



COLLECTED MEMORY

MILLE KALSMOSE

COLLECTED MEMORY

MILLE KALSMOSE

SENAVISSEN
Posten

POLITIKEN

I feel lonely

POLITIKEN

Ekstra
Bladet

FORHALL

POLITIKENS HUS

SEBEN

BOOKS

M

Rådhuspladsen

when I cannot recognize myself

Ekstra
Bladet

POLITIKEN

POLITIKEN



BOOKS

BOGER

STREET



BOGER

NETO

SENDEBUD
44 92 92 0



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"Collected Memory finds a very strong relevance in the current context of the 21st century marked by the obsessive return of the figure of the social body, the collective body in the post-covid era."

Jérôme Sans, curator and artistic director





I feel lonely when I cannot recognize myself

Ekstra
Bladet

POLITIKEN

ABOUT COLLECTED MEMORY

*by Signe Cecilie Nørregaard Joshumsen,
Exhibition Director, Politikens Forhal
August 2020*

Mille Kalsmose provides space for the individual's personal story and voice in the exhibition 'Collected Memory', which can be experienced from August in Politikens Forhal and on light newspapers at central squares and traffic hubs in Copenhagen.

When Mille Kalsmose takes over Politikens Forhal, it will be with a large-scale installation created in brass and hundreds of neatly folded paper pages colored in a deep red color that leads our thoughts to an archive or a library. Here, the public is invited to share personal stories, which are archived and disseminated via the house's light newspapers at Rådhuspladsen, Nørreport, Vesterport and Hans Knudsens Plads. They emerge as social spaces or as a medium created with the hope of comprehending human existence with a view to our fundamental loneliness and common connection.

By utilizing the immediate decoding and attraction of known materials and objects, Mille Kalsmose invites us into the works, not as passive observers, but as active participants in the work's creation and development over time.

Mille Kalsmose was born in Horsens in 1972. She has an MA from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and has also studied Bio Art Lab at SVA, School of Visual Arts in New York. She is based in New York and Copenhagen. Her work has been exhibited at e.g. ARoS, Aarhus Art Museum, Museum of Visual Arts in Santiago, Horsens Art Museum, UN in New York and The Free Exhibition Building.





I FEEL

WITHOUT

FAN

LONELY

UT MY

FAMILY











COLLECTED MEMORY, 2020
BRASS, CHINESE PAPER AND
NEWSPAPER
DYED IN RED PIGMENT
500 X 440 X 39 CM

BUILDING COLLECTIVE STORIES

by Jérôme Sans
Curator and Artistic Director

How to consider the status of collective memory in our present times, whereas all our social and human references are constantly changing or mutating? Today, we live in an “all- memory” society, where new archiving methods or techniques are invented every day in order to protect us from “memory lapses” ...

Collective memory is one of the Danish artist Mille Kalsmose's major concerns in her long-term project *Collected Memory*, a series of sculptural and participatory cabinets sculptural pieces made of recycled brass shelves containing a myriad of memories written on folded rice and newspapers. Thought as a universal library and a living and vibrant archive of Humanity, the work will be exhibited in various forms in a wide array of contexts around the world. Mille Kalsmose addresses the sedimentation of individual memories, referring to the idea that these are systematically influenced by the social frameworks in which they are embedded.

In Kalsmose's project, memories take the form of paper archives alluding to the very nature of one's identity as well as they are an extensible source to enable the restitution or at least the questioning of

collective memory on another level. Through these works, she continues her exploration of psychological mechanisms, identity, the relationships between the self and the others, as well as human existence and its place at the thresholds of earthly ecosystems. Her global work, a constellation of installations including video, photography and new technologies, touches the crucial issue of social cohesion which assumes a singular role in the heterogeneous contexts shaping our contemporary societies. The latest iteration of *Collected Memory* consists of two large brass shelves cabinets housing folded Chinese paper stained hand-colored red pigment giving the impression of drops of blood. These subtly pleated scrolls are as many memorial archives of anonymous individuals.

Both a sculpture and an open library, it becomes the miniaturization of an architectural project as an image of our living spaces, between promiscuity and intimacy. For Mille Kalsmose, it is a question of examining the nature of what constitutes identity, in contrast to the usual stereotypes about nationality, blood relations or gender. These thousands of pages relate stories, experiences and statements

written by the participants who share their words through a QR code and an online database.

The work enables interaction with the audience through a physical and emotional act of writing a memory that one wishes to archive. The work itself becomes a receptacle and a living memory shared with a larger community. It invites us to connect with others through remembrance and common intimacy. As each written contribution is saved physically, fixed on paper and digitally in a database that people from all over the world can access and interact with it in order to consult them or spread their own individual experiences. This way, the artist blurs the boundaries between handwriting and digital writing, the physical and the digital world.

