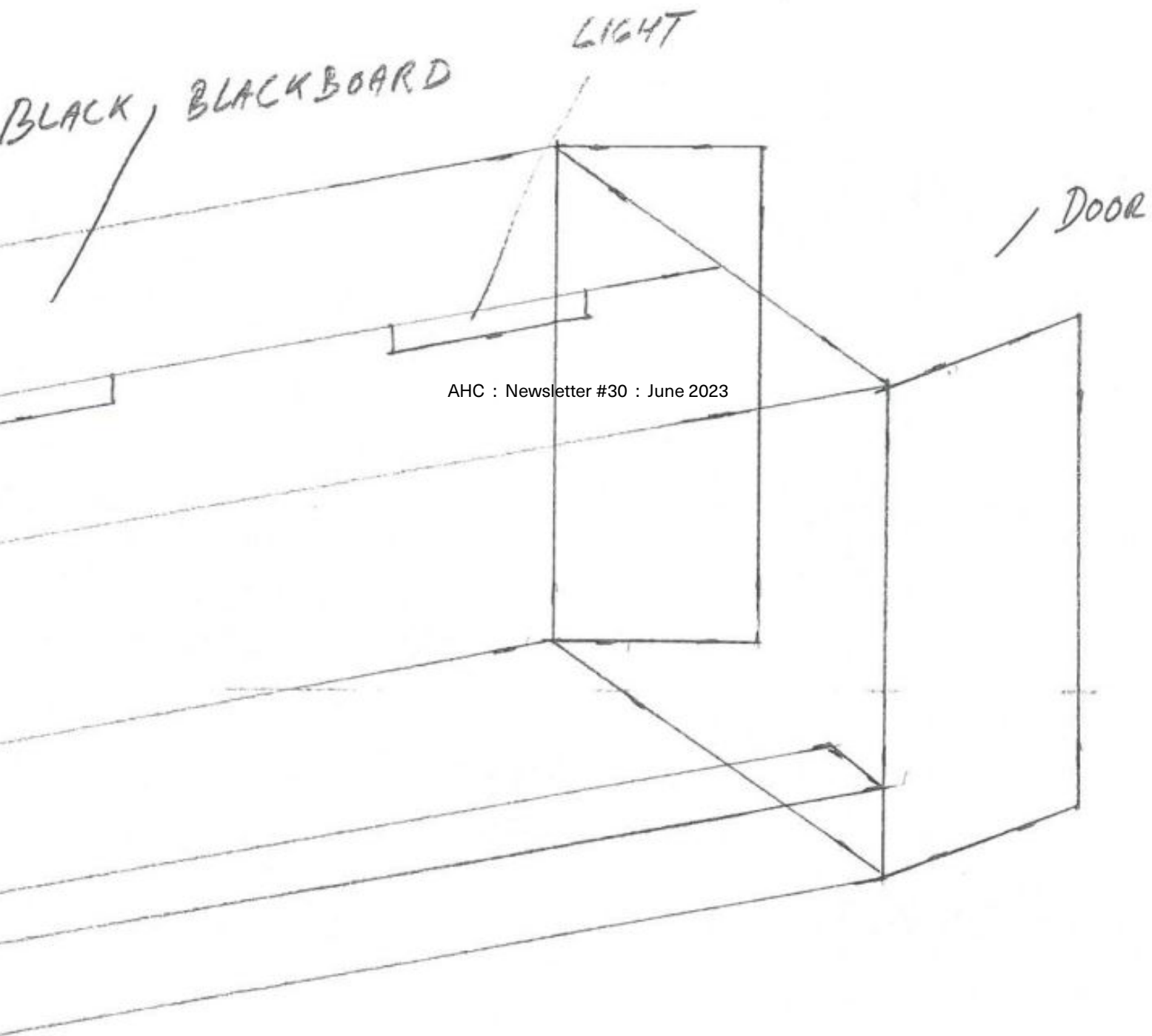


CONTAINER ACADEMY



AHC : Newsletter #30 : June 2023

INTRODUKTION

Kære læser. Art Hub Copenhagen har indgået et samarbejde med billedkunstner Bjørn Nørgaard om at administrere hans projekt Containerakademiet, som er et nyt atelierfællesskab, der er undervejs i Københavns Nordhavn. Containerakademiet skal sikre flere atelierpladser til yngre billedkunstnere i hovedstaden, og så skal det samtidig danne rammen om samtaler og diskussioner mellem kunstnere og andre ligesindede. I dette nyhedsbrev fortæller Bjørn Nørgaard om tankerne bag i en samtale med AHC's leder af Art & Research, Lars Bang Larsen. Men ikke nok med samtalen her, så kan du allerede i løbet af sommeren lære mere om Containerakademiet, når Bjørn Nørgaard inviterer kunstnere og videnskabspersoner til at mødes og tale sammen på Kunsthal 44Møen i juli og på årets Kulturmødet Mors i august. Find mere info om dette i vores kalender nederst. Rigtig god læselyst og rigtig god sommer!

