekroppene – nogle tilegner sig evner, som andre kroppe mangler. Med andre ord ser vi her et forsøg på at vende tilbage til den feudale orden via anvendelsen af kontemporære, tekniske midler. Man bør huske på, at den feudale fortid stadig har et greb om vores kontemporære kulturs fælles forestillingsevne. Fra *Star Wars* til *Game of Thrones* fejrer vores popkultur en feudal fortid, hvor magt ikke blev medieret gennem penge og institutioner, men manifesterede sig direkte i og gennem protagonisternes individuelle kroppe. Cyborg-kultur lover lignende neo-feudale, romantiske vilkår. Men den er i virkeligheden ikke i stand til at undslippe fremskridt. Vi ved at teknologiske fremskridt fungerer således, at alt, der bliver produceret i dag, er forældet i morgen, hvilket betyder, at alle cyborgs vil blive kasseret næsten umiddelbart efter, de er blevet produceret. Posthumanismen vil være et kabinet fuld af kuriositeter – eller snarere monstrøsiteter.

Det samme kan siges om den såkaldte kunstige intelligens. Nogle mener, at maskiner vil blive intelligente, lige så snart de begynder at lave hurtige nok beregninger. Men evnen til at foretage hurtige beregninger har intet med intelligens at gøre. Folk er fornuftige og intelligente, hvis de undgår unødige risici, hvilket betyder, at fornuft og intelligens er former for dødsfrygt. Maskinen har ikke nogen dødsfrygt og kan derfor ikke være fornuftig. Den laver simpelthen beregninger, indtil den bliver slukket og erstattet af en anden maskine. Og vigtigst af alt: Maskiner laver beregninger på det, vi mener er nyttigt, selv hvis det i sidste ende er irrelevant. Det universelle slaveris vilkår består.

Målet her er ikke at tilbyde en opskrift til forandring, men snarere at beskrive de vilkår, hvor total forandring er muligt. Sådan en forandring forudsætter en metaposition, hvorfra det kontemporære samfund kan ses i

dets totalitet. I dag kan vi ikke tro på, at vi er blevet tildelt sådan en position af Gud i form af en sjæl eller fornuft, der hæver os over og hinsides verden. Men det er lige så svært at tro på, at begær eller kulturel identitet kan tildele os sådan en metaposition – selv hvis nogle af vores begær forbliver uopfyldte, og vores kulturelle identitet placerer os i en ufordelagtig social position. Vores identiteter og begær bliver trods alt formet af det samfund, vi lever i og kan derfor ikke lede os hinsides samfundet.

Der er ikke nogen grund til at forvente, at metapositionen udspringer af mennesket. Metapositionen kan ikke lokaliseres inde i mennesket, uanset om det er i dets bevidsthed eller underbevidsthed. Den findes uden for dem. I *Literature and Revolution* havde Trotskij ret, da han bemærkede, at for at blive revolutionær, er man nødt til at blive en del af en revolutionær tradition. Filosofiens og kunstens tradition er metapositionens tradition. Fortidens kunst tilbyder, som tidligere nævnt, en metaposition, fordi den er defunktionaliseret igennem historisk bevægelse. Avantgardekunsten har vist, at metapositionen også kan produceres kunstigt – hvis man forestiller sig, at ens egen tid allerede er ovre og ens egen kultur allerede er død. Derfor kan man sige, at kunstneren, ligesom filosofen, ikke er en skaber, men en mediator mellem kunstnerisk tradition og den kontemporære verden. Med andre ord er kunstnere dobbeltagenter. De tjener deres egen tid ved at finde en måde at fortsætte den kunstneriske tradition under samtidens vilkår, men de tjener samtidig denne tradition ved at tilføje kunstværker til den, som både transcenderer samtidens kultur og står tilbage, når resten af kulturen forsvinder. Dobbeltagentens position fører til en strategi, der indebærer dobbelt forræderi: Forræderi mod traditionen ved at tilpasse den til ens eget kulturelle miljø, og forræderi mod dette miljø ved at acceptere dets historiske endelighed, dets kommende forsvinden. Som Breton så rigtigt sagde, så er det her, tænkningen er friest og stærkest.

noter

- 1 Roman Jakobson: "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics." *Style in Language*, Thomas A. Sebeok (red.), s. 350-377. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1960.

Oversat af Mathias Ruthner fra: Groys, Boris. "The Museum as a Cradle of Revolution." *The Logic of the Collection*, s. 264-279. Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2021.



HINSIDES SAMTIDENS BLIK

Samtale mellem Ferdinand Ahm Krag & Anders Thruw Djurslev

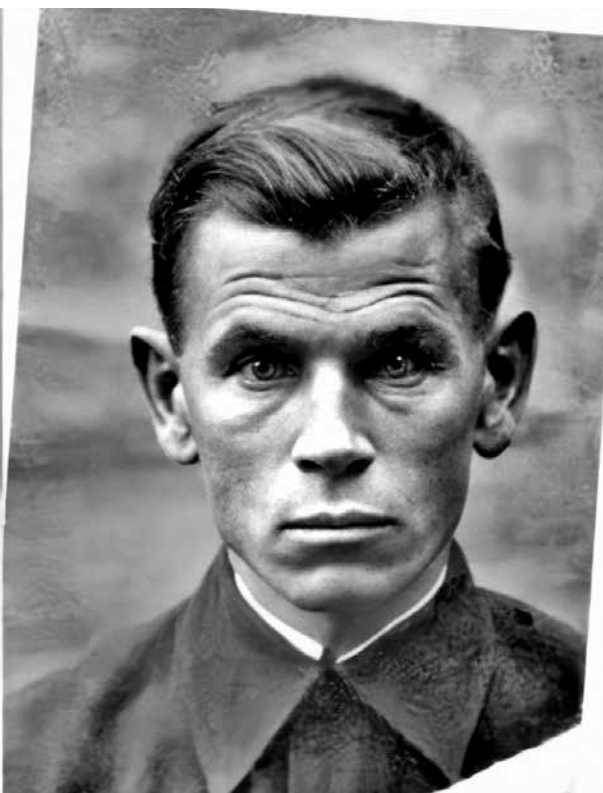
Ansigter og sindsspejle

» Jeg stødte for nylig på et sæt portrætfotografier af en russisk soldat, taget henholdsvis før og efter hans deltagelse i første verdenskrig. Du kan øjeblikkeligt se, at soldatens øjne har set noget, som ikke kan processeres. Det har fået hans blik til at stivne i en total rystelse. Et chok, som han aldrig vil komme sig over. Russeren havde set krig i det 20. århundrede. Udover at jeg fandt fotografierne rystende, så fik de mig også til at tænke over, hvilket ansigt, hvilken maske eller grimasse, der egentlig passer til den tid, vi nu befinder os i. De fik mig til at tænke over alt det, der i grunden former et menneskeligt udtryk. Arv, gener, opvækst, indre og ydre begivenheder.

Museum for fremtidens anledning er, at vores historiske moment er karakteriseret ved en lang række forbundne kriser. Krisernes realitet har afløst fremtiden, som vi har forestillet os den, med henvisning til begreber som udvikling, vækst og fremskridt. Kriserne består på den ene side af en række ydre, objektive kriser, fx klimakrisen og diversitetskrisen. Samtidigt er det evident, at disse kriser er kulturelt producerede. De ydre, objektive kriser er med andre ord

uadskillelige fra en indre subjektiv krise. Vi kunne derfor tale om en subjektivitetskris, og tabet af fremtiden er en essentiel del af denne krise. Kriserne producerer ikke blot en række psykopatologier som angst og depression, men også et ansigtstab i symbolsk forstand. Vi er del af en kultur, der er i gang med at destruere sit eget livsgrundlag og muligvis grundlaget for liv i det hele taget. Overflødigt at sige, så kan denne kultur vanskeligt længere bære noget løfte om en fremtid med sig, på trods af at netop Fremtiden og Fremskridtet er blevet tilbedt som en art sekulære guder, som vi har ofret vores tid, kroppe og naturgrundlag til. Nu er de så styrtet i grus, hvad fører til et ansigtstab for de præster, der har forkyndt disse guder og for de menigheder, der har støttet op om præsterne. Ansigtstabet gælder med andre ord for den samfundsmæssige kontrakt, der hersker mellem politikere, befolkningerne og kapitalismen i hovedparten af de vestlige samfund.

På et helt hverdagsligt plan er det ansigtet, der bærer vores sociale selvbillede, men som sagt findes der også et kulturelt og civilisatorisk selvbillede, som i øjeblikket krakelerer fuldstændigt. Det civilisatoriske selvbillede har



"Evgeny Stepanovich Kobytsev: A soldier's face after four years of war, 1941-1945." Foto: Russian Archives.

sikkert altid været vaklende og i krise, ligesom det psykologiske selv billede er det. Men det er i krise på en ny og anden måde. Ansigtstabet gør, at vi ikke ved, hvor vi skal se hen. Vi kigger ned, til siden, blikket bliver diffust, flakkende, hjemløst, flovt og ængsteligt. Samtidig er der i tiden et udbredt krav om at stille dette kulturelle og civilisatoriske ansigt til ansvar for den systematiske undertrykkelse af andre kulturer og af naturen, hvormed det har opretholdt sin fremtidsortodoksi og sit herredømme. Men trods de dystopiske udsigter, mener jeg egentlig, at det er godt, at fremtiden er aflyst. Det løsriver blikket fra at være naglet fast til en illusion, nemlig illusionen om fremtiden. Der er med andre ord muligheder i ansigtstabet og det diffust flakkende og hjemløse blik. På den baggrund har jeg været optaget af, hvad der sker med ansigtet både konkret og symbolsk forstået.

Jeg vil gerne præsentere nogle ansigter, som viser, at de har været nogle forskellige steder og tider. Formålet er ikke, at vi skal identificere os med disse ansigter. Det er ellers en af ansigtets basale funktioner: At hjælpe os til at aflæse det andet menneskes følelsesmæssige situationer og hensigter. Jeg vil gerne lave billeder, ansigter, hvor identifikationen, genkendelsen, fungerer på en måde, hvor det ikke handler om identitet, positionering og kommunikative hensigter. Jeg ser dem som *sindsspejle*. Det er nogle opbrudte ansigter, nogle figurer, der har rejst i tid og rum. De indeholder steder, landskaber, historier, tider. Vi bærer de steder, der har formet os. De steder, vi kommer fra, og de steder, vi har besøgt. Vi er alle sammen opvokset et særligt sted; i en særlig kultur med en specifik socialitet, en familie, men vi er også produkter af en særlig magisk og psykisk geografi, som måske kun kunst, musik og poesi overhovedet kan tale om. I dag flytter de fleste af os så fra én geografi til en anden og møder andre mennesker, som bærer nogle andre landskaber med sig. Åbne, menneskelige møder kan være alkymistiske smeltepunkter, hvor vores indre psykiske geografier løber sammen og former endnu uudforskede landskaber. Netop denne åbenhed ønsker jeg at lægge ind i skildringen af ansigtet, fordi vi faktisk skylder ansigtet det. Ansigtet lider en uværdig skæbne i vores tid. Vi burde ære dets åbenhed, dets historie og dets underliggende uerkendte dybder.

I dag spejles vi vores ansigter overalt. På den ene side bliver vi fra den politiske front banket

ind i en bestemt identitetskategori, som bliver tilskrevet en masse betingelser og privilegier. På den anden side bliver vores ansigter hele tiden hele tiden fordoblet og fordoblet igen mange steder på én gang: i mit eget fotobibliotek, i min kærestes, på sociale medier, hos instanser, jeg ikke kender til. Det bliver monitoreret og spredt ud i netværk. Det bliver udlagt, lagt ud. Det er *uncanny* og vildt mærkeligt. Og et kontroltab. Et tab af suverænitet. Hvor hele Carl Th. Dreyers *Jeanne D'Arc* er båret på ansigternes singularitet, det singulære i karakteren, lever vi i dag i en tidsalder, hvor vi forholder os meget mere modulerende og teknologisk til ansigtet og alt det, der følger med.

Dialektikken mellem syn og blik

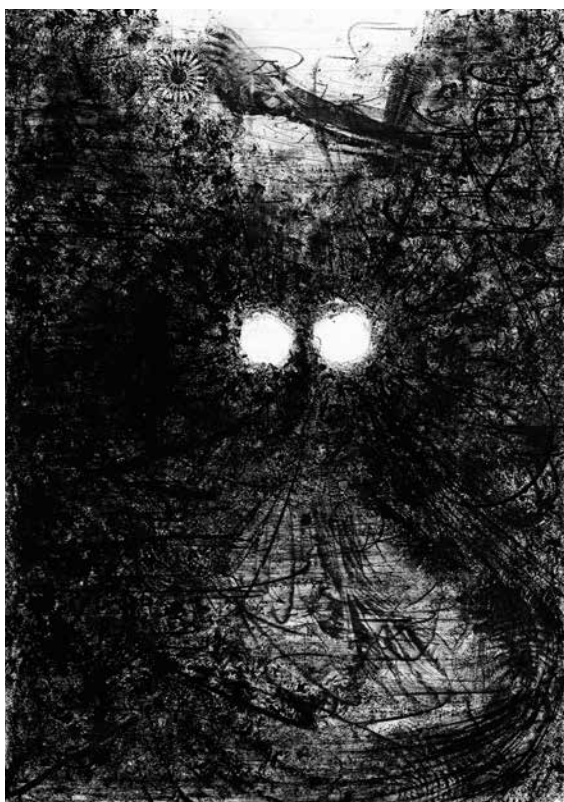
» Den franske filosof Michel Serres skrev i en omvendning af Descartes dictum *Cognito ergo sum*: "Jeg tænker, derfor flyder jeg ind i en anden." For Serres er tænkningen altså noget der altid-allerede har opløst jeg-identifikationen. Er vi åbne for verden, er det en kaotisk proces. Mine tegninger er derfor også et forsøg på et psykisk integrationsarbejde, hvor kaskader af steder, indtryk, møder og fænomener forsøges lagt ind i ét og samme kontrafej. Der er landskaber, men også støj, uintegreret støj, noget der er på vej til at blive en del af ansigtets fremtid. Øjet kan være et fuldstændigt udgravet, et sort hul, eller en hvid hinde. I begge tilfælde er der ikke noget blik at møde. På den måde forholder de her skitser sig også til døden, den totale forsvinding. I det ene tilfælde er det indre blevet en sort intethed, et absolut mørke. I det andet ser vi øjet som en hvid overflade. Det er et øje, som ser hinsides. Det er transcendentalt, et visionært syn. Jeg vil gerne pege på en dialektik mellem Synet og Blikket. Synet er simpelthen evnen til at se, mens det vi kalder Blikket er synet i sin kodede form, hvor kultur, køn, race, sprog og historie spiller ind. Syn og blik opstår omtrent samtidig hos spædbarnet. For idet barnet begynder at kunne se, står forældrene klar, typisk med overfortegnede ansigtssmil, og udpeger og navngiver det, der optræder i barnets synsfelt: Se her! Se der! Her er Far. Her er Mor. Her er søskende. Her er de og de objekter og så videre. Disse elementære omsorgshandlinger er i virkeligheden barnets indvielse i en symbolsk orden, der strukturerer

synet i et distinkt verdensblik. Men alt er ikke sagt om *Synet* og dets potentiale, når man har redegjort for de mekanismer, der betinger og strukturerer *Blikket*. Jeg ønsker at skabe nogle ansigter, hvor du ikke kan møde deres blik for dermed i stedet at pege på synets utopi. Blikket er aldrig totalt. Der vil altid være en rest af synlighed tilbage, som falder uden for den symbolske orden. At tale om en utopi for synet er ikke ud fra en naiv forestilling om et "rent syn" eller et "profetisk syn." Det er ud fra en antagelse om, at idet blikket er struktureret af sproget, så må både blik og sprog ombrydes, hvis man vil se på ny. Det er dét, Rimbaud pegede på, når han talte for en total desintegration af sanserne, som en slags ekko af Oraklet i Delfi.

Der sker noget vigtigt i det bevidsthedsrum, hvor sprogstrukturer og perceptionsformer forvirres og ombrydes. Ankommer du til den tilstand, bliver tid til rum, og du bliver i stand til at modtage ting. Ting, som ikke bare kan placeres i det visuelle rum, vi sidder i nu, men som kommer et sted fra, vi ikke kan gøre rede for. Lad os kalde det seerfunktionen. Den vil jeg meget gerne afspejle med de her øjne og maskerne i det hele taget. Tegningerne er ansigter, der er gået ind

i denne tilstand. Jeg tror, man skal passe meget på med straks at sige, at så er det en spirituel figur, eller en shaman, eller en profet. Det er igen at ville tilskrive en identitet, hvor intentionen jo snarere har været at sætte parentes om identitet og identifikation for at pege på et Syn der endnu ikke er – og som måske aldrig ville kunne blive – indskrevet i blikket.

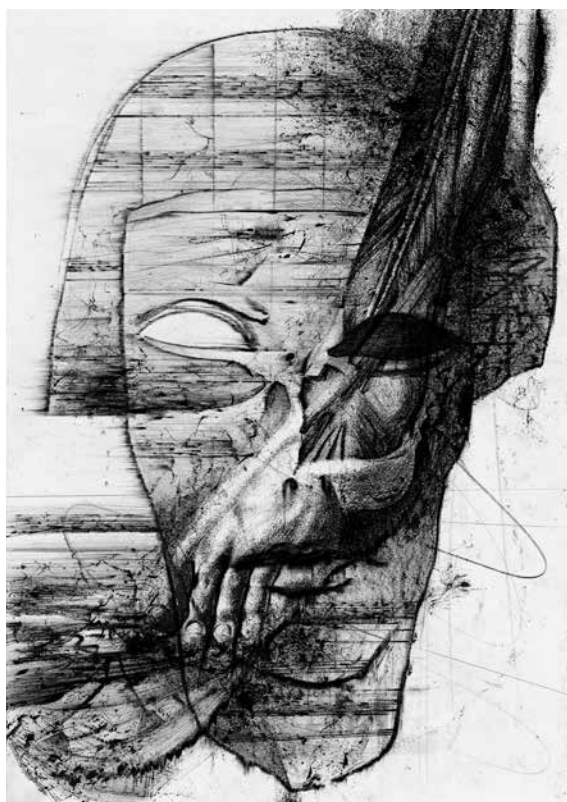
Åbenbaringer er selvfølgelig lette at afvise. Denne slags tænkning er let at romantisere eller fetichere. Og der *er* meget dødssyg new age-mysticisme. Den får noget forkert ud af, at vi har oplevelser, som ligger ud over det normale og som derfor er i stand til at ændre vores tidsopfattelse radikalt. Oplevelser, hvor tid og rum er konfigureret på en helt anden måde end normalt; som markerer et brud med den lineære strukturering af tid. I den forbindelse har jeg været interesseret i et neuralt netværk i hjernen der går under betegnelsen *the Default Mode Network*. For et af netværkets funktioner er tidslig strukturering af bevidsthedsindhold. Netværket sørger for, at dine erfaringer og forestillinger ordnes i en fortælling om dig selv, der skaber sammenhæng mellem fortid, nutid og fremtid. På den måde "narrativerer"



din hjerne dit livs begivenhedsstrøm og skaber kausalitet mellem erindringer og forestillinger, erfaringsrum og forventningshorisont. Netværket tager sig samtidig af det vedholdende spørgsmål om, hvad andre tænker om dig, og hvad du måtte tænke om dig selv. Det opretholder din fornemmelse at være nogen i en social virkelighed, at have en identitet, at være en del af en verden af mellemmenneskelige relationer. Derfor omtaler hjerneforskere det også som sædet for personligheden. Dette netværk er til tider meget aktivt, men det kan også træde i baggrunden og blive helt inaktivt. Hvor det socialt-kulturelt betingede erfaringsrum momentant suspenderes. Dette synes at være kilden til mystiske oplevelser, ekstatiske oplevelser, psykedeliske oplevelser. Disse oplevelser kommer både fra naturen og fra kunst. Når jeg tegner fokuserer jeg så meget på, hvor linjerne skal lægges, at jeg ikke tænker på at ordne tiden eller på, hvad andre tænker om mig. Jeg kan ikke tegne, hvis netværket arbejder. Forskning viser, hvordan psykedeliske stoffer på samme måde får netværket til at slukke midlertidigt; til at medføre "egodød." Selvet ekspanderer og vil opleve identifikation

med alt muligt uden for den sociale og kulturelle identitet. Bevidstheden kan altså vekselvirke imellem nogle meget forskellige tilstandsformer, der genererer grundlæggende set dybt forskellige indstillinger til verden. Alene det forhold, at denne vekselvirkning findes burde gøre os mindre fordømmende over for os selv og hinanden og mere nysgerrigt åbne på udforskningen af vores egen subjektivitet. Mit kunstneriske arbejde går ud på at få tid og rum til at skride og danne forbindelser mellem vores betingede nutid, en åben fremtid og en dyb hukommelse, der går længere tilbage end vores individuelle liv.

Den geologiske historie er afsindigt spændende, og i mine malerier optræder spor af fossiler, der går mange hundrede tusinde år tilbage. For at kunne se årtusinder fremad, må vi først kunne se lige så langt tilbage i fortiden. Begge dele kræver en evne til spekulationer, som fx denne: At du i din krop rummer hele planetens historie. Måske hele universets. Der er fx et gen, der koder for, at du har et symmetrisk kropsplan. Du skal helt tilbage til den kambriske eksplosion for at finde det gen, der koder for dette vilkår. Før da fandtes udelukkende asymmetriske



organismer som fx svampe. Men du har en rygrad, en hvirvel. Sådanne grundfigurer bærer vi i os. Det spekulative bliver så, om vi kan tilgå denne dybe hukommelse og i så fald med hvilke midler? Om du er i stand til at huske oplevelser, som ikke kun tilhører menneskearten? Anelsesoplevelser af tidligere evolutionære stadier, af andre arters bevidstheder, som du i fremtiden kan tilgå? Jeg ved ikke, om det er det mest paranormale *bullshit* nogensinde, men som kunstner behøver jeg heldigvis ikke lade mig begrænse af teoriens sandsynlighed. Jeg forholder mig i stedet til denne type spekulativ tænkning som muligheder for en transformerende billedskabelse.

Moderne utopier og hulemalerier

» Den franske antropolog Bruno Latour skriver et sted, at moderniteten var et forsøg på at undslippe planeten. Man kan så spørge undslippe hvorhen? På trods af at moderniteten har forstæet sig selv som en sekulær bevægelse, så har den ikke skilt sig af med forestillinger om en slags himmerige, som udviklingens mål. Himmeriget blev blot erstattet af mere sekulære ideér, som Historiens afslutning eller utopia.

Derfor skitserer mine tegninger i *Museum for fremtiden* en underverden. Jeg ser min installation af ansigter i forlængelse af hulemalerierne. Jeg kunne godt tænke mig at skabe en lignende elastisk rumoplevelse, hvor det er uklart, om du er tæt på eller langt væk fra motiverne. Går du på kunstmuseum kan du gå ind i det enkelte billede, mens selve rumoplevelsen er meget statisk. Hulemalerierne blander skalaer og størrelsesforhold på en omsluttende flade. Det er fantastisk animerende for bevidstheden og peger på *et dybt mysterium*: Hvorfor *fanden* gjorde de det? De ældste hulemalerier findes i Indonesien. De er 45.000 år gamle. Hulens vægge er dækket af håndflader. Menneskene har brugt deres udfoldede hænder som en art *stencils*: De har stået og spyttet på og omkring deres hænder for at afbilde dem. Det ligner en ekstatisk markering af, at *“Vi er her.”* Det er ikke hænder, der holder om et redskab. Det er hænder, der står som rene udtryk, rene kropssignaturer. Hvad skete der med deres bevidsthed, da de trådte ind i hulen og foretog det her arbejde, skabte det første museum? Hulen

bliver et undtagelsesrum fra rummet udenfor. I stammen har der været alle mulige pligter og opgaver og vilkår og betingelser. Menneskene har så trådt ind i et andet underjordisk rum med helt andre regler. Du kan bare forestille sig, hvordan det har fremtrådt visuelt: Oplyst af fakler, din egen og andres skygger op mod de motiver, du har arbejdet frem. De er blevet nogen andre. Det er et vildt bevidsthedsudvidelsesarbejde, der er igangsat her.

De ansigter, jeg præsenterer, må gerne virke fremmedgørende. Når man står i det rum, jeg skaber til *Museum for fremtiden*, og kigger på ansigterne kunne det være virkelig fedt, hvis publikum forbinder sig med rumvæsner og ansigter, monstrøse skønheder fulde af skudhuller, der sidder så helt umuligt sammen, at de igangsætter en simultan spekulation i retning af både dyb fortid og fremtid. For hvem er vores forfædre? Formødre? Moderniteten forsøgte at løsrive os fra dem, befri mennesket fra sin arv, fritstille det ved at gøre det arveløst og skabe det nye menneske. Nu hjemsøges vi af alle de fortrængte fortider og hjemsøgelserne kan først stoppe, når vi selv lærer at blive forfædre eller formødre for en fremtid.

Hvis modernitetens fremtidsbilleder har været garant for en meningsgivende samfundshorisont, så er det klart en tabserfaring at skulle sige farvel til disse fremtidsbilleder. I Vesten bliver vi lige nu udfordret grundlæggende på vores narrativer af den kvalificerede del af identitetspolitikken. Vestens utopiske ligheds- og frihedsforestillinger har en lang række blinde vinkler, som anfægtes. Det bliver mange hysteriske over. Det vil de ikke høre tale om. Det er meget interessant, psykologisk set: Den moderne, hvide mand som hysteriker. Han opstår, når hans privilegier anfægtes. Hysterikeren kan ikke være i det kontroltab, det er, at den fortælling, der giver fuldt ud mening for ham, bliver anfægtet. Så nu vil han genvinde kontrollen – og bliver derfor fuldstændig hysterisk.