It is thus possible to interact physically or at a distance with the work, online. Each week, a selection of writings is being published in the national newsnight papers, at Rådhuspladsen as an extension of the work into the social, public and media sphere where they are invited to share individual and personal emotions collectively, blending the “small history” to the “Great” History.

This work is a diary of the world, which is no longer a utopia but a reality. It is a recording of collective memory, each page being added to a larger body, enriching a broader and more universal history of humanity. Memory is often hidden in the inner depths of society, through successive generations. The presence of a collective memory within the same group presupposes that all its members are bound by a common history and identity. Collected Memory finds a very strong relevance in the current context of the 21st century marked by the obsessive return of the figure of the social body, the collective body in the post-covid era. Kalsmose’s work turns the artist’s egotistical gaze towards collective and collaborative proposals.

The project resonates in synchrony with the current world’s state which valorized the primacy of the collective entity as a bulwark against individualism. The notion of the social body through collective experience is more relevant than ever.

The individual must relearn to exist and vibrate through the crowd. In fact, the metaphor of the social body designates the interdependence of the parts within the social whole. But they depend on the needs that each one feels and can only satisfy by and with others as well as by collective action and the laws that govern us all as a single body. Nor can we reduce contemporary history to individual memory, the others form the basis of our memory.

Mille Kalsmose constantly refers to the representations that a group accepts and shares of its past, present and future: a collection of memories, conscious or unconscious, an experience lived/or mystified by a living collectivity. Multiple memories coexist, such as the memory of events and sensations that we do not experience, that are not of our time and yet, in some cases, would be self-activated or activated by us. Then, collective memory is never interrupted, always in action, it expands as the metaphor of life and of the artwork which is in itself a living body.

Moreover, the work also lies in the tension of the materials themselves, paper and brass, between fragility and solidity, immutability and malleability. Folded, sinuous, infinitely malleable, the papers represent individuals that are subject to social pressures when trying to maintain their individuality. This reminds in a way the works of blood from 1988 by

Felix Gonzales-Torres who referred to intimate memory with a significant fragility of materials as well.

Universally regarded as the fundamental symbol of the principle of life, with its strength, power and brilliance, red is the color of blood, which has all its symbolic ambivalence. This sanguine, organic color, crosses all her work as a red thread that connects and sews together each of the stories diluted on this ocean of pages. Carefully arranged, these overflowing archives could also evoke a plethora of official acts, a myriad of book slices in our libraries and the weight of paper's reams in our offices and homes. Inflexible brass frames are possibly associated with the idea of rigid standards and social norms that compose the framework in which the individual must find his or her place. In this sense, the installation also shows how the memory of people and events builds the space around us.

Collected Memory is a work that is silent from the outside yet filled with voices as painting has always been. Mille Kalsmose gives back to art this notion of an evolutionary window open to the world so as to continue the story. Each sheet of paper represents as many scenarios, like as many colors in a painting. The artist seems to give back to the work its orality through its multitudes of entangled and fragmented stories.





Each contribution is a piece of an individual story, a fraction of the collective history. Collected Memory is a permanent exquisite corpse where all the stories are connected; a simultaneously silent and loud landscape from which countless voices rise. The “exquisite corpse” is an experimental collective historical writing game invented by the Surrealists consists in composing a text or a drawing with several people without anyone being able to consider previous collaborations, in a similar process to Kalsmose’s one. Thus, the work unfolds from one story to another so that each individual case blends into the collective history, constantly reoriented, augmented, filled with new experiences.

In fact, Kalsmose’s project is being constantly activated by the participants in order to build together a story that is perpetually revived. All these fragments of stories with no beginning and no end make it possible to reconstruct as many stories where things can be grafted together, amalgamated with each other, to tell a new History in a changing world. The artist does not refer to the romantic celebration of History but to the semantic, semiological historic plurality that is always reinvented and rewritten. Each of these new disparate pieces creates a homogenous whole: it is the mystery of the work of art, as in Jean-Luc Godard’s endless films.

The work goes against the expected notion of commemoration associated with a ceremonial dimension, but instead reveals the condition of the social body, which is a living body, always in a perpetual state of movement. In contrast to the nostalgic, sometimes depressing character of a solemn ceremony, the work honours in the post-covid times the need to create new collective rituals from which an incredible and powerful positive energy emanates; Against collective amnesia, the artist wonders about how to tell the collective memory, immersed in the heart of the history that is just being written.

Far from being crystallized in the past, it is a continuous ongoing recording of today’s human memory. This fragmented, non-linear history does not end. Still in progress, it is continuously written and interpreted by several people through a plurality of readings and meanings.

Mille Kalsmose believes in the unifying essence of creation and art as an experience in its own right that links and connects individuals and stories together. Collected Memory is a story to be followed...





