

MAGIC MATERIALISM

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MAGIC MATERIALISM

Magic Materialism is based on Kalsmose's distinctive artistic expression, defined by philosopher and writer Ole Fogh Kirkeby as "magic materialism". With this concept, Fogh Kirkeby describes how we can exist fully by understanding ourselves as not only 'matter', but also by bringing our extended, multi-dimensional and connected self into play.

"I believe that the biggest breakthrough of the twenty-first century is not going to be within new technologies, but through what it means to be human." "We now know how to measure the electromagnetic waves or the frequencies that we transmit from our body, with the most significant field being the heart and then the brain field, and it is especially through learning how to navigate that electromagnetic field on a more conscious level that we fulfill our human potential." - Mille Kalsmose

Through the use of industrial and archaeological materials, such as concrete, paper, brass, gold, and

crystals, *Magic Materialism* insist on the inherent beauty of these materials, but it also brings to mind the alchemical process in matter and in the world around us: The concrete undergoes a transformative process in the way it goes from liquid to solid state, found objects are given new life and purpose, and the quantum physical properties of crystals lead energy between particles, organisms - or individuals.

The body is a material that holds the same potential for transformation and refinement as these materials, the same inherent beauty and magic, the same gold that can be activated through the alchemical creative process, making it possible for us to transcend and become unique creators of ourselves and our surrounding environment.

"I can't see myself" appears repeatedly in a voice-over, a statement, which emerged before Kalsmose during hypnosis. Both physiologically, as Kalsmose

“ I believe that the biggest breakthrough of the twenty-first century is not going to be within new technologies, but in what it means to be human. ”

was in a changed state of mind, but also philosophically and spiritually. Because if you can't see yourself, how do you find out who you are? Kalsmose explores this sense of blindness by connecting with her own as well as our collective history. This has resulted in the series *Universal Blindness* and *Golden Blindness*, which consist of paper and concrete works, each bearing a statement printed in Braille. The concrete blocks appear familiar, as architectural reminiscences from previous empires, and at the same time as blocks of knowledge, outside of time and space.

The architectural references are also present in Kalsmose's crystal tower, consisting of purple, yellow and green crystal rods in different shades, all connected to an overwhelming structure in brass. Kalsmose describes the tower as a way for her to grasp the connected self. The work represents the crystals' ability to connect organisms or individuals, as described in, among other things, quantum

physics. The artist is particularly concerned with their properties in relation to moving energy between particles, and from this perspective the work explores an activation of our potential and how we can reach beyond ourselves by going into ourselves.

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.

Collected Memory is an ongoing, interactive network of sculptural installations. It houses an archive as well as a database of the participants' ideas and hopes. It is an archive of humanity's shared visions, a world diary, our collective history, and is a part of *Magic Materialism*.



MAGIC MATTER

THE MAGICAL CREATOR

Written by Helena Kalsmose, Cand. Mag., Founder NEW Creator Coaching & chosen sister

There is an intense activity in Mille Kalsmose's workshop. Chaos, some would say. No apparent agenda, everyone seems to be working on random, fragmented tasks all around, a loose end they've thrown themselves into, perhaps remembered in the last minute, while topics of conversation change arbitrarily according to which idea seems most top of mind at the moment.

In the same way, the presence of artist and assistants is also fluid, as if they flash and beam themselves from one room to another for no apparent reason, crossing each other, straddling concrete blocks and rice papers in beautiful colours between

boxes with indeterminate contents, tools, old and new, finished and unfinished works, piles of gold leaf, brass chains, drying racks, tables with overflowing surfaces, computers, crystals and myriads of things everywhere.

Mille is sitting on the floor, dripping colours in shades of blue, green and purple onto a series of papers as we speak. I met her 21 years ago, when she was in the midst of shaping her life as an artist and have followed her with interest ever since, almost studied her way of creating - not just art - but her life. Therefore, I also know that beneath





“Activating one’s inner alchemy is magic materialism. And the person who transforms herself from being a creation into becoming a creator engages in Magic Materialism.”

this apparent chaos runs a strong stream of focused energy carried by everyone and everything on the scene. There is something that must come out of all that activity, something that the artist has in mind, that she breathes and lives for - something that will be created, but that no one can yet see.