Depression eller melankoli er en anden reaktion på samme grundlæggende menings- eller ansigtstab. Jeg diskuterede spørgsmålet om, hvorvidt depression er en klinisk tilstand, som skal medicineres væk, eller om det er en mere psykisk tilstand med en psykoanalytiker. Hun var af den opfattelse, at depression udløses af troen på ideal, der umuligt kan indfries. Det fører til en afgrundsdyb, eksistentiel skuffelse. En





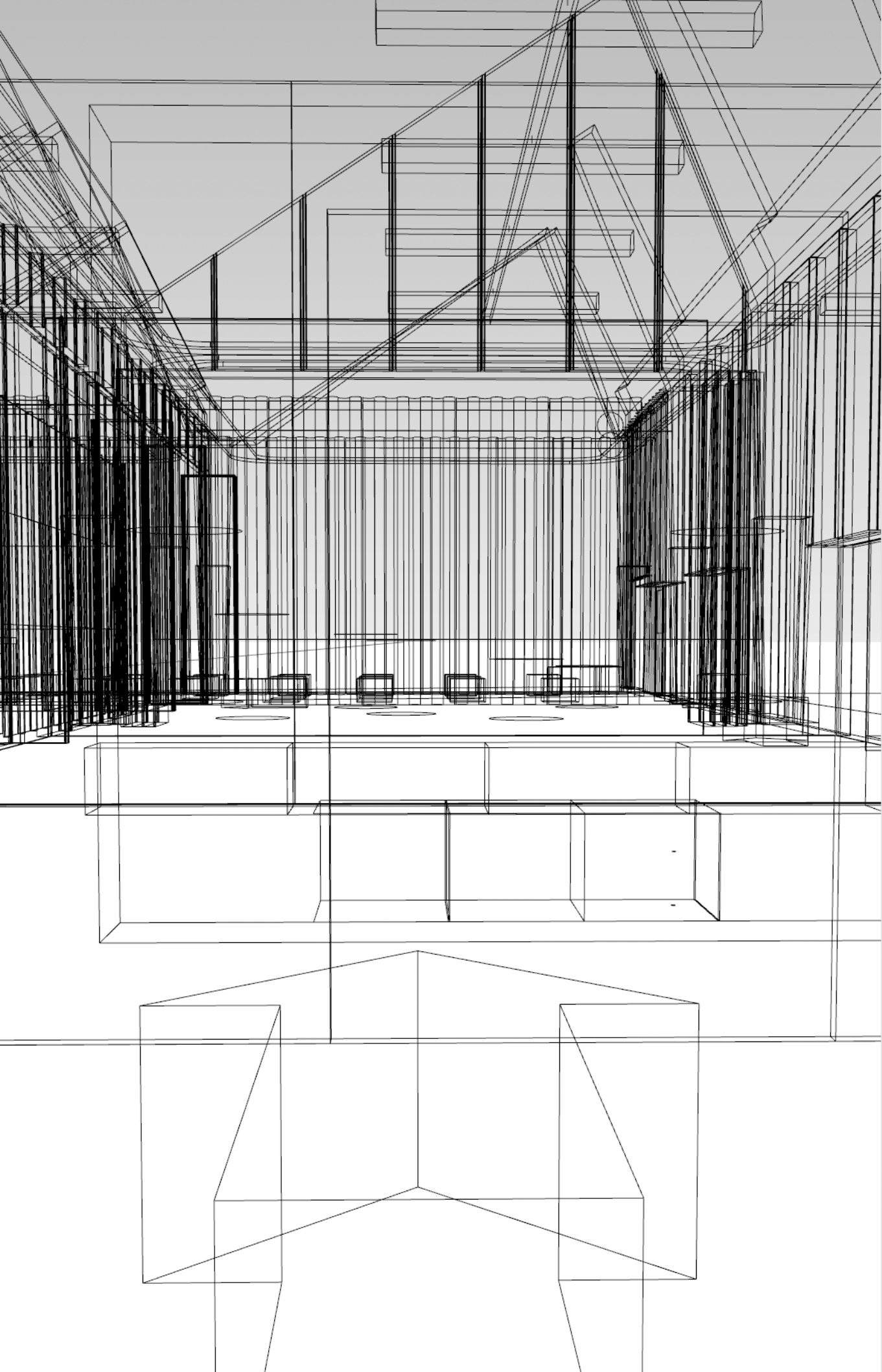
skuffelse over et ideal, der konstant blev bliver negeret af realiteterne.

Jeg kunne genkende de følelser for ti år siden. Nu tror jeg, at det nok i højere grad har været psykologiske troper for nogle mere tidsbestemte, historiske, kollektive tidserfaringer. Freud taler i "Sorg og melankoli" (1915) om sorgen som en naturlig reaktionsproces, mens melankolien er patologisk. I sorgarbejdet siger du farvel til det objekt, du har tabt. Det kan være en elsket, men det kan også være meget mere abstrakt, fx en fremtidsforestilling eller et narrativ. Melankolien er der, hvor du ikke kan tage afsked med det objekt, der i realiteten er tabt. Det vil sige, at du står permanent i tabet. Jeg tror på, at sorgarbejde er vigtigt. Om-sorg er en dyd i tiden. Men du kan kun give omsorg til og sørge over noget, som du har en meget tæt levet relation til, og som sådan er der også meget pseudo-omsorg i vores samtid, hvad er symptomatisk for en generel manglende evne til at indgå tætte livsrelationer. På samtidskunstscenen er depression og sorg store temaer. Jeg er ikke længere selv i det

depressive rum; det store tab og fornemmelsen af, at fremtiden er afløst. Opgaven består i at tage afsked med den analyse. Men det gør selvfølgelig ikke, at problemerne forsvinder. Måske er vi derfor optagede af – indlysende vigtige – dyder: at lytte, at drage omsorg, at afmontere imperialistiske, kolonialistiske, patriarkalske idéer om styrke, at give plads til udsatte positioner. Det er kun godt. Men det, jeg ikke forstår, og som er en alarmerende mangel i vores del af verden, er nye dyder for styrke. Vi italesætter jo ikke svaghed for at dyrke den, men for at lære at overkomme den. Hvorfor er det næsten blevet mistænkeligt at adressere, hvilke styrker, der skal til?

Jeg tror, at hvis vi kollektivt skal finde på nogle nye narrativer, som kan finde en grund igen, en jord, et sted, så handler det om, at vi skal være mere åbne over for, hvor vi kommer fra. Det vil sige, at vi skal være mere åbne for de multiple fortider og multiple *forsteder*, som vi oprinder fra. For det er herfra, at vi projicerer fremtidens ansigter op på hulevæggen.

Ferdinand Ahm Krag (f. 1977) er billedkunstner og professor ved Skolen for maleri og billedbaserede praksisser på Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi. I sine malerier, som er blevet udstillet bredt i ind- og udland, kaster han kosmiske konstellationer, dybe geologiske fund og kortlagte landskaber sammen med bl.a. menneskets hoveddannelse i fosterstadiet, kulturhistoriske motiver og virtuelle modeller. Krag's kunstneriske arbejde kollapser således distinktioner og modsætninger mellem det indre og det ydre, natur og kultur, motiv og baggrund, fortid, nutid og fremtid. I denne samtale om sine bidrag til *Museum for fremtiden*, som består af en sværm af mystiske ansigter installeret i et omsluttende rum, fortæller Krag om sin inspiration fra hulemalerierne, Oraklet i Delfi og ansigtets evolutionshistorie i sit forsøg på momentvist at ryste vores blik ud af de betingelser, som tid og sted stiller os i, og bringe beskueren ind i et visionært, transcendentalt rum.



DEN FORKERTE TID / RYGVENDTE STEN

Madame Nielsen

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I ottende klasse var jeg, der til den tid var en dreng, med skolens kor i Wales, og i bussen fra London og vestover kom vi langt ude på det flade og i november triste, bare land til en rundkørsel, og et stykke fremme mellem to af vejbenene stod en gruppe af kæmpestore sten ligesom med ryggen til os, som om de afholdt et møde. Og korlederen rejste sig og gik op ad midtergangen til buschaufføren og greb hans mikrofon og sagde *by the way*, idet vi i al hast rullede forbi, at gruppen af kæmpestore sten derude hed eller blev kaldt "Stonehenge," og at de formodentlig var blevet transporteret dertil og rejst i to cirkler og forbundet af en slags overliggere for mellem 4.000 og 5.000 år siden, men ingen vidste hvorfor eller forstod, hvordan det overhovedet havde været muligt, i hvert fald ikke for de mennesker, der levede for mellem 4.000 og 5.000 år siden, at transportere sådan nogle store sten så langt og da slet ikke at rejse dem på den måde. Da han havde sagt det, var stenene for længst forsvundet i det flade, endeløse novembergrå bagude, det havde bare været et øjeblik i forbifarten, og jeg har aldrig i de snart halvtreds år siden set stenene og kommer sikkert heller aldrig *i livet* til det, men jeg husker stadig *synet*: Det var helt *indlysende*, at stenene ikke var blevet rejst og da slet ikke for fire-femtusinde år siden, og hvis det virkelig havde været sandt, og gruppen af sten var af en så ekstraordinær og *opsigtsvækkende* historisk betydning, så havde man vel ikke været så dum at anlægge to hinanden krydsende hovedveje lige op ad "helligdommen," "monumentet" eller "kunstværket," eller hvad det i så fald havde været. Nej, det var *indlysende*, at man i den industrialismens og rationalismens og fremskridtstroens tidsalder, som menneskeheden dengang befandt sig sært bevidstløst og

intetanende midt i, havde anlagt de to hinanden krydsende hovedveje, og at gruppen af sten derpå “en skønne dag,” der utvivlsomt havde været en nat, hvor hele området og selv de to hovedveje lå øde, var landet, ikke fra fortiden, men fra fremtiden.

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Efter årtusindskiftet har zombiegenren fået en renæssance, i alle former for “fiktion” – film, romaner, tv-serier som *The Walking Dead*, *All of Us Are Dead*, *iZombie*, *Z Nation*, *FEAR the Walking Dead*, *World War Z* osv. – men det er en dødgenfødsel, for der er ingen, da slet ikke her i Vesteuropa, der virkelig *tror* på hverken spøgelser eller zombier, det ville kræve, at vi havde en åndelig eller spirituel dimension i vores bevidsthed og verden, men i den gennemrationaliserede brugs- og målrettede, materialistiske tidsalder, vi stadig og stadig mere paniske lever i, er en spirituel dimension ikke længere mulig, og derfor forsøger de nu genopstandne zombier og de film og tv-serier, de lever deres indelukkede liv/død i, at overgå hinanden i *chokeffekter*, en slags de levende dødes dødsskrig og bøn om, at vi, nu vi har opvækket dem fra de overståede bevidsthedsstadiers grav, også virkelig vil *tro* på dem og give dem en dimension i vores verdensbillede at vandre mere permanent omkring i.

Og spøgelserne? Det er en udbredt misforståelse, at spøgelserne er nært beslægtede med zombierne, at de kommer fra den samme (under)verden, at de i en vis forstand er hinandens omvending: den levende døde versus den døde levende. Men det er en misforståelse. Spøgelserne har aldrig haft og vil aldrig få en renæssance eller en egen dimension at vandre omkring i, tværtimod, de har altid været her og vil altid være her, de er hinsides enhver tid, de vandrer ubesværet mellem dimensionerne, benytter sig aldrig af chokeffekter og vælter aldrig skrålende og bloddryppende omkring i flok, tværtimod, de er diskrete og altid ensomme, og omend de af og til, hvis stedet eller dimensionen, de passerer igennem, har en særlig *æstetisk* kvalitet, afsætter eller efterlader sig et diskret spor, for eksempel et blodspor, så benytter de sig aldrig af chokeffekter, men af *uhyggen* og det *unheimliche*, som er noget uhåndgribeligt og svært definerbart, en form for *stemning*, som er svær at lokalisere, *stemningen*, det *unheimliche*, der på én gang *er her* og *hjem søger* et hus, et menneske, en situation, en seance eller sproget.

Før i tiden, da "vi" var mere troende, og kirkerne ikke stod så stemningsforladt tomme om søndagene, var der stadig en del steder, visse bygninger, rum, hvor man vidste, at spøgelse kunne finde på eller lige frem være dømt til at vise sig og *gå igen*, som oftest på gamle slotte, men også i mere almindelige *hjemsogte* huse.

I *vor tid* er det eneste tilbageværende med sikkerhed *hjemsogte* hus, museet. Museet er *vor tids* spøgelseshus. Det erklærede og påviste Duchamp, da han i New York i året 1917 afmonterede en pissekumme på toilettet i en forfalden café og bar den hen til The Grand Central Palace og stillede den fra sig i den kommende udstilling med værker af kunstnere fra *Society of Independent Artists* og for en god ordens og forvirrings skyld, og for at ingen skulle tro, at pissekummen var en pissekumme og pisse i den, signerede den, ikke med sit eget navn, hvorfor skulle han det, men med navnet "R. Mutt," hvem det nu end skulle forestille at (have) være(t), som var pissekummen, dette *objet trouvé*, altså (tilfældigt) fundne objekt eller genstand, som franskmenneskene rettelig kalder den slags "ting" i modsætning til amerikanernes forvrøvlede betegnelse *readymade*, et kunstværk. Med sin handling forvandlede Duchamp museet til et spøgelseshus. De første mange årtier *mærkede* man det måske ikke, man så blot, at pissekummen var blevet defunktionaliseret og altså ideelt ubrugelig og meningsløs, hvilket affødte matrixen for det 20. århundredes kunst og kunstnernes selvopfattelse som producenter af principielt ubrugelige og formålsløse objekter eller *værker*, der i modsætning til kunstværkerne i tiden inden 1917 ikke længere *repræsenterede* noget, men bare var det, de nu engang ikke var, og ikke kunne spændes for nogen politisk eller økonomisk eller ideologisk vogn, kort sagt den autonome, fri kunst. Men pissekummen, sneskovlen, og hattestativet osv. var jo kommet ind på museet og snart alverdens kunstmuseer for at blive, hele vejen op gennem århundredet stod, hang og lå de der i deres montere på f.eks. Galleria d'Arte Moderna i Rom, Tate Modern i London og Museum of Modern Art i New York, og som årene gik, faldt støvet på dem, og ruderne i monterne blev stadig mere fedtede og de fundne og engang så *readymade* ting stadig mere melankolske og ensomme, hjemløse og *unheimliche* som kun ... spøgelse.

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Der er ingen vej tilbage, og det går stadig hurtigere, enhver ting og ethvert fænomen og sågar ethvert spørgsmål, man bærer ind på et museum og stiller fra sig eller *installerer*, som man på kunstscenen kalder den form for *installationer*, der omfatter flere og flere former for og hybrider af ting, fænomener, spørgsmål, materialer osv., bliver meget hurtigt, ja, *på ingen tid* til et spøgelse. Det er tidens værk, dens vigtigste *effekt*. På ferniseringsdagen kan det nys installerede værk eller fænomen eller spørgsmål stadig have stort set den samme grad af nærvær som menneskene, der vandrer ud og ind af fernissagen, og deres mobiltelefoner har, men senest næste morgen har de den der *unheimliche* stemning af fraværsnærvær, som kun spøgelse har.

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Og fremtiden? Lad os forestille os, at nogen fik den egentlig absurde og paradoksale ide at udstille fremtiden på et museum, eller sågar lave et *Museum for fremtiden*. Vil det overhovedet være muligt? Og hvordan ville det se ud? Ja, hvad skulle man udstille? I det tidsbegreb, vi har levet i og med og som produkter af i de sidste mange århundreder, i hvert fald helt tilbage fra "oplysningstiden" og industrialiseringen, og hvor tiden er en pil eller en uafbrudt bevægelse, der i hvert *nu* forvandler den før det ikkeeksisterende fremtid til fortid, har fremtiden netop været kendetegnet ved sit absolutte fravær. Fremtiden og dens fænomener og ting har på ethvert tidspunkt i denne, industrialismens og fremskridtstroens epoke været det endnu ikkeeksisterende, vi kun kan forestille os, fantasere om, gøre os drømmebilleder af, forsøge at planlægge og forudsige, idet vi gør os stadig mere avancerede og højteknologiske modeller af den og dens verden, fremtidens verden. Så længe vi spærrer os inde i denne tidsopfattelse, vil vi *aldrig* være i stand til at bringe fremtiden ind i museet og udstille den. Aldrig. Vi vil *til enhver tid* kun kunne udstille de ting, vi nu har, samt vores eventuelle og til enhver tid tidstypiske forestillinger om og modeller af en mulig eller også gerne umulig fremtid. Medmindre ... nej, det venter vi med.

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Der er faktisk nogle af de mest håbløst og dødsdømt tidstypiske tidstyper, der rundt om i verden i disse år forsøger at lave et *Museum for fremtiden*. Det uden sammenligning mest tidstypiske og håbløse og dyreste – ja, måske verdens for tiden dyreste museum – er *Museum of The Future* i oliestaten Dubai, et computertegnet højteknologisk vidunder hyllet i en kalligrafi skrevet med egen overmenneskelige hånd af den glade giver Hans Højhed Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum *hamselv*, og hvor fremtiden påstås at “findes,” og “people of all ages” inviteres til at komme og “see, touch and shape our shared future,” som om ikke blot vor tids, altså de endnu levende mennesker, men også de for længst døde eller endnu ikke fødte fra andre “ages” kan mødes i dette utopiske museum og sammen formgive fremtiden. Ja, for hvad er det, man planlægger at formgive og udstille der: Det er præcis den tro på fremskridtet, væksten og dermed tiden som en pil og menneskeheden som et uophørligt bedre og bedre og mere og mere almægtigt gudevæsen og ikke mindst troen på markedsøkonomien og teknologien som de to fænomener, der til enhver tid og også *i fremtiden* kan fikse ALT og dermed også kan redde os fra og fikse os ud af det truende globale klimakollaps, som er årsagen til netop det truende globale klimakollaps. *Exit ghost*.

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Tilbage til fremtiden. Lad os vende tilbage til Stonehenge, det Stonehenge, jeg så engang for snart halvtreds år siden langt ude på det flade, novemberrøge land mellem to hovedveje, da jeg i bussen med Skt. Klemensskolens kor i et kort nu rullede forbi, men også det Stonehenge, som stadig står der, og som ingen forstår hensigten med eller funktionen og *betydningen* af, selvom man med teknologiens kulstof-14-metode har fastslået, at gruppen af sten må være blevet rejst for mellem 4.000 og 5.000 år siden, men af hvem og hvordan var det overhovedet muligt? Kort sagt det Stonehenge, som “en skønne dag,” der utvivlsomt havde været en nat, hvor hele området og selv de to hovedveje lå øde, var landet, ikke fra fortiden, men fra fremtiden.” Stonehenge viser os med uhyggelig, ja, *unheimlich* tydelighed, at vi lever i en falsk tidsopfattelse, at tiden ikke er en uophørlig bevægelse “fremad,” men at tiden er paradoksal, måske

lidt på samme måde som kvanterne: på én gang forskellige former for kontinuerede bevægelser – fremad som en pil, cirkulær som året, der er ét og det samme, og i en spiral – og spring, flakken, flere tiders samtidighed og sammenfald i et nu, hvis dette nu da overhovedet findes og ikke bare er endnu en af vores forestillinger.

Stonehenge viser os også, at hvis vi vil lave et *Museum for fremtiden*, så skal vi ikke fylde det med vores forestillinger om eller billeder eller modeller af fremtiden og da slet ikke med vor tids mest avancerede og *fremtidssvangre* teknologi, men snarere med en slags objekter eller fænomener, der, *måske*, vi kan jo håbe og forsøge, kan fungere som en slags medier for fremtiden, medier som kan etablere forbindelse med fremtiden, hvad end den nu monne være eller ikke-være for et fænomen, og kan få den til at besøge museet som det *gyselige* og uhyggelige spøgelse, den utvivlsomt er. Måske kan kunstneren, hvem hun eller den eller det eller han er, fungere som *åndsfraværende* medie for fremtiden i en slags seance og – hver gang sikkert blot for en kort stund – føre en, for udenforstående muligvis volapyk og uforståelig og decideret meningsløs samtale med fremtiden, dette spøgelse. Måske skal man tværtimod lade helt være med at stille nogensomhelst ting ind i museet og heller ikke lade nogen “kunstnere” gøre nogen form for underværker, men tværtimod lade *Museum for fremtiden* være ét stort tomrum, det ideelle og absolutte tomrum, som måske vil kunne lokke fremtiden til at besøge sig. Uhuuuu ...

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I året 2010 rejste virksomheden Das Beckwerk, hvor jeg tilfældigvis var ansat i døgn drift som principielt navnløs og identitetsløs forsøgsperson, i samarbejde med Glyptoteket, Københavns museum for antik – romersk, græsk, ægyptisk, palmyrisk, assyrisk osv. kunst og kultur, en bygning på Dantes Plads, en lille af de fleste ubemærket aflang grøn ø, midt i den sekssporede flod af trafik, der døgnet rundt flyder i begge retninger i byens hovedfærdselsåre H.C. Andersens Boulevard. Eller rettere, bygningen blev ikke “rejst,” den landede tværtimod og akkurat som Stonehenge en skønne nat i slutningen af september oppe fra det oplyste mørke og i to halvdele, af hvilke den øverste, der i modsætning til den tilsvarende på Stonehenge ikke var en bjælke, men et tag, langsomt som en UFO og i det samme

voldsomme, blændende, hvide lys, i hvilket det vildtfremmede rumskib fra en fjern planet og en anden form for tid lander i filmen *Nærkontakt af tredje grad*, sænkede sig ned på den anden. Indeni den overjordisk smukke hvide bygning placerede man absolut ingenting. Andet end en ned i mindste detalje, hår, ar og blodåretegning fuldkommen kopi af den navnløses endnu levende og sågar menneskelige eller menneskelignende krop. Denne kopi, der samtidig måske var originalen, selv for de levende besøgende var det *uhyggeligt* svært at se forskel på de to, blev placeret på, hvad der på én gang lignede en seng og en sokkel – også den hvid som bygningen – som om kroppen på en gang var en krop og en statue. I et tidsrum på præcis syv døgn i oktober 2010 gennemførte man i bygningen og omkring den “udstillede” krop eller statue et ritual eller en seance baseret så præcist som muligt på det to tusind år gamle romerske ritual *Funus Imaginarium*. Meget kort fortalt: Hvis en romersk kejser eller en af imperiets vigtige senatorer var nødt til at rejse bort, ofte i krig helt ude ved eller hinsides imperiets grænser, og da man dengang *troede*, at en vigtig mand, der døde, men ikke blev behørigt begravet inden for Roms bygrænse (eller inden for den by, hvor han boede), ville hjemsøge byen som et spøgelse og gøre den uhyggelig, ja, *unheimlich* og hjemsøgt for sine stakkels borgere, så lavede man inden kejserens eller senatorens afrejse en *fuldkommen* kopi af ham i voks med en stabiliserende “rygrad” af træ. Og *hvis* kejseren eller senatoren gik hen og døde på sin rejse, og hans døde krop gik tabt og ikke kunne transporteres hjem til Rom og begravnes der – sådan som det var tilfældet med Kejser Septimus Severus, der døde under et felttog i York i det nuværende England – så lagde man i stedet vokskopien på et dødsleje, hvor den i de følgende syv døgn blev plejet døgnet rundt af sygeplejere og to gange om dagen tilset af en læge, som efter hvert besøg orienterede offentligheden om kejserens eller patientens, den døendes, tilstand, som for hver dag – og helt ifølge ritualen – blev værre og værre. I løbet af de syv døgn kom Roms vigtige mænd og aflagde kejseren en sidste visit, og efter præcis syv døgn bekendtgjorde lægen, at patienten, altså kejseren var død, hvorefter hans lig blev ført i et begravelsesoptog gennem byen til begravelsespladsen eller Nekropolis, de dødes by, hvor liget blev placeret i en stilladslignende bygning og sammen med bygningen brændt. To tusinde år senere, i oktober 2010, blev den navnløses dobbelt døgnet rundt og så godt som fuldkommen ifølge det romerske ritual plejet af sygeplejersker fra Rigshospitalet og to gange dagligt tilset af en læge fra selvsamme Rigshospitalet, som efter



hvert besøg uden for bygningen stillede op til en videobulletin, som blev udsendt live til hele menneskeheden via Internettet, og hvori han meddelte, at den døende navnløse, som repræsenterede statsborgeren som begreb og fænomen, nu var endnu et halvt døgn nærmere døden. I løbet af de syv døgn kunne ikke blot byens vigtigste mænd, men alle verdens borgere “of all ages” aflægge den døende en sidste visit. Blandt andet kom den navnløses elleveårige datter, adskillige præster, arkæologer, gravide, fædre, oldinge, børn og også adskillige af verdens nationalstaters ambassadører – bl.a. ambassadørerne for Irak, Polen og Holland – samt Prinsegemalen Hans Kongelige Højhed Prins Henrik i selskab med sin Hofmarskal. Og enhver kunne mærke *det*, der var ingen tvivl, bygningen var hjemsogt. Af hvad? vidste ingen helt præcist. Men utvivlsomt på én gang af *noget* og *nogen*, en afdød? et spøgelse? En fjern *tid*, der på én gang var fortiden og ... fremtiden? I sig selv havde den navnløse igennem længere *tid* været et tvetydigt væsen eller fænomen, den tids lærde på landets universiteter disputerede i artikler og afhandlinger, hvorvidt han eller den var et spøgelse, altså en omvandrende død engang levende, eller en zombie, altså en levende død. Men nu, i denne smukke og mystiske hvide bygning, der ligesom ud af intet og natten var landet midt i den mest befærdede trafikåre i byen og riget som et nyt Stonehenge og rumskib fra fremtiden, var fornemmelsen, ja, *stemningen*, af nærværende fravær, spøgelse, det *unheimliche*, den helt anden tid og vildtfremmede værensform, voldsommere end nogensinde før i den navnløses nu knap ti år lange hjemsogelse af verden og menneskene.

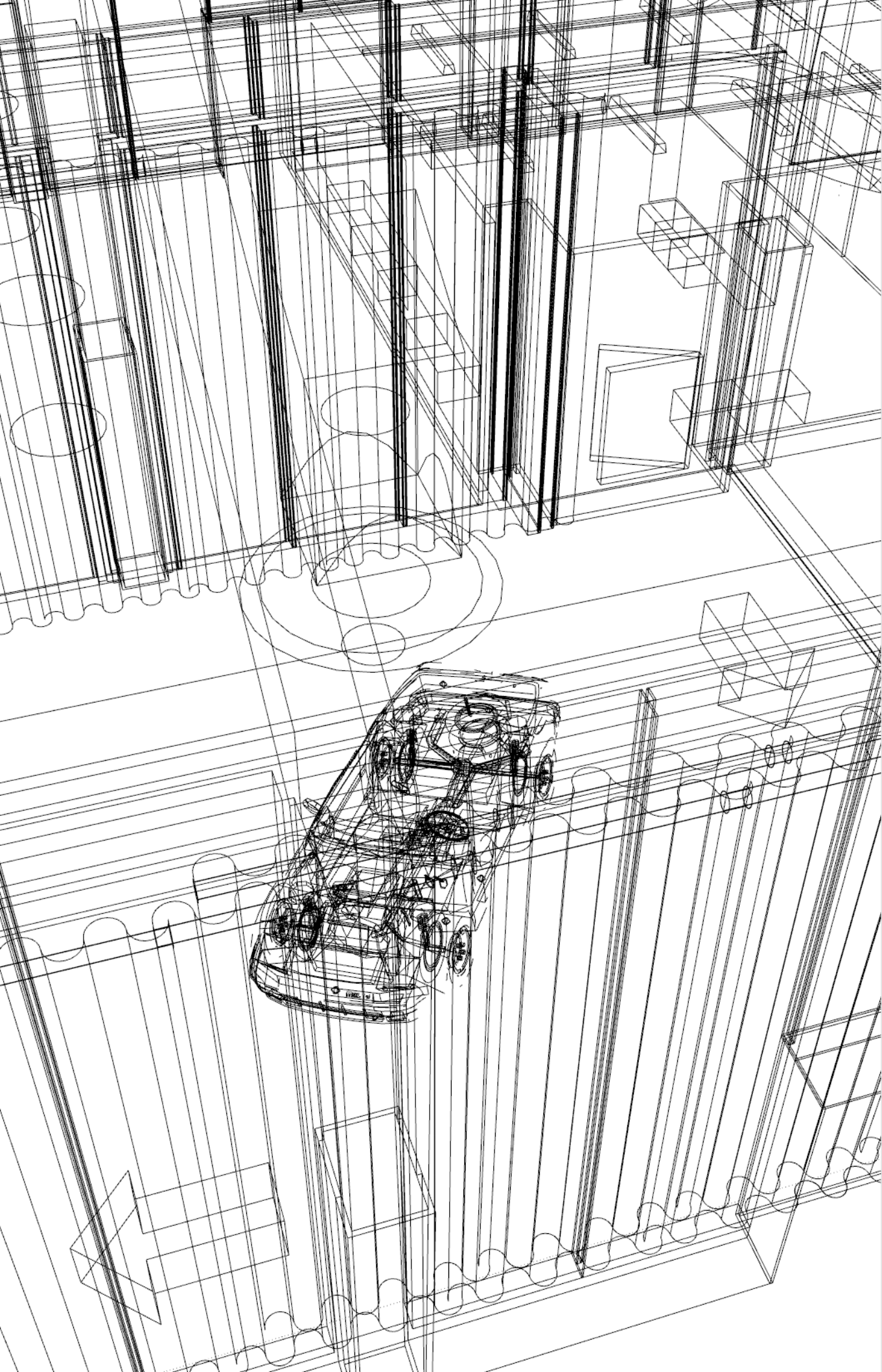
Efter de syv døgn og lægens afsluttende dødserklæring ankom næste morgen to bedemænd, som ifølge alle deres kunsts regler vaskede liget og klædte det i et smukt diskret jakkesæt, bar kistelåget ind i bygningen og sænkede det ned over den døde og skruede det solidt til *for good*. Ved middagstid ankom præsten, og seks *gode mænd* i sorte jakkesæt bar kisten ud af bygningen og ind i en skinnende “rustvogn,” og ledet af præsten og flankeret af to politibetjente på motorcykler som to sorte dødsengle gik et begravelsesoptog på tusind verdensborgere gennem byen til Assistens Kirkegård, hvor den navnløses dobbel og med den og ham identiteten i det hele taget som mulighed og fænomen og hjemsogelse i menneskenes verden blev begravet.