WITHOUT THE OTHERS, WE'RE NOBODY

by Emilia Van Hauen
Cultural Sociologist

Collected Memory can contain this vulnerability, by containing all the stories that people all over the world can tell.

Without the others, we're nobody. So concisely can mankind's history be penned. For without the community, the individual does not exist. What we all knew instinctively, COVID-19, and our tackling of its world-encompassing outbreak have managed to corroborate. Suddenly, we've been robbed of many of the groups that we – on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis – took for granted. Some people have experienced isolation, while others gathered even more closely together. But nobody remained unaffected. And now we're in the process of assembling the narrative about what happened and about who we are. Today.

We've chosen, in our modern society, to organize ourselves according to efficiency, optimization, maximization, and measurability, rather than according to friendliness, closeness, presence, and love. Despite the fact that countless studies (among these being the Harvard Study of Adult Development) bear out that good relationships are those that give

rise to healthy and happy lives, results remain our primary yardstick of success: measurable results that can be set into formulas and can be used to generate graphs. Ostensibly as part of an attempt to control the uncontrollable: namely, life. And this is supposedly why it appears so that never before have we seen so insanely many cases of anxiety, stress, depression, and insomnia, running across the different generations, while younger people, particularly, are grappling with self-inflicted injuries and loneliness.

For us, as human beings, we rarely understand ourselves best through Excel spreadsheets. Narratives are the currency that can be exchanged for meaning and accumulation. So that we can obtain ontological security, a sense of certainty about our own being, which our relationships and our contributions ought to furnish us with, as a matter of course, but which today has become a volatile capacity. And we're suffering. And longing.

After feeling ourselves to be a part of a meaningful, larger, and stable context. Once upon a time, we were eminently qualified members of the latently bound communities into which we were born, whe-

re the hierarchy, the rules, and status were given from the moment of our birth. This provided peace, a shared sense of strength, and social and creative constraints. Today, we're floating around in free neo-tribal communities, with rules that we are obliged to adopt on our own, with tasks that we have to create ourselves, and all this must be borne forth by a common trust in each other. This is beautiful. Wonderful. Creatively explosive. However, it's also very vulnerable and transitory.

Collected Memory can contain this vulnerability, by containing all the stories that people all over the world can tell.

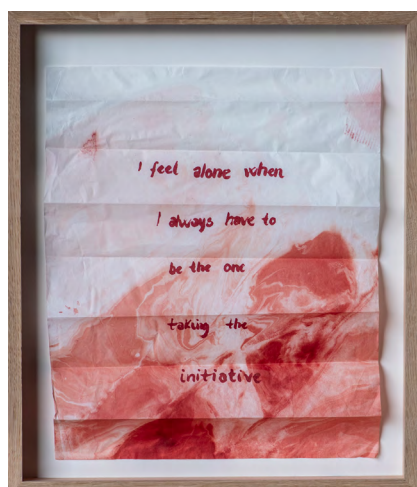
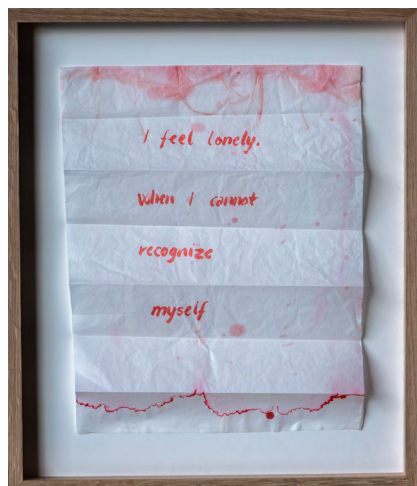
If we want to, it can become the domicile of the modern ritual, which spins all of our stories together into a common narrative about humanity, thereby becoming a library of compassion. A portal leading into the greatest longings, the most comprehensive rendition of this incarnation, and maybe even the next, so that the work is not only of this world but also spans across timelessness, because we humans are always, first and foremost, our relationships. Without the others, our energy would simply dis-

appear forever, out into the darkness. Here, however, it becomes placed inside, with love in the friable pages, and preserved for all times by the golden metal. Because relationships are the first thing we meet and the last thing we leave behind.

It would be fabulous to be afforded the chance to perform a sociological curating of the work, *Collected Minds*. On so many levels, it not only tells the story of modern people but also gathers together the whole history of wo/mankind, in a single work. And to be afforded the chance to articulate this in words – both by making use of the work itself and by making use of its words – in the context of the knowledge we possess about human communities would be something utterly special.



MILLE KALSMOSE, 2020
CAN YOU BE BORN LONELY?
PIGMENT, RICE PAPER, FRAME
50 X 43 X 5 CM





HUMANNESS: INNER STUDIES IN A COLLECTIVE CLOUD

Part of exhibition "Work It Out!"