And precisely seeing - or not being able to see - is one of the main themes in the exhibition *Magic Materialism*. Most clearly for me in the work *Golden Blindness*, a series of images with gold leaf and braille, i.e. golden braille.

Refined materials

I have heard her talk about gold leaves many times, as something she almost longed to work with, but until now I have never asked what it actually means to her.

“It is that thing about alchemy, the refinement of our humanity, which requires us to get behind what we think is reality. Reading with the fingertips is the realization that we are blind, an acceptance that we basically cannot see ourselves and that what we see as the real thing is a veil.

Braille is a way of starting over, starting blind and having the will to start from scratch again to learn about reality, exempt from everything we have experienced as reality up until now.”

“When we grope forward blindly, we gain access to the parts of ourselves and the connectedness that we don’t see when we look outside. We have to trust what we don’t understand, so it’s about accepting our blindness and letting it be a starting point for the journey into our magical nature.”

“To me, magic is everything we have access to that we don’t immediately know we already have as something natural within us. The magic is inherent, but we have to unlearn something to use it. It is very difficult to navigate because there is no manual, we have to use our inner sensations and accept that it is the new way forward.”

Magic Materialism is about the possible refinement processes that make materials and people magical. She invites us into a plentitude of works that reflect her love for materials in which she finds beauty, regardless of origin.

Industrial waste materials are made into something just as beautiful as gold. The alchemical process is pervasive, as if everything she touches turns to gold. She finds the inherent resources in everything and everyone and turns them into magnificent works that point to our own as well as the built-in ability of materials to transform, the alchemical process that happens when we bring out good qualities in ourselves and others.





The use of gold leaves in parchment-thin sheets emphasizes how vulnerable it is to trust - and to go with - one's inner sensations, but also that the path to the inner gold goes through what we cannot see.

Finding the gold

In Milla's works we get a glimpse of the inner invisible processes. For example, in *Universal Blindness*, which consists of a series of concrete blocks, some with golden dots, which look like an enlarged sequence from Braille. The gold in the braille works, *Golden Blindness*, where we were taken behind the physical sight and presented with the value of our blindness, has now been given a body, a very down-to-earth size that can be touched. The small golden dots almost seem like a shining path, as if it says look, here is the way forward.

We know concrete as an industrial material, as the foundation of a construction; something found in the vast majority of homes and buildings; a universal material, and one that follows a transformative process from liquid to solid state. A clue that we all possess the transformative creative ability, it is not reserved for a small group of creatives, this is something universal and essential in all people - a potential we all have - to become magical creators.

From the concrete cubes, the gold slowly trickles forth from somewhere inside, directing attention into the body as the place where the magic resides. Slowly the old material transforms into a new, more luminous material. Slowly we are refined as we grope forward and follow the inner path.

The refining process of alchemy is actually an in-

ternal process that takes place in our bodies. And the body is a material that holds the same potential for transformation and refinement, the same inherent beauty and magic, the same gold that can be activated through the alchemical creative process. The phone rings, she has to pick it up, and suddenly the new assistant is at the door and has to be put to work. We have to take a break.

In her workshop, you have to let go of the “how” and stick to your “what”. You have to let go of the external control as best you can and always stick to the internal goal - what is it that wants to be created? And then you have to hold on tight when the magic takes off. Because if you are able to go with the flow here, then you enter a field with many different people, ideas, elements and individual parts all part of an alchemically connected process, which move with a great centripetal force towards the manifestation of the creator’s inner vision, the original spark in the artist from which all choices are made.

The blind process of the creator

As an artist, she creates from an inner sensual vision, an imperceptible intention that, when she goes with it, is reinforced by bodily, sensory, linguistic, intellectual, psychological, spiritual, relational and material processes that give birth to works that she herself had not seen coming. Works that insist on being co-created in a state of “blindness” on her part, but also with uncompromising consistency when it comes to the inner vision and intention. And this does not only apply in art or

the creation of other things, projects, companies etc., it also applies in life in general. I learned that by watching her when she chose the artist’s path. Back then in the beginning she didn’t have much from which to navigate. She didn’t have much around her in her outer world to grab hold of, so instead she let herself be grabbed by something inside that spoke to her through sensations. Sensations that she confirmed with action.