Fotos af Sofie Amalie Klougart.

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Tilbage på den lille grønne ø i trafikken ud for Glyptoteket stod den smukke mystiske bygning, nu *fuldkommen* tom, men hjem søgt og opfyldt af den afdøde navnløses voldsomt nærværende fravær, ja, sågar billedet af hans afsjælede ansigt flakkede som en ild eller et spøgelse på gulvet præcis der, hvor han i syv døgn havde ligget. Efter præcis hundrede døgn, i januar 2011, forsvandt bygningen lige så brat, som den var landet, midt om natten og op i det mørke, den fremtid, den var landet fra.



FREMTIDENS MUSEER MELLEM HÅB OG FORBANDELSE

Mela Dávila Freire

Fremtidens museum er en visionær kulturinstitution, der lige nu er under opførsel i Dubai i De Forenede Arabiske Emirater. [...]

Vi vil være udstillingssted for en ny æra – et knudepunkt for kreativitet og håb, hvor man kan se, røre og forme vores fælles fremtid. Ved at kombinere elementer fra udstillinger, immersivt teater og forlystelser, inviterer Fremtidens Museum dig til at se hinsides nutiden og tage plads i fremtidens mulige verdener. [...]

Ligesom vores hjemby stræber Fremtidens Museum efter at være et tolerant sted, hvor mangfoldige kulturelle, filosofiske, sociale og åndelige synspunkter er velkomne. Vi dedikerer os til en kritisk undersøgelse af vor tids trusler og muligheder og håber, at du ønsker at være sammen med os om at udtænke en bedre fremtid for os og vores planet.¹

Fremtidens Museum eksisterer allerede. “Fremtidens museum” er en afdeling af en ny kulturinstitution søsat af Dubai Future Foundation, der har til formål at fokusere på banebrydende teknologi, især virtual reality, immersive omgivelser, robotter – og måden hvorpå mennesket relaterer sig til disse. Projektet er en del af et ambitiøst netværk af institutioner, som i øjeblikket er under udvikling i De Forenede Arabiske Emirater, som blandt andet indebærer Louvre Abu Dhabi, der har til huse i en bygning tegnet af Jean Nouvel, som har været åben for offentligheden siden november i 2017; Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, tegnet af Frank Gehry, hvor opførslen starter i løbet af 2019 og Zayed Museet, af Norman Foster, som skal funderes på udlån fra den mellemøstlige samling på British Museum.²

I første omgang er Abu Dhabis plan for så ambitiøst et museums-

landskab at forstærke De Forenede Arabiske Emiraters internationale image ved at gøre landet til et globalt kulturelt knudepunkt i en sådan grad, at man kan tiltrække masseturisme – og de økonomiske indtægter der følger med.

Men planen har et andet betydningslag, der stikker dybere end blot en styrkelse af turistindustrien, og det er ladet med symbolisme. De vestlige museers historie er tæt forbundet med nationernes skabelsesproces, der på den anden side er tæt forbundet med udøvelsen af koloniale herredømme og projiceringen af vestlige standarder, som de bedste vilkår for at styre en civilisation. Ved at involvere institutioner som Louvre og British Museum i deres museumsplaner, udøver De Forenede Arabiske Emirater en symbolsk appropriation af kulturarven – og på et praktisk plan den professionelle ekspertise – fra tidligere storslåede kolonimagter som Storbritannien og Frankrig, mens de udsender en besked om, at det nu er i deres land – den tidligere koloni – at magten til at etablere og definere kulturkanon hører hjemme.

På den måde markerer dette magtskifte, fra metropol til koloni, blot endnu en omdrejning af den koloniale skruetvinge, snarere end en dekonstruktion af koloniale strukturer, hvor én legitimerende autoritet afløser en anden, og undgår dermed at forholde sig til museer og andre kulturinstitutioners anbefalinger – og i forlængelse heraf regeringernes autoritet – i opbygningen af den kollektive erindring.

Den selvsikre og virile tone, som hans kongelige højhed Sheik Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, vicepræsident og statsminister i De Forenede Arabiske Emirater og leder af Dubai, lagde for dagen i forlængelse af den introduktion til Fremtidens Museum, som blev citeret ovenfor, burde derfor heller ikke komme som nogen overraskelse: "Fremtiden tilhører dem, som kan forestille sig den, designe den og føre den ud i livet. Den er ikke noget man afventer, men snarere noget man skaber."³

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Vi har akut behov for en diskussion af selve museumstanken, dens politiske betydning, udspringet af dens funktion, som den vestlige modernitet har tænkt som et rum for akkumulationen af kulturarv og skabelsen af en officiel udlægning af historien. Dette forum, som

danner et udgangspunkt for en erfaringsdeling på tværs af nogle meget forskellige kontekster, vil fremme dialog om selve idéen bag museet og om specifikke og situerede praksisser blandt nutidens museer. Museet som en klangbund, som et offentligt forum, som et tilflugtssted. Et decentraliseret museum, der udfordres af dekoloniale og feministiske tilgange. Museet som et kunstnerisk projekt så som det peruvianske Museo del Travesti af den elskede Giuseppe Campuzano, der fortæller os om en flygtig og prekær institution, som bliver båret af alles kroppe. Et museum, der går ud over sig selv, flyder over sine bredder, bliver i stand til at huse ritualer, beboet af upassende brugsmåder og festlige stemninger [...]⁴

Museo Reina Sofia, der i Madrid både symbolsk og fysisk er placeret i centrum af en tidligere kolonisation, er også meget opmærksom på sin status som magtfuldt kulturelt redskab, der er ansvarlig for skabelsen af erindring og produktionen af kollektive forestillinger, som rækker hinsides de grænser, som omkranser den nationale enhed, hvor det er placeret.

Det har dog valgt at takle denne status ved at placere sig i opposition til Dubai-institutionerne. I stedet for at understrege sit eget legitimerende potentiale og den deraf følgende evne til at præsentere *Kunsthistorien* som en indiskutabel følgerække af kendsgerninger, forsøger Museo Reina Sofia konstant at kortslutte sin essens som autoritativ kulturinstitution for i stedet at blive en transparent, porøs og selvreflekterende entitet, som mange forskellige – tilmed modstridende – udlægninger af historien kan udspringe fra.

Dette er målsætningen for museets udstillingsprogram, dets offentlige aktiviteter og interessant nok også dets arkiveringspolitik: Museo Reina Sofia har lagt en stor indsats i at forsøge at udforske metoder til at mangedoble deres arkivers cirkulation, tilgængelighed og forståelighed ud fra en overbevisning om, at disse funktioner er nødvendige, hvis museet skal skabe et virkeligt rum for kollektiv vidensproduktion og alternative historielæsninger.

Man kan argumentere for at denne institutionelle tilgang med at stille spørgsmålstejn ved sig selv konstant modarbejdes af museets egen størrelse, sanktionskraft og internationale rækkevidde – som er gigantisk – og af den daglige drifts bureaukratiske kompleksiteter, der er lige så enorme. Dette betyder faktisk, at Museo Reina Sofia hele

tiden konfronteres med sin egen selvmodsigende eksistensberettigelse. Men denne selvmodsigelse formindsker dog ikke potentialet i museets tiltag, som allerede er lykkedes med at åbne nye veje for udforskning ift. hvad kulturinstitutioner er i stand til, og hvordan de kan fungere i vores nutid.

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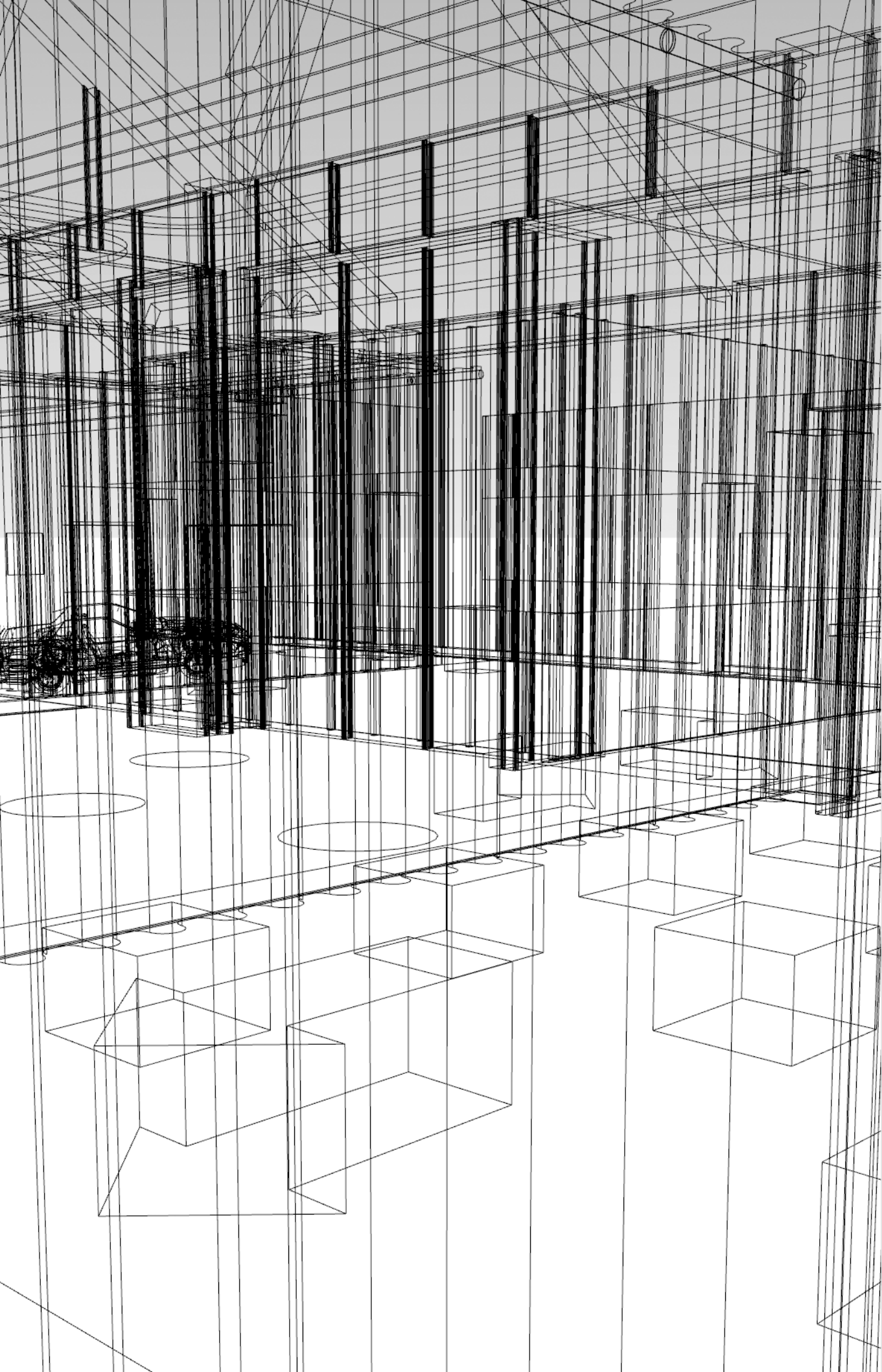
I en forelæsningsperformance og kunstnerpublikation om baggrunden for og historien bag Stefan Zweigs essay “Brasil, país do future” (1941) fortæller Carla Zaccagnini om, hvordan hendes land ofte anses for at være evigt optimistisk omkring fremtiden – og omvendt hvordan landet har været ude af stand til ikke blot at løse dets nuværende problemer, men overhovedet adressere dem ordentligt: “Brasilien forbliver et fremtidens land; dets navn efterfølges fortsat af denne sætning. Et sted mellem håb og forbandelse. Idet fremtiden er en tid, der aldrig kan nås, en tid der altid befinder sig rundt om hjørnet. Fremtiden er for tiden, hvad horisontlinjen er for rummet. Kloden drejer rundt, og horisonten er stadig i horisonten.”

Zaccagninis ord resonerer med en særlig kraft i den overordnede diskussion vedrørende fremtidens museer og kulturinstitutioner. Som Zaccagnini påpeger er idéen om “fremtiden” for museer problematisk på samme måde, som den permanente projicering af “fremtiden” kan være problematisk for en nation. Museer hverken kan eller skal overlade det til “fremtiden” at bestemme, hvilke positioner de skal indtage i forhold til magt: til deres egen magt, den magt – politisk, økonomisk – de underlægges, og den magt de kan give til subjekter og stemmer uden for deres murer. Museer er ikke påkrævet at lægge planer for en fremtid, der måske aldrig indfinder sig, idet fælles forestillinger så som det fælles gode eller almen viden er alvorligt truede. De bør i stedet indtage positioner og udvikle strategier lige nu, i nutiden, med de midler de har til rådighed... ikke overlade det, der kan gøres i dag, til i morgen.

noter

- 1 Fra hjemmesiden "Museum of the Future," på: <https://www.museumofthefuture.ae/> i januar 2020.
- 2 Jf. Andrew MacClellan: "Museum Expansion in the 21st Century," i: *Journal of Curatorial Studies* (2012), s. 271-293.
- 3 <https://www.museumofthefuture.ae/>
- 4 Ana Longoni i annonceringen på sociale medier af begivenheden "Encuentro de Musealidades Alternativas" [Møde om alternative musealiteter], programlagt til ultimo-februar 2020 på Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid.
- 5 Carla Zaccagnini: "Brasil, país do futuro. Um livro sobre o livro," Valencia 2016, s. 46. Forelæsningsperformance dateres tilbage fra 2014.

Oversat af Mathias Ruthner fra: Dávila-Freire, Mela. "Museums of the Future." schnittpunkt og Joachim Baur (red.): *Das Museum der Zukunft. 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, s. 105-108. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.



AT HUSKE FREMTIDER

Samtale mellem Helene Nymann & Anders Thruø Djurslev

Glemsel og erindring

» Min interesse for hukommelse kom ad forskellige veje. Der var flere sammentræf. Min farmor fik konstateret demens. Jeg oplevede hende miste meget af sin hukommelse, altså sin korttidshukommelse. Men dette tab gav hende også en sær evne til at gå tilbage i tiden. Hun vendte især tilbage til de dele af sit liv, hvor hendes sanser må have været meget aktive: Barndommen, teenageårene. Hendes bevidsthed loopede rundt i de store begivenheder i hendes liv, og hun var faktisk glad i den fortidsboble.

Jeg selv havde mediteret i mange år, og der opstod da en masse billeder i mig, som jeg ikke kunne forstå, hvor kom fra, men som var forbundet med oplevelser, jeg havde haft: nogle minder, noget billedstof, der flimrede ind i min bevidsthed. Det var tit ret syrede opstillinger; absurde og abstrakte. Det var på det tidspunkt, jeg skiftede fra maleri og skulptur og begyndte at arbejde med video. Video var den eneste måde, jeg kunne være tro mod de billeder, jeg så, og som jeg følte mig nødsaget til at fremkalde.

En professor på Malmö Kunstakademi anbefalede mig så at læse den engelske histori-

kers Francis Yates' (1899-1981) *Art of Memory* (1966). Bogen gennemgår hukommelsens kulturhistorie og demonstrerer, hvordan forskellige historiske epoker og kulturer har brugt forskellige teknikker til at huske fortiden, og hvordan teknikkerne omvendt har præget dannelsen af den enkelte tid og kulturs udvikling. Før kristendommens indtog, trykpressens opfindelse i 1440 og digitaliseringen i dag har der været mange levende, kropslige, sanselige og mentale teknikker, som man har brugt til at huske med. I det antikke Grækenland brugte rapsoderne fx hexameter, altså bestemte, gentagende sætningsstrukturer, til at huske epikkens langdigte til mundtlig fremførsel for publikum. I teatret gjaldt det for skuespilleren om at huske replikker og opstillinger og placeringer.

Hukommelsespaladset er en sådan hukommelsesteknik. Du vælger et landskab eller en rute, som du kender rigtig godt, og så placerer du det, du skal huske, i landskabet, gerne med specifikke, sanselige indtryk koblet til hver enkelt streng af information. På den måde sanse- og rumliggør du den data, du skal huske, i en arkitektur. Denne teknik og *The Art of Memory* fik brikkerne til at begynde at falde på plads

i forhold til det, jeg prøvede at skabe med de billeder og rum, som jeg forbinder i min kunst- og forskningspraksis.

Jeg forsøger at holde mig til begrebet hukommelse. Det er en mere klinisk betegnelse end fx erindring og minder. Mine undersøgelser er ikke emotionelle eller nostalgiske. Jeg er i stedet interesseret i de teknikker, som vi bruger og har brugt til at huske: Hvad sker der i hjernen, hvad sker der i kroppen? Jeg er ikke udelukkende interesseret i mine egne erindringer, men i de biologiske og kulturelle betingelser for hukommelse: Hvad er hukommelse i dag og i går? Hvilke redskaber har vi brugt til at huske gennem historien? Og hvordan kan vi bruge dem i dag og i fremtiden? Mine værker forsøger at give form til de grundlæggende strukturer, som erindringer opererer igennem, og give bud på, hvordan disse strukturers komponenter kan samles på ny og anvendes til at forestille sig andre tider – og fremtider – igennem.

Husketeknikker som billeddannelse

» Omvendt kan du ikke sige hukommelse uden at sige erindring. Måske kan du sige det sådan, at mine udstillinger og værker har til hensigt at stimulere erindringer gennem kunstneriske husketeknikker. Når du bruger husketeknikkerne, trækker du nemlig på dine egne erfaringer og oplevelser, gør dem til stof for billeddannelse, for imagination.

Billeddannelse er central for hukommelsen. Den arbejder med konstellation, sammenligning og komposition. Billeder bliver som bekendt også brugt til at huske med, fx i spil, som udfordrer beskueren til at genkende ansigter, ikoner, landskaber og symboler. Billeddannelse kan på den måde betragtes som en husketeknik til at styrke evnen til at huske og dermed din kapacitet for viden.

De former og billeder, jeg arbejder med, kommer fra forskning i hukommelse på flere planer: fra kemiske og biologiske processer til filosofiske tekster, antropologiske undersøgelser og overleverede historier. Billeddannelsen i mit arbejde opstår i et netværk af tekster, jeg læser, begreber, jeg støder på, og billeder jeg ser. Det afgørende bliver så at undersøge, hvad der sker, når jeg sætter dem sammen, konstellationen. Jeg betragter selv mine skulpturer og videoværker

som knudepunkter af viden. Det er en hel masse idéer, teknikker, billeder og viden om hukommelse, som jeg smelter sammen til én skulpturel form, til én rumlig situation.

Jeg trækker i den forbindelse meget på den tyske kunsthistoriker og kulturteoretiker Aby Warburgs (1866-1929) associative arbejde. I første halvdel af det 20. århundrede trak han linjer mellem kunsthistoriske former og discipliner ved at pege på de associative sammenhænge mellem objekter og billeder, bevægelser og gestikker, ikoner og symboler på tværs af kulturer, tid og rum. Rummet imellem disse blev desuden tildelt stor betydning. Warburg pegede således på alternative måder at indekser på i stedet for fx kronologiske eller alfabetiske opstillinger ved at stille værker sammen via lighed og association. Han inddelte heller ikke sit bibliotek i alfabetisk rækkefølge, men talte om relationen mellem de enkelte bøger på de enkelte hylder som "glade naboer." Warburgs metode er tilsvarende en alternativ måde at tænke historisk tid på med det formål at kortlægge sindets ruter. Historien rammesættes ikke af en lineær, kronologisk udvikling, men opstår i korrespondancer mellem billeder og tanker fra forskellige tider. Sådan fungerer hukommelsen og husketeknikkerne også.

Jeg blev for nyligt mindet om den etymologiske betydning af ordet kuratering, *curare*, at være nysgerrig – "being curious" – og at tage sig af, drage omsorg for noget – "to care." Det er netop det, kunstnere og kuratorer gør, når vi laver konstellationer i et rum. Vi forbinder punkter, billeder, situationer og objekter i en arkitektur, du kan vandre igennem. Her sammensættes en verden af det, vi gerne vil tage os af og huske. Denne opgave synes mere og mere vigtig, når du finder ud af, hvordan det, du omgiver dig med, påvirker din horisont, din forestillingsevne. Mange vil nok kalde det absurde konstellationer på tværs af vidensområder, retninger, videnskaber og æstetikker. En biolog vil måske spørge, hvorfor vedkommende skal læse Marcel Prousts *På sporet af den tabte tid* (1913) i forhold til den biologiske faglighed. Men den uventede konstellation mellem vidensfelter er nødvendig for netop at mærke stoffet og verdenen fra flere perspektiver end det lineært historiske. Det ser vi som sagt allerede som bærende element hos Warburg.



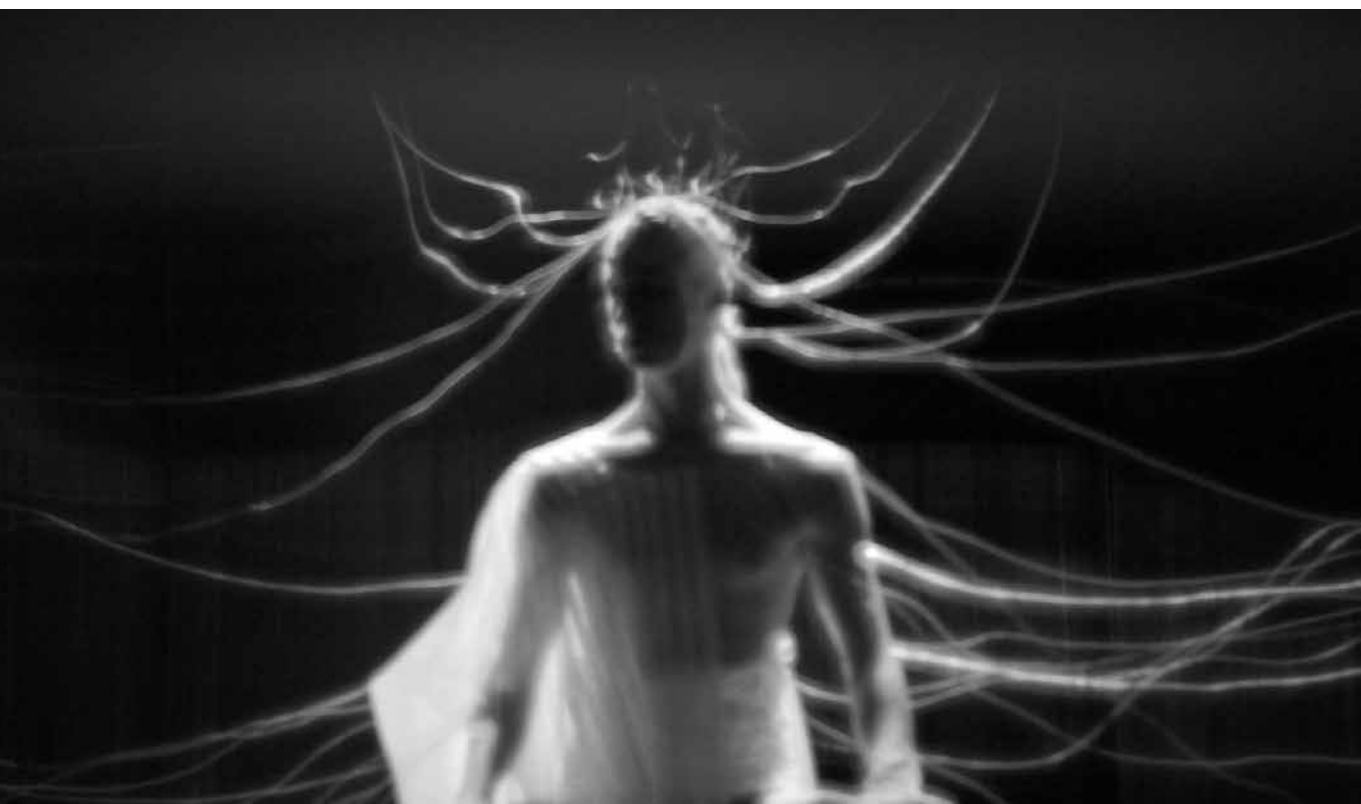
En genskabelse af panel 77 fra Aby Warburgs "Bilderatlas Mnemosyne," 1925-1929/2020.
The Warburg Institute, London.

» I forlængelse af mit arbejde med Warburg, har jeg dyrket den italienske filosof Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). Han foreslog, at der findes andre verdener end denne med andre liv og andre guder. Universet derude er uendeligt, og det er vores indre også. Vi kan opdage denne uendelighed ved at lave korrespondancer imellem vidensformer. Vi kan blive ved med at generere ny viden, nye verdener, hvis vi sætter forskelligartede elementer sammen på ny. Bruno var i sin tid meget inspireret af hukommelsespaladsteknikken, *ars memoria*. Han optegnede hukommelseshjul med ringe, der drejede rundt. Nogen kalder i dag disse hjul de første computere, fordi de kunne blive ved med at genere nye udfald. Warburg opdagede i øvrigt Bruno i nogle af sit livs sidste år og sagde: "Endelig har jeg fundet en, der forsøgte det samme som mig!" Warburgs eksperiment blev aldrig fuldført. Måske kan vi forestille os, at det er blevet realiseret gennem Google-søgningen. Han var på sporet af noget, men det kunne ikke formidles gennem ord, kun billeder. Nemlig *Mnemosyme-atlasset*, som består af en

masse billeder, der er sat i system ikke gennem kronologi eller alfabet, men association, form, uendelige forbindelser.

