

Clowns Kingdom

Group exhibition

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Le Bicolore



Clowns' Kingdom

Pierre-Alexandre Mateos and Charles Teyssou
Exhibition curators

Denmark is the clowndom of avant-garde art movements. This kingdom of just under six million inhabitants has historically summoned up the figure of the clown, buffoon, fool or prankster to disrupt the merry-go-round of vanities and sham. Clowns are borderline entities: through their absurdity, obscenity or radicality, they personify a form of ultimate otherness in opposition to the smooth moral veneer of public postures. Danish avant-garde art has a long tradition of using play, humour, pranks and hoaxes to jostle the established order and norms, never mind if they get broken in the process.

With “Destruktion af RSG-6” in Odense (1963), the only exhibition mounted by Guy Debord, art was transformed into a theatre of operations in which revolution became a game and vice versa. Accompanied by the deafening sound of an army siren, the exhibition culminated with viewers firing at targets depicting the great dignitaries of the atomic age. A year later, Jorgen Nash subversively turned the statue of Andersen’s *Little Mermaid* into a headless heroine. A decade on, the clown morphed into an emasculatory figure, joining Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Lene Adler Petersen and Elisabeth Therkildsen behind the camera in *Three Girls and a Pig* (1972). Dark and caustic in the work of Lars von Trier, the clown became Denmark’s anarchic Auguste in *The Kingdom*, *The Boss of It All* and *The Idiots*. Disturbing and embarrassing in the cruel satires of Henrik Plenge Jakobsen and Jens

Haaning, terrifying in Ann Lislegaard's exploration of the invention of spiritualism through the hoax perpetrated by the Fox sisters in puritanical mid-nineteenth-century America, the clown also seeped into Lise Harlev's ambiguous political slogans.

The contemporary generation of artists summon up flesh-and-blood clowns, be they outsider Arcimboldo figures in Rasmus Myrup's anthropomorphic assemblages of plant-based materials, *faux naïf* in Magnus Andersen's paintings, narcissistic and helium-filled in the work of Esben Weile Kjær, sexually ambiguous in Tora Schultz's Pinocchio, inchoate and mired in the suburban tragi-comedy of Line FINDERUP Jensen's CGI videos, the melancholy Pierrot of surveillance capitalism in Sidsel Meineche Hansen's simulation, revealed in broad daylight as the monsters they are in Sahar Jamili's wardrobe, or alternately embodying artist and spectator in Christian Falsnaes' performances.

Clowns are everywhere - in drag, as trolls, wearing the face of the Joker. Even when they are identified and sometimes vividly embodied, they remain incontrovertibly taboo. No one really wants to be a clown - simultaneously euphoric and dispossessed, dangerous yet risible, necessary but repulsive. But if we showcase clowns and their tricks, aren't we shutting off their most corrosive side? The French philosopher Paul Virilio exhibited accidents in the Museum of

Accidents he developed in the 1990s to avoid being exposed to them. Mapping clowndom necessarily means tracing the streets of a ghost town. But what might be seen as an avenue of worn-out gestures asks us to reconnect with a form of idealism and delude ourselves like Don Quixote when he takes windmills for giants. When we do so, we summon this tragic buffoonery - this deliberate silliness - to ward off fate, for in the kingdom of clowns, we all end up stark naked and absurd, be we knave or king.

Curators

Pierre-Alexandre Mateos (1989) and **Charles Teyssou** (1988) are a Paris-based writing and curating/duo of curators and writers. Current and planned projects include a public programme at the Pinault Collection - Bourse de Commerce entitled "Paris Orbital", a publication about gay cruising with HEAD - Genève, and the Arles Terminal City (arlesterminalcity.com) archive at the LUMA Foundation (Arles). They recently curated "Anathemata"(Mostyn, Wales), which focused on works by Antonin Artaud, Pierre Guyotat and Sarah Kane, Darja Bajagić's GOREGEOUS at Le Confort Moderne (Poitiers) and co-curated an exhibition about the dandy figure Jacques de Bascher at Treize (Paris) and the Kunsthalle in Berne with Kevin Blinderman. In 2020, in collaboration with Dustin Cauchi and Dasha Zaharova, they launched The Opioid Crisis Lookbook, an online platform and print publication showcasing narcotics culture. In collaboration with Rasmus Myrup and Octave Perrault, they instigated Cruising Pavilion, a series of exhibitions that made connections between sexual dissidence, art and architecture and took place in Venice (at the 16th Biennale of Architecture), New York (at Ludlow 38) and Stockholm (at ArkDes). They are former editors of *L'Officiel Art* and are regular contributors to *Mousse Magazine*, *Spike*, *Double* magazine and *CURA*.