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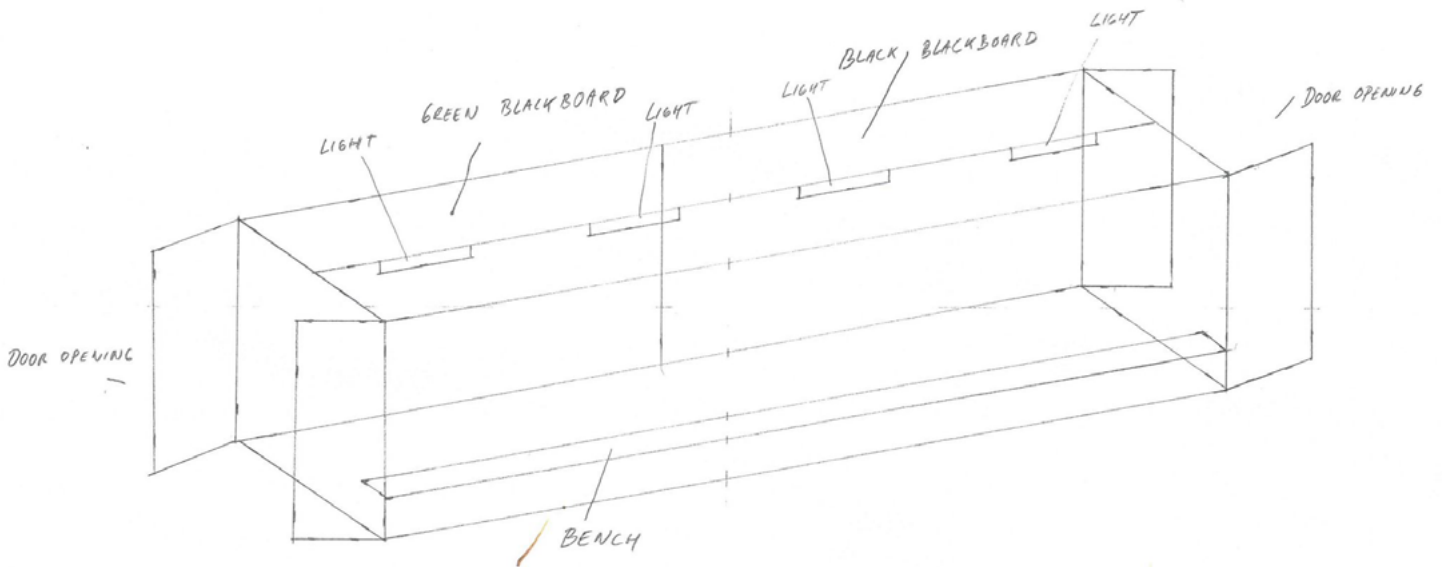
INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader, Art Hub Copenhagen has now entered into a collaboration with visual artist Bjørn Nørgaard involving our management of his project, Container Academy, which is slated to be a new studio community and is presently being made ready in the Nordhavn section of Copenhagen. The aim of the Container Academy project is to provide studio spaces for young visual artists in Denmark's capital city, while serving also to fashion a frame around ongoing conversations and discussions among artists and other like-minded people. In this letter, Bjørn Nørgaard shares his thoughts behind the project, in conversation with AHC's Head of Art & Research, Lars Bang Larsen. And in the course of the coming summer, you'll be able to learn even more about the Container Academy when Bjørn Nørgaard will be inviting various artists and scientists to meet and engage in a conversation at the Kunsthal 44Møen in July and at Kulturmødet Mors in August. In our calendar below, you can find more information about this. Happy reading and have a really great summer!

40 feet High Cube Container open both ends.

CONTAINER ACADEMY

Exterior measure 1219 x 244 x 290 cm interior measure 1203 x 235 x 266



AKADEMIET I CONTAINEREN

Lars Bang Larsen (LBL): Containerakademiet er et atelierfællesskab med en superstruktur, for at sige det sådan. Vil du fortælle om dine tanker for akademi-delen i Containerakademiet?

