

Moment no. 3: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld



Still from GAME SHOW: *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Plaster Cast Copy Bust of Frederik V*; "But We're Afraid to Ask" by Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld as part of "TED-Talk on ACID" by New Red Order, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, 2022.
Photo Credit: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld.

As part of the exhibition 27DAGE (27DAYS), f.eks. organizer Scott William Raby initiated a conversation with artist and researcher Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld (PhD) about her practice and recent projects, especially in the wake of the now famous artistic happening that took place at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2020. This dialogue serves as a point of departure to explore her artistic work and collaborative processes further in projects such as *Archives that Matter*, *Voices in the Shadows of Monuments*, *Rematerializations*, and her upcoming project with f.eks. in 2022.

The final of three “publishing moments” activating f.eks.’s past, present, and upcoming public projects, this text concludes f.eks.’s “satellite office” at Art Hub Copenhagen, initially launched in February 2022.

Scott William Raby: There’s been so much press coverage, but also many misconceptions and misinterpretations of the art happening that occurred at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and at Copenhagen harbor in 2020. Could you describe it, and then discuss what has come about afterward?

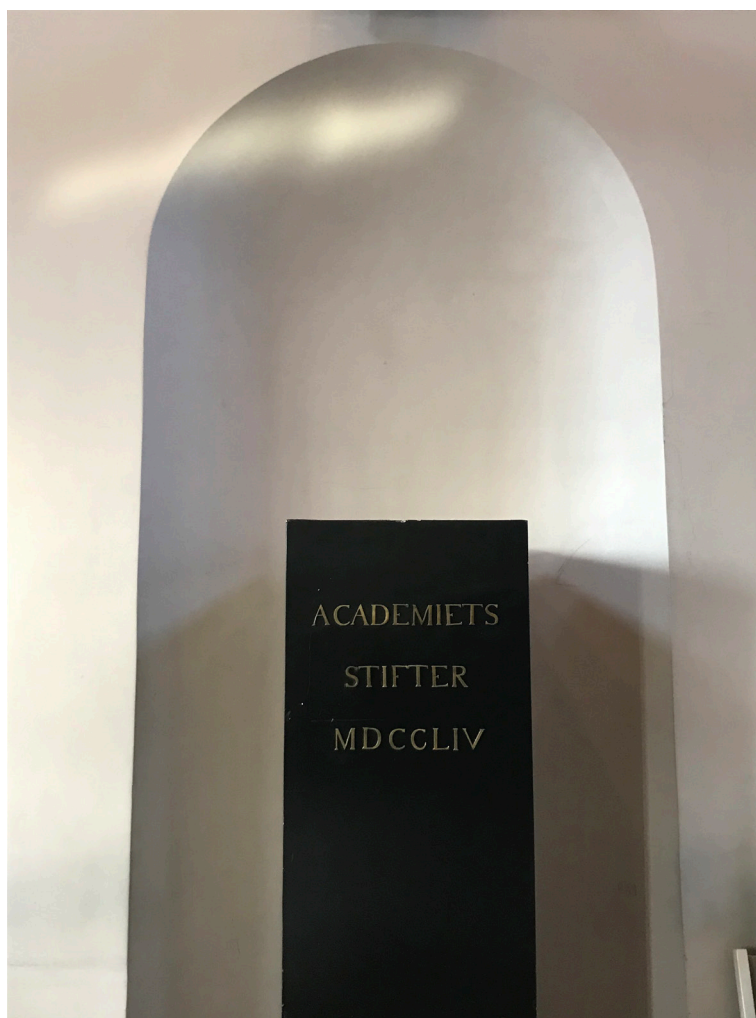
Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld: In the fall of 2020, following a summer where the global Black Lives Matter protests in which statues that were commemorating colonial figures were being defaced, a small art happening took place at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. A plaster cast copy bust of Frederik V - who founded the art academy the same year that he incorporated the Danish West India–Guinea Company and the Danish Asiatic Company¹ under his absolute power - was removed from its pedestal in the assembly hall of the art academy and submerged in Copenhagen harbor. The art academy was founded during the period when the Danish colonial project was at its peak, and its assembly hall is the center of the art academy's activities and the main lecture hall. The plaster cast copy bust was submerged in Copenhagen harbor, which was the center of the colonial trade. The artistic happening was carried out by the artists' collective "Anonymous Artists", who published the video documentation of the happening and a statement, expressing: "We want an art world that relates to and takes responsibility — not only for the actions of the past, but for the ways in which colonialism is still active today"² and that the artistic happening was carried out in solidarity with people in Ghana, Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Virgin Islands, India and elsewhere, who still live in the aftermath of Danish colonialism.



Video still from Anonymous Artists's video, 2020. Photo Credit: Anonymous Artists.