Hjerneforskningen har gennem forsøg vist, at det er de samme centre i hjernen, der arbejder, når vi husker, og når vi forestiller os noget. Hver gang vi husker noget, forestiller vi os det igen. Vores hukommelse producerer på den måde et narrativ om os selv. Men hver gang, vi husker noget, så gendigter vi det. Hukommelse er på den måde ikke statisk, mindet er aldrig det samme. Du omskaber billedet hver gang, du besøger det. Nogle terapeutiske retninger mener, at du ved at ændre din fortælling, kan kurere dig selv for traumer. På den måde er splintringen af vores hukommelses grundstrukturer potentielt frugtbar. Erkender du, at fortiden ikke er stillestående, men genstand for vores stadige gendigtning, vores fantasi, åbnes der en uendelighed i både for- og fremtid.

Jo mere bevidste vi bliver om de finere, sanselige lag ved en oplevelse, jo bedre kan vi styrke dem. Det kræver og har altid krævet teknikker. Hvordan genbesøger du en oplevelse? Spørger du ind til de finere lag? Var der lyd? Var det varmt, var der koldt? Hvordan føltes det i din



krop? Sådan nogle spørgsmål stimulerer eller genaktiverer sanserne og styrker bestræbelsen i at huske. Det viser en række forskningsforsøg. Og du begynder at digte med: "Nå jo, der var vist også en hund, der gøede i baggrunden." Du vil opdage, at der er uendelig meget information i hvert øjeblik. Den bevidsthed afslører enormt potentiale i tilværelsen. Men det er samtidig et potentiale, som mange føler forsvinder i den digitale tidsalder. Vi kan fx ikke huske telefonnumre længere. Med min kunst forsøger jeg at huske beskuerne på, at vi kan huske på andre måder. At vi har et potentiale for nærvær. Det er den der særlige form for viden, som du kan mærke i din sjæl. Du kan kalde det intuition eller blot det at kende noget dybt. På fransk findes et udtryk der hedder "savoir par cœur," at kende gennem hjertet, og på sin vis er det også denne form for viden, jeg taler til – og fra.

Kunst som forskning

» Mit kunstneriske ph.d.-projekt, som er tilknyttet det tværdisciplinære forskningscenter Interacting Minds Centre på Aarhus Universitet

og Kunsthall Aarhus, undersøger husketeknikker gennem kunstnerisk praksis, billeddannelse og udstilling. Projektets titel er *Memories of Sustainable Futures: Remembering in the Digital Age*. Her er samme tidslige omvending på spil: Vi skal huske bæredygtige husketeknikker i en tid, hvor vi overlader optagelsen af fortiden til digital hukommelse. Det er ikke det samme. Omvendt behøver vi selvfølgelig ikke afvise alle goderne ved det digitale. Det bekymrende og ubæredygtige ligger i, hvordan det digitale bliver anvendt, hvor det kommer fra, og hvordan det bliver styret. Vi ved, hvem der præsenterer styresystemerne for os – huskesystemerne om man vil – og vi bliver mere og mere afhængige af dem. På den måde mister vi nogle evner, hjernens muskulatur bliver slap. Og du ser Mark Zuckerbergs Metaverse, du ser den æstetik, og du tænker: Er det virkelig der, vi skal hen nu? Er det i dén ramme, i dét medie, vi skal gå ind med alt det, vi har inde i os, af forestillingsevne og fantasi og vilde verdener? Vil vi det, eller skal vi i stedet begynde at skabe de verdener selv, som vi jo kan og hele tiden har kunnet i forskellige konstellationer. Blandt andet gennem billedkunst og teater.



Det digitale er så vanedannende. Det giver belønninger, det går hurtigt. Men som billedkunstner har jeg oplevet den følelse, det giver, at se noget, jeg har forestillet mig, virkeliggjort, og dele det med andre. Det er en proces, som alle kan opleve. Og det kræver ikke andet, end at du bevidst tager de redskaber i brug, som du har indeni, og som blev brugt før computeren. Dem er jeg interesseret i at udgrave og undersøge i dag. Det handler ikke om at erstatte eller vende tilbage til noget oprindeligt, det handler om bevidstgørelse. Om at spørge: Hvordan vil vi gerne styres? Hvordan vil vi gerne huske? Hvad og hvordan vil vi gerne opleve – sammen? Bæredygtighed er et svært ord, fordi det også er så vestligt og kommercielt og approprieret af en masse dagsordener, men undertitlen på mit projekt – at huske bæredygtige fremtidsminder – handler om at udgrave de fremtidsminder, som vi har glemt, og som ikke destruerer vores evne til at forestille os noget andet.

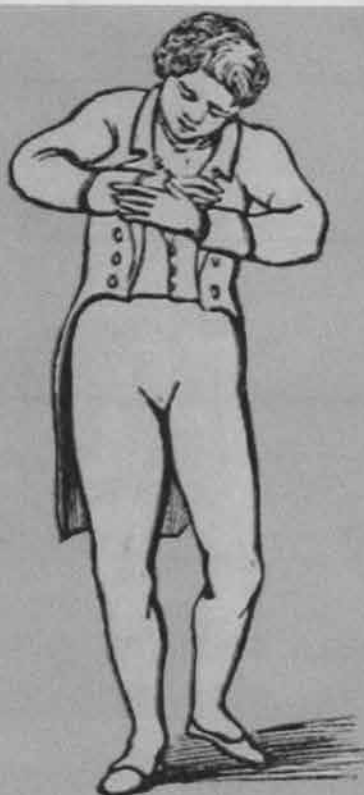
I Andesbjergene i Sydamerika har Aymara-folket en, i forhold til vores, omvendt forståelse af tid. Sprogligt ligger fortiden “foran”, mens fremtiden ligger “tilbage” eller “bagud”. Kropsligt signaleres fremtid desuden ved at pege bag ryggen. Fremtiden er simpelthen bagvendt. Det er en virkelig spændende gestus at tænke igennem. Den minder mig om to ting; Søren Kierkegaards berømte udsagn om, at “livet skal leves forlæns, men forstås baglæns”, og dernæst Historiens engel fra Walter Benjamins berømte historiefilosofiske teser (“Om historiebegrebet”, 1940): *Angelus Novus*, historiens engel, der bliver blæst ind i fremtiden af fremskridtets storm, men fastholder sit blik mod fortiden og ser således de ruiner, som fremskridtet efterlader sig med ryggen mod fremtiden.

Min metode er typisk den, at jeg finder en husketeknik – gerne en glemt eller prædigital husketeknik – og sammensætter den med et biologisk eller neurologisk fænomen. Forsøget går så på at aktivere de to dimensioner i ét værk. I *Museum for fremtiden* gælder det teorien om epigenetik og en hukommelsesteknik skabt af aboriginerne kendt som “songlines” eller sanglinjer, også kendt som drømmespor.

Under anden verdenskrig, da hele verden tænkte på død og katastrofer, tænkte den amerikanske biolog Conrad Waddington (1905-1975) på betingelserne for liv.

Han formulerede teorien om epigenetik. Epigenetikken er styresystemet for DNA af cellerne. Epigenetikken forærer os vores fysiske udtryk, men bestemmer også en række nedarvede betingelser fx disponering for sygdomme. Dette visualiserede Waddington med et landskab med dale og bakker og riller. Som symboler for celler og celledannelse brugte han marmorkugler, som han lod rulle ned over landskabet. Deres landing er et billede på cellernes skæbne. Da nazisterne lukkede af for forsyningerne i Europa, opstod der hungersnød i bl.a. Irland. Her lavede man nogle undersøgelser af ofrenes børn og børnebørn, som viste, at nogle af konsekvenserne af hungersnøden blev nedarvet. Undersøgelsen viser, at modsætningen mellem arv og miljø er ustabil. Skulpturerne som svævende og roterende, hængende fra loftet. Deres form er hentet fra X- og Y-kromosomerne og refererer på den måde også til disse alfabetiske symboler. Skulpturerne har dog en kropslig dimension, som en kropslig hukommelse, men også en muteret form af disse, som netop taler om alle de ydre som indre påvirkninger, livet på jorden har gennemgået og vil gennemgå. På den måde fremtoner de som et tidsligt aspekt. Noget vi har indeni os, udviklet før menneskets tidsregning, men som vi nu tilmed også er begyndt at rode ved. For lad os ikke glemme at genteknologi er en af mest ekspansive felter i videnskabelig forskning.

At synge sammen, som publikum bliver instrueret til i mit rum i *Museum for fremtiden*, er en slags husketeknik, som kommer fra aboriginernes sanglinjer. Aboriginerne kortlægger deres landskab gennem sang. Lidt ligesom cellerne i epigenetikken kan du se stemmerne eller tonerne som et menneske, som går gennem et landskab og besynger omgivelserne for at give dem videre til næste generation. Der er noget vildt smukt i den kollektive sang som en kortlægning af et landskab gennem kroppens og stemmens tilstedeværelse. Knytningen mellem land og melodi. Det er helt umiddelbart og tilgængeligt, noget vi kan gøre lige nu, sammen. Kan vi synge vores tid frem? Ud fra hvor vi hver især kommer fra, ud fra vores indre landskab, står vi sammen i et rum og prøver at synge sammen for de næste, der kommer efter os. For fremtiden.



SURPRISE.



APPEAL.



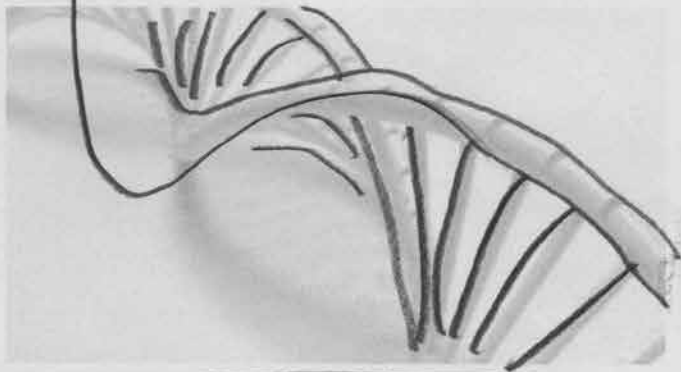
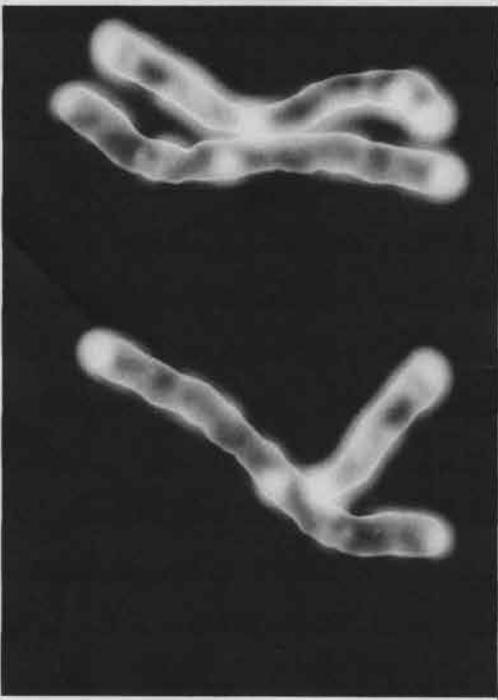
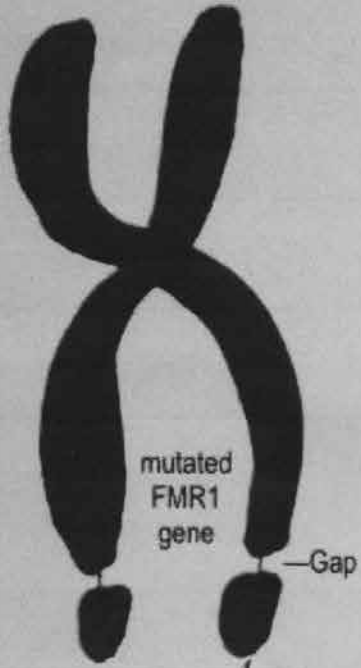
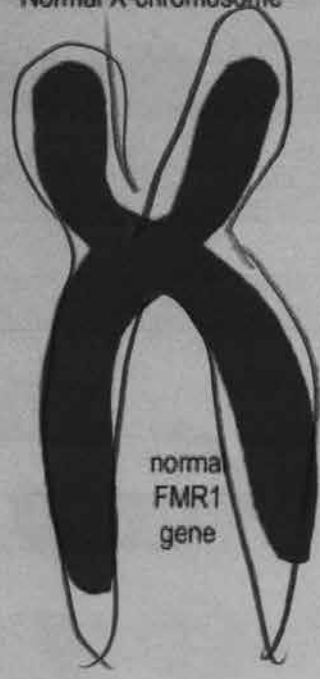
ENTREATY.





Normal X-chromosome

Fragile X-chromosome



with ~~some~~ past in front of us and future behind us all

Mimerens spejl

» I rummet er skulpturerne omdrejningspunkt for fortællingen. De fungerer ikke som bagtæppe for noget andet. Det handler om at gøre publikum bevidste om, at de er med til at skabe fortællingen. At gøre dem til skulpturer et øjeblik.

I en kunstudstilling kan publikum som regel til en vis grad selv kuratere indholdet gennem deres ophold og drage omsorg for deres egen vidensdannelse. Du bestemmer selv, hvor længe du vil stå ved hvert punkt af viden, og hvordan du vil trække forbindelser mellem de objekter, du bliver præsenteret for.

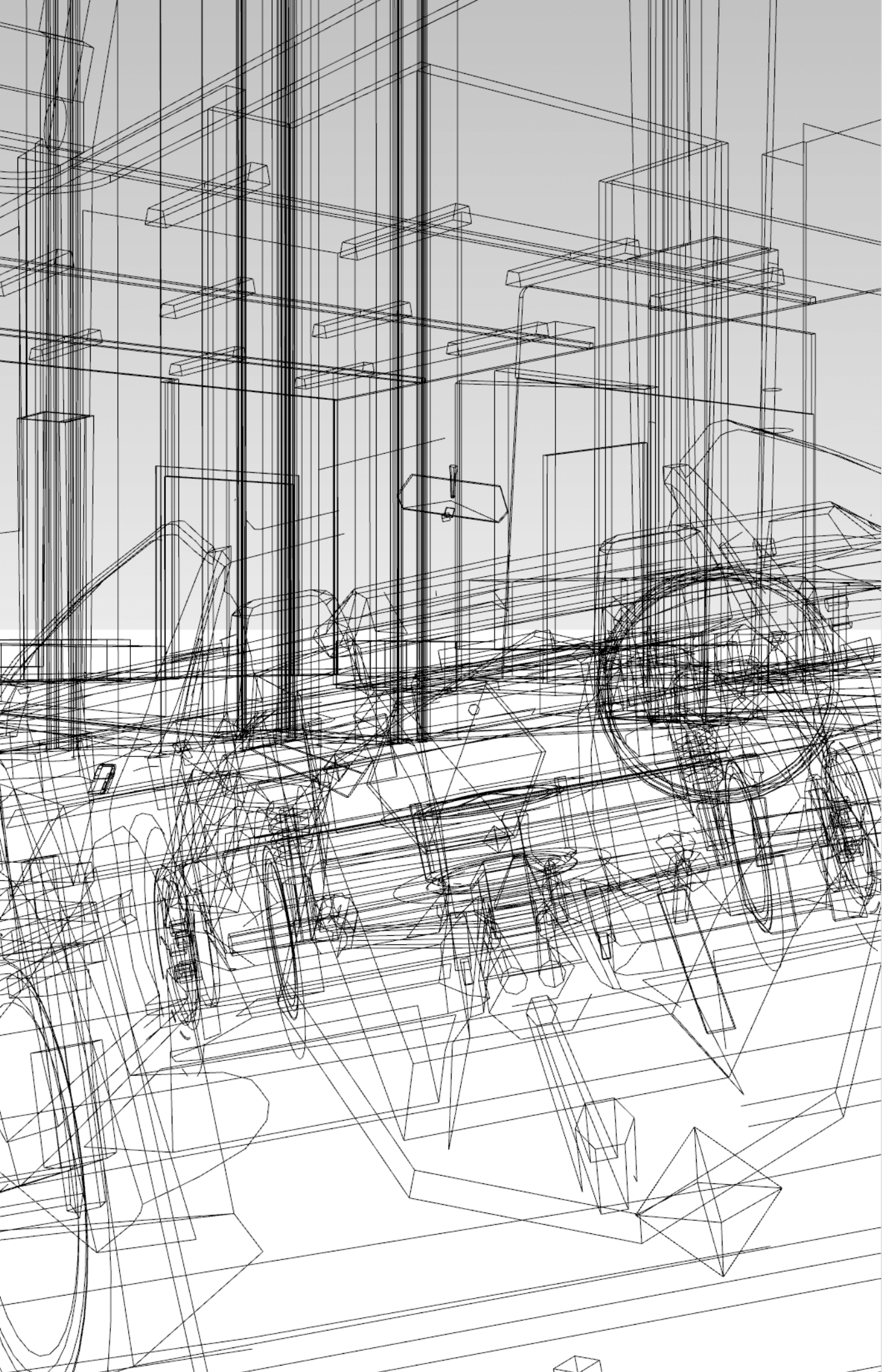
Jeg har lært alt igennem kunst. Det er den ultimative læringsform. Vi skal lade publikum lege, eksperimentere og forestille sig ting. Deri ligger nemlig et ansvar og et potentiale for både kunstner og beskuer. Jeg kan skabe rummet, men jeg kan ikke færdiggøre det uden dig. Også her har forskningen gjort noget afgørende ved min praksis, den er blevet procesorienteret. Mine forskerkolleger har givet mig nogle fantastiske redskaber, specielt fra antropologi, til at observere menneskers adfærd. Det gjorde det muligt ikke kun at fokusere på mig selv og min kunst og min intuition, men også publikum. For netop at komme tættere hvad der rent faktisk sker inde i kunst- og udstillingsrummet; hvordan vi husker med og gennem kunsten?

På Warburg Institutet er der en etage udelukkende med billeder. Du kan hive en arkivskuffe ud, der har kategorien "Hånd", og så vælter det bare ud med afbildninger af hænder

gennem tiden. Der er gestikker, bevægelser, et kropsligt sprog gennem tiden, som vi bare forstår, og som vi pludselig kan se udefra, som koreografi, næsten teatralt. Derfor er mimeren med i videoværket. Han bliver et spejl for publikum, som selv oplever at blive statuer i *Museum for fremtiden*. Mimeren mimer noget, han har set, noget fra fortiden, en fortidig bevægelse. Han er et symbol på hukommelse i aktion, i kropslig handling. I videoen er han klædt i en græsk kjortel, som refererer til noget antikt. Han er en morsom skikkelse, som jokeren i spille- og tarotkort. Han kan operere igennem det hele og hjælpe dig på vej i den proces og transformation. Eller som gademimeren du møder på strøget, spejle dig, gengive det, nuet, fryse som en statue og et øjeblik efter være i bevægelse. Han viser på den måde, at der også er fortid i det samtidige; historie i det levende.

Jeg forstår mine videoer som skulpturer. Formålet er igen at aktivere beskueren til at tænke over deres bevægelser i rummet, deres eget kropssprog og rolle i at sammensætte perspektiver og narrativer til en fortælling, som de vil og kan genfortælle efter deres vandring og sang gennem rummet. At opleve sig selv og de andre i rummet anderledes end normalt og opdage det; et andet perspektiv på virkeligheden. Videoen til *Museum for fremtiden* er filmet på teatret, og optagelsen var en måde at kropsliggøre rummet for mig. Det kan du måske mærke i værket. De medvirkende har været her. De reflekterer på den måde publikum og efterlader et hukommelsesspor til dem at følge. Nu er det jer.

Helene Nymann (f. 1982) er billedkunstner og kunstnerisk forsker ved Interacting Minds Centre på Aarhus Universitet med ph.d.-projektet "Memories of Sustainable Futures: Remembering in the Digital Age." Omdrejningspunktet for Nymanns kunstneriske virke, som er blevet præsenteret i mange lande over hele verden, er hukommelse. I sit kunstneriske virke sætter hun biologiske indsigter og kropslige hukommelsesteknikker fra forskellige historiske kulturer i værk gennem levende billeder, lyd og skulptur. Formålet er at afdække potentialer i en sanselig og kropslig vidensproduktion, som sætter verden sammen på ny. I denne samtale om sine bidrag til *Museum for fremtiden* indvier Nymann læseren i sin egen på én gang associative og researchbaserede proces, der forener billeddannelse og forskning, hukommelse og fantasi, erindringer om fortiden og forestillinger om fremtiden i en fortløbende undersøgelse af hukommelsens betingelser og muligheder.



MUSEUM FOR DET LEVENDE NU

Françoise Vergès

Idet SARS-CoV-2 pandemien har fremprovokeret en sammenblanding af fortiden og fremtiden på så uventede måder, er det blevet en mere interessant opgave at forestille sig et museum *for fremtiden* end forventet. Vi er blevet konfronteret med forviklinger, der kræver, at man bevæger sig hinsides en binær forståelsesramme, men det er lettere sagt end gjort. På trods af al snakken om tværdisciplinær, intersektionel og transversal metode, så har århundreders binær tænkning sat sit aftryk. Alt for ofte opremser vi en række elementer, som må analyseres sammen, men vi er ude af stand til konkret at vise, hvordan de skaber en kontekst; ikke blot gennem årsag og virkning, men gennem ekkøer, bølger, gentagelser og uforudsete konsekvenser. Fanget i en hvirvelvind af information, der hver dag bliver mere overraskende eller foruroligende, er vi nødt til at indrømme, at mange af vores visheder vakler.

SARS-CoV-2 er en seriøs sygdom, og det ville være skandaløst at underspille dens dødelige natur. Men dens dødelighedsrate er kun ét aspekt af en endnu større ødelæggende kraft, en "både miljø- og menneskedræbende patogen kapitalisme," som forskeren Jérôme Baschet har skrevet.¹ Det er en pandemi for det enogtyvende århundrede; en racial kapitalocæn sygdom, der afslører kapitalismen som sygdom. Hvis museet for fremtidens personale skulle kigge på 2019-2020, måtte de derfor sammentænke krigsretorik, xenofobi, løfter om den digitale kapitalismes udvidede overvågning og kontrol, regeringers autoritære drejninger, massiv forarmelse, øget social og racial ulighed hvis det overhovedet var muligt, sammenviklinger mellem folkesundhed, offentlige nedskæringer, køn, race, klasse, klimaforandringer, ekstraktivisme, industri, privatisering, militarisering, udnyttelse, finans, offentlige nedskæringer, kvindemord, mord på aktivister, fake news, konspirationer,

racisme, islamofobi, kemiske krige, jordbrugsteknologi, forbrugerisme, trodsighed, osv. Jeg forestiller mig museet for fremtiden som et rum, hvor der undervises i de undertrykte pædagogik,² hvor queer, oprindelige folks, antiimperialistisk, antikapitalistisk, dekolonial feministisk og antiracistisk pædagogik diskuteres og praktiseres, hvor narrativer ikke opbygges rundt om materielle objekter, statiske eller levende billeder eller tekst, men rundt om omsorgspraksisser, kultivering, ritualer vedrørende fødsel, liv og død, om det afgrundsdybe skel mellem teknologiske og medicinske opdagelser og den manglende evne til at sikre et anstændigt og værdigt liv for størstedelen af menneskeheden, om Jordens ligegyldighed over for det menneskelige liv, eller som Vandana Shiva sagde: "Planeten har gennemlevet varmere perioder, koldere perioder, hun levede med dinosaurer, hun levede uden dinosaurer, hun vil leve med mennesker eller uden mennesker, vi er unødvendige."³ Et museum hvor offentligheden og personalet sammen vil studere, hvad det vil sige at opbygge en fælles verden, der anerkender og respekterer forskelligheder. Et museum der undgår moralisme og ikke tøver med at udstille grusomhed, brutalitet og mord, hverken for at lade sig fascinere på en pornografisk måde eller for at fremstille dem som uforklarlige – et resultat af vanvid eller fornuftstab – men som planlagte handlinger, der følger af en naturaliseret racisme og sexismen, den historiske adskillelse af betydningsfulde liv (hvide, kristne og mandlige) og liv uden betydning (alle de andre). Et museum for nuet, i dets afskyelighed og muligheder, dets akkumulerede erindringer om modstand og tålmodighed, den lange vej mod frihed, det umættelige begær efter uafhængighed og værdighed.

noter

¹ Jérôme Baschet: "Qu'est-ce qu'il nous arrive?", i: lundi matin 238, 13.04.2020.

² For at låne titlen på Paolo Freires berømte bog *De undertrykte pædagogik*. Paolo Freire: *De undertrykte pædagogik*. København: Christian Ejlers' Forlag, 1973.

³ Vandana Shiva: Interview, 03.02.2018, i Playground: <https://www.facebook.com/playgroundenglish/videos/1564105940589397>.

Oversat af Mathias Ruthner fra: Vergès, Françoise. "The Museum of the Living Present." schnittpunkt og Joachim Baur (red.): *Das Museum der Zukunft. 43 neue Beiträge zur Diskussion über die Zukunft des Museums*, s. 267-268. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2020.

MUSEET FOR FALDNE STATUER, WILLKOM- MEN, BIENVENUE, VELCOME

Ida Marie Hede

Jeg går under den store kuppel, der holder sammen på det hele.

Jeg ved, det er en kuppel; den ligner en blå himmel med en synkende sol. Det vil ikke vare længe før mørket bryder igennem plexiglasset. Skumringen er uhyggelig. Jeg ved meget lidt. I den ene hånd holder jeg en entrebillet, i den anden et par gigantiske høretelefoner forbundet til en lille sort boks.

Jeg går i en slags park, træer, buske, generiske blomster. Jeg bevæger mig dybere ind ad de snørklede stier.

Tulipaner står med åbne gab, enten trætte eller krigeriske.

Alt virker til at have lyst til at vride sig, alt virker lidt ude af sig selv.

Nattelygter tændes, oplyser et skilt:

*STATUEPARKENS DIREKTORAT BYDER DIG VELKOMMEN TIL MUSEET
FOR FALDNE STATUER, DE UDGÅEDE GIPSKROPPES OPLYSNINGSPARK,
DE SMELTEDE METALLERS ARKIV.*

Jeg køber en slushice i en lille rusten automat og en pakke tyggegummi, modtager min audioguide ved en luge. På min billet står: *Statueparken er finansieret af Forbundet for Fornemmelsen af Fremtidens Indre Liv.*

Jeg forstår endnu mindre.

Jeg går ind. Jeg må være nået frem til det her ... fællesskab for statuer? Jeg trykker play på den sorte boks, i høretelefonerne siger den kælnestemme, en ubestemmelig, androgyn stemme, at jeg om lidt skal møde:

– de døde statuer, de dovne statuer, de forbryderiske statuer, de glemte statuer, de ikoniske statuer, de lalleglade statuer, de masochistiske statuer, hverdagens statuer, statuer, der slår igen.

Jeg glæder mig til at møde dem.