She took off her wristwatch and threw away her purse in order to abandon the old order structure of a life governed by external vision, external time and external values in order to better open up to her inner vision and focus her energy in her inner intention - to learn all she could about art and about being an artist.

She chose to make art and to let art shape herself and her path in life. For many years it was a form of survival and an attempt to find methods that could help her through life. From the painting and the psycho-social works of action around the creation of family relationships (of which I myself am a part of), she went into a larger study of time and that which extends beyond the individual person and the body’s thinking. And it is clear that in *Magic Materialism* she stands on a foundation of personal transformations through her previous works.

For example in *The Shape Of Us*, where she examined materials such as Canadian drillings from ancient rocks that have existed here on earth for infinite ages, long before humans were here. Here she could find and place herself in a larger context that goes far beyond the psycho-social reality,

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It seems that through her work with materiality and all of their embeddings, compressed through time, she found an inner language. As if the materials showed that deep in the consciousness of the body lies access to the wisdom of all times about ourselves as human beings. What it really means to be human. And that it is through transcending the body's time itself that we find our potential as magical creators.

**- Helena Kalsmose, Cand. Mag., Founder
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beyond the time that governs our bodies' limited thinking on survival.

It seems that through her work with materiality and all their embeddings, compressed through time, she found an inner language. As if the materials showed that deep in the consciousness of the body lies access to the wisdom of all times about ourselves as human beings. What it really means to be human. And that it is through transcending the body's time itself that we find our potential as magical creators.

The human as magical material

Perhaps that is why there are giant crystals in various shapes and colours floating around the tables in the workshop. It almost seems like a natural extension of the studies in time that she has chosen to work with a material such as crystals, which can also be shaped over millions up to billions of years.

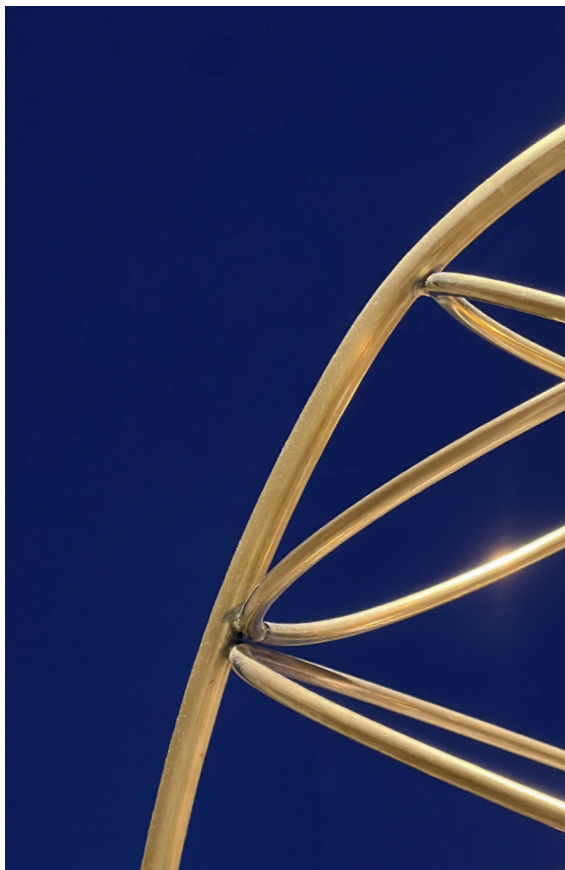
Because although crystals are given many attributes in different contexts, in Mille's hands they become what they are, a material just like other

types of stone. A material that points to the atomic structure and the quantum physical reality behind everything. Furthermore, as a stone, fluorite is a semi-precious stone that is found everywhere in the world in abundance and, like the use of concrete, points to the common rather than the rare.

She is particularly interested in the ability of crystals to conduct energy between particles. Purple, yellow and green crystal rods in various colour combinations on the sculpture *Magic Matter* are connected like elongated arrows that both point for- and backward, to a sumptuous human-sized brass tower.