Ironically, no one noticed that the bust was removed. It took 10 to 12 days before someone realized that it was not on its pedestal anymore. A few days later, Anonymous Artists published the video documentation of the happening on IdoArt.dk,³ along with a statement accompanying the video. The moment the video was released it created a massive media backlash where a lot of politicians, journalists, media figures, artists, and art historians condemned the happening by comparing it with terrorism. Among others, what caused a lot of fuss, was a media post that was being published by all of the major newspapers in

Denmark, where a museum inspector claimed that the plaster cast copy bust was an invaluable, priceless piece of national heritage.⁴ He proclaimed that it was the original carried out by the French artist Jacques François Joseph Saly (1717-1776), as a study to his equestrian Statue of Frederik V, and Saly all of the sudden became a Danish national hero.



Empty Pedestal, 2021. Photo Credit: Angela Melitopoulos.

This was a massive misrepresentation, because obviously it was a plaster cast copy bust which exists in multiple copies. The academy council still has the bronze in its collection, and there are several other copy busts in the Art Library, SMK's collection, and other museum collections and institutions in Denmark.⁵ Also, the copy-bust was made sometime between the 1950's and the 1980's, so it was completely disproportionate to claim that this was "priceless national heritage". Anyway, it unleashed a massive amount of media hatred and then police and journalists went on campus and began interrogating staff and students. Also, there was a far-right artist that went into the academy, naked in the schoolyard and black-faced himself and shouted the N-word several times. I decided to take responsibility for the artistic happening, and was immediately expelled from my position as the head of the Department for Art, Writing, and Research and my research project on the colonial history of the art academy "Entangled Archives" was halted.

SWR: What I still find ultimately bizarre is it seems unclear that your critics even know the value of the plaster cast copy bust and who actually made it when they're making these claims that national heritage was damaged, they actually aren't using any verifiable evidence to back up their assertions, are they? They seem to be making these claims based on their own biased assumptions toward the perceived social value of this symbol of the Danish monarchy. How can so-called cultural value be "damaged" if its socio-economic value is not determined and while many other copies still exist?



Plaster cast copy bust of Frederik V on the harbor of Copenhagen, 2020. Photo Credit: Anonymous Artists.

KDH: The people who are claiming that this was priceless national heritage didn't know the value, but the art academy knew. The director of the art academy knew, and the Academy Council knew. They could have rectified all of the incorrect information, but they didn't. Instead the Art Academy Council proclaimed that it was "vandalism" and compared it to "theft from a museum",⁶ and the art academy expelled me. Another thing that has been misconstrued is that the Art Academy Council, who claim that they own the bust didn't report the happening to the police, even though in the beginning they claimed that they did.⁷ One of the people who reported the case to the police was Morten Messerschmidt...

SWR: He's the head of the Danish People's Party - what could be described as a rightwing, nationalist political party in Denmark,⁸ that often fosters discrimination, xenophobia, and a problematic white Danish ethnocentric worldview.⁹

KDH: Yes. The other person who reported it was Nikolaj Bøgh, a member of the Conservative party for Frederiksberg Municipality. Despite the demand to crack down on any form of dissent the art happening started a lot of important discussions: How to create a more just art education, art scene, and how to decolonize, or at least start discussing what type of cultural heritage our cultural institutions in Denmark are founded upon. This is something - that to my knowledge - has never been discussed among artists, teachers, or students within the art academies in Denmark, but also within art institutions – what are the colonial legacies of the construction of fine art in Denmark?



School of Re-membering, 2021. Student-led initiative producing souvenir plaster busts of the rematerialized plaster-cast copy bust after its transformation in the water. Photo Credit: David Stjernholm.

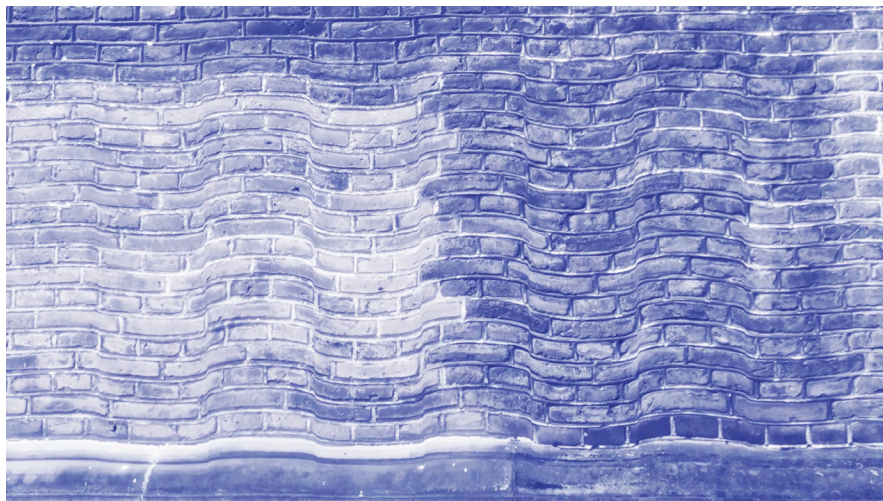
These are the crucial questions that were raised by the very spontaneous and peaceful art happening. I think it created so much fuss because it really struck a nerve in Danish self-understanding because it hit a weak spot that we have never been able to reflect upon. This weak spot is a paradox at the center of the Enlightenment period in Denmark, which was created around the time of Frederik V, at the same time when Denmark was enslaving people and extracting resources in the Danish West Indies, Ghana, India, and Kalaallit Nunaat.