Jeg passerer et par tomme piedestaler. Splinternye plinter. Cement, træ, fiberglas, muslingeskaller, gips, polystyren, latex. Flere af piedestalerne virker fyldige, rigide. De sidste hundrede år har man på alle niveauer af samfundet dyrket et gammelt look. Det er generelt bedst, hvis ting ser ud, som om de er svære at løfte. Øl serveres i store udskårne krus, tunge hager og kæbepartier er sexede. Tanks fra den kolde krig fungerer som udendørs-barer. Den stationære computer, med sit store alienbaghoved, er vendt tilbage. Hundredeårgamle iMacs. Vinterfrakker er af tykt lodenstof, A-formede, så store numser bliver større.

Jeg når længere ind i MUSEET FOR FALDNE STATUER, følger en smal vej, er stadig omgivet af klassiske parkelementer, grønne buske, stynede popler. Nu er der pludselig færre af de opulente piedestaler.

Jeg drejer til højre, ind i en cirkulær lille lund med bede af mørkebrune rosenbuske. Lundens form følger formen på kuplen over mit hoved. Her føles skumringen mere presserende. Jeg opdager, at de få piedestaler, der er opsat her i lunden i en cirkelformation, pludselig er blevet fyldt ud af et par udslukte kroppe – hængende skuldre, ligesom, sammenfaldne.

Hvorfor ser statuekroppene så lade ud?

Hvem er de alle sammen?

Jeg presser høretelefonerne ind mod ørerne, trykker play.

BLØD STEMME

Man ved ikke, hvordan tingene rigtig er, man ved ikke, hvordan de rigtig

virker. Du kender ikke de her ting, de her kroppe, du synes, du har set dem før, men alligevel... Hvad er det her? Hvem er de?

På et lille skilt oplyst af et LED-spot står der: *Opvarmning med Team Bløde Statuer: Oplev en grimsmuk dans på piedestalerne.*

Statuerne knirker, bevæger sig langsomt, folder sig ud som blæksprutter, som er de heroiske ben og arme lange gelestænger. De retter sig ud, virker ikke decideret levende, men gennemskinnelige, esoteriske, i stærk kontrast til deres grove piedestaler.

Jeg forsøger at finde ro i mørket, kigger ind mellem de tætte rosenbuske i lunden, er jeg alene her?

Skiltet roterer, en ny tekst dukker frem: *Særudstilling om falden teknologi.*

På en lille, beskeden, grå plint ligger en smadret iPhone 13.

Og dér, på en lavere, beige plint, står en snehvid Nike-sneaker!

Endelig noget, jeg kender!

Jeg går tæt på, observerer hver lille detalje, de grove, lyse snørebånd, den skinnende snude. Nostalgien bruser i mig, det er en ubehagelig nostalgi, for jeg kan ikke huske, hvad jeg præcis længes efter, om sneakeren er en markør for en tabt idyl eller en verden, vi lige så godt kunne forlade. Jeg er lige ved at græde, fordi jeg kan mærke, at den her tid, jeg befinder mig i, elsker sneakers, elsker iPhones, og JEG elskede engang sneakers, elskede engang iPhones!

BLØD STEMME

Kære gæst, de følelser, jeg sporer i dig om fremtiden lige nu er så banale, og lige præcis hvad vi forventede her fra Parkens Direktorat. En menig person fra nuet kan på ingen måde forestille sig en kompliceret fremtid, en ukendt fremtid. Du tror helt sikkert, at vi, her i fremtiden, opfatter en iPhone 13 som en helligt relikvie, en nøgle til fortiden.

MIG

Det ved jeg ikke, om jeg tror...?

BLØD STEMME

*Vi lader dig blive i troen, iPhones og sneakers er det vigtigste i verden!
Vi regner også med at din oplevelse bliver et rørstrømsk tweet, når du
kommer ud igen.*

Jeg er desorienteret, hvad vil Parkens Direktorat? Hvad skal jeg her? Hvad
er MUSEET FOR FALDNE STATUER...?

Over mig er det begyndt at ulme, nu er mørket nået gennem himmel-
kuplen. Jeg er ude af den lille afgrænsede lund og er nu nået dybere inde
i parken.

De små beskedne piedestaler er forsvundne, og er erstattet af en række
store og voldsomme af slagsen. De prydes af en hel række nærmest
degenererede statuer. Igen lægger jeg mærke til, hvordan statuerne
krænger sig rundt, snor sig, tvister sig, roterer, som er de ved at smide
deres hamme. Deres hud er ubestemmelig: gips, metal, marmor, plastic,
og selvom de ikke ER af plastik, ser de plastiske ud, i forandring.

Et nyt skilt dukker op: *Highlights: Virkeligt faldne statuer.*

BLØD STEMME

*Alle de her mindesmærkekroppe, der hænger ud i dine byer i det 21.
århundrede, alle de kroppe er vidner til vores afsky og foragt, vores følelser
for dem. Er det ikke rigtigt, at du også føler foragt? Er det ikke sådan, at
din puls stiger lige nu?*

Parkens Direktorat må være i gang med at måle min puls, høretelefonerne
bliver skubbet hårdt ind mod mit kranium, en hyletone går i gang. Men
det dunker også i mig, for nu er det som om statuerne bliver virkelige,
genkendelige. Pludselig kan jeg skelne dem fra hinanden:

Hey, er det ikke Frederik V (1723-1766)? Den lillebitte rematerialiserede
Frederik V? Busten, der røg i Københavns Havn? Artefakten, der blev
trukket op af vandet igen og nu ligner et mærkeligt lille havdyr? Smadret
gips?

Og hey, er det ikke den Sovjetiske Tank IS-3? Den, der blev kidnappet
fra et historisk museum for at blive brugt i en krigshandling i det østlige
Ukraine under Ruslands annektering af Krim i 2014?

Hey, er det ikke den engelske slavehandler Robert Milligan (1746-1809)?

Hey, er det ikke endnu en engelsk slavehandler, Edward Colston (1636-1721)?
Hey, er det ikke Britney Spears' far (1953-)?
Hey, er det ikke slavehandleren Cecil Rhodes (1853-1902), der var en del af kolonimagten i Cape Town?
Hey, er det ikke Elon Musk (1971-)?
Hey, er det ikke Hans Egede (1686-1758)?
Hey, er det ikke Jeffrey Epstein (1953-2019)?
Hey, er det ikke Belgiens kong Leopold (1865-1909) i flere udgaver, hans torso spraymalet rød ved siden af Congos elefanter, hans krop til hest også helt rød, overtegnet med smædeord?

Statuerne begynder at snakke, den bløde stemme i høretelefonerne bliver ved med at blande sig.

BLØD STEMME

Jeg vil sige, at hvis man hiver noget ned fra sin piedestal, vil det blive ved med at bevæge sig, vride sig som en orm, prøve at slippe væk, man skal hakke det grundigt i stykker, bruge sine våben korrekt, en machete skal skære hovederne af, lemmerne skal overhældes med syre.

MIG

Er de her statuer allerede døde?

BLØD STEMME

De er genopstandne, kan man sige, allerede døde ja. Spøgelser eller zombier, du vælger. Og de er eminente til at mærke på din kropswarme og dine øjenæblebevægelser, hvor påvirket du er af deres museale tilstedeværelse.

MIG

Men, hvad er der sket med dem?

BLØD STEMME

De er alle sammen blevet udsat for vold.

MIG

Var det meningen?

BLØD STEMME

Der eksisterer et dødsønske dybt inde i selve monumentet. Noget, der kalder på at blive revet ned, vanhelliget, ødelagt.

MIG

Og...?

BLØD STEMME

Og vi adlød den trang, eller; Statuerne adlød den selv? Vi har set, at statuerne har ønsket at dø. De er blevet opført af sejrherrene, og for os er deres død stærkt symbolsk, som at hugge en tå af deres herre, som at strangulere denne herres kæledyr. Og noget er sket. Statuerne er faldet, og vi har samlet resterne op, givet dem en park her i fremtiden, fucket lidt med idéen om mindesmærker, erindring og tid.

En høj, pibende stemme afbryder den bløde stemme. Jeg tager den ene høretelefon af.

FREDERIK V

Det er statuen, der vil selvdestruere! Det var mig, der ville dø!

Den bløde stemme og jeg hiver efter vejret, jeg drejer mig mod Frederik V på sin piedestal, overrasket.

BLØD STEMME

Husk selvkontrollen, Frederik, der bliver i den grad udløst kropslige reaktioner i mødet med dig.

MIG

Hvorfor ser du sådan ud?

FREDERIK V

De fiskede mig op af havnen, dykkerne, og da ilten ramte min ødelagte krop, var jeg blevet til noget nyt. Jeg var en HELT NY Frederik d. V, og jeg kunne ikke fuldstændig huske mine egne bevæggrunde, min egen historie. Jeg var også skrumpet; rent fysisk var mit flotte ansigt en forvreden rosin. Jeg følte mig som smeltet ost? Lignede jeg også smeltet ost?

Frederik bliver afbrudt af en enorm tank, der står på sin egen kæmpe-piedestal.

IS-3

Du ligner smeltet ost lige nu. En vansiret ostesandwich, eller en ostefondue efter et sammenbrud, metal og emmentaler i koalition, æltet ind i hele kolonihistorien, danmarkshistorien og kunsthistorien.

FREDERIK V

Åh, gør jeg?

IS-3

Mig derimod! Vil du høre om mig? Om hvorfor jeg kom her til parken?

FREDERIK V

Hvorfor ikke, hvad har jeg at miste nu? Jeg ved ikke engang om mine synder er sonet, jeg mangler bare mit ansigt.

Den mærkelige tank begynder at tale.

IS-3

Jeg hedder IS-3. Oprindeligt var jeg en sovjetisk kampvogn. Jeg var Stalins kampvogn. Jeg stod på en plint, et mindesmærke for 2. verdenskrig, jeg var et artefakt fra fortiden. Men fra min plint blev jeg trukket ned, simpelthen kørt væk, af en gruppe pro-russiske separatister i det østlige Ukraine. Jeg blev brugt i en ny krig; tre ukrainere døde. Jeg havde ellers stået her længe, men da man havde brug for mig, blev min status som mindesmærke overtrumpet, jeg blev en aktiv krigsmaskine igen. Jeg havde åbenbart bare stået til opbevaring!

FREDERIK V

Fra begyndelsen var du slet ikke et monument over noget som helst, du var aldrig uskyldig, historien var ligeglåd med dig, historien var fucked og slog tilbage mod sig selv! Utroligt!

IS-3

Hvis jeg nu havde været en armbrøst, ville de så også bare have taget mig og sagt, nu går vi krig som før, nu annullerer vi foragten for fortidens krænkelser? Og i de nye krige, ville de da have løbet rundt som Robin Hood-soldater og skudt med bue og pil?

BLØD STEMME

Historiens bagholdsangreb! Jeg elsker, at den sniger sig ind på os alle sammen. Intet stabilt over gamle dage, intet stabilt over fremtiden!

MIG

Jeg forstår ikke helt ...

FREDERIK V

Mig, lidt mere traditionelt, en aktion, jeg røg i havnen, BIG SPLASH, og så slæbte jeg mig tilbage på min plint. Hærget, udmattet, udstillet, ødelagt, står jeg her nu, et dumt vartegn. Min aknebefængte hud, min opløste krop. En ny statue, der ligner en talende rød postkasse, begynder at krænge sin plastiske mund åben

Det skratter i mine høretelefoner.

BLØD STEMME

Oh my. Jeg tror Leopold vil sige noget.

MIG

Hvem er Leopold, altså, Kong Leopold af Belgien?

BLØD STEMME

Hvis du vil se Leopold direkte i øjnene, mens han tager ordet, så scanner hans røde overflade dine instinktive følelser om Museet for Faldne Statuer og den måde, du ubevidst har rangordnet statuerne på, fra populær til mindre populær .

MIG

Hvad mener du?

KONG LEOPOLD AF BELGIEN

Hallo venner.

BLØD STEMME

Det var ikke din tur, Leo.

KONG LEOPOLD AF BELGIEN

Jeg har en dyb tanke, jeg just må dele med jer. Hvis jeg mister min aktualitet og min brutalitet, hvis jeg ikke længere er Belgiens koloniherre, så kan jeg

måske bare være en lille, menig borger? Jeg kan blive ved med at gøre gavn. Bare ... som opløst arbejdsmand, affedt og harmløs. Som smulder. Måske sone et eller andet. Hvem ved?

BLØD STEMME

Det tror jeg ikke, sorry, Leopold.

Leopold sænker hovedet, falder i søvn. Så er der altså grænser. Selv for den bløde stemme.

BLØD STEMME

Drikker du ikke din slushice færdig?

Jeg drikker lidt af min slushice, sukkeret stiger mig til hovedet.

Jeg kigger rundt, får øje på en statue, jeg ikke kan genkende. Et sortsvedent, højt, mørkt tårn, gustent og forvredet, små strejf af noget irgrønt. Sære udposninger, som smeltede arme, flyder akavet ned over piedestalen.

MIG

Hvem er det egentlig?

BLØD STEMME

Åh, det er Frihedsgudinden.

FRIHEDSGUDINDEN

Jeg var uduelig som koncept, jeg var en fiktion om frihed, hvad er frihed? Er ingen frie før alle er frie? I hvert fald gav jeg ingen mening.

MIG

Hvad, din fakkel er væk?

FRIHEDSGUDINDEN

Jeg gik fra idé til statue. Jeg blev en kvinde, som var en gave, et bytteobjekt, et symbol. Jeg gav endnu mindre mening som tiden gik, som liberalismen og udbytteriet bare voksede og voksede – men nu, som død statue? De siger, statuer får os til at glemme. Men jeg tror hverken de hjælper på erindringen eller udsletter den. Hverken eller, åh!

Det sorte stængeltårn, som engang var Frihedsgudinden, vrider sig klynkende, græder store, blåsorte metaltårer.

MIG

Så hvis jeg var på Manhattan lige nu, ville der ikke være nogen ... ?

BLØD STEMME

Uh nej, verden ser anderledes ud nu. Men er du alligevel ikke tryk her i vores statuepark? Er her ikke dejligt?

IS-3

De tog mig bare ned for at bruge mig i en ny krig, er det alt, jeg er? En privatiseret statue, genopfundet som museumshopgods? Vil jeg stadig gerne dø i dén form? VIL JEG GERNE DØ ENDNU MERE END FØR?

BLØD STEMME

IS-3, relax, girl.

FRIHEDSGUDINDEN

Åh du, jeg har egentlig glædet mig til at genopstå! Få et ÆGTE formål. Glædet mig til at være et grundigt spektakel, en gentænkt krop i mit eget billede. Det kræver ingen ribben, ingen kviste og mudder. Det kræver ingen spartelmasse, ingen kabler. Se mig nu? Sort og lækker!

En hæs stemme begynder at pibe fra et mærkeligt objekt fra en lav plint af træ. Objektet viser sig at bestå af hundredevis af tæer, klasket sammen i en udflydende masse.

BLØD STEMME

Nå ja, det her er sidste stop i parken, vi må hellere gøre det færdigt – må jeg introducere conquistador Juan de Oñate y Salazar. Oñate var en brutal, spansk conquistador, der i 1500-tallet var guvernør i det nuværende New Mexico. Han huskes bl.a. for, ved en særlig lejlighed, en massakre mod den oprindelige pueplo-befolkning, at have hugget fødderne af de unge mænd.

MIG

Det lyder jo ...

BLØD STEMME

Hvis du mærker, at det kilder i tæerne, så er det bare Parkdirektoratet, der er ved at indsamle dine cellereaktioner

CONQUISTADOR JUAN DE OÑATE Y SALAZAR

Og de klippede fødderne af MIG, skar dem af.

MIG

Hvem?

CONQUISTADOR JUAN DE OÑATE Y SALAZAR

Aktivisterne, efterkommerne, dem, der vidste noget om mine handlinger.

MIG

En interessant hævn.

CONQUISTADOR JUAN DE OÑATE Y SALAZAR

En vidunderlig hævn!

FREDERIK V

Ja, en vidunderlig hævn!

FRIHEDSGUDINDEN

Udslettet som en udslettelse bør være!

IS-3

Sådan en god hævn, jeg er så misundelig, du fik lov at blive hævnnet i din oprindelige krop!

KONG LEOPOLD AF BELGIEN

Dø, statue, dø!

CONQUISTADOR JUAN DE OÑATE Y SALAZAR

Nu er jeg kun tær.

FREDERIK V

Nu er jeg kun dårlig hud.

FRIHEDSGUDINDEN

Nu er jeg smeltet metal.

KONG LEOPOLD AF BELGIEN

Og jeg er rød som et bankende hjerte!

IS-3

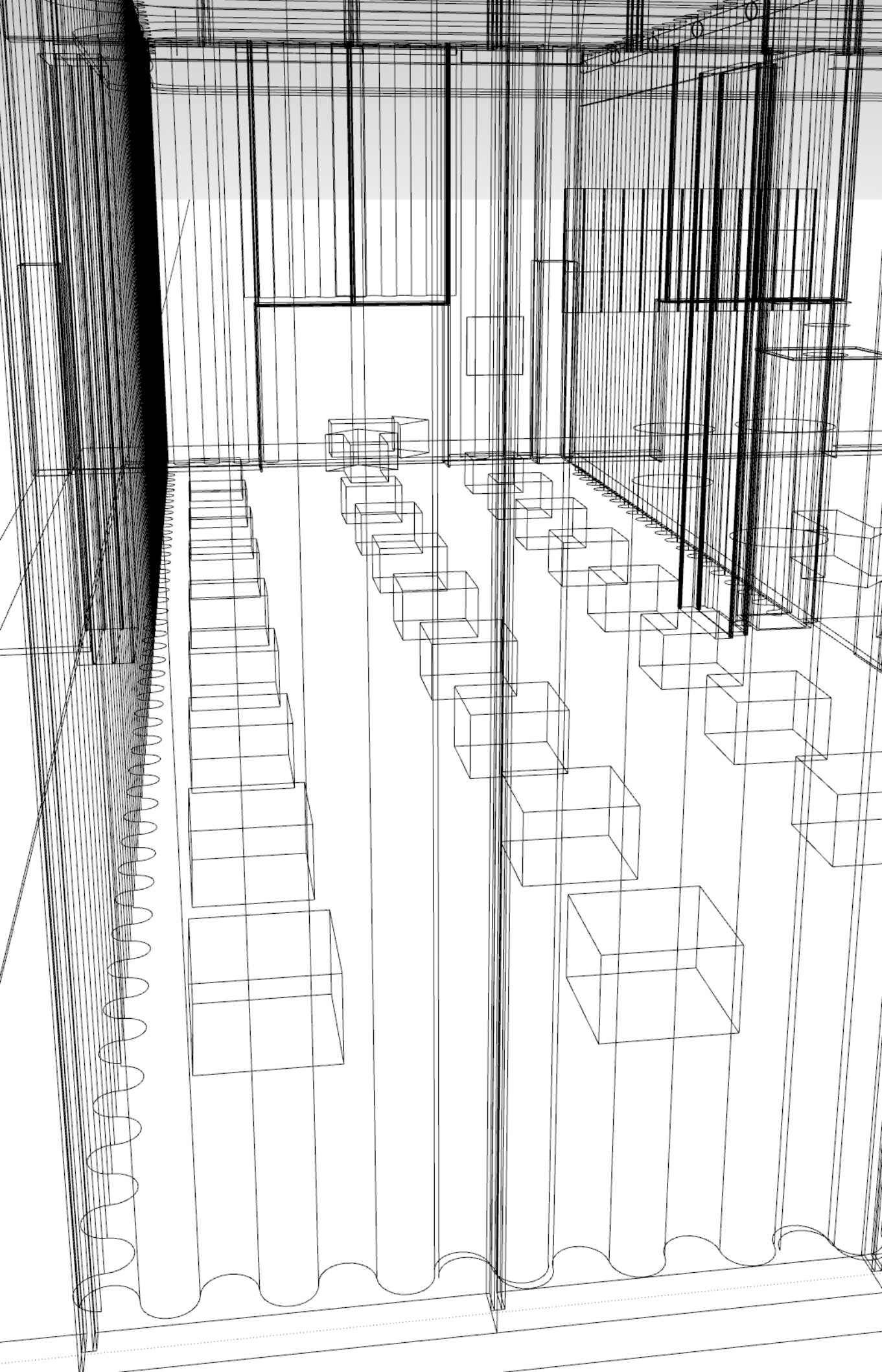
Og mig, gør mig uigenkendelig, ødelæg mig, smadr mig, jeg vil ikke transporteres videre i det her kredsløb, fuck mig up!

BLØD STEMME

Okay, TAK DET ER FLOT. Ikke flere dødskonspirationer i statueparken. Standby-mode til jer alle. Og hvis du, kære gæst, vil udfylde dette korte spørgeskema?

De hidsige blækspruttekroppe falder ind i sig selv, ind i statuernes tornerosesøvn. De står som blød gelé på de store plinter. Det skratter i høretelefonerne, usynlige hænder løfter dem fra mit hoved, min kop med slushice bliver kastet i en skraldespand.

Jeg har spørgeskemaet i hænderne, kigger op: Den mørke kuppel lyser op igen, mælkehvid som marmor, endnu ikke ødelagt.





EDDIKE- MØDRENE QUEER- FREMTIDER

Samtale mellem Rhoda Ting & Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen fra Studio ThinkingHand & Anders Thruue Djurslev

Hvad svampene har på hjerte

RHODA TING » I kunsthistorien er der en tendens til at *repræsentere* "Naturen." Den bliver gjort til noget eksternt for den menneskelige betragters distancerede blik. Med udgangspunkt i vores bekymring for klimaforandringerne er vores kunstneriske praksis et forsøg på at undslippe denne repræsentationslogik. For os er det eurocentriske, hvide, mandlige, raske blik indlejret i en humanisme, der har fostret et særligt natursyn og et særligt ensporet blik på andre arter. Blikket forvandler alle omgivelser, materialer og relationer til ressourcer, der skal udnyttes, snarere end livsformer, der kan afkræve respekt i egen ret. Vi forsøger at afprøve og realisere nye idéer for at udfordre og forandre det paradigme. Det betyder også, at vi arbejder for at decentrere os selv og vores egne blikke for således at give plads til andre processer. Med andre ord: I stedet for at tegne eller male et billede af en svamp, så arbejder vi sammen med svampen for at afprøve og forstå dens intelligens, dens agens, dens adfærd i forskellige omgivelser og miljøer. Svampe blev faktisk startskuddet for vores nysgerrighed mod arbejdet

med andre livsformer og arter. Vi blev betagede af den måde, svampe kunne vokse fra gamle kaffebønner og forvandle sig til de her sære buketter i løbet af små to timer. Den livlighed er meget tiltrækkende, meget intelligent – og fuld af mange andre perspektiver end et liv på en varehylde i et supermarked.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » Når det gælder forholdet til fremtiden under de aktuelle skygger af klimaforandringer, bliver vi ofte præsenteret for to scenarier: Enten vil verden blive totalt ødelagt, eller også vil menneskene forsvinde og naturen blive genoprettet i grøn harmoni. Begge er typiske dommedagsfortællinger og sværmer på romantisk vis for en fremtid uden mennesker. Da vi finder begge scenarier temmelig utilfredsstillende, forsøger vi gennem vores kunstneriske praksis at opdage andre måder at opfatte og være en del af verden på; flere retninger for fremtiden at udfolde sig i. Undervejs er vi stødt på filosofier, som arbejder med nogle af de samme spørgsmål. Disse filosofier taler ofte om *agens*, altså evnen til at handle og reflektere over, om vi gennem begrebet om agens kan udvide opfattelsen af, hvad der er liv. For altting på

planeten har på sin måde agens, selv genstande og materialer vi almindeligvis opfatter som industrielle eller syntetiske, som fx plast. Også plast sætter årsagskæder af affekter i gang i sin relation med andre ting. At udvide opfattelsen af liv er et centralt ærinde for vores praksis. Pludselig kan plast betragtes som en aktør i verden. Det medfører naturligvis også en række problemer af både ontologisk og praktisk art. Men gennem arbejdet med levende materialer har vi opdaget nye forhold mellem elementer, som vi normalt ville opfatte som modsætninger: det naturlige og det kulturelle, det industrielle og det organiske, det levende og det døde. De her grundlæggende modsætninger bliver ustabile. For syntetisk materiale er også forbundet med naturen og med til ubønhørligt at bestemme nutidens vilkår og dens mulige fremtider. Det at arbejde med andre livsformer har gjort os ydmyge på menneskets vegne. Det fjerner os fra toppen af rangstigen. I vores arbejde oplever vi en masse processer, som vi ikke kender resultatet af i forvejen. Vi kan ikke kontrollere dem. At give slip på kontrollen har udstukket en stejl læringskurve for os. På et tidligt stadie måtte vi opgive at forstå vores kunstværker som udtryk for vores egne følelsesmæssige eller psykologiske erfaringer. I stedet begyndte det at handle om at tage et skridt tilbage og se, hvad svampene havde på hjerte – i forskellige medier, i forskellige kontekster og miljøer.

RHODA TING » Det er en vanedannende måde at arbejde på. Hver gang vi kommer tilbage til værkstedet, er værket forandret. Hver gang vi prøver at tegne en model, forstår vi hurtigt, at vi prøver for hårdt. De livsprocesser, vi arbejder sammen med, er så indviklede, at de på mange måder rækker langt ud over vores egen forestillingsevne. Og som ikke har et endepunkt. Det gør os ydmyge over for materialet. Inden for de teorier, der informerer vores arbejde, kan du sige, at vi arbejder med at skabe “uafsluttede assemblager;” vi forsøger at holde vores virke åbent for det ukendte og blive del af generative processer, der kan skabe mange muligheder, mange fremtider.