Bjørn Nørgaard (BN): Det akademi, som jeg håber at kunne skabe i det her projekt, nærmer sig den eksperimenterende kunstscole, altså Eks-skolen i 1960'erne. Det tager afsæt i det sokratiske akademi, en samtale mellem frie, ligeværdige personer, hvor der som udgangspunkt ikke er nogen rangorden, så det ikke handler om, hvem du er, men hvad du siger, og hvordan du argumenterer. Containerakademiet skal altså virke ved, at ligesindede går ved siden af hinanden i en periode og udveksler ideer og tanker. Billedkunsten bør, ligesom andre erkendelsesformer, fortsat være en selvstændig og uafhængig måde at erkende og forholde sig til verden på. En spekulativ erkendelsesform, som er uafhængig af statsmagten til enhver tid. Det er jo sådan, vores demokrati er opbygget, og det er det, jeg mener, neoliberalismen er i færd med at forsøge at nedbryde. Neoliberalismen vil jo ikke have fri kunst – den vil heller ikke have fri videnskab, og den vil slet ikke have et frit retsvæsen. I neoliberalismens øjne kan kunsten ikke bruges til noget.

LBL: Man kan sige, at Eks-skolen var et alternativt akademi, hvor deltagerne lavede kunstscole for hinanden. Det skete blandt andet som reaktion på de institutionelle og diskursive strukturer, som eksisterede dengang, og vel også fordi der var noget, som ikke fandtes. I dag er situationen en ganske anden, og du foregriber det lidt allerede: Kan du sige noget mere om, hvad du ser som nødvendigt at reagere på i dag?

BN: Der er to ting, der er nødvendige. Som billedhugger er man en ret praktisk person, men det, der sker i København i de her år, er svært for en kunstner at blive i. Vi kan snart ikke se byen for bare boliger. En by er jo ikke lavet for at bo i den – en by er skabt på grund af handel, på grund af videnskaberne, på grund af universitetet; retsvæsen, regering og så videre. Men alle de her funktioner, er man ved at tømme byen for. Man har valgt at finansiere metroen ved grundsalg i Københavns Kommune, så der er ikke den græsplæne, der ikke skal bygges på – og det jager de unge kunstnere ud. Jeg fik ideen til Containerakademiet på en rundtur, jeg var på, i Nordhavn. Og ideen er helt enkelt at sørge for 30 atelierer til unge mennesker. Men det skal ikke bare være et sted, hvor kunstnere skal stå og arbejde. Det skal være mere levende end det, og det er her, den anden nødvendighed kommer ind: I dag kan hvad som helst være kunst, men det betyder ikke, at hvad som helst er kunst. Den diskussion, synes jeg, vi har meget svært ved at tage. Og det er blandt andet sådan nogle diskussioner, jeg håber på, at Containerakademiet kan være med til at fremme. Diskussionen om kunstbegrebet eksempelvis. Hvor er det begreb i dag? Og hvad med kritikken?

LBL: Jeg holder med dig i, at kritikken er i krise. Neoliberalismen har ikke brug for en refleksion over muligheden for at dømme noget, den har behov for styring – styring af flows af varer og kommunikation, styring af infrastruktur. På den anden side er kritikbegrebet i krise af andre grunde, sådan som jeg forstår det, fordi der er opstået nye paradigmer, for eksempel om omsorg og kropsliggjort væren. Og kritikens universelle aspekt kræver i sig selv en, nå ja, kritisk stillingtagen.

BN: Det er med Oplysningstiden, at videnskaberne, billedkunsten og juraen som samfunds bærende erkendelsesformer bliver sat fri og bliver en uafhængig måde at tænke verden på. I den forbindelse introducerer oplysningsfilosofferne et vigtigt begreb: 'kritik'. For nu, når Gud er død, hvem er det så, der skal sørge for, at ingen render rundt og laver ulykker? Kritikken. Efter diktaturerne og 2. verdenskrig afsværgede modernisterne og 60'erne en alment gældende autoritet som udgangspunkt for samfundet, selvorganisering og direkte demokrati fik en alt for kort opblomstring som nye modeller for organisering af sociale strukturer. "To live outside the law, you must be honest," som Bob Dylan sang. Men med det neoliberale indtog i 70'erne blev opportunisten helten, 60'ernes selvorganisering blev til yuppie og hurtige penge, konkurrencestaten var en realitet, og med de digitale teknologier blev samfundet sprængt i enkeltindivider uden andre referencer end penge og sig selv. Drømmen er, at Containerakademiet kan diskutere grundlaget for en kritik, som kan føre fra opportuniste til fælles mængder, der kan interagere med hinanden konstruktivt.

LBL: Og den diskussion vil du genopleve med akademitanken?