SWR: There is a similar cultural historical denial by some in my home country as well. In the U.S., some “originalists” ardently defend the U.S. constitution – the foundation of American government written in 1787 - as the way in which the U.S. should be governed - often forgetting this document included legal slavery. If the idea of the genocide of the Native American population, the lack of rights for women, etc. are also added to this “originalist” philosophy, the idea of blind faith toward this governmental, but also cultural

intrepretation seems discriminatory, absurd, and creates a contradiction of American self-understanding.¹⁰ Similarly, in a Danish context, there seems to be a cultural identity that is challenged in relation to Danish national identity when the past is really, truly unfolded and the conditions are laid bare. Therefore, thinking about the bust-happening beyond art, and in relation to Danish cultural identity and nationalism seems crucial. From your perspective, how did the bust happening challenge how Danes think about themselves in relation to Danish history?

KDH: This became more clear in the summer of 2020 when we were witnessing the Black Lives Matter protests on a global scale. In Denmark, there is a denial that racism and the continuous effect of colonialism had anything to do with a Danish context. For instance, when monuments celebrating colonists were being toppled world wide, in the Danish media there was an idea that this was only pertaining to the British or American context – racism is “an American phenomenon” was a popular sentiment. Obviously, many could agree that the Belgian King Leopold or the British slave trader Edward Colston in Bristol were the worst of the worst. However, there is a self-understanding that the Danish colonial power was the “benevolent”¹¹ one – that we were not as bad as the others. It is as if it’s a competition to be the least bad colonizer, despite the fact that Denmark was among the 7th largest slave trading nations in the world, and even this is being debated among historians now - maybe Denmark’s share in the trade was actually much larger than what was previously assumed.¹²

This legacy has been very difficult to deal with in Denmark, because the Danish self-understanding is that we are a very small country.¹³ There is an idea of Denmark as a tiny, friendly, “hygge”¹⁴ nation, and as such, this draws a lot on “white innocence”.¹⁵ From my perspective as an artist, it’s important to look at how the art institution and the art academy as a place where we educate artists is tightly interwoven within the matrix of coloniality. Colonialism is also an aesthetic and cultural project that still carries legacies and remnants today. Therefore, I’m interested in exploring how these aspects are embedded within the material fabric or foundation of the institution.



Still from video installation *Rematerializations #4: (Notes for a video installation)* 10 min: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Barly Tshibanda, Amr Hatem & Maxime Abou Diab. Destiny's Oslo, 2022. Photo Credit: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld.

My postdoctoral research project was called *Entangled Archives*, and the aim of the project was to explore how the building Charlottenborg Castle (which houses the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts) can be seen as a “material witness”¹⁶ to colonial history. *Entangled Archives* was proposed as a prism to look at how the colonial archive is simultaneously an entanglement of overlapping histories, and an instrument that disentangled and disconnected communities affected by colonialism by producing a radical cut between the colonized communities and their creative expression. The birth of the Art Academy and the Enlightenment ideas of “free” and “fine” art in Denmark coincided with the colonial and imperial project’s extraction of people, goods, and natural resources from the colonies. The idea of the artist in that period transitioned from a craft-based person who was organized in guilds into the idea of the “fine artist” as a singular, liberal subject. This artistic transformation was partly created by the bourgeoisie that erupted during this period. The new elite gained their wealth from an entangled trade that included: slave trade with humans from Ghana to the West Indies, the sugar plantation complex, the commercial imperialism conducted across the Indian Ocean littoral, and the colonial and imperial projects in the North Atlantic including Sápmi, Kalaallit Nunaat, Iceland and the Faroese Islands. This trade was tightly knotted to the birth of liberal humanism, in which aesthetics played a crucial role in granting civility to the white bourgeois, European subject, while colonial subjects were turned into racialized labor. The wealth that came to Copenhagen in this period created a need for artists and architects to erect their new mansions in the inner city of Copenhagen called Frederiksstaden (named after Frederik V) – which is the inner city from Kongens Nytorv to the Palace Amalienborg.



Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld: Christmas Report & Other Fragments, video still, 2017. Textile samples ordered by the Danish Guinea Company on the Gold Coast (today Ghana). The order was sent to Copenhagen, whereafter it was sent to the Danish trading post in Tranquebar (today Tharangambadi), in India, where the textiles were produced, and returned to Ghana where they were traded for enslaved Africans, minerals, and other goods. Source: The Danish National Archives “Vestindisk-Guineisk Kompagni, Direktionen Breve og Dokumenter fra Guinea 1705-1722: 390/589”. Photo Credit: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld.

My research project was about looking at how these spaces and contexts were created while at the same time artists in the Virgin Islands, Ghana, and Kalaallit Nunaat were being cut off from their cultural expression through the removal of their heritage, but also by forbidding of the enslaved people and colonized subjects to use instruments, perform music, practice their spirituality, or create in other ways. While I'm not a historian or an art historian, I am interested in the way in which we as artists can create different networks, infrastructures, and conversation between artists that have been cut off from communicating together.