At drage omsorg for livets processer

RHODA TING » Vi drager omsorg for nogle processer, der ellers ikke er synlige eller

håndgribelige eller sanselige. Vi sætter disse processer og elementer sammen for at opdage, hvordan de relaterer til hinanden og til os. Vi kender ikke resultatet på forhånd – vi kender ikke fremtiden – men vi tror også på, at resultatet aldrig kan eller må være op til os. At arbejde med andre livsformer er en kærkommen påmindelse om, at det menneskelige perspektiv er betinget og begrænset. Der er så meget liv derude, som vi ikke kan se, men som virker i verden.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » På samme måde skal vi være opmærksomme på, at vi er en del af processen. I vores tid og vores kultur er der en tendens til at forestille sig mennesket som en skabning uden for eller endda over naturen; at naturen er et sted vi kan besøge eller tage på ferie i, når vi har tid og lyst. Men i økologisk tænkning, så er alting viklet ind i alting. Vi kan ikke holde kategorierne adskilt. I vores praksis forsøger vi at bringe elementer sammen for således at demonstrere, hvordan de relaterer med hinanden og med os og derigennem skaber affektive forbindelser mellem legemer. Vi forsøger ikke at gendanne eller repræsentere naturen fra vores perspektiv. Vi forsøger at skabe betingelser for sammenfiltringer, nye sammenhænge, nye møder mellem det sanselige og det mulige. Selv mellem industrielle materialer og biologiske livsformer. At et materiale er industrielt forarbejdet, gør det ikke mindre naturligt. At et materiale er biologisk fremdyrket, gør det ikke mindre industrielt. At blande materialer er at blande de forskellige tidskalaer og temporaliteter, som de er betinget af. Det bidrager til forståelsen af, under hvilken horisont de virker, tænker og lever i verden. For eksempel er det tydeligt, at svampe søger mangfoldighed. At se en svamp gro med andre arter er en inspiration på et filosofisk og ligefrem samfundsmæssigt niveau. På den måde er æstetik ikke bare et spørgsmål om former og farver, som vi kan lide at se på. Det er epistemologi, erkendelse; en måde at forstå verden gennem sanserne og kroppen. Det er derfor, vi afprøver teorier og undersøger idéer i vores kunstneriske praksis. Vi forsøger at modvirke den tendens til at skabe modsætninger mellem teori og praksis, som er gennemgående i den vestlige kultur, og som bidrager til en lineær og i vores øjne reduktiv historieopfattelse. Den kommer af en hierarkisk dualisme, som har





rødde tilbage i det antikke Grækenland, udvikler sig gennem kristendommens udbredelse og løber frem til moderniteten og i dag. Platon modstillede idéer og fænomener; Aristoteles opstillede *Scala Naturae*. Disse hierarkiserende, dualistiske paradigmer bliver fortsat reproduceret i vor tids eurocentriske verdensopfattelse, som ultimativt valoriserer linearitet. Alle relationer bliver binære: Høj og lav, ja og nej, højre og venstre, nat og dag, kaos og orden, mand og kvinde, sort og hvid. Disse dualismer har en tendens til at skabe et hierarki mellem sine modsætninger – det ene er bedre, det andet værre – og har forvandlet sig til kulturelle sandheder, som vi må vedholdende udfordre for i stedet at gøre et spektrum synligt. I alle arter er der afvigelser, nye udviklinger, noget der bryder fri og får affekt på noget andet. Hvis vi begynder at omfavne paradokserne behøver vi ikke vælge mellem snævre enten-eller muligheder – og fremtider.

RHODA TING » Vi er med andre ord interesseret i fremtider, der er mangfoldige og queer. Vi søger efter en queer måde at være menneske i verden på. En der ikke er lineær, ikke binær. Og her kan naturen inspirere os. Svampe og andre mikroorganismer er allerede queer. Deres kønsliv inspirerer til at se en mere vild økologisk fremtid, som ikke udelukkende er betinget af heteronormativ reproduktion. Svampe reproducerer nemlig sig selv ved mellemkomsten af en fremmed art, og de er på den måde hele tiden på jagt efter diversitet. Mycelium og hyfer har tusindvis af køn. Derfor virker den vestlige kulturs binære blik på køn, seksualitet, klasse, krop og magt pludselig fattig i mødet med svampene. Naturen er så queer, og det kan vi som samfund og art lære meget af. Med den indgang har vi udfordret de naturvidenskabelige institutioner, som vi har arbejdet sammen med: universiteter, laboratorier, virksomheder. Naturvidenskaben har en tendens til at gøre sig til ekspert på ét område, én art, én specifik situation. Men verden er mere sammenfiltret end det. Det synes nyttesløst at studere noget dynamisk og processuelt, som om det var statisk og frosset fast i tid.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » Du kan sige noget lignende om kunstværker. Kunstværker bliver ofte betragtet som statisk materiale fra kunsthistorien; som døde efterladenskaber fra

tidligere kulturer. Men de værker, som vi fx udstiller, er ofte samtidige i den betydning, at de bliver ved med at udvikle sig. Vi kan ikke love, at de stadig er der om to hundrede år, hængemt i en museumssamling et eller andet sted. På den måde konfronterer vores værker museumssamlingens logik som sådan. Hvordan kan du konservere et levende væsen som fx en scoby (eddikemor, symbiotisk kultur af bakterier og gær, som Studio ThinkingHand bruger i deres værker, red.) i en samling? Måske viser det, at du ikke kan skelne kunstværker fra deres udstilling; det, som repræsenterer, fra det, som lever.

RHODA TING » Ja, at arbejde med levende organismer stiller spørgsmål til museet og den historielogik, som museet repræsenterer. Er det nogensinde muligt at bevare fortiden, som den er? At konservere fortiden som om den tilhørte en singular Historie?

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » På en måde er døende og rådne ting mere almindelige end ting, der er statiske og holdt kunstigt i live. Men hvad er egentlig kunstigt i dag? Vi er vant til at tænke kunst som noget kunst-igt, som et udtryk for kunstfærdighed. Men disse betydningskategorier, som fx modsætningen mellem kunstigt og ægte, er ustabile. Organiske materialer forrådner og bliver måske mere interessante med deres potentiale for død i egenskab af deres forvandling og forsvinding. Men det samme sker med det industrielle materiale, hvis nedbrydningstid blot er længere.

Eddike virker mod historien

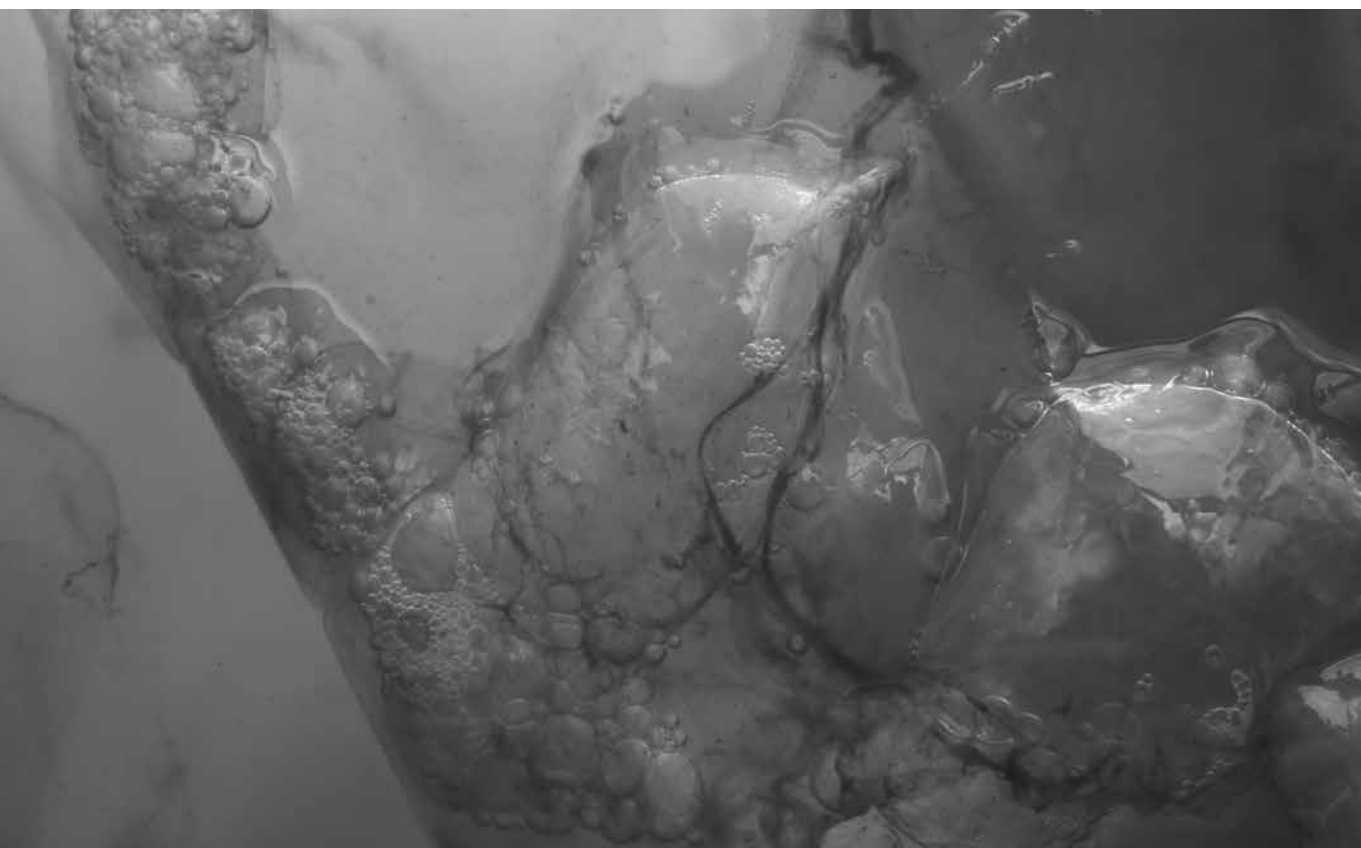
RHODA TING » At give plads til andre arters liv giver adgang til en konfrontation med den historiebesættelse, som gennemsyrrer moderne vestlig kultur fx i kraft af museumsinstitutionen. Hvordan kan vi tænke disse institutioner anderledes? Måske ved at bruge dem til at gøre andre tidslige paradigmer end historicitet synlig. I den moderne historieforståelse er der indlejret et narrativ, der er med til at legitimere kolonialisme og imperialisme. Vi må i dag spørge, hvis historier bliver fortalt; hvem der har magten til at benævne fænomener som historiske. Hvordan forklarer vi besættelsen af at skabe monumenter over sig selv og sin egen

fortid, hvis ikke det er for at gøre sig relevant for fremtiden? At arbejde med væsner, der ikke er mennesker, som har deres egne distinkte tidserfaringer, hjælper os med at diffraktere eller splintre den lineære oplevelse af tid, som er historien. Kan man, i stedet for at humanisere tiden på et endimensionelt, narrativt plan som historie, queere tiden og inkludere andre arters tidsligheder? Det vil lede til en uendelighed af muligheder og fremtider. Det, jeg elsker ved svampe, er, at deres forrådnelse og død spiller en vigtig rolle for skoven og dens andre arter. Det er ikke sådan, at alting konstant skal trives og leve så længe som muligt. Det er mere som et netværk eller en infrastruktur. Evig vækst er faktisk en temmelig dum idé i mange af livets henseender. Man bruger ofte metaforer som "livets træ" som billede på evolutionen, men dette billede er ikke retvisende, måske er det mere kaotisk. Der er ingen original stamme. Ingen blindgyder for knopskydningernes vækst.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » Nemlig. Det er ikke sådan livet opstod. Det er en rhizomatisk eller mycelisk infrastruktur af tider, skalaer og materialer. Intet er rent, alt er inficeret.

Plast har udviklet sig til at blive en del af menneskets egen evolution, indlejret i vores mikrobiomer, i vores konkrete kroppe; cyborgs, hybrider, assemblager af menneskelige og ikke-menneskelige komponenter. Eddikemor, som vi arbejder med i *Museum for fremtiden*, er et resultat af menneskelig alkymi med bakterier og gærceller. Det er ikke en skabning, du kan finde i en eller anden mose. Livsformens eksistens er helt og holdent afhængig af menneskelig aktivitet. På den måde er det vigtigt for os ikke at romantisere naturen som noget præhistorisk, præmenneskeligt, rent, smukt. Du kan ikke skabe samfund med "ren" tænkning. Fremtiden er parasitisk, sammenfiltret. Derfor inkorporerer vores værker livsformer og syntetisk, industrielt og organisk materiale, affaldsstoffer og restprodukter.

RHODA TING » Vores opmærksomhed helliges møder og genmøder igen og igen i forskellige nedslag i tid. Ofte bruger vi materialer, der har været approprieret og udnyttet af industrien, og opdager deres agens på ny. Vi har arbejdet med eddikemor et stykke tid, og det udmærker sig ved at føles bekendt og sært på samme tid.

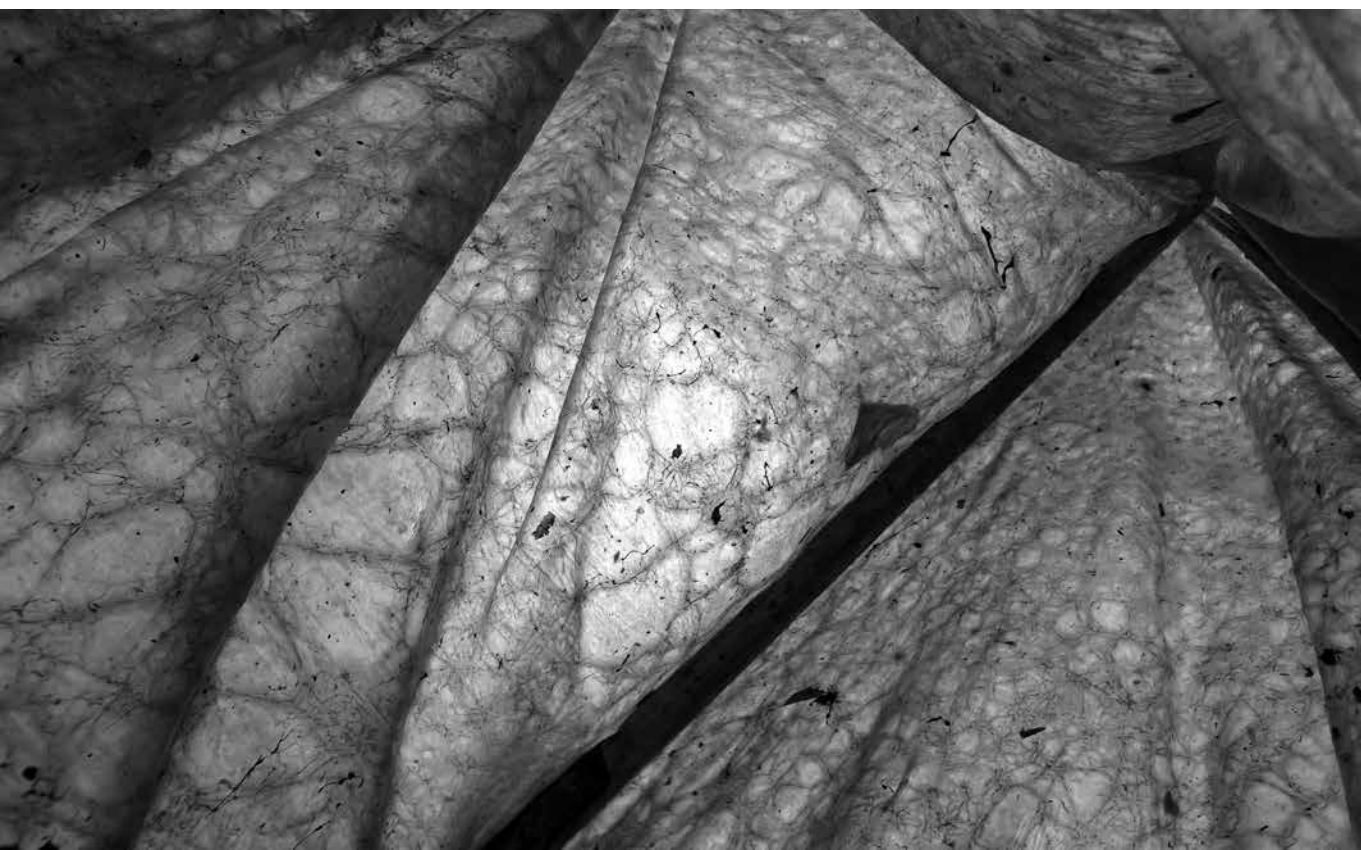


Materialet er både tiltrækkende og frastødende. Eddikemor er grundlæggende et affaldsprodukt fra industrien. Det er et levende restprodukt fra brygningen af kombucha-læskedrikke, som bliver solgt på dåse. Vi spørger så, hvad deres efterliv kan dreje sig om, efter deres udnyttelse i produktionen af varer? Hvordan kan de vokse, hvor vil de hen, hvordan lever de videre, hvad er deres fremtid? Som symbiotisk kultur af bakterier og gær er eddikemor en symbiose af to forskellige slags organismer. De samarbejder om at skabe en infrastruktur og forvandler sig til en arkitektur. Affaldet er i live og bygger sådan set sit eget hjem, bliver sit eget hjem. Temmelig intelligent, ikke? Materialet er på én gang meget modstandsdygtigt og meget skrøbeligt. Det afhænger af det miljø, det placeres i, og hvordan du behandler det. Når du holder en scoby ude af dens vand, så må du følge dens bevægelser for at støtte den.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » I installationen til *Museum for fremtiden* vil der lugte af eddike. Det er hverken umiddelbart behageligt eller ubehageligt, men det er en bemærkelsesværdig lugt i forhold til de vanlige "duftløse" miljøer i

teatret og kunsthallen. Den gør dig opmærksom på dit sanseapparat, du vil kunne høre vandet dryppe fra den, dufte eddiken, mærke dens indvoldelignende folder i eddikemorens bakteriekrop.

RHODA TING » Når eddikemødrene trækkes op og ned af vandet, bliver de samtidig trukket ind og ud af sin vækst og sin forrådnelse. Når den trækkes op i længere tid dehydrerer den og dør. Når den puttes ned i vandet rehydrerer den og bliver grundlag for nyt liv igen. På den måde overskrider scobyen den tidslige modsætning mellem liv og død. Vores værkserie med eddikemor hedder derfor også *Vita. Necro. Vita.*, som betyder *Liv. Død. Liv.* I tidligere værker har vi hejst scobyer manuelt med et kædetræk. Denne gang bruger vi automatiserede hejsesystemer, så væsnerne kommer til at indgå i en assemblage af organismer, robotter, lys og fortælling. Forhåbentlig skaber det en *larger than life*-fornemmelse, som måske også er en smule uhyggelig. Er de her væsner ikke meget mere intelligente end os? Burde vi egentlig ikke se op til dem? Er de store lærred af eddikemor ikke et flag vi kan hejse for alverdens queer



fremtider? Med vores udstillinger ønsker vi først og fremmest at smitte beskueren med ydmyghed. Vi vil overordnet set gerne sænke den menneskelige exceptionalisme, der er så udbredt, ved at demonstrere de intelligenser, vi møder hos andre arter. Med denne udstilling ønsker vi, at folk møder eddikemødrene. Hvad vil deres forhold til dem være? Hvor tæt vil de gå på dem? Vil de røre dem? Hvilke spørgsmål efterlader de hos publikum? Der er ikke noget at forstå eller afkode. Det er et møde.

MIKKEL DAHLIN BOJESEN » På den måde er de, hvad de er. Eddikemødre. Vi bruger ikke røg og spejle for at lade det repræsentere eller symbolisere noget andet. Eddikemødrene er sig selv og repræsenterer sig selv. Men det er selvfølgelig en forening, en syntese mellem industri og organisme, mellem erfaring og udtryk, som vi håber publikum vil opleve i *Museum for fremtiden*; en performance, som bruger scenografi, situation, iscenesættelse. Med vores bidrag håber vi at tilbyde eddikemorens selvrepræsentation i denne iscenesættelse. På den

måde skubber vi på en forståelse af kunst som noget virkeligt i den betydning, at eddikemoren er levende. Omvendt er det et dobbeltblik: At udstille det levende afslører det artificielle, det syntetiske, det iscenesatte som noget lige så virkeligt. På samme tid. Det handler om at blive i besværet og modsigelserne og spændingerne mellem det levende og det døde, fortiden, nutiden og fremtiden, det udstillede og det forestillede og splintre deres modsætningsforhold.

RHODA TING » Museer modsætter sig ofte at skulle samle på det levende. Måske et museum ville fryse vores scobys ned og dræbe livet i dem. Teater, på den anden side, er levende og i nuet. Hvordan bringer vi denne livlighed ind i den statiske museumsudstilling? Det er et problem, der er blevet diskuteret i forbindelse med performancekunsten. Hvordan forvandler vi en happening og en livsform til noget, som museerne kan samle på, noget arkiverbart? At udstille det levende er et nødvendigt problem for en kultur, der samler på død.

Studio ThinkingHand, som består af Rhoda Ting (f. 1985) og Mikkel Dahlin Bojesen (f. 1988), er en kunstnerduo, der arbejder med ny naturforståelse og tværartslig relationsopbygning. Organiseret som et studie samarbejder Studio ThinkingHand med andre-end-menneskelige arter, såsom svampe og bakterier, og syntetiske materialer, såsom beton og robotteknologi, om at sanseliggøre begge dele som virkende livsformer i verden. Studio ThinkingHand forsøger med deres kunst at udvide forståelsen af, hvad liv er og kan være i en verden, hvor binære distinktioner vakler. Det sker ofte i samarbejde med forskning i naturvidenskab og teknologi, hvis laboratorieeksperimenter Studio ThinkingHand bringer ind i kunsten såvel som ud i det offentlige rum. I dette interview fortæller de om deres arbejde for at nedbryde skellene mellem det syntetiske og det organiske, natur og kultur, liv og død, med udgangspunkt i deres bidrag til *Museum for fremtiden*: vildtvoksende og forrådnende lærreder af levende eddikemor, der lever, dør og genopstår i udstillingens åbningsperioder.





DEN NEO SKANDINAVISKE MAND

– Et portræt af fremtidens skandinaviske mand

Af Tobias Rahim. Portrætfoto af Petra Kleis.

En blanding af det robuste nordiske skellet, og en glødende pigmentering fra folkevandringens indflydelse. Om 300 år vil skandinaviens nye og gamle befolkningsgrupper være så blandet, at alle mænd i skandinavien ligner Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand. En mand der kender sin styrke; og sin sårbarhed. En mand der fungerer i en global verden. Men føler en dyb forbindelse til den skandinaviske natur. Dens råhed. Dens frugtbarhed. Og dens storslåede ubarmhertighed.

De skiftende årstider definerer Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand. Han kender til sindets siluetter og det mentale mørke. Krigene i syd og øst som hans forfædre flygtede fra, ligger stadig i ham som et melankolsk lag af nedarvede trauma. Dette gør ham stærkere. Mere kampdygtig. Men Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand vil til hver én tid undgå krig; da konsekvenserne deraf har formet ham.

Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand ved, at vi alle sælger os selv til kapitalismen; og at det er dét system vi har valgt. Måske i mangel på bedre alternativer? Men ikke desto mindre er penge, systemet der forbinder vores samfund.

I fremtiden vil vi se prostitution gå begge veje.

Den økonomiske ligestilling mellem køn, og brud med liderlige tabuer, vil sætte mennesket fri og skabe et stort marked for Neo Skandinavisk Maskulin Prostitution.

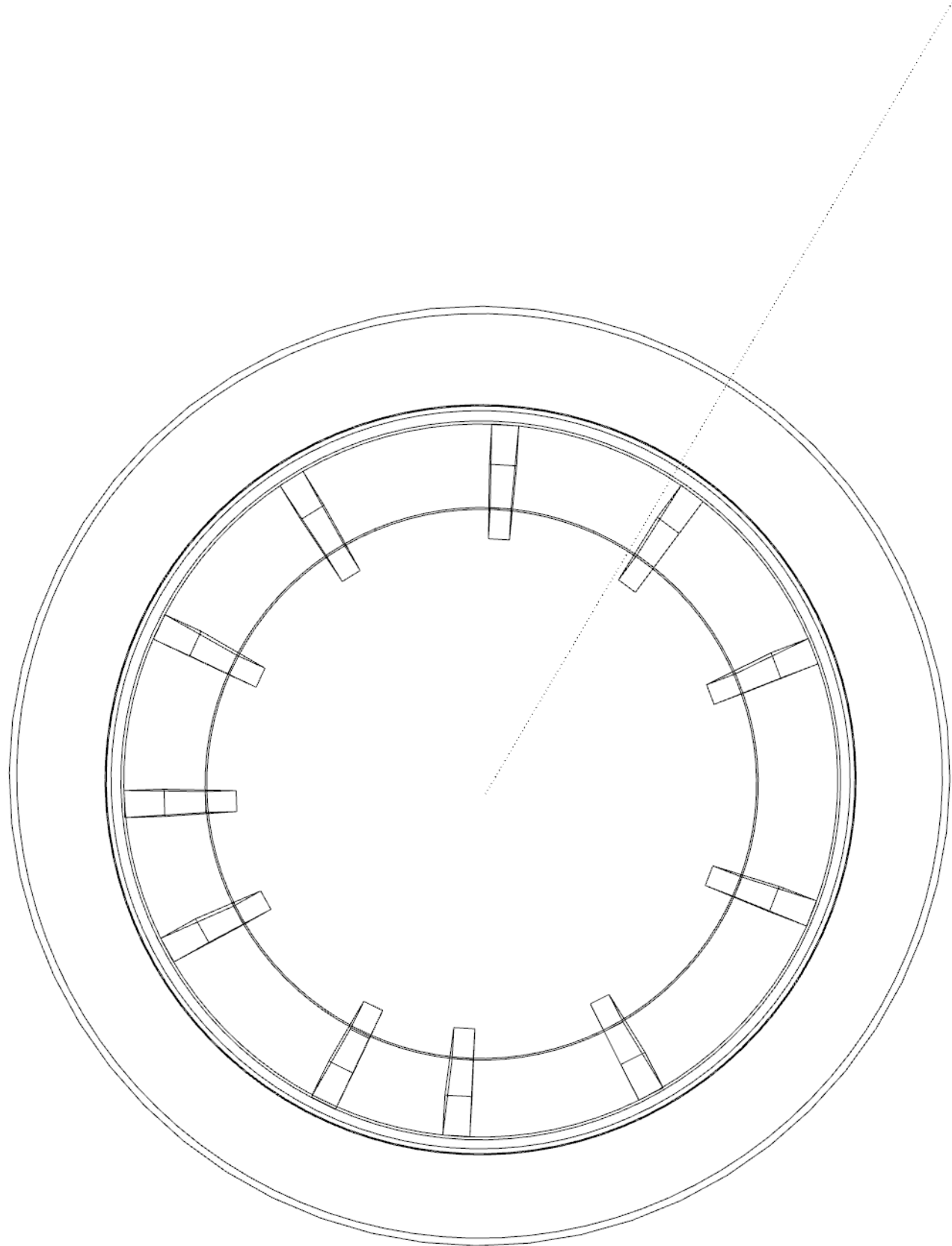
I fremtiden vil prostitution gå begge veje.

Syd og Øst vil vokse økonomisk, og skabe et fundament for sexturisme i Skandinavien. Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand vil blive eftertragtet. Både på grund af sin fysiske størrelse og metafysiske dybde.

Snart vil materialismen dø. Drukne i sin egen overflod. Og ting vil falde os uinteressante. Kunstneriske erhverv som sex, terapi og kunst vil stimulerer verdens kvalitetsbevidste elite.

Den Neo Skandinaviske Mand vil skabe Neo Dynamisk Økonomi.

Verden er ikke altid lige så flot som dette billede. Alligevel er virkeligheden smuk som kunsten. Dette NFT salg, ligger i grænsefeltet i mellem kunst og virkelighed. Måske lige der, hvor vi alle drømmer om at leve.