BN: Ja, Containerakademiet skal være et sted, hvor vi kan forsøge at nærme os et fælles kunstbegreb igen, et fælles grundlag, en fælles autoritet, som kritikken kan tage udgangspunkt i. Det samme med begrebet 'det formelle'. Det synes jeg også, vi bør diskutere. Sprog, hvor vi er nogenlunde enige om, hvad de enkelte ord betyder, gør, at vi kan føre en samtale. Men som det er nu: Hvis sproget var ligesom kunstverdenen, så ville det ikke være muligt at tale sammen.

LBL: Og hvordan kommer Containerakademiet på et praktisk plan til at fungere?

BN: For at skabe et levende sted har vi besluttet, at en kunstner max kan have et atelier i Containerakademiet i fem år, og at kunstnerne, som indlemmes, minimum skal have haft to år ude efter endt uddannelse. Lige nu er bygningen ved at blive opført. Oprindeligt var det planlagt sådan, at Containerakademiet skulle udgøres af en række mobile containere, deraf navnet, men på grund af pandemien og derefter inflationen bygges nu én stor container; et industrihus beklædt med stålplader. Det kommer til at rumme 30 atelierer i alt, både enkelt- og fællesatelierer samt to store fælles værksteder, og det forventes indviet og i drift fra november 2023. Akademiet bygges og drives af fondet Containerakademiet i samarbejde med Art Hub Copenhagen, som varetager det kunstneriske program af udstillinger og andre arrangementer, der skal finde sted. Og så er drømmen, at akademiet, stedets åndelige struktur, skal blive selvorganiserende. Visionen er, at du som kunstner er med til at udvikle et nyt kunstbegreb. Gennem en diskussion med dem, du deler rum og tid med.



The Container Academy under construction, celebrated with a topping out event in the beginning of June, 2023.

THE ACADEMY IN THE CONTAINER

Lars Bang Larsen (LBL): The Container Academy is going to be a studio community with a superstructure, so to speak. Would you like to tell us about some of your thoughts regarding the academy-aspect of the Container Academy?

Bjørn Nørgaard (BN): The academy that I'm hoping to set up in this particular project draws near to Eks-skolen, the experimental art school that was happening and active back in the 1960s. It takes its mark in the Socratic Academy: a conversation going on among free and equal individuals, where there's no inherent order of rank, so that it's not a matter of who you might be, but more a matter of what you are saying and of how you're reasoning. Consequently, the Container Academy will be operating in such a way that like-minded individuals will be proceeding alongside each other for a certain period of time and exchanging their ideas and their thoughts. Just like other forms of knowledge, visual art ought to continually be an independent and self-contained way of understanding and relating to the world. A speculative epistemological form, which is independent of the power of the State at all times. That's the way our democracy has been organised, and it is this that I believe neoliberalism is in the process of dismantling. Neoliberalism doesn't want to have free-minded art – nor does it want to have free-minded science, and it most certainly doesn't want to have a freethinking judicial system. You see, in the mindset of neoliberalism, art doesn't have any purpose at all.

LBL: It could be said that Eks-skolen was an alternative kind of academy, where the participants were making an art school for each other. The school was established as a reaction to the institutional and discursive structures that prevailed at the time and supposedly also because there was something that simply could not be found at the time. Today, the situation is something else again, and evidently, you're already anticipating this, to some extent. Could you say a bit more about what you regard as being necessary to react to, today?

BN: There are two things that I regard being necessary to react to. As a sculptor, one is, of course, a rather practical person, but that which is happening in Copenhagen these years is making it hard for an artist to remain here. Soon, we won't even be able to see the city before us on account of all the housing construction going on. A city is not created for the purpose of living in it: a city is created because of commerce, because of the sciences, because of the university, the judicial system, the government, and so on and so forth. But all these functions are currently in the process of vacating the city. The powers have chosen to finance the construction of the metro (subway system) with the profits that can be gained from the sale of plots of land in the Municipality of Copenhagen, with the result that there will soon be no more lawns left for building on top of – and this state of affairs is chasing the younger artists away. I actually came up with the idea for the Container Academy while I was taking a guided tour around Nordhavn. The idea is quite simply to provide 30 studios for young people. But not only is it going to be a place where artists will be busy working. It's going to be much more vivacious than just that, and it's right here that the second necessity comes into play: Today, anything whatsoever can be called 'art', but that doesn't mean everything whatsoever is art. This is a discussion that I feel we're having a difficult time becoming engaged in. And it is these discussions, about issues like this and other matters, that I'm hoping the Container Academy will be playing a role in instigating and promoting: for example, the discussion about the very notion of art. Where does this concept stand today? And what about criticism?