In 2018, as part of Uncertain Archives Research Collective, Daniela Agostinho, Nanna Thylstrup, and I initiated a project called *Archives That Matter* examining the digitization of the colonial archives in Denmark which were removed from the U.S. Virgin Islands two years after the Virgin Islands were sold to the U.S. by Denmark. Those documents have since been in The Danish National Archive. For the occasion of "Transfer Day" in 2017, marking Denmark's sale of The Danish West Indian Islands to the United States, there was a process of mass-digitization where 1.5 km of shelf material consisting of plantation logbooks, ship logs, etc. were shared online. I was closely examining this material, and we had the opportunity to invite artists from Ghana and Virgin Islands to visit Denmark and create new interventions within the archives, resulting in a conference, workshop, and publication.¹⁷ It was during this time period I realized how the art academy was tightly interwoven into this colonial history, which was something that to my knowledge, was never discussed. When I was a student at the academy, we discussed that women did not have equal access, but we did not discuss the fact that even the building, the name - everything - was related to the Danish colonial project.

SWR: If we think about the sign value of the monarch Frederik V within the plaster cast copy bust – for me it seems as if there is a disconnect between reality and the exaggerated punishments you face - the reaction seems obviously to protect national identity, monarchy, and denial of the Danish colonial past. These legal actions seem to be overreactions challenging the normative conceptions of Danish cultural identity and highlight the denial about properly dealing with the legacy of Denmark's slave trading history, which challenges and undermines self-understanding of Danish culture and history.

If we tie in your *Archives that Matter* project, what is quite fascinating is that it brings in new approaches - collective, collaborative, and cooperative perspectives on thinking about how the legacy of Danish colonial history is represented in public space and public discourse. How are these histories often misrepresented or represented problematically in the public sphere? How can they be better, more interesting, more just?

KDH: The problem is similar to how the whole debate was constructed after the artistic happening. There was this idea of "cancel culture" – or an "erasing of history" sentiment, but this is not a question of erasing history. On the contrary, Frederik V has never been more popular – I don't think there were a lot of people walking around speculating who

Frederik V was, what is a plaster cast copy bust doing in the art institution in Copenhagen, and who was Saly the French artist, who was brought to Denmark by monied interests from The Asiatic Company to create an equestrian statue of Frederik V – it's not about erasing history, it's about *actualizing* history, and understanding the impact and the continuities of that history on the present.

Now together with Barly Tshibanda and Nanna Hansen, I'm involved in a project called *Voices in the Shadows of Monuments*, which is an audio-visual walk taking place in Copenhagen looking at the material and monumental legacies of colonialism that are inscribed in the built environment in Copenhagen's city center. During the research process, somebody asked whether a particular monument was "good or bad". It's not a judgment of whether a monument is good or bad - the question is more about creating different relationships to these sites and their contested histories, not brushing over the pain and the discomfort that they evoke in the present, while acknowledging that they often have a completely different context than what is often perceived. Depending on who you are as a person walking by in the public space you might have a totally different reaction to a monument depending on where your position is in relation to the monument's history.

To some people this is not a history that can be placed in the past. It is something that is experienced in everyday life, and this is something that is easily forgotten, or missed by dominant groups in power that erect, maintain, and restore these monuments. As an example it was quite telling that a lot of people did not even notice the plaster cast copy bust in the assembly hall because the whole idea of whiteness is so institutionalized within the aesthetic tradition, and in our own cultural identity in Denmark. We're not being asked to negotiate what it means to have a white patriarchal figure overlooking the students in the assembly hall from the back of the space positioned like a colonial overseer. We are not asking what type of "visual complex" this instills in the mindsets of people - to draw upon Nicholas Mirzoeff's idea on the complexes of visibility where he coins the term "plantation complex".¹⁸

SWR: In *The Voices in the Shadow of Monuments* project where you are asking the public to not gloss over the pain - but rather see the detail in a public space and how that reflects an alternative history that might not be the hegemonic history - this reminds me in some respects to a public discussion f.eks. had recently with Jakob Jakobsen about his project we organized on the Danish island of Livø. This island's history is that of a 20th century hospital institution and prison that held young men against their will and subjugated them for their mental health, sexual orientation, substance abuse issues, etc. in which there was a strong cultural denial from many Danes of this very different atrocity as well.¹⁹

When speaking about these spaces, places, architecture, structures, or sculptures and the history they evoke, it can be easily misunderstood when we as artists reframe, rethink, or intervene within these sites through artistic practice – a lot of this misunderstanding at

least particularly around the artistic happening relates to the media landscape and their manufactured consent around public discourse.²⁰ Nada Prija said there “was a total lack of meaningful comments or insights from the public officials in relation to this”.²¹ Can you recognize this reaction in how the bust happening was portrayed publically and how public figures commented on it? What are your thoughts on how the happening was perceived and how it reflects upon the broader Danish media landscape?