Kunsten Museum of Modern Art in Aalborg

2022

Humanness: inner studies in a collective cloud is an interactive artwork in continuation of the Collected Memory series. This artwork is centered on questions of identity, the workplace and our role in the digital era. The work is part of the exhibition Work It Out! at Kunsten Museum of Modern Art in Aalborg.

Set on a dramatic and visually striking stage, Humanness: Inner Studies in a Collective Cloud explores through archives, physically and digitally, how we live in a dual existence of both of these worlds. The participants are the driving force in creating meaning and matter in the artwork, where they write their intentions on one of the thousands of individually folded papers in the archive, or participate from anywhere in the world, online through a link. The statements will flow through the screens put up at the site, and permanently stored in the digital archive of collectedmemory.world, a global platform of individual voices.

In her work Humanness: Inner Studies in a Collective Cloud Mille Kalsmose addresses the individual, who, now more than ever, exists in an interconnected state of relations. The work creates a space for deceleration, which allows the participants to centre their attention and reflect on their life. The installation creates a hub for journeys - new and old, internal and external - to cross and connect both people and diverse institutions.

"I believe that we, as humans, are made of a particular set of data, consisting of particles, that are constantly in flux. If this is correct, then we are living algorithms, and algorithms can be rewritten. Because I wasn't brought into this world with the algorithm of my dreams, I try to find the way to optimize, and rewrite, myself, so I can become a programme that inspires other programmes to find their dream algorithm." - Mille Kalsmose







MAGIC MATERIALISM

**Solo show at Martin Asbaek Gallery
2023**

'Magic Materialism' is fundamentally about seeing; seeing ourselves, seeing the world as well as seeing behind the reality that consists only of matter, and through our inner vision catch sight of the invisible reality, where I am part of we, and we are part of the co-thinking body of the world.

The solo show 'Magic Materials' at Martin Asbæk Gallery, presented works from Mille Kalsmose's recognized series Collected Memory, which is an on-going network of sculptural installations that

houses an archive as well as a database of the participants' ideas, visions and hopes. Collected Memory is an archive of humanity's shared visions, a world diary, our collective history.

90 6 May 19





COLLECTED MEMORY AT THE UN

**Solo show at UN Headquarters in New York City
2019**

The first work of the Collected Memory series premiered at a summit held in the United Nations Headquarters in New York in 2019. The Summit was an intergenerational platform where technology met humanity, providing pioneers, entrepreneurs, Fortune 500 companies, thought-leaders and youth to unite in action around the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

As the first contributors to Collected Memory, the summit participants could write down their visions and hopes for the planet, how they would like to contribute to them, and what it would take for them to achieve their hopes.

Collected Memory presents a body of artistic research connected to current science on consciousness and the enormous untapped potential that lies within our consciousness. The artwork embraces diversity and underlines the importance of a more sustainable, responsible and conscious way of living.

The idea is when people write down their vision for the world, fold the paper and put it back into the artwork, it activates them both physically and sensorially. In addition, the plan is for the collected data to be used in G20's inspiration bank where collected ideas and visions are aimed to inspire people to make a difference.





ABOUT MILLE KALSMOSE

Mille Kalsmose is a Danish artist based in Copenhagen and New York. Her work spans from images to sculptural pieces and installation works. Mille Kalsmose's work gives shape and materializes what is invisible to the eye – this is a driving force and an indispensable desire throughout the work.

Combining the worlds of physics and science with existentialism and the intangible, Mille Kalsmose creates artworks that resonate on a multitude of levels. She has worked with a wide range of materials and explores the architecture of memory, identity, psychological mechanisms, and spiritual life conceptions, thus creating a union of the unconfined in highly tactile manifestations.

Mille Kalsmose's art is most often characterized by the use of iron, metal, stones and other sources of materials that are reminiscent of the earth we live in, and the resources we have excavated and used to build our lives on. This thought – that we have been given the capability to create the world that we live in – is interwoven with the Anthropocene idea that we are entirely interconnected with the world. And not just with our relations and senses of belonging, but with everyone and everything created – both organic and man-made.

As a link in Mille Kalsmose's work, she makes a point of using found or recycled material in her art, such as the wood, clock-pendulums, rocks carved from Green Mining, and in some earlier work also paper, fabric and hide. The fact that we can see the geological striations on the pendulums made from core drillings, allows for a meta-perspective of time and the way the universe has been shaped, which directly translates to our interconnectedness with the planet and cosmos.

Kalsmose holds a MA from Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and has studied at the Bio Art Lab at SVA, School of Visual Arts, in New York. Her work has been exhibited at KUNSTEN, Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg, ARoS, Aarhus Art Museum; MAVI, Museum of Visual Arts, Santiago, Chile, La Virreina, Centre de Imagen, Barcelona, Catalunya; ITAMI Museum, Hygo, Japan, Horsens Art Museum, Fundacion Valentin de Madarigada, Andalusia, Spain, The Free Art Center, Denmark among others.

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