LBL: I agree with you: criticism is currently undergoing a crisis. Neoliberalism has no need for making any reflection on the possibility of judging something; no, it has need for control—control of the flows of goods and communication, control of infrastructure. On the other hand, the concept of criticism is undergoing a crisis for other reasons; in any event, as I understand it, because there are new paradigms that have emerged, such as care and embodied being. Moreover, you might say that the universal aspect of criticism requires, in itself, a critical stance of making up one's mind.

BN: It was with the Enlightenment that the sciences, visual arts, and law, as society-bearing epistemological forms, were set free and became independent ways of thinking about the world. In this connection,

the philosophers of the Enlightenment introduced an important concept: 'critique'. Because now that God has been pronounced 'dead', who's going to see to that nobody goes around causing catastrophes? Criticism. After the various dictatorships and World War II, the modernists and the '60s rejected universally valid authority as the point of departure for society. Self-organisation and direct democracy had an all too brief period of blossoming as new models for the organisation of social structures. As Bob Dylan once sang, "To live outside the law, you must be honest". However, with the advent of neoliberalism in the 1970s, it was the opportunist that became the hero; the self-organization of the '60s turned into the yuppies and fast cash; the competition state came to be a reality; and with the digital technologies, society was ruptured and burst into separate individuals without any other shared references than money and themselves. The dream is that the Container Academy can talk about the grounding for a critique, which can potentially lead from opportunism to united gatherings of people, people who can interact with one another in a constructive way.

LBL: And this is a discussion that you would like to re-experience through the academy notion?

BN: That's right, the Container Academy will be a place where we can try to approach a common concept of art again, a common foundation, a shared authority in which criticism can take its mark. The same goes for the concept of 'the formal'. I think that we should also be discussing that. Language, where we can more or less agree on the meanings of individual words, renders it so that we can actually carry on a conversation. But as it is now: if language were like the art world, then it simply wouldn't be possible to talk together.

LBL: And how, on the practical level, is the Container Academy going to operate?

BN: In order to create a lively and spirited place, we've decided that an artist can have a studio in the Container Academy for a maximum of five years, and we've decided that the artists who are going to be incorporated into the program must have spent at least two years out in the outside world after finishing up their education. As we speak now, the building is being constructed. Originally, the project was planned in such a way that the Container Academy would be constituted by a series of mobile transport containers, hence the name. However, as a consequence of the pandemic and the subsequent inflation, there's now one large transport container that's being constructed: an industrial building paneled with steel plates. This container will eventually contain a total of 30 studios, both individual- and shared-studios, as well as two large jointly shared workshops, and we expect that the building will be inaugurated in November of 2023, and that the place will be fully operational from then on. The academy is being constructed and operated by the Container Academy Foundation, in collaboration with Art Hub Copenhagen, which is going to be handling the program of artistic exhibitions and other arrangements that will be happening. The dream, then, is that the academy, the place's spiritual structure, will eventually become self-organizing. The vision is that you, as an artist, will be playing a part in developing a new concept of art. Through a discussion with those people with whom you're sharing your space and time.



Bjørn Nørgaard.

KALENDER

CALENDAR

AHC x Roskilde Festival : Exhibition : Trine Struwe, Sóley Ragnarsdóttir, Tore Hallas, Regitze Engelsborg Karlsen, Maria Nørholm Ramouk & Alexandra Jönsson : until 01.07.23

AHC x Containerakademiet x Kunsthall 44Møen : Bjørn Nørgaard, Michala Paludan & Peter Ditlevsen : 08.07.2023 : 13.00–14.00

AHC x Containerakademiet x Kunsthall 44Møen : Bjørn Nørgaard, Kristoffer Ørum & Emil Bjerrum-Bohr : 13.07.2023 : 13.00–14.00

AHC x The Containter Academy x Kunsthall 44Møen : Bjørn Nørgaard, Alexandra Hunts & Vítor Cardoso : 13.07.2023 : 13.00–14.00

AHC x Viborg Kunsthall : Exhibition : Javier Tapia : Friezes & Borders : until 06.08.23

AHC : Artistic Practice : Talk : Kristoffer Akselbo & Anthony Huberman : 10.08.23 : 17.00-18.15

AHC x Viborg Kunsthall : Exhibition Opening : Masar Sohail & Halfdan Pisket : The Mullah Redux : 23.08.23 : 15.00-17.00

AHC x Kulturmødet Mors : Filip Vest, Lina Hashim & Bjørn Nørgaard : 24.08.23 & 25.08.23

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