KDH: It was a case-in-point lesson on the Norwegian concept of “herskerteknikker” (“domination techniques”). First of all, the focus was removed – instead of speaking about the colonial legacies in Denmark and racism and other forms of oppression within art institutions - the focus was shifted toward crime, punishment, and “vandalism”. This meant that everyone was afraid to speak up or to associate with it.

Before I decided to take the responsibility for the artistic happening, there was a direct targeting and racial profiling of BIPOC students and artists. Then, there was a public mockery of me. It just shifted the focus instead of using it as a wake-up call to address pressing matters: What are the consequences of colonialism within Danish society? What are the experiences of minoritized people within the art scene? What do we mean by equal access? What are the lack of institutional infrastructures, and facilities for people from various different walks of life: with disabilities, neurodiversity, gender diversity, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, class - let’s talk about these issues.



Still from video installation Rematerializations #4: (Notes for a video installation) 10 min: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Barly Tshibanda, Amr Hatem & Maxime Abou Diab. Destiny's Oslo, 2022. Photo Credit: Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld.

On top of that, I've been dealing with a lot of hate and threats on social media. There's a spiral where the machine feeds itself and the only thing it is feeding on is clickbait and hatred. These techniques were utilized after the art happening, which were very effective in silencing any form of debate. However, the minoritized groups and racialized people in Denmark who speak out are living with these threats on a daily basis. It is my sentiment that they had hoped that I would eventually disappear, which I could have done easily if I didn't have so many friends, family, students, colleagues and infrastructure around me, which have been a great support. This also shows that it is not everyone who has the privilege to speak up, which is another important aspect.

SWR: Indeed, there was some enthusiastic support for you from the art field in Denmark. It seems the grassroots, younger people, students, and different professional artists were supporting you. There was a petition published in solidarity with the art happening, with you, and Anonymous Artists that received over 1000 signatures²² – this seems significant for a small scene and a tiny country like Denmark that an engaged segment was behind you. It seems on a broader scale though, when the media completely skipped over discussing the content of the history of discrimination and Danish colonial history, this evoked a double standard, which I find to be a problematically conservative way of supporting free speech in Denmark. An exploration of the past against the problematic normalized colonial condition in a Danish context was extremely criticized. In relation to “free speech” it raises the question - who draws the boundaries and how are they set?

KDH: I'm grateful for all of the solidarity declarations that Anonymous Artists and I have received, but I would say that people in powerful positions within the Danish art scene, apart from a few, were distancing themselves and did not show support.

Concerning “freedom of speech”, Denmark and other Nordic countries often pride themselves on being protectors of freedom of speech and human rights, but I think it is interesting to explore how this is currently being applied in practice. If you are supporting the hegemony within a society, and stepping on minoritized people – those acts are often considered protected by the “freedom of speech”, or at least not criminalized. However, “freedom of speech” should also protect those who speak against the hegemonic power structures – and it is important to note that artistic freedom and freedom of speech also include artistic acts that cannot be reduced to “speech”. In addition, the Danish parliament in 2021 voted for a parliamentary motion calling on universities to avoid “excessive activism in certain research environments”.²³ The motion was voted for after a heavy media campaign targeting researchers within the fields of gender studies, migration studies, post-colonial studies, etc. by the same politicians and media-people who were also very active in criminalizing the artistic happening. Around the same time, the Minister of Culture Joy Mogensen published an op-ed against artistic research in favor of what she called a return to the “sublime” and “craft-based arts”.²⁴ So, there is a direct political desire to control critical thinking and practice within the fields of art, research, and education.

SWR: For art more broadly, this is also a really problematic misinterpretation of the frameworks of artistic moral rights and artist's intellectual property rights in Denmark. For example, if the art happening is so politicized by the press and this pressure influences its legal outcome, this could create a shift in what is legally artistically possible, particularly for projects and practices that are highly visible, carried out in public space, or contain "controversial" subject matter. Also, it seems as though false pretenses are being set for what constitutes artistic authorship and the protected rights for artistic practices, especially if they voice non-normative political beliefs. In a French civil legal system there is the concept "droit moral de l'artiste" principle - or artist's moral rights - which gives the artist specific rights in relation to their artistic practice and much leeway in protecting the artist's intentions and validation of their work.²⁵ Artists also have similar moral rights in Denmark as well, but it is almost as if there is a specific definition being placed on the artist's moral rights in the case of the bust happening that could be problematic for the wider art field.

KDH: I think it is fine that people didn't agree with the art happening, or disliked it as a work of art. I go to museums and see a lot of shows that I don't agree with and we can sit down and have a conversation about it. But then to criminalize the artistic act and expel me from the art academy is absurd. Society has spent so much money and energy on a plaster cast copy bust – which could have been solved in a simple conversation within the art academy. The reactions say something about what we can cast in a society. What forms do we want to preserve? What is being dredged up from the harbor to be restored, and who is left to drown at the bottom of the sea? These questions speak about who counts as a subject in society and who counts as an artist.