The work suggests the properties of crystals to connect particles, organisms or individuals as it can be seen in quantum physics. For instance in the double split experiment where we activate potentials with our consciousness, where something new happens when we have an active intention.

The use of crystals points into the activation mechanism and possibility that lies hidden from the eye in our innermost nature. Where we ourselves become the tool that makes the new happen.



In that perspective, the sculpture becomes a monument to human architecture in its expanded, multidimensional nature, our own potential as magical matter and technology.

And then we are back at the starting point. That we are more than what meets the eye. That there is gold to be found beyond the physical sight which can only look at what is already created in the past. That we paradoxically reach beyond ourselves by going inward to find the gold. That the refined man must break out of the prison of apparent reality in order to be able to stand in his natural connection to others and contribute his gold in an intentionally created community. This is where the connection is magical. And this is where we arrive at the crowning work, *Collected Memory*, that lifts it all into our experienced reality. Because how do we activate this magical nature and connection?

The activation of human potential as a creator

Collected Memory is an interactive work that collects experiences from people all over the world both digitally and physically as a kind of open global workshop, where participants have an active

role by contributing individual statements that are archived on folded rice papers, a left over material from the printed press.

The work was first presented at the UN headquarters in New York and has since, among other places, been exhibited in the lobby of Politikens Hus in Copenhagen connected to the news lightboard in the city square, Rådhuspladsen.

The interactive work can be repeated with different groups and in different situations in different places with different themes and thus presents a kind of formula with a built-in principle of infinity that can also be found in the nature of mankind.

In relation to *Magic Materialism*, the work asks:
When have we succeeded in following our inner sensations, gut feeling or intuition despite what seems logical or impossible?
When would we wish we had done so?
What would life look like if we always did that?

The individual statements on the completed papers are then filed side by side in the work's brass frame, which either hangs on the wall or stands as a book-

case in the room. Again, an architectural technique that coordinates our consciousness and shows us that we create the world together.

But from which consciousness do we operate when we co-create? From the limited survivor self in our body-time or from our magnificent creator self that transcends time and space? From the lead or the gold in ourselves?

Mille invites us to actively meet our creator-self and contribute with our individual gold while she orchestrates a mass activation of our co-creative potential based on a kind of architectural logic.

In this way, *Magic Materialism* becomes a movement that focuses on the evolution of a new co-creative-conscious human being who can bring his or her own expanded, body-reflective, inner sensing, multidimensional and connected self into a common moving collective. But it presupposes an activation of awareness and contact with our inherent beauty and wisdom, an awareness of ourselves as the creative technology, our super-humane qualities that go far beyond the artificial intelligence of the digital man based in the past.

Her works draw the magic within ourselves, into the body and point out that there is something inside all of us of great value that lights the way when we cannot see it. Following that path with love both for what is and for what can be, opens the magic in man. When we become conscious creators in everything we interact with it's not just the creative process that can be a chaotic affair, it also applies to the life process itself. And it is not only artists who can create and work like this. Everyone consists of matter and being and can use their body's magical potential.

With this exhibition, Mille focuses on the gold we all share, our creative abilities and how we can acquire and activate our own magical nature. Like pearls on a string, the works represent different perspectives in a possible human architecture, man after the post-human and digitized, as a formula for being human and the built-in potential we have to become the most ground-breaking form of technology in the future.

Activating one's inner alchemy is Magic Materialism. And the person who transforms himself from being a creation into becoming a creator engages in Magic Materialism.





GOLDEN BLINDNESS

YOU ARE WHAT YOU SEE

Written by Peter Brinker, Ophthalmologist

An eye has 126 million pixels. The best cameras have 17 million. The 126 million pixels in each eye receive an image of the world in a 180-degree field of view. The images in the eyes are converted into electrical impulses, which are sent to the brain, where the image is restored in the posterior cerebral cortex. The images reappear almost completely equivalent to how they originated in the eyes, after which the images are made conscious in the other

part of the brain. The eyes are thus a forward-looking camera, and the brain is what we actually see with. There is thus a big difference between what you see and what you experience when you see it. As shown by compared witness statements where individuals have seen the same thing but perceived it differently. The physical precision of the ability to see is very high, but the ideas you form about what you see are coloured by the knowledge you



have about what you are looking at. Including prejudices, preconceived opinions, repressions, phobias, anxiety, antipathies, sympathies and much more (“what you see is what you are”). And the strange thing is that the subjective experience of what is seen is considered more real than reality.