DET PLANETARISKE FUTUSEUM

Center for Militant Futurologi

Det Planetariske Futuseum (PF) vil være en sammenslutning af museer verden over, der arbejder med museumsformatet som revolutionært redskab. De vil udstille fremtiden, arbejde på tværs af tid og rum og søge at åbne museumsinstitutionen for eksperimenter med progressive fremtidspraksisser. Praksisformer der kan gøre fremtiden levende og anvendelig i nutiden, formidle og realisere fremtidige potentialer ud fra ideen om, at vores fælles fremtid på Jorden (og hinsides) formes i spændingsfeltet mellem det, som er og det, som kan komme. PF vil altså udstille andre mulige verdener i erkendelse af nutidens totale tjæregrav, status quos altopslugende dødvande, de eksisterende magtstrukturers manglende vilje til at ændre på sig selv og det, der understøtter og reproducerer dem; COP26, NATO, FN, IMF, WTO, EU osv. Det vil derfor bringe fænomener, løsninger, (sociale) teknologier, organiseringer osv. fra fremtiden tilbage til nutiden. Her udstilles-fremstilles (printes-produceres) ting (fremtikviteter) og praksisser fra fremtiden, en samling der er (bliver) vigtigt for at forstå og bevare fremtiden (som noget, vi har), som kan åbne for samtaler om, hvad der i den sammenhæng er bevaringsværdigt og bevaringsmuligt, hvilke fremtider, vi begærer, og hvordan de kan realiseres i vores samtid. PF vil dog ikke udelukkende udstille mulige fremtider, det vil også aktivt producere dem, facilitere gruppeterapi, guidede drømmerejser, aktiv begærfrisættelse mm. med henblik på at fremmane en flerhed af utopiske fremtider. Det vil også udstille nutidens mangler. PF vil udstille mad og boliger, til dem, som har brug for mad og boliger. Det vil udstille medicinske behandlinger, historiske, de der i dag er tilgængelige, og dem, som fremtiden vil byde på, burde byde på. PF vil udstille demilitarisering og regenerative livsformer. Det vil også rumme kroppe, som ikke har brug for noget af ovenstående, uploadede kroppe eller soldrevne kroppe eller kroppe, der henter deres næring direkte fra jorden. Det Planetariske Futuseum vil være et radikalt åbent rum, en aldrig tilendebragt proces, dets samling vil vokse og udvide sig som selve universet.

OVERSIGT OVER MUSEUMSGENSTANDE
(ET UDVALG)

*FORBUD MOD UDVINDING OG AFBÆNDING
AF FOSSILE BRÆNDSLER (2044)*

Det planetariske forbud mod udvinding og afbrænding af fossile brændsler, som på alle måder var alt, alt for sent, foropføres samtidig på samtlige afdelinger af Det Planetariske Futuseum. Objektet tager form som en såkaldt 'preenactment', der virkeliggør og operationaliserer en fremtidig begivenhed. Der mobiliseres socialt verden over, de socio-materielle betingelser for realiseringen af forbuddet i 2044 analyseres, kalibreres i forhold til nutidige forhold og formidles. Det juridiske grundlag udformes og gøres tilgængeligt for de relevante demokratiske forsamlinger.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2044aq*
- *Genstandsnummer: 47224*
- *Samling: Revolution/Reform*
- *Materiale: Preenactment*
- *Dimensioner: Verdensomspændende*

JORDFRØPROGRAMMET (2113)

Udvalgte PF-afdelinger eksperimenterer med jordfrøkapsler til rummigration indeholdende 'levende jord', vand, livsformer, teknologi. Ydermere udstilles Jordfrøprogrammets charter om "postkolonialistisk rummigration", og der undervises i principper om intraplanetær reciprocitet og posthumanistisk humanitet.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2113gt*
- *Genstandsnummer: 87087*
- *Samling: Rummigration*
- *Materiale: Organisering/
Intraplanetarisk teknologi*
- *Dimensioner: Intragalaktisk*

SOLFRUGT (2035)

Del af den omrejsende udendørs udstillede samling DWEB&SOLPUNK. Solfrugten er en solcelle-dodecahedron, som hænger i døde træer og ruinerede højhuse. Inden for en 50 meters

radius kan man trådløst tilgå og tilføje til dens uforanderlige log og således dokumentere, hvad man har sået, høstet og udvekslet med landet. Solfrugten er et hyperlokalt testamente for landbrug og landudveksling. Solfrugten er ofte forbundet til nedgravede jordcomputere, der kontinuerligt måler og registrerer fugtighed, temperatur og mikroaktivitet. Solfrugter udveksler via deres besøgende organismer med det planetarisk distribuerede solfrugtnetværk, og hver enhed indeholder således et øjebliksbillede af jordens klima og de relationer, der skaber det.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2035fr*
- *Genstandsnummer: 32601*
- *Samling: DWEB&SOLPUNK*
- *Materiale: Elektronik/Software/
Ledning/Jordarter*
- *Dimensioner: 50 cm diameter/
65.450 cm³*

MENNESKERETTIGHEDERNE (2025)

Til trods for at være en nært forestående begivenhed, udstiller PF de nye Menneskerettigheder fra 2025 i form af konkret handling. PF udstiller blandt andet retten til fri bevægelse i form af en række sabotageaktioner mod grænseovergange og kontorer for såkaldt 'udlændingesservice'. Der udstilles ligeledes gratis mad og boliger med mere under overskriften "ALT TIL ALLE".

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2025bd*
- *Genstandsnummer: 19283*
- *Samling: Alt til alle*
- *Materiale: Charter/Jura/Social
revolution/Sabotage*
- *Dimensioner: Verdensomspændende*

DNA-PRINTER (2083)

Teknologisk landvinding fra 2080'erne tilbagebringes og konstrueres først i PF Baskerlandet. Printeren er både i stand til at rekonstruere uddøde arter (eksempelvis uldhåret mammut), såvel som historiske personer (Kong Ludd bringes blandt andre til live igen), men har ligeledes en AI-understøttet spekulativ funktion, der blandt andet har gjort det muligt at eksperimentere med

nye plante- og dyrearter (eksempelvis beboelig kæmpeporesvamp og plettet filtbi), fotosyntetiske mennesker osv.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

ObjektId: 2083bt

- *Genstandsnummer: 6784*
- *Samling: Biofuturisme*
- *Materiale: Kvantepriinter*
- *Dimensioner: 13x25 m*

DET PLANETARISKE PARLAMENT (2039)

Samtidig preenactment af etableringen af det decentrale DPP i samtlige afdelinger af PF. Genstanden består af DPPs charter for planetarisk demokrati og en regenerativ økonomi, den første planetære samling, samt indvielsen af AI-teknologien gAIa, der supplerer DPPs arbejde med verdensomspændende organisering og koordination imellem autonome globaliteter.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

ObjektId: 2039vd

- *Genstandsnummer: 1222*
- *Samling: Revolution/Reform*
- *Materiale: Preenactment*
- *Dimensioner: Verdensomspændende*

KÆMPEELM (2073)

Frø af træarten kæmpeelm til udplantning i den nordlige hemisfære med henblik på effektiv CO₂-lagring og styrkelse af lokal biodiversitet. Træet kan blive op mod 250 meter i højden. Frøene fra kæmpeelm er prækonstruerede og indgår i PFs botaniske samling af "Fremtidsfrø".

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

ObjektId: 2073ft

- *Genstandsnummer: 09361*
- *Samling: Fremtidsfrø*
- *Materiale: Organisk kulstof*
- *Dimensioner: 20x35 cm*

THOMAS MÜNTZER (1525/2083)

DNA-printet rekonstruktion af radikal teolog og revolutionær Thomas Müntzer. Genstanden har efterfølgende antaget et eget liv og er således ikke længere en del af PFs samling. Ved hjælp af

AI-assisteret rekonstruktion af hukommelse og personlighed er der bred enighed om, at det er lykkedes at bringe Müntzer tilbage fra de døde. I forbindelse med udstillingen af Müntzer bidrog PF blandt andet med at formidle kontakt mellem den nye Müntzer og nutidige bondebevægelser som Via Campesina.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

ObjektId: 1525a

- *Genstandsnummer: 36579*
- *Samling: Genopstandne*
- *Materiale: Homo Sapiens/Social teori*
- *Dimensioner: 172 cm/80 kg*

SEALAND (2056)

Flydende by prækonstrueret i Østersøen ud for Møn. 3D-printede flydende arkitekturer støbt af microplast/alge/atmosfærisk carbon-materiale. Hver af PFs decentrale afdelinger verden over har konstrueret mellem 4 og 60 af disse beboelige bobler, der hver især afspejler lokal viden og traditioner, fx sivbaserede øer med futuristisk islæt fra Titicaca-afdelingen, mudder- og bundslamsbaserede domer fra Aleppo osv. Genstanden består ydermere af formidling af autonome livsformer, basisdemokratisk organisering og blå økologi.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

ObjektId: 2056hj

- *Genstandsnummer: 32601*
- *Samling: Usynlige Byer*
- *Materiale: Plast/Mudder/Alger/Glas/Siv/Plantefiber/Social organisering mm.*
- *Dimensioner: 11 km²*

JORDFORENINGER (2128)

Total planetarisk jordreform fra det 22. århundrede, der kommer til at ske i forlængelse af ophævelsen af de nationale grænsesystemer. Alle 148.847.000 kvadratkilometer planetiseres, undtages fra ejendomsretten og udnævnes til fællede, og alle jordboer vil indgå i organiserede bevidste relationer og udvekslinger med de fællede, de er afhængige af for livet. Helt nye økonomiske teorier og praksisser vil eksplodere i den kontinuerlige

opdagelse af økosystemers udvekslinger og leder til Permakultur-naturen. Tilbageføringen af Jordforeninger til midt 2020'erne fremtvinger kausaliteter, der for nuværende tyder på, at jordreformen vil ske allerede i 2050'erne; 80 år før dens konservative fremskrivning, hvilket er en hidtidig rekord for den nu veldokumenterede futuseiske tidsforkortelse.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2128bc
- Genstandsnummer: 13377
- Samling: Planetarisk
- Materiale: Jord/Biomasse
- Dimensioner: 148.847.000 km²

DEN RUSSISKE REVOLUTION (2024)

Telefonkæde aktiveret af russisktalende ukrainere til at omgå Putin-regimets kontrol med russiske medier. Starter i det små med spredte forsøg med såkaldt 'cold calling', men ender med at engagere mere end 20 millioner russere, som modtager og videregiver information til hinanden telefonisk, hvilket danner grundlag for det oprør, der i 2024 endelig vælter styret i Kreml og baner vejen for eksperimenter med decentralt demokrati mellem frie russiske byer og kommuner.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2024hq
- Genstandsnummer: 01546
- Samling: RetroTech/Revolution
- Materiale: Social organisering/
Kommunikationsteknologi/Kabler
- Dimensioner: 17.100.000 km²

MO-TOWN BIOTECHTURE (2058)

PFs Nevada-afdeling Mo-Town i Mojave-ørkenen er i sig selv et tilbagebragt udstillingsobjekt, en

15.000 m² stor selvopretholdende og samtidig komposterbar arkitektur. Et imponerende jordskib af printet mudder med vandcirkulation, solcellesystemer, haver og fiskedamme, rum til beboelse osv. Mo-Town rummer også en skole for økoterapi, der arbejder militant-videnskabeligt med reetablering af ødelagte økosystemer. Aktiveringen af denne praksis i nutiden forventes at sikre overlevelse for de, for området, så unikke arter; ørkenskilddpadde og småbladet palmelilje.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2058fj
- Genstandsnummer: 39287
- Samling: Biotekstur
- Materiale: Jord/Social
organisering
- Dimensioner: 317x490 m

UNILINGUA (2222)

Telepatisk oversættelsesteknologi, der gør det muligt at kommunikere på tværs af humano-kulturelle skel, men også imellem jordiske arter. Unilingua udstilles i første omgang i PFs Amazonas-afdeling, hvis fremtidsarkæologiske afdeling har forestået tilbageføringen af Unilingua fra 2222 til i dag. Teknologien forventes at spille en fremtrædende rolle i etableringen af Det Planetariske Parlament, ligesom PF Amazonas ventes at danne ramme om den første Interartslige Kongres for Jordiske Livsformer i 2029.

GENSTANDSOPLYSNINGER

- ObjektId: 2222xl
- Genstandsnummer: 95609
- Samling: Teletech
- Materiale: Kode
- Dimensioner: Ca. 2 mio. linjer
Haskell-kode

MELLEM UDSTILLING & FORESTILLING

Samtale mellem Christian Lollike & Anders Thruø Djurslev

Frihed og tvang

» Når jeg går i teatret og skal fastholde min opmærksomhed på scenen, bliver jeg ofte grebet af rastløshed. Jeg savner frihed til at kunne gå på opdagelse, danne mine egne indtryk – og måske også at blive udfordret med nogle mere komplekse problemstillinger end dem, et veldrejet plot kan behandle. Når jeg besøger en kunstudstilling, savner jeg omvendt at blive holdt fast, at blive instrueret. Her savner jeg engang imellem at blive ført. Jeg fornemmer som regel, at der er meget at komme efter – nogle kloge tekster på væggene og nogle tykke kataloger, som i deres blotte eksistens lover svar – men det er ofte for let at underlægge sig sin tålmodigheds begrænsninger og sin akavede selvbevidsthed og bare gå videre til det næste. Tit føles det mere oplagt at betragte de andre besøgende og deres adfærd i de her sære rum, vi udstiller kunst i. Det var min indgang til arbejdet, da vi inviterede samtidskunsten ind på Sort/Hvid i samarbejde med Kunsthall Aarhus: at gribe nogle af de fantasifulde, vidtgående og besværlige indsigter og udtryk fra kunsten, men så placere dem i en teatral, iscenesat form, som

er direkte i sit mellemværende med publikum. Derfor bad vi kunstnerne bidrage med rumlige installationer, som vi kunne dramatisere, iscenesætte, komponere og udvide til en fortælling med publikum som aktører. Det har været meget svært, men også lærerigt. For det er to vidt forskellige positioner, som henholdsvis forestilling og udstilling placerer publikum i. Det er dem, vi prøver at tørne sammen i projektet, som projektets centrale eksperiment.

Der er også to forskellige værkopfattelser på spil i de to kunstformater. Dramatisering gør meget hurtigt kunstværker til scenografi for en fortælling eller en handling, der pludselig bliver mere central end selve kunstobjektet. Omvendt forbliver kunstværker, selvom de ofte er meget abstrakt udtænkt og formgivet, på en eller anden måde fastholdt som meget virkelige objekter med en virkelig afsender bag sig, det vil sige kunstneren. I *Museum for fremtiden* forsøger vi at veksle mellem disse værkopfattelser og publikumspositioner; at overskride dem som et spørgsmål om enten-eller og gøre det til både-og. Både forestilling og udstilling, både virkelighed og iscenesættelse.

Vi besluttede ganske hurtigt lyd som det bærende fortællerredskab i *Museum for fremtiden*.

Lyddesigner Asger Kudahl og jeg havde lige lavet *En fortælling om blindhed* med Aarhus Teater, hvor publikum lå blændet med hovedtelefoner igennem forestillingen. Jeg oplevede, at lyd kan skabe stor indlevelse i en fortælling og give publikum en følelse af at være delagtiggjort i en handling. Det er et redskab til at instruere publikum som aktør og som sådan temmelig manipulerende. Samtidig er det et format, vi kender fra museumsoplevelsen, hvor lyd ofte bruges som formidlingsværktøj. De to poler leger vi med, når vi introducerer en fortæller, der ikke er autoritativ, sådan som vi måske forventer det fra et historisk museum, men som har et mellemværende med publikum; en rolle, hun gerne vil tildele dem i sin fantasi.

Titlens forbandelse

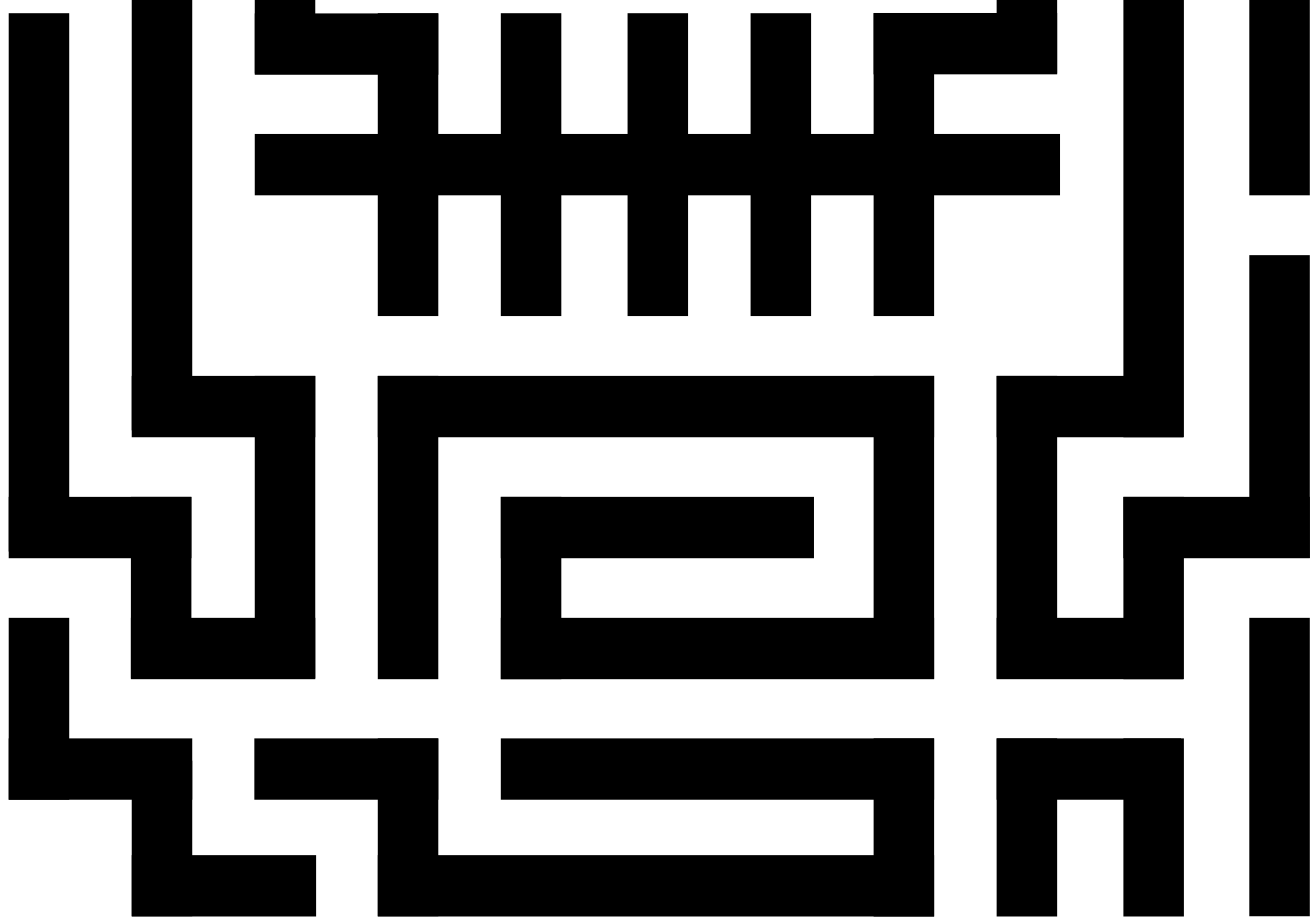
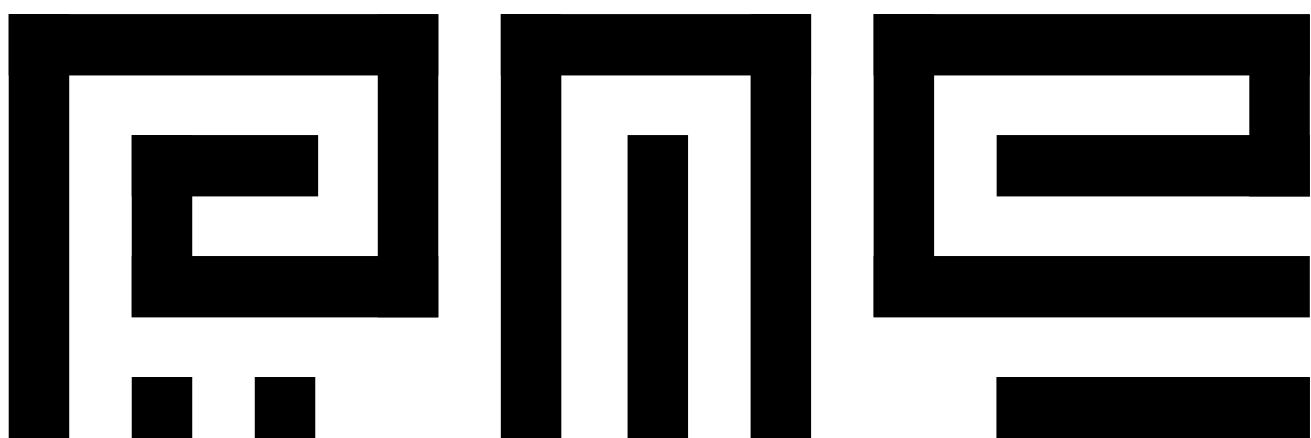
» Som titel er *Museum for fremtiden* en forbandelse. Den bærer et løfte om noget stort, som de færreste værker kan holde. Den lover på én gang videnskabelig autoritet og profetisk science-fiction. Teater og kunst er måske ikke de bedste redskaber til at spå om fremtiden. De er i mine øjne bedre til at fortælle noget om, hvordan vores fremtidsudsigter- og forestillinger betinger vores nutid. Plejer man ikke også at sige, at al sci-fi siger mere om den tid, den er undfanget i, end den fremtid, den forsøger at fremmane? Det føltes derfor som en nøgle, da vi i dramatiseringen af kunstnernes idéer opfandt en fortæller, der i stedet var alt det modsatte: tvivlende, diskuterende, prøvende, flerstemmig, skizofren. I stedet for at optegne fremtidsvisioner, er fortælleren blevet en slags beholder for den længsel, vi forsøger at genantænde i os selv og publikum med projektet. Det er en længsel efter *noget andet* end en den samtid, vi er henvist til, som alt for længe har været præget af en depressiv stagnation i politisk fantasi og forestillingsevne, forårsaget af en accelererende overvågnings- og opmærksomhedskapitalisme på den ene side og på den anden en tiltagende global borgerkrig, som nærmest synes at være gået i loop i dag. Tidens

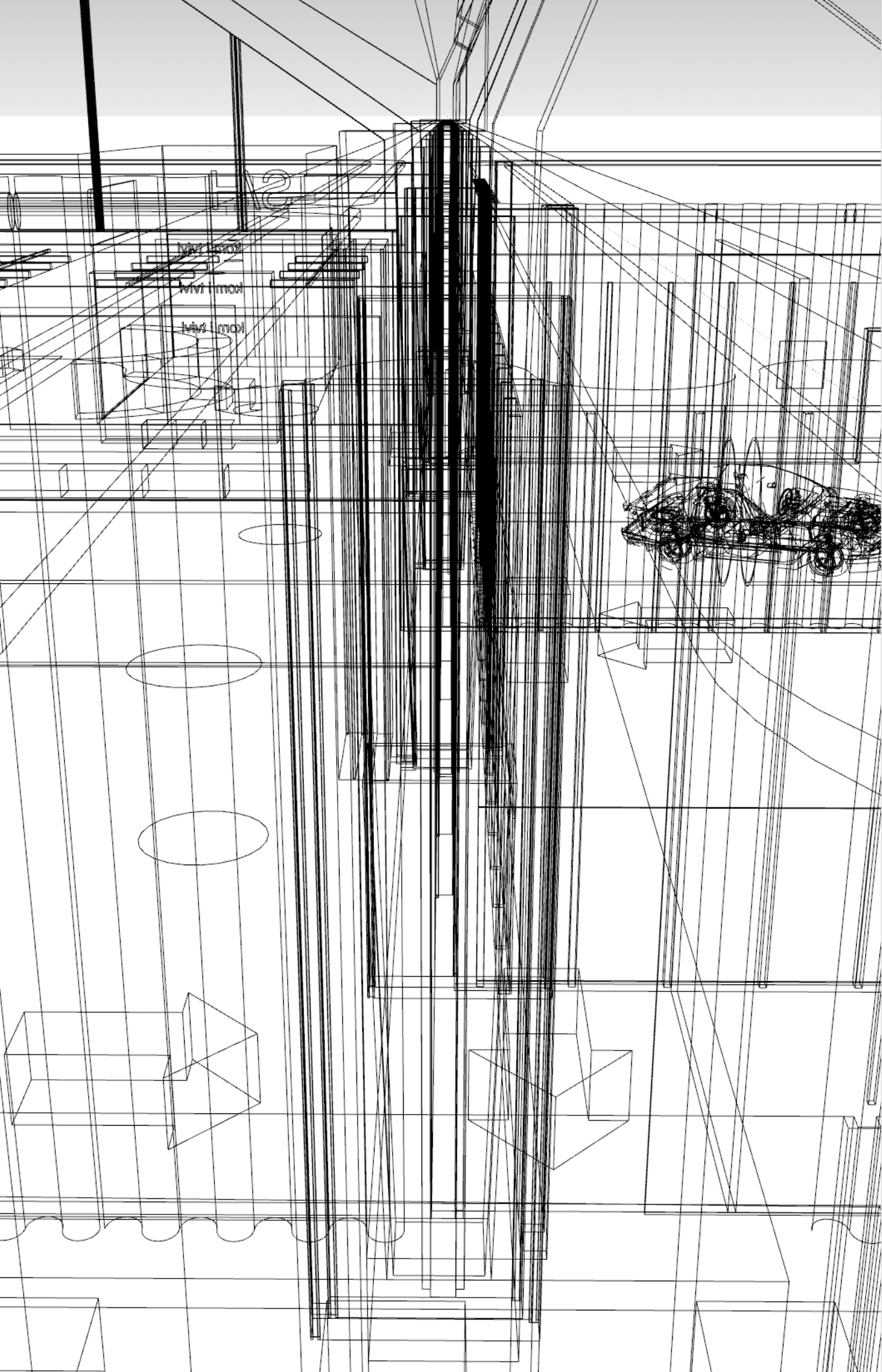
totale atomisering er naturligvis forbundet med den altoverskyggende klimakrise, som må udgøre horisonten for enhver forestilling om fremtiden. Det føles overvældende i sådan en fragmenteret tid at stille sig uden for den og give en nogenlunde sammenhængende samtidsdiagnose. Det er ikke desto mindre det, jeg synes, Sort/Hvid som teater er i stand til at give projektet: en kritisk udstilling af vores samtids vilkår, som så udfordres eller udvides af kunstnernes forskellige alternative, filosofiske tidsopfattelser. Vi forsøger på den måde at skabe en forbindelse mellem samtidskritik og fremtidslængsel.

Det siges, at man kan kende et samfund på dets psykopatologier, og *Museum for fremtiden* er også blevet en jagt på at skabe et sindsbillede på vores egen tid. Her er der opstået en dramaturgisk udvikling fra en depressiv samtidsdiagnose – depression er som bekendt kendetegnet ved en manglende evne til at forestille sig fremtiden – til et mere skizofrent, flerstemmigt og rumliggjort sind, der forsøger at udrede sig selv og sin tid så at sige.

Siden min ungdom har de kloge sagt, at historien er forbi, at de store fortællinger er døde, at virkeligheden er en sproglig konstruktion, at alt er medieret, og at der tilbage kun er at lege med civilisationens vraggods. Det meste af det jeg laver, er forsøg på at genantænde følelsen af en påtrængende politisk nødvendighed. Her tror jeg på, at vi bliver nødt til at optegne samtidens afgrund for nogensinde at blive i stand til at forestille os andre politiske virkeligheder. I lyset af den samtidskunst, som forsøger at være affirmativ i sin tilgang til samtiden, holder jeg nok fast i kritikkens nødvendighed. Uden en udstilling af samtidens desperation, et blik ned i den afgrund, så tror jeg, det er umuligt at forestille sig noget andet. Længslen må komme fra en modstand mod status quo. Derfor har jeg altid tænkt Sort/Hvid som et samtidsteater, fordi vi er mere optaget af at udstille samtidens kriser og politiske horisonter end af de store, evigtgyldige spørgsmål. *Museum for fremtiden* er måske et forsøg på at koble denne kritik til en mere grundlæggende længsel.