SWR: You had also mentioned some of the important work you're developing such as *Archives that Matter* and *Voices in the Shadow of Monuments*. I know for many years you've been developing a nuanced, in-depth, rigorous trajectory of projects in which you're unfolding conversations on cultural memory, colonialism, power, and history alongside different people, and places, and communities – I'm wondering if you could describe how this work is progressing?



Voices in the Shadows of Monuments, 2022. Barly Tshibanda, Nanna Katrine Hansen, Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld. Photo Credit: Barly Tshibanda.

KDH: Over the last few decades, my artistic work and research, has been focusing on developing what I call “reparative critical practices”, which is a term that I have been reworking from Eve Kofsky Sedgwick who was a queer-feminist, literary scholar and thinker.²⁶ She developed this concept of the “reparative reading” as a response to the AIDS crisis in the 1980’s and 1990’s and in her response to her own diagnosis with terminal breast cancer. Faced with these urgencies she asked, how can we create and invest our energies in “reparative” and affective readings while fashioning other forms of subjectivity?

My research project has been trying to rework the notion of the reparative in relation to artistic practices focusing primarily on visual, performative, but also audio/visual video installations, often in collaboration with different communities. Since I finished my PhD *Time in the Making: Rehearsing Reparative Critical Practices* in 2015, I have been reworking this notion in relation to the aftermath of New World slavery and colonialism. Following David Scott, some events, like New World slavery, are not repairable; they are “beyond repair”.²⁷ I became increasingly interested in how those situations do not preclude, but rather call for reparative practices that work to rebuild bonds between communities, their creative expression, and cultural heritage. That’s how I began looking into the colonial archives in Denmark, which was then expanded into exploring the “cultural archive” of colonialism.²⁸

The colonial archive is not limited to the documents and ledgers stored within repositories such as The Royal Library or The National Archive, but can be found in the built environment, materials, paintings, and cultural products. Even the smallest brick from the Charlottenborg Castle might tie into this larger archive: it is said that remaining bricks from the construction of Charlottenborg were transported to the West Indies, and can be found in the buildings in the US. Virgin Islands today. There is a sense in which even the smallest remainder can open up to these larger overlapping histories and geographies.

I was carrying out my research project *Engangled Archives* at the art academy, then I was expelled, and the project was defunded. Regardless, I’m continuing to do the project independently. It has been really rewarding working on *Voices in the Shadow of Monuments* with artists Barly Tshibanda, Nanna Hansen, La Vaughn Belle, Jupiter Child, Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Oceana James, Julie Edel Hardenberg, Sabitha Söderholm, and Arash Pandi, because of the conversations that we have had. Each of the artists created voices and sound pieces for specific locations and monuments in Copenhagen, centering on situated embodied histories that tell the story from a different vantage point. In addition to the audio walk Barly, Nanna, and I curated a film program *Whose Gold is This?* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg, which presents a selection of video essays and documentation of performances by La Vaughn Belle, Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Linda Lamignan, Julie Edel Hardenberg, and Tabita Rezaire that dig into the material traces of colonialism and its reverberations today.

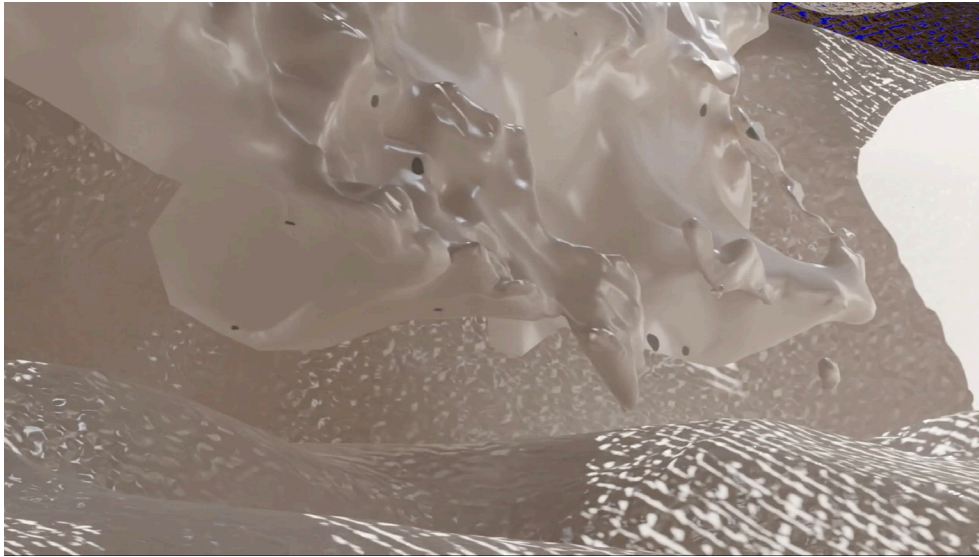
It is important to stress that my projects are always collaborative. It's also about creating other infrastructures and communities around artistic production that you want to see happen. Along with my partner Abbas Mroueh and a group of friends, we co-founded Sorte Firkant in Nørrebro in 2016, which is a café/bar and cultural venue. The idea was to create a different environment around artistic production where conversations with communities that create different relations outside of the white cube galleries can exist.