Biographies of the artists

The Situationist International

The Situationist International (SI) was an organization of revolutionary theoreticians and strategists, who wanted to abolish class society and the dictatorship of commodities and operated in the political and cultural arenas. They had political affiliations with early 20th century intellectual movements such as council communism, the theories of Marxist thinkers Anton Pannekoek and Rosa Luxemburg, the theories of the young Georg Lukács developed in his book *History and Class Consciousness*, and the 1950s' group *Socialism or Barbarism*. In that sense, it could be seen as an ultra-left organization, yet it also expressed, at its origins, a willingness to go beyond the revolutionary attempts of artistic avant-gardes from the first half of the 20th century: Dada, Surrealism and Letterism. Formally born at the Conference of Cosio di Arroscia in July 1957, the Situationist International is a coming together of international avant-garde movements, including the Letteriste International (established by breaking away from Isidore Isou's Letterism), the International Movement for an Imaginist Bauhaus, the London Psychogeographic Committee and a group of Italian painters. Its founding document: *Report on the Construction of Situations [...]* was written by Guy Debord in 1957. In this programmatic text, Debord writes of the necessity to "change the world" and considers going beyond all artistic forms by "a unitary use of all the means of revolutionizing everyday life".

Co-Ritus

(Jørgen Nash, Jens Jørgen Thorsen & Dieter Kunzelmann, Hardy Strid)

Board fence painting, 1962

CO-RITUS exhibition, Galerie Jensen
(Reproduction)

Jørgen Nash (1920 – 1962, DK) was a Danish artist and writer. He was Asger Jorn's brother and a key member of the Situationist movement. He was also a member of the Danish Resistance during the Second World War and was arrested twice before fleeing to Sweden. He spent the last 40 years of his life in Sweden, in Drakabygget, where he gathered around him a community of international artists.

Famous for his happenings, he represented the most humorous and farcical branch of Situationism. His most infamous exploit, aided by other members of the Situationist Bauhaus during an anti-consumerism demonstration, was to decapitate the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen on the 24th of April 1964.

Magnus Andersen

School hallway magician, 2021

Oil and acrylic on canvas

Magnus Andersen (1987 in Elsinore, DK) graduated from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the Städelschule Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Frankfurt in the class of Judith Hopf. Andersen have had solo exhibitions in Germany, USA, Italy, Austria and France among others and have shown at MMK in Frankfurt, Foundation Cartier in Paris, Kunstverein Weisbaden in Weisbaden and Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen. His work is represented in the public collection of SMK, National Gallery of Denmark and the collection of the European Central Bank, Frankfurt am Main.

Ursula Reuter Christiansen, Lene Adler Petersen, Elisabeth Therkildsen

Three girls and a pig (Tre piger og en gris), 1972

Film

Ursula Reuter Christiansen (1943 in Trier, Germany) studied under Joseph Beuys at the art academy in Düsseldorf, was the first female professor at the art academy in Hamburg (HfBK) (1992-1997), and the first female professor of painting at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen (1997-2006). She was married to the Danish composer Henning Christiansen (1932-2008), and in 1969 they settled down together in Askeby on the Danish island, Møn, where Ursula Reuter Christiansen still lives and works today.

Christian Falsnæs

Self, 2018
Performance

Christian Falsnaes (1980, DK) studied in Vienna. Individual presentations include Copenhagen Contemporary DK (2020) Kaiser Wilhelm Museum Krefeld DE (2018) Berlinische Galerie DE (2017) Yarat Contemporary Art Space Baku AZ (2016) National Gallery of Denmark Copenhagen DK (2016) Kunstverein Braunschweig DE (2015) Bielefelder Kunstverein DE (2015). Christian Falsnaes' work has been presented in various group exhibitions worldwide including Malmö Konstmuseum SE (2021) Bundeskunsthalle Bonn DE (2020) Kiasma Museum for Contemporary Art Helsinki FI (2019) Centre Pompidou Paris FR (2018) at the Bienal de Performance BP.17 in Buenos Aires AR (2017) at Belvedere 21 Vienna AT (2017) CCA Tel Aviv IS (2016) and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst Zurich CH (2016). Falsnaes was nominated for the Future Generation Art Prize (2017) and the Preis der Nationalgalerie (2015).