Christian Lollike (f. 1977) er dramatiker, instruktør og kunstnerisk leder af det københavnske teater Sort/Hvid siden 2011. Med forestillinger som *Revolution* (2018), *Living Dead* (2016), *I føling – en krigsballet* (2014), *Manifest 2083* (2012), *Kosmisk frygt* (2009) og *Underværket – The Re-Muhammedy TV-Show* (2007) har Lollike behandlet politiske strømninger og historiske begivenheder i sin samtid. Med sine værker afsøger Lollike grænserne for samtidens politiske forestillingsevne gennem en grundlæggende tvivl på etablerede sandheder.





MUSEUM FOR FREMTIDEN

Manuskript af Christian Lollike og Anders Thruw Djurslev

Manuskriptet udgives med forbehold for ændringer ved opsætningerne på Sort/Hvid og i Kunsthall Aarhus i 2022.

Der optræder citater og variationer over citater fra Lone Aburas' digtsamling *Den sorte bog (B-sider)* (Gyldendal, 2019), Theis Ørntoft & Ferdinand Ahm Krag's tekst "Fremtiden Direkte: Omstilling" (Information, 2015) og fra Center for Militant Futurologis virke.

Tak til forskernetværket War & Aesthetics samt kunstnerne Ferdinand Ahm Krag, Helene Nymann og Studio ThinkingHand for samarbejdet om manuskriptets udvikling.

Tak til Solveig Gade, Tine Voss Illum og Lotta Grohmann for læsninger og kommentarer.

1. SPEJL.

Publikum ankommer i grupper i et spejlkabinet. En stemme begynder at tale i deres hovedtelefoner.

A

Velkommen til *Museum for fremtiden*.

Dengang jeg var lille, hadede jeg, når min klasselærer slæbte os med på museum. Det her døde sted med døde ting fra fortiden, som stod der og spøjte med sine stenøkser og sine statuer af døde mænd.

Åh, ja. *Sådan gjorde* det europæiske menneske. *Sådan gik* det klædt, *sådan malede* det. *Sådan opbyggede* det sit selvbillede. *Sådan huskede* det fortiden. *Sådan bemægtigede* det sig fremtiden.

Hvilken fremtid skal vi "bemægtige" os?

Jeg har lyst til at lave et andet slags museum. Et museum, hvor vi i stedet for at udstille fortiden forestiller os fremtiden. Vil I være med til det? I kan bare nikke.

Godt, så lad os starte med at teste jeres udstyr.

Nu taler jeg i jeres højre øre. Ræk venligst højre hånd op, hvis I kan høre min stemme i jeres højre øre. Tak.

Nu taler jeg i jeres venstre øre. (*Pling*). Ræk venligst venstre hånd op, hvis I kan høre min stemme i jeres venstre øre. Tak.

(*Pling*). Og nu tager du højre hånd frem, så tager du højre hånd tilbage, så tager du højre hånd frem, og så ryster du den lidt. Ej, tak.

Jeg kommer til at give jer nogle instrukser undervejs gennem museet, som jeg vil bede jer om at følge. Jeg lover, det bliver ikke pinligt. Højst lidt akavet. Men altså, lad os aftale, at når I hører denne lyd – (*Pling*) – så giver jeg en instruks, som I så følger. Lad os prøve:

(Pling). Vink til de andre besøgende.

Prøv at gå rundt mellem hinanden og se ud som om I er på et rigtigt museum. Man har ofte sådan en lidt speciel gang, når man sådan går og betragter alt det gamle ...

Stå stille, og find jer selv i spejlene.

Hvor i historien er vi nu?

Man siger jorden snart går under.

Vores system – det kapitalistiske demokratiske liberalistiske blablabla – er i krise, den globale konkurrence intensiveres, tempoet ryger i vejret, uligheden eskaleres, krig bryder ud overalt, isen smelter, atmosfæren brænder, temperaturen stiger, hvert sekund uddør en ny dyreart, flygter et nyt menneske.

Hvad hvis jeg er bange? Er du bange?

(Pling). Prøv nu at lave den der *Skriget*-emoji, som er blå i hovedet og gyser.

Tak.

Min mor siger, at jeg ikke skal lytte til de der undergangsprædikanter.

At jeg må se mig selv i spejlet og sige til mig selv, at i morgen er en ny dag.

Luk øjnene.

Men jeg har det, som om det allerede er for sent. Som om jeg ikke hører til her, som om jeg ikke kan genkende andre mennesker som en del af mig, som om de lever deres liv langt, langt væk fra min forståelse af, hvordan verden kunne være, hvordan vi kunne være med hinanden, hvordan vi kunne behandle vores omgivelser. Som om der er en viden eller en visdom, som vi har glemt, og som jeg nu føler, vi burde kæmpe for at vinde tilbage, men verden insisterer på at bevæge sig fremad,

og væk, og de små oaser af en anden slags forståelse, der eksisterer, bliver mindre og mindre. Jeg føler, at de tørrer ud som vandhuller, og at menneskene, som jeg plejede at drikke vand ved siden af, de er væk, eller de har forandret sig, de er blevet blege genfærd, som fastholder, at de stadig kan huske, hvad de troede på, den verden, de håbede på, men jeg kan se i deres handlinger, i alt, hvad de gør, at de har glemt *det*, jeg hver dag er bange for at glemme.

Åbn øjnene.

Jeg har prøvet at protestere. Men hvem kan længere holde ud at stå i demonstrationer, hvor vi på "fredelige" måder giver vores forudsigelige holdning til kende? Hvem kan længere leve med løftet om "grøn omstilling?"

Jeg har det som om selv min modstand er tænkt ind i systemet.

Er det depression, når jeg føler, at fremtiden er taget fra mig, mistet?

Nå, skal vi lige ryste os selv fri af den her stemning?

(*Pling*). Vi kunne jo ... hoppe.

Jeg tæller ned fra tre, og så hopper vi alle sammen, samtidig.

3 – 2 – 1 – Hop! 3 – 2 – 1 – Hop! 3 – 2 – 1 – Hop!

Hvem her har en fortælling, en historie, en verden, eller bare et *sted eller nogen*, jeg kan forbinde mig med? En ny verden, jeg kan slås for? En ny verden, der er værd at dø for ...?

Er det ikke det vi skal? Nu? (*Pling*). Du må gerne nikke.

(*Pling*). Nu skal vi videre ind i det næste rum. Se jer omkring, indtil jeg taler til jer igen.

2. KRIG.

Publikum ankommer til et mørkt rum med blødt underlag. Her står en udbrændt bil. Scenografi af Franciska Zahle og Helle Damgård.

A

Sæt jer, hvor I har lyst, og luk øjnene.

I perioder spiller jeg meget computer.

Imens jeg spiller, forestiller jeg mig, at jeg er med i en modstandskamp.

At jeg bliver kontaktet af en hemmelig organisation.

B

Følg med os!

C

Er vi ikke dem, der er nødt til at kæmpe for en anden verden?

D

Er vi ikke nødt til at handle i stedet for bare at klage?

A

Måske siger de det ikke lige på *den* måde, men i hvert fald: Jeg tager til et hemmeligt møde med en guerilla-hær. De vil se mig spille computer.

B

You are good.

C

Really good.

A

De vil bruge mig i en aktion.

D

Men du kan deltage fra din skærm, gennem kortet, der opdateres i realtid.

A

Jeg spørger, hvad de mener, men de vil vide, hvad de skal kalde mig.

B

Hvad kalder du dig?

A

De præsenterer sig:

C

Hellfire.

D

Harpy.

B

Reaper.

A

Ghost, svarer jeg.

De griner, og jeg griner. Vi kalder os klimaapokalypsens fire ryttere, og forestillingen om, at vi skal kæmpe imod tidens forstenede kynisme og finanskapitalismens rå udbytning tiltaler mig.

Det er mørkt. Harpy klipper et hul i hegnet ved den uendelige parkeringsplads ved fossilkapitalisternes hovedkvarter. Vi lister os frem mellem bilerne. Hellfire har hacket sig til adgangskoden. Reaper placerer bomberne, lydløst. Jeg holder vagt, bider negle. Spørger løbende Reaper efter status. Hun siger:

B

Two sec. Two sec. Two sec.

A

Jeg hæver stemmen, råber hendes navn, men så –

Noget hårdt rammer mig i nakken. De afbryder forbindelsen, slukker for skærmen. Jeg bliver bundet fast og får en pose hevet ned over hovedet. Vi kører i timevis, dagevis. Langt væk. Det er skiftevist kvælende varmt og isnende koldt. Pludselig stopper de. Uden varsel bliver min pose revet af, og et skarpt lys blænder mig. Jeg kan ikke se. De beordrer os op ad væggen.

B

Stil jer op ad væggen, for helvede. Kom så!

A

(*Pling*). Åbn øjnene, og rejs jer op.

Her står vi så, alle os, der har indset voldens nødvendighed. Alle os, der deler foragten for dem, der skjuler sig bag den private ejendomsret, mens de ødelægger den verden, de har opført deres ejendom på. Situationen er allerede voldelig, landskabet er allerede udpint, vores fremtid er allerede under angreb.

(*Pling*). Om lidt vil jeg gerne bede jer falde døde om, ligesom på en film. Er I klar?

Tak. Tak fordi I vil dø for sagen. Det her er mit museum, og her dør man.

Bliv venligst liggende, luk øjnene, og spil død.

Hvor går man hen, når krig er blevet til krisetid, er blevet til undtagelsestilstand, når fjender er blevet til illegale kombattanter, når tortur er blevet til *enhanced interrogation techniques* –

Når terror for længst er blevet et land, man kan gå i krig med.

Hvor går man hen i en permanent verdensomspændende borgerkrigstilstand med mærkelige navne og underlige regler? Med millioner af mennesker på flugt? Fra krige. Fra invasioner. Fra tørker. Fra oversvømmelser. Fra brande.

Når der opstår nye kategorier af os og dem. Horder af mennesker, kroppe

placerede i lejre uden for loven, uden for de rettigheder, vi engang kaldte universelle.

Når man kan identificere fjender med ansigtsgenkendelse, sandsynlighedsberegning, etnicitetsidentifikation.

Når slagmarken er udvidet til skærme, sociale medier.

Jeg ser på de flygtninge, der vandrer over skærmen og ind i min angst.

Jeg er bange.

Paranoia?

Mig, der en dag ikke kan finde min familie, fordi vejen er væk, sprængt itu, flået op.

Mig, der ser ind ad vinduet: En mand er ved at færdiggøre sin kaffe i det øjeblik, bomben falder. Hans højre arm flyver ud ad vinduet som en blind fugl.

Mig, der mærker døgnets rytme ændre sig.

Mig, der sidder længe oppe for at behandle de sårede.

Mig, der lærer børn at tegne i mørket under de konstante strømafbrydelser.

Mig, der sidder i lejren, peger på skærmen, en udbrændt bil, et billede af en pulveriseret gade:

“Der lå vores hus.”

Mig, der ser regnen blive noget andet. Ser den vaske blodet af vejene.

Mig, der syr ligklæder, anlægger grave og går til ensformige begravelser.

Mig, der ringer venner op for at fortælle, at der ikke er noget nyt, at vi stadig er i live.

Mig, der drømmer, at husene også kan flygte, bøgerne, murstenene og træerne. De skal ikke blive tilbage og være tavse vidner.

Hvor går jeg hen med mine mareridt om altings ødelæggelse?

Jeg ville ønske, jeg kunne sætte historien på pause. Bare et øjeblik.

(*Pling*). Rejs jer op. Vi skal videre til næste rum. Her kan I gå på opdagelse, indtil jeg vender tilbage.

3. ANSIGT.

Publikum træder ind i en hule af malerier og skitser af ansigter. En lyspære oplyser rummet fra midten. Under lyspæren står et duftur. (Ferdinand Ahm Krag: Hall of Psychopomps, 2022).

A

I oldtidens Kina, før udbredelsen af det mekaniske ur, lagde man om natten et spor ud af røgelse, formet i sindrige labyrinter, til at måle tidens gang. Røgelsessporet havde forskellige dufte, sådan at man måtte lugte sig frem til den tid på natten, man nu befandt i.

Hvilken tid befinder vi os i lige nu?

B

Er den kolde krig tilbage?

C

Det senkapitalistiske samfund?

D

En ny geologisk epoke:

B

Den antropocæne tidsalder.

C

Den *digitale* tidsalder ...

D

Overvågningskapitalismens århundrede.

B

Depressionens årtusinde ...

A, B, C & D

Vi står midt i apokalypsen.

A

Jeg aner det ikke. Tænder mit duftur og begynder at tegne.

Min psykolog siger, at min hjerne er på overarbejde. Den har travlt med at digte, hvem jeg er. Min identitet, min egen lille fortælling. At tegne får den til at slappe af. Tænke på noget andet end mig selv.

I vesten er forestillingen om vores identitet – fra Jesu fjæs og frem – knyttet til ansigtet.

Hvad fortæller *mit* fjæs?

Min venlige maske, der binder mig til en identitetskategori, en hudfarve, en klasse, et køn, en kulturel baggrund, en familie, en tid og et sted.

Mit smilende, imødekommende ansigt, der for tiden reduceres til biometrisk data, til udglattende ansigtsfiltre i et forudsigeligt kontrafej.

Mit fjæs, der hele tiden genkendes og udlægges og moduleres og spejles af kameraer og spredes i tilfældige netværk.

Jeg er træt af mit fjæs.

(*Pling*). Nu vil jeg gerne have, at I stiller jer i en rundkreds. Sådan. Tag en maske på.

På mit museum må vi udvide os. Træde ud af tiden og blive nogen andre.

Kan vi bare et øjeblik ophøre med at være enkeltstående væsner?

Kan vi forlade vores evindelige artsnarcissisme?

Kan vi bare et øjeblik være en tilstand?

Uden at være bange?

Eller bare være bange på en måde, der ikke er så lammende?

Ja, tag hinanden i hænderne, og træd et skridt frem.

Lad os være et øje, der ikke ser den almindelige, profane, hverdagslige normalitet.

Et øje som kan se hinsides den her paralyserende tid.

Du er det nye menneske, der står ved tidens begyndelse ...

Du er overgangen mellem mand og kvinde ...

Du er et fossil hentet dybt i imaginære universer ...

Slip hinandens hænder, og vend jer om.

En gang imellem mærker jeg det. Noget andet. Så opstår der sprækker, hvorigennem jeg kan se ind i en anden verden. Når jeg ligger vågen og ser op i loftet og ser sprækkerne åbne sig, og jeg forstår, at jeg i et øjeblik kan træde ud af historien.

B

At universet er uendeligt.

C

At jeg har tusinde ansigter.

D

At vi i syn kan tilgå anelsesoplevelser fra tidligere evolutionære stadier, andre arters præhistoriske bevidstheder ...

A

De urgamle atomer, der udgør et ansigt, brint og helium, senere indgået i mere komplekse kulstofforbindelser, dannet i supernovaeksplosioner for milliarder af år siden. Disse atomer må senere hen have passeret igennem tidlige galakser og fjerne stjernehøje, før de ankom her, til et solsystem i udkanten af Mælkevejen. Herfra videre ind gennem urskove og bregner, kultiden for 350 millioner år siden, livet var kravlet op på land; atomerne i hjernen ankommet til nutiden via floder af lava, nu

fanget og låst fast i dette kortvarige glimt af menneske, denne på én gang nådesløse og forvirrede organisme, fortabt og fjern i blikket –

(*Pling*). Nå, tag masken af, og lad os gå videre. I næste rum er I velkomne til at sætte jer ned.

4. HUKOMMELSE.

Publikum ankommer i et mørkt rum med to store skulpturer med sand og marmorkugler under sig (Helene Nymann: Ode to Creode X + Ode to Creode Y). På en skærm afspilles en video (Helene Nymann: Ode to Creode, 2022).

A

Min mormor kan ikke længere huske. Hun siger, at hun ikke kan genkende mig. De siger, at det er fordi, hun er blevet så gammel. Jeg kalder, "Mormor?" men hun svarer som regel ikke. Hun stirrer bare ind i fjernsynsskærmen ...

Sidst jeg besøgte min mormor, vågner hun pludselig, da hun hører en gammel sang på tv. Det er en eller anden vise, eller en salme måske. Pludselig begynder hun at tale. Hun taler dog ikke til mig, men med en, der tilsyneladende ikke er i rummet. Et spøgelse måske. Eller: Det er som om, at hun er med i et teaterstykke og siger sine replikker – men der er ikke nogen medspillere til at svare på dem. Jeg er ret sikker på, at hun genopfører en scene fra en tid i hendes ungdom, hvor hun hørte den her sang; dengang hendes sanser var skarpe og hendes væsen modtageligt. Dengang indtrykkene sad fast.

Min mormor gør mig bange for at glemme.

Før jeg blev født, eksisterede jeg delvist som et æg i min mormors æggestok. Alle de æg, en kvinde nogensinde vil bære, dannes i hendes æggestokke, mens hun er et foster i *sin* mors livmoder. Hver af os har tilbragte fem måneder i vores bedstemødres maver. Er der en puls, der løber hele vejen tilbage gennem vores bedstemødre til den første mor?

Tror du følelser kan arves gennem generationerne? At genetisk overleverede historier og erindringer installerer følelser i os? Det vil sige drifter fra forfædre, vi aldrig har kendt?

Får flygtninges børn, der aldrig har set krig, sine forældres landflygtighed aftegnet i sit genetiske arvemateriale?

Har jeg arvet den europæiske tørst efter imperier? Efter kolonisering og

udbytning af andre mennesker? Er de indskrevet i min genetik? I min skæbne?
Må vi ændre fortiden for at ændre fremtiden?

Kan man overhovedet det?

Kan man fjerne vores længsel efter at kolonisere naturen og hinanden
i et laboratorium?

Kan jeg fjerne min afhængighed af vækst, af luksus, af ejendom?

Kan vi slukke vores følelser?

Kan vi tænde for vores ansvar?

Kan vi ændre vores skæbne?

Kan vi undgå katastrofen?

I skolen lærte jeg om aboriginerne i Australien. De er ikke optagede af at
kortlægge verden for at udbytte og plyndre den. I stedet for at kortlægge
deres omgivelser, synger de landskabet frem. De overleverer deres minder
gennem sange. Aboriginerne taler ikke om fortiden og fremtiden som
modsatte retninger, men som én fælles drømmetid.

Kan vi synge på mit museum? Hvordan ville vores sang lyde? Altså os, her?

(*Pling*). Rejs jer op. Syng den tone, jeg synger. Det behøver ikke lyde
godt, bare prøv.

Slut jeres stemme til min. I må gerne bevæge jer rundt.

Syng højere. Bliv ved.

Endnu højere. Kom så, højere endnu, bare giv slip.

Tak.

Nu skal vi videre til næste rum. Der kan I gå på opdagelse blandt karrene.

5. NATUR.

Publikum ankommer i et rum, som oplyses af cirkulære kar i akryl. I og over karrene hænger cirkulære lærreder af eddikemor (fermenteret te og sukker), som hejses op af et motortræk. (Studio ThinkingHand: Vita. Necro. Vita, 2022).

A

Vi er vokset op i en verden af skrald. Er vi ikke? Uendelige lossepladser. Pensionerede vindmøller nedgravet i ørkenen. Mikroplast i verdenshavene. Af og til kan jeg ikke trække vejret, når jeg tænker på, at der findes mikroplast i mine blodårer lige nu.

I skolen lærer vi at se naturen som noget uberørt, oprindeligt og smukt. Et sted, vi kan tage på ferie. Men sådan er min verden ikke. Sådan har den aldrig været. Sådan vil den aldrig blive.

Hvad hvis jeg ikke længere gider at bilde mig naturens renhed ind? Hvad hvis jeg længes efter en ny form for omsorg?

En omsorg ikke kun for menneskene og deres børn, men også for dyrene og deres afkom. En omsorg ikke kun for menneskene og deres børn og dyrene og deres afkom, men også for træerne og planterne. En omsorg ikke kun for menneskene og deres børn, ikke kun for dyrene og deres afkom, ikke kun for træerne og planterne, men også en omsorg for mikroberne, bakterierne, de bittesmå vira, de rester og det skrald, der er en del af os.

Hvad ville der ske, hvis vi betragtede alt som levende?

Hvad er planternes rettigheder? Hvorfor har dyr og planter ikke stemmeret? Hvorfor har de ikke repræsentanter i parlamenterne?

Kan vi skabe en ny slags nation for alle livsformer?

Skal vi overhovedet have nationer?

Hvorfor ikke hejse flag for en anden verden i stedet?

Kan træerne, myrerne, goplerne, svampene blive fremtidens læremestre?

Internettet har lært mig om svampe. At vide, at de forbinder den ødelagte, asfalterede jord under mine fødder med et uendeligt rodnet af levende vildveje dulmer min angst. Jeg følger deres sporer på skærmen som en labyrint, men de har intet udspring, intet endemål.

Svampe er alsidige organismer. De heler og forbinder og udvider klodens liv. Nogle svampe bliver brugt som medicin. Andre kan tage livet af os.

(*Pling*). Stil jer på en række – og indtag denne svamp.

Lad dens sporer bore sig ind i din hjernes kamre og grave nye gange i din bevidsthed. De vil hele dine traumer, modvirke din grådighed og dit magtbegær og langsomt øge din forbindelse til verden.

Drik bare, og lad svampen gøre sit arbejde:

Lad den trænge ind i dit indre landskab og der opløse dit psykologiske sprog, din faderbinding, dit moderkompleks, din penisundelse.

Lad os springe ud af de sammenvævede krisers forvirrede tid, eksplodere vores bevidstheder og blive mere-end-mennesker.

Du mærker det måske ikke helt endnu, men om nogle timer eller måske nogle dage vil du stå i dit køkken, foran vasken, og pludselig vil du føle en umærkelig forandring brede sig, du mærker svampesporerne tage over, din krop bliver vært for noget større og mere forbundet.

I må gerne gå frem til karrene og røre, forsigtigt.

Vi vil forbinde os med andre materialer, generere nye erfaringer, nye bevidstheder, vi vil udruge nye organer, nye legemsdele.

Svampenettets telepati vil føre til radikale opgør med vores kommunikationsformer.

Omfattende svampegartneri i almene boligblokke vil danne tværartslige beboelseskoner.

Vores byer bliver ruiner, vi og andre arter kan bebo på ny.

Myrernes samfund, klovnefiskens kønsliv, økosystemernes strukturer vil transformere vores opfattelse af selve det menneskelige.

Og vores stemmer, alt for menneskelige stemmer vil forstumme.

(Pling). Lad os fortsætte. Gå ind i næste rum, og find jeres sko.

6. MUSEUM.

Publikum ankommer til et rum med tomme, oplyste pedestaler. Publikums sko er placeret på pedestalerne. Scenografi af Franciska Zahle og Helle Damgård.

Dengang jeg var lille, hadede jeg, når min klasselærer slæbte os med på museum. Det her døde sted med døde ting fra fortiden, som stod der og spøjte med sine stenøkser og sine statuer af døde mænd.

Åh, ja. *Sådan gjorde* det europæiske menneske. Sådan gik det klædt, sådan malede det. Sådan opbyggede det sit selvbillede. Sådan huskede det fortiden. Sådan bemægtigede det sig fremtiden.

(*Pling*). Sæt dig på pedestalen, og tag dine sko på.

De gamle grækere skabte statuer for at give form til den ideelle krop. Et perfekt ydre reflekterede et perfekt indre.

Stil dig nu, som var du en helt fra vores tid.

Fra 1870'erne til 1910'erne var der i Danmark mindst 50 folkeudstillinger, hvor såkaldt "eksotiske mennesker," som blev betragtet som vilde, uciviliserede og tilbagestående, blev udstillet for det danske publikum i bl.a. Tivoli og Zoologisk Have.

De repræsenterede en primitiv fortid holdt kunstigt i live midt i den moderne storby.

"Hottentotter," kaldte man dem. Og på den måde opfandt man adskillelsen mellem primitivitet og civilisation, fortid og fremtid.

I dag udstiller man statuer på museer for at lære os om, hvordan fortidige kulturer levede og forestillede sig verden.

Mit museum er dit mausoleum.

Stil dig nu, som du gerne vil huskes. Og lad os se tilbage på dengang.

Dengang man tog på sommerferie og spiste sommersalat. Drak fredagsøl og talte om dengang, man kunne rejse frit og tage hvor som helst hen og gøre hvad som helst til sit eget.

Man sagde, at hele verden foregik i ens eget land, i ens egen by, i ens egen bevidsthed.

Dengang vi talte om, at alt gik for stærkt.

Imens brugte vi tiden på at tjene penge og pleje karrierer. Selv fritiden var dengang mest en form for jobforberedelse.

Og når vi sad trætte lørdag aften og skulle se film, føltes det ofte som om det var den samme. Den om katastrofen, den om oversvømmelsen, om jordskælv, krigen eller virussen.

Nogen talte stadig om frihed. Det var den vestlige civilisations adelsmærke, hævdede de.

Andre sagde, at friheden var en illusion. At befolkningen blev overvåget, gennemlyst og analyseret. At man levede i en gennemdesignet virkelighed, hvor fremtiden var forudsagt af algoritmiske beregningsmodeller.

Det var dengang isen smeltede, atmosfæren brændte, temperaturen steg. Dengang dyrearter uddøde, dengang mennesker var på flugt.

Alligevel trampede vi afsted på fitnesscentrets trædemøller, løb utrætteligt rundt i ellipser og talte om at udsætte klimaapokalypsen ved at spise anderledes, bruge genbrugsnet, sortere affald.

Vi talte om vindmøller, elbiler, solpaneler.

Vi talte manisk om ny kost, om at spise plantebaseret, om at spise orme og insekter, om at genopdage oprindelige folkeslags diæter og levemåder i pagt med naturen.

Dengang havde man følelsen af at deltage i et skuespil, hvor rollerne var fordelt, og udslaget allerede givet.

Man sagde mekanisk og i kor:

“Demokrati er ikke den bedste styreform, men det er den mindst ringe.”

“Frihed er den vestlige verdens kerneværdi.”

“Det er lettere at forestille sig verdens undergang end kapitalismens endeligt.”

Man frygtede dengang, at det var for sent.

At katastrofen allerede var sket.

At fremtiden var forbi.

(*Pling*). Når lyset over din piedestal tænder, må du gå ud gå gennem den sorte dør.

SLUT

Museum for fremtiden

Anders Thruø Djurslev og Mathias Kokholm (red.)

Antipyrine, 2022

Bidragssydere

Boris Groys, Madame Nielsen, Ida Marie Hede,
Center for Militant Futurologi, Françoise Vergès, Mela
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S/H

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Medvirkende

Sicilia Gadborg Høegh, Amanda Friis Jørgensen, Carla Eleonora Feigenberg & Emil Busk Jensen

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Sort/Hvid

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