Opening of Sorte Firkant, Copenhagen, 2016. Photo Credit: Frank Piasecki Poulsen.

SWR: How do these projects not only relate to what you've proposed for f.eks., but also how does your previous work inform or relate to some of the sites, and communities that we've decided to approach, work with, and develop relationships with in Aalborg? What other future projects are you working on and what are they aiming to explore further?

KDH: Artistic research is central to my practice, and I look forward to further exploring some of the critical questions that the artistic happening has raised. In my understanding of artistic research the artistic practice pushes the theoretical and conceptual frameworks. In Denmark, there are a lot of misconceptions about what artistic research is, and a fear that it is an academicization of artistic practice, but honestly, I think it is the other way around. Art can expand and push the normative framework of what counts as knowledge in a given society. Therefore, I am interested in the way in which our epistemological boundaries can be expanded through and in the encounter with praxis. Artistic practice can stretch those boundaries. In that case, I must say that the art happening pushed the conceptual framework far beyond anyone's imagination. It has provided an exorbitant amount of material which needs further reworking. That's what I'm looking forward to engaging with more deeply in collaboration with the people that I've been in conversation with over the past years.



Rematerializations #5: (3D model) 01:53. min. by Torkild Helland Kleppe & Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld of the rematerialized copy bust based on the 3D model made by School of Re-membering, based on images from the internet. Destiny's, Oslo. 2022. Photo Credit: Torkild Helland Kleppe & Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld.

Moreover, I am currently working on a new project in Oslo around “rematerialization” as a concept where I continue to explore the legacies of the colonial histories of Denmark and Norway. I’m interested in further exploring “rematerialization” as a Möbius-like movement, in which a given material both harbors the violent history of its own making in its very texture and materiality. By disentangling and reassembling these textures and materials, sedimented practices become permeable. Rematerialisation makes possible a remodulation that calls into question the hegemonic force that governs who counts as a subject, and which bodies matter and are worth protecting in society.

Also, I have an upcoming project with f.eks. – which I’m looking very much forward to - it’s still very early in the process, but it’s called “reroutings” – looking at the urban transformation of Aalborg, my hometown, but putting a special focus on two sites, which are the “Port of Greenland”, which since 1972 has been responsible for all trade to and from Kalaallit Nunaat,²⁹ as well as a neighborhood which is referred to as the “Greenlandic Neighborhood”, which has a church that is called Hans Egedes Church,³⁰ and that church was designed by my grandfather in 1973. “Reroutings” is thought of as a conceptual device that both mimics the fact that the “Port of Greenland” itself is being redirected - but also as an artistic tool to think how artists can create reroutings in the affective infrastructures of coloniality.³¹

My projects are also questioning my own position as a white Dane in relation to this history, which is not something that is outside of me, but which I am complicit within. We are all embedded in these structures, but in very different ways, so I’m curious to go back to these two areas, which I basically grew up between, and look at what blindspots there are between these entangled histories. Hopefully, this work will be in conversation with all of the amazing new artists and initiatives that are emerging in and near Aalborg as well as artists from Kalaallit Nunaat and internationally working around similar questions.

Endnotes

- 1 These were the large Danish companies that were in charge of the enslavement trade and the sugar plantation complex between the Gold Coast (today Ghana), Danish West Indies (today the U.S. Virgin Islands), as well as the Danish trading posts in India.
- 2 Anonymous Artists, “DET KGL. DANSKE KUNSTAKADEMIS GRUNDLÆGGER SMIDT I HAVNEN — I DO ART,” [IDOART.DK](https://www.idoart.dk), November 6, 2020, <https://www.idoart.dk/blog/det-kgl-danske-kunstakademis-grundlaegger-smidt-i-havnen>
- 3 For more on the art happening, see: <https://www.idoart.dk/blog/det-kgl-danske-kunstakademis-grundlaegger-smidt-i-havnen>.
- 4 “Uvurderlig dansk statue smidt i havnen,” TV2 / NYHEDER, November 7, 2020, <https://nyheder.tv2.dk/samfund/2020-11-07-uvurderlig-dansk-statue-smidt-i-havnen>.
- 5 Amalie Skovmøller, Assistant Professor at the University of Copenhagen, has compiled a list that currently counts 25 replicas of the bust in Danish museums, institutions, and private collections.
- 6 See Akademiraadet, “Akademiraadets svar på ødelæggelsen af Frederik V-busten,” November 12, 2020, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57867c3203596edb2dc8e554/t/5fc128f5a97599144e210bd3/1606494455339/Akademiraadets_udtalelse_om_FrederikV_busten.pdf.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Even major mainstream global news outlets have labeled the Danish People’s Party as such: BBC has reported on the DF as “xenophobic” while the New York Times has called the DF “anti-immigration.” See, “Søren Espersen - Deputy Chairman, Danish People’s Party, HARDtalk, BBC News, February, 11, 2016, 23:00, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03hlf4m>; Steven Erlanger, “Rise of Far-Right Party in Denmark Reflects Europe’s Unease,” New York Times, June 19, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/20/world/europe/rise-of-far-right-party-in-denmark-reflects-europes-unease.html>.
- 9 Messerschmidt was convicted of racism in 2002. See, “Unge DF’ere dømt for racism,” Kristeligt Dagblad, October 12, 2002, <https://www.kristeligt-dagblad.dk/kirke-tro/unge-dfere-dømt-racisme>.
- 10 Howard Zinn has relevant thoughts on the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the U.S. constitution. Howard Zinn, “A People’s Constitution: Some Truths Are Not Self-Evident,” *The Nation* (August 1, 1987): 87–88.
- 11 Christina Petterson, “Colonialism, Racism and Exceptionalism” in *Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others and National Identities*, eds. Kristín Loftsdóttir and Lars Jensen (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 29.
- 12 See Scott Stawski, “Denmark’s Veiled Role in Slavery in the Americas: The Impact of the Danish West Indies on the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” (master’s thesis, Harvard Extension School, 2018), <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/37365426>.
- 13 This is despite the fact that Greenland is part of the Realm of Denmark (Rigsfællesskabet). Due to Greenland and the Faroe Islands being part of the Danish Realm,