Jens Haaning

Jens Haaning (1965, DK) is a Danish conceptual, contemporary artist. Haaning's work and practice has since the 1990s related to contemporary society, its underlying discontents and its frictions such as communication in global society, and necessitates a debate about subjects such as nationalism, migration, and displacement. Haaning does this by moving structures, occupations, and business objects affected by general changes in society into museum or gallery spaces in order to offer new insight into them. Jens Haaning has exhibited extensively internationally. He has taken part in Documenta XI, Kassel, Germany; Vienna Secession, Vienna, Austria; Gwangju Biennale, Gwangju, South Korea, among others.

ДАИМАРК, 2021

Murale

Lise Harlev

Lise Harlev (1973, DK) is a Danish artist and writer based in Berlin. Her work has been widely exhibited in Europe and beyond, most recently at Kunsthal 6100, Haderslev (2019), Galerie Odile Ouizeman, Paris (2019), Galerie DuflonRacz, Brussels (2020), Thorvaldsen Museum, Copenhagen (2020), Copenhagen Contemporary, Copenhagen (2020), Art Sonje Center, Seoul (2021), Lobe Block, Berlin (2021), WIELS Project Room, Brussels (2021) and Galerie Anton Janizewski, Berlin (2021). A collection of her prose poems titled *I'm Never Indifferent* was published by Broken Dimanche Press in 2019.

My Own Country, 2005

Offset print on paper

Sidsel Meineche Hansen

NO RIGHTWAY 2 CUM, 2015
VR installation

Sidsel Meineche Hansen (1981 in Ry, DK) lives and works in London. Meineche Hansen's practice reflects on virtual and robotic bodies and their relationship to human labour within the gaming, pornographic, and tech-industries. Their work is included in **The Milk of Dreams** at The 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. Recent solo exhibitions include Rodeo, London / Piraeus (2020); Center for Contemporary Arts, Prague (2019); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2019); SMK – The National Gallery of Denmark, Copenhagen (2019); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2018); Kunsthal Aarhus (2018); Index Stockholm (2018); Ludlow 38, New York (2017); Transmission Gallery, Glasgow (2016); Gasworks, London (2016); Meineche Hansen is a bursary recipient of the 2020 Turner Prize.

Henrik Plenge Jakobsen

Marotte, 2021

Laughing Gas House for Kids, 1998

Henrik Plenge Jakobsen (1967 in Copenhagen, DK) is a conceptual and appropriation artist, who works in a variety of media, from sculpture and installation to performance and public intervention and commissions. He has studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen, Denmark, from 1987-94, Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux Arts and Institut des Hautes Etudes en Art plastique, Paris, France, from 1992-93. Plenge Jakobsen lives in Copenhagen. Plenge Jakobsen has showed and worked in Paris at many occasions, with institutions such as Le musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris and Palais de Tokyo and has works in the collections of Centre Pompidou, Frac l'Île-de-France and Musée des Arts Décoratifs and the Fonds national d'art contemporain.

Sahar Jamili

I see monsters everywhere, 2021

Clothes

Sahar Jamil (1990) is studying for a Master's degree at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, and has previously read Chinese and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Copenhagen. They have most recently exhibited at Bizarro Logistics and at Villa Kultur in Denmark, WEST BERLIN in Germany and Gallery Steinsland Berliner in Sweden.

Line Finderup Jensen

Line Finderup Jensen (1991, DK) currently works and lives in between Vienna, Austria and Copenhagen, Denmark. With a background in video and animation from the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien (2019), Jensen works as an artist and freelancer within film, 3D simulation and interactive media. Her practice is experimenting with interaction in storytelling and how that possibly could overthrow norms and rules for the reality we collectively live in. Her work has been shown in Copenhagen, Vienna, Berlin and Glasgow.

Kill Joy, 2018

Video

Esben Weile Kjær

Esben Weile Kjær (1992, DK) is an artist based in Copenhagen and Frankfurt. Spanning sculpture, video and performance, Esben Weile Kjær's work draws on the history of pop culture and pop music to investigate themes of nostalgia, authenticity, and generational anxiety. In an attentive though reckless visual language, he investigates today's event economy, often focusing on marketing tactics and the aesthetics of the entertainment industry – mainly to consider art's relationship to its surrounding culture industries. As such, his work attempts to not only mimic other cultural modes of performance (such as those found in raves, protests, press conferences, and ballets), but to become performative pop culture in its own right—often through interventions in public and commercial spaces, using props such as podiums, confetti cannons, fences, and party lasers.