In this way, our perception of reality is at odds with what we actually see. This phenomenon is called an illusion or a deception of the senses. You believe more in the illusion than in what you have really seen. This phenomenon is something that i.a. has been mapped within aviation medicine, as it has resulted in several plane accidents over time because pilots have believed more in their own senses or interpretations than in the factual reality. Re-interpreting reality based on one’s own subjective notion is a consciousness phenomenon that arises in one’s subconscious.

Psychological tests have shown that something you only see for, say, a tenth of a second immediately

triggers a visual illusion, which is decoded through the aforementioned reasons.

You want to see something other than the real world. Under normal circumstances, numerous illusions will arise throughout our journey, which, however, are quickly corrected when you have to deal with reality – for example when you drive a car. Numerous illusions pass by unnoticed because we cannot register and correct quickly enough when the subconscious sends images up into consciousness.

An easy way to decode subconscious errors is by observing the face of others. This very quickly deposits an experience of reality in the observer through an interpretation of the observed person as being worried, fearful, angry, depressed, surprised, full of expectations, introverted, secretive, etc.

It goes without saying that this interpretation of other people’s facial expressions has nothing to do with the observed person, but only originates from the observing person’s subconscious. And since



80% of all communication is non-verbal, there is ample opportunity to interpret what we experience based on our own imaginary world.

Almost all conscious thinking is related to the sense of sight, and here, art-viewing occupies a special position. We have a visible object that gives off an impression that is immediate, but later something indeterminate is deposited, something that colours the impression. If we try to approach an understanding of this magical indeterminate factor that makes art art, we move into the unknown landscape of the human consciousness. A place that looks at art with different eyes than the physical ones, but where you consider the impression you got of the work through an inner sense of sight.