Denmark is actually the 12th largest country by land and sea mass in the world.

14 See Anna Altman, “The Year of Hygge, the Danish Obsession with Getting Cozy,” *New Yorker*, December 18, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-year-of-hygge-the-danish-obsession-with-getting-cozy>.

15 A term that Gloria Wekker evokes in relation to the Dutch self-understanding, which I think has a lot of commonalities to the scenario in Denmark. There is this idea that race, and racism was something that was created in the United States and in the Americas, but in fact there is little consideration of how that entire project departed from Europe, and that Denmark took an active part in the construction. See, Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016).

16 Susan Schuppli, *Material Witness: Media, Forensics, Evidence* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016).

17 Daniela Agostinho, Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, and Karen Louise Grova Søilen, “Archives That Matter: Infrastructures for Sharing Unshared Histories. An Introduction,” *NTIK: Nordisk Tidsskrift for Informationsvidenskab Og Kulturformidling* 8, no. 2 (2019), <https://tidsskrift.dk/ntik/issue/view/8529>.

18 The “plantation complex” produces a certain form of visibility with the figure of the overseer who organizes and monitors the forced labor, people, and natural resources through a cluster of techniques of surveillance and punishment. See Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visibility* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

19 See the conversation between Jakob Jakobsen and Scott William Raby here: “Unfolding the Livø Memorial: Part I,” IDOART.DK, November 23, 2021, <https://www.idoart.dk/blog/unfolding-the-livoe-memorial-part-1?rq=jakob%20jakobsen>.

20 See Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky’s argumentation on “inconvenient facts” and “dissent on the margins” in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), 2, 3, 297–307.

21 Nada Prija, “The Sinking of King Frederik V - an Art Happening or a ‘Bit of Everything’?” *Whitehot Magazine of Contemporary Art*, November 25, 2020, https://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/or-bit-of-everything-/4789?fbclid=IwAR1lNngs5OaL-7w2y3g_V73-0mSc1AIcVRplke_F3OnWplcE3mNYqL9USjmo.

22 See the petition here: <https://www.idoart.dk/blog/solidaritet-med-katrine-dirckinck-holmfeld-og-anonyme-billedkunstnere?rq=katrine%20dirckinck>.

23 Jan Petter Myklebust, “Uproar as MPs claim university research is ‘politicised,’” *University World News*, June 10, 2021, <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20210610103648390>.

24 Joy Mogensen, “Kunst skal ikke være en skrivebordsøvelse,” *Jyllands-Posten*, February 20, 2021, <https://jyllands-posten.dk/debat/breve/ECE12768286/kunst-skal-ikke-vaere-en-skrivebordsøvelse/>. Also see UKK’s criticism of former Cultural Minister Joy Mogensen’s op-ed, “Åbent Brev Til Kulturminister Joy Mogensen: Kunst Er Ikke Kun Fysiske ‘Ting,’” IDOART.DK, February 23, 2021, <https://www.idoart.dk/blog/kunst-er-ikke-kun-fysiske-ting>.

25 Maria Eichhorn and Daniel Buren discuss the *droit moral de l'artiste* in practice in Eichhorn's book *The Artist's Contract* (Cologne: Walther König, 2009), 96.

26 Eve Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

27 David Scott, "Preface: Evil Beyond Repair," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 22, no. 1 (55) (March 1, 2018): vii–x, <https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-4378876>.

28 Wekker, *White Innocence*.

29 It is said that approximately sixty-six percent of all the goods that were shipped to Greenland were produced in Northern Jutland. That shipping is now being rerouted out of the port at Aarhus, Denmark.

30 Named after Hans Egedes, the Dano-Norwegian priest, missionary, and colonizer of Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) in 1721.

31 I am grateful for conversations with artist Julie Edel Hardenberg and entrepreneur Svend Hardenberg.