Bloated (floating signifier), 2021
From the Julian Luxford series
Mixed materials

Peter Land

*The Cellist (1997),
The 5th of May (1994),
Pink Space (1995),
Joie de Vivre (1998)*

Video

Peter Land (1966, in Aarhus, DK) studied at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, 1988-94.

Peter Land came to the attention of a wider public in the 1990s with video installations depicting himself in unflattering and absurd situations where he is off balance, or has in some other way lost control of mind and body.

Peter Land's work has featured in numerous exhibitions in Denmark and internationally.

Ann Lislegaard

Ann Lislegaard (1962, in Norway) In Lislegaard's work, experiences of simulated spheres are created by means of interdisciplinary hybrids and connections — between architecture and cinema, between fictional narratives, and between human beings, machines, and animals. In this context, which draws on the historical residues of culture and technology while building on feminist gender theories, the boundaries between the real and the imagined are blurred. Concrete and simulated worlds interpenetrate and are reorganized within one another, a world within a world within a world.

Solo exhibitions include: *palace enterprise*, Copenhagen (2022), Kyoto Art Center, Japan (2015); Tel Aviv Museum (2015); Raven Row, London (2009); Murray Guy, New York (2014, 2011, 2008, 2005, 2003); Group-exhibitions include Venice Biennale (1999, 2005); Sao Paolo Biennale (2006); Gwangju Biennale (2016); and FotoNoviembre Biennale at TEA, Tenerife Espacio de las Artes (2019).

Tapping of the Fox Sisters, 2010

Video

Rasmus Myrup

Rasmus Myrup (1991 in Copenhagen, DK) is a Danish artist, whose work seeks a synthesis of the big and the small. With roots in our belonging to the natural realm, Myrup investigates the big narratives of humanity's existence, evolution and history through the lens of small, personal and intimate emotions. Through his sculptures, installations and drawings, he seeks to understand other times, species and worlds – and in that way everything from Neanderthals to trees or folklore can provide new perspectives on our understanding of death, sex and power.

His recent solo exhibitions include *Folx* at Nicolai Wallner (DK), *Re-member me* at Jack Barrett (US) and *Homo Homo* at Tranen Contemporary Art Center (DK).

***The Faggot (Bøssen)*, 2021**

Mixed materials

Tora Schultz

Tora Schultz (1991, DK) holds an MFA from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm (2021). Schultz works with sculpture in feminist and minimalist ways, investigating the structural gender discrimination that exists in the world around us. In a play between materials, references to institutional design, and pop-cultural stories, Schultz makes us question these overlooked narratives. In 2021 she exhibited at Bizarro (DK) and SKF/ Konstnärshuset, Issues, and Tre Kronor (SE). Later this year Schultz will present her first large institutional solo show at O—Overgaden in Copenhagen.

Pinocchio II (1940), 2022

Blue linoleum, Red Linoleum, school locker, steel, strap-on painted bent pine

Lars von Trier

Lars von Trier (1956, DK) is a Danish director and screenwriter whose prolific career spans over four decades. His work is famous for bringing innovations into genres and technique, for its conflictual investigation of existential, social and sociopolitical issues, and for tackling greater themes such as mercy, sacrifice and mental health. Heavily influenced by Andrei Tarkovsky, Lars von Trier has a distinctive dark and pessimistic style. Having been through several depressive and alcoholic episodes himself, the characters depicted in his work are confused, grieving, depressive, nymphomaniac, violent or misanthropic. His style can often swing from great artistic surges (slow motions, majestic wide shots) to a very crude naturalism. He is a co-founder of the Dogme95 movement.

***The Idiots*, 1998**

Film

Knud Vesterskov

Knud Vesterskov (1942, DK) is a Danish film director who originally made his mark with a long string of experimental art films. He later wrote and directed two highly unusual hardcore pornography films, *Constance* (1998) and *HotMen CoolBoyz* (2000), both produced by Lars von Trier's company Zentropa Entertainments based in Denmark. Knud Vesterskov's career is the subject of Bent Staalhøj's feature-length documentary *From Scratz* (2002), included on the French 2xDVD release of *HotMen CoolBoyz*.

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