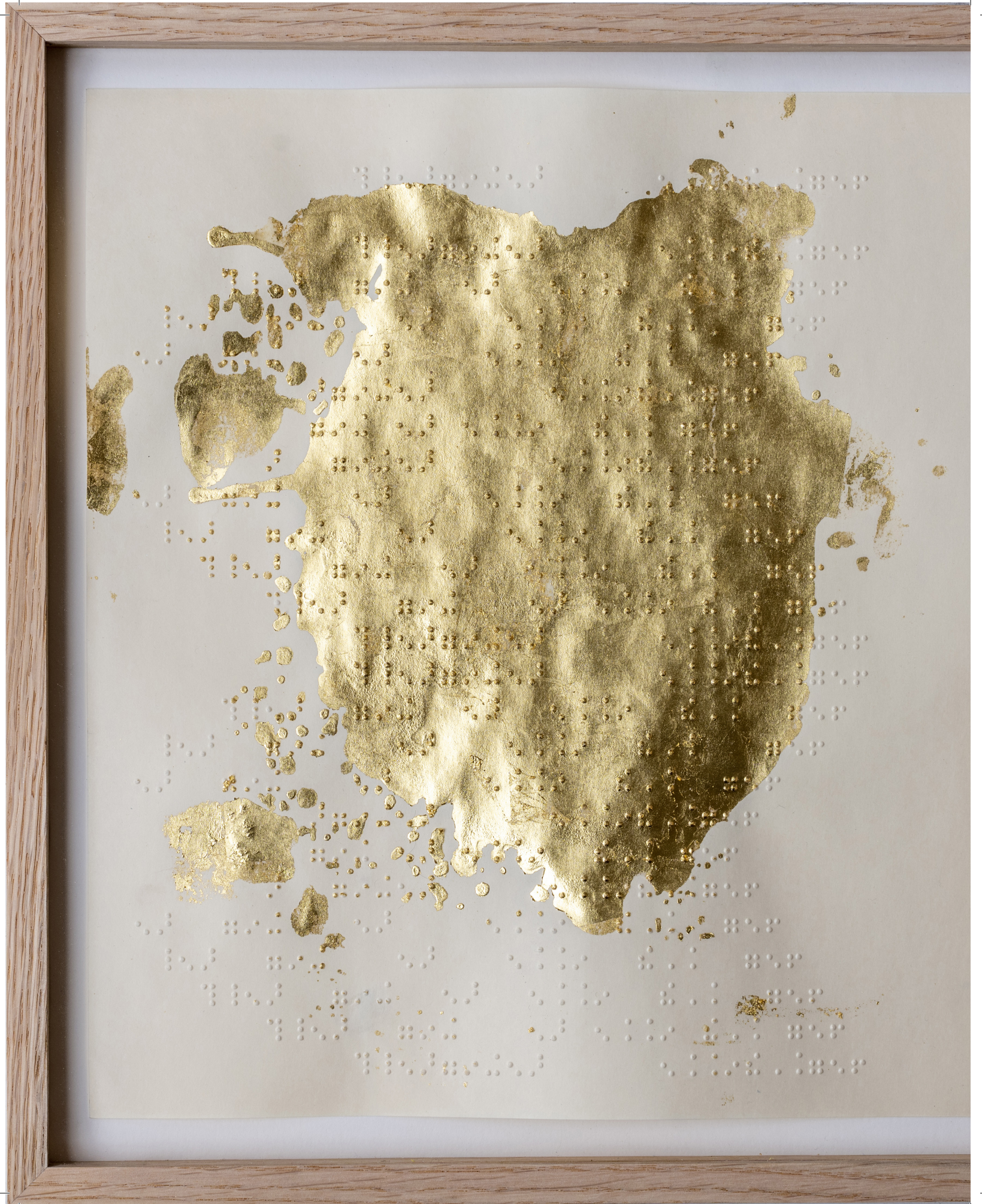
In Mille Kalsmose's new work, this inner viewer of the artwork has been named *Golden Blindness*. We consider a physically manifested form or image, where the physical itself expresses something that is difficult to put into words, but which feeds

our subconscious towards being attracted to the object, whether it is a painting or a sculpture. Who would have thought 500 years ago that the Mona Lisa would become the world's most expensive and most reproduced picture, or who would have thought that Mark Rothko's black pictures, which everyone thinks they can imitate, have ended up costing tens of millions.

The real artist, and the real works, often select themselves over time when enough people have viewed them. But the artist must be considered to have a special feeling for this unconscious factor, which is art, so that the artist through the material can produce the impression that causes the viewer to declare it art. With this we can add a new concept to art, namely that there is a magical factor in matter, which we will call magic materialism. With these considerations in mind, one cannot differentiate what art is, one can only conclude that one is drawn towards the work of art by an undetermined, unknown, non-disputable factor.







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If we try to approach the understanding of the magical indeterminate factor that makes art art, we move into the unknown landscape of human consciousness. A place in consciousness that looks at the art with different eyes than the physical ones, but where you consider the impression you got of the work in your interior.

– Peter Brinker, Ophthalmologist

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BRAILLE ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
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UNIVERSAL BLINDNESS

THE GOLDEN BLINDNESS

Written by Ole Fogh Kirkeby, Writer & Philosopher

The golden blindness is the gift of all gifts. The immediate reality is communicated to us through the senses. Body and thought, language and world constitute an emergent unity beyond dualism. We see with our fingertips, and we feel the warmth and smoothness of the surface.

Beneath the workings of sight, lies a more fundamental relationship to the world, the human mole. Because we are not just skin that breathes, we are

skin that makes visible, audible, smellable, palatable, and not least, imaginable and therefore thinkable. Matter is a part of us, and we a part of it. When we touch the world, we touch ourselves. We find home because we are received.

Science itself (the Wenn telescope) questions The Big Bang, and perhaps because we can no longer use the known, earthly images for events, it gives

“...our capacity to transform our inner life to text is identical to nature's capacity to produce realms of sense in anything it generates, material codes to be read by the fingertips in analogy with the Braille Alphabet.”

way to other views of events, where all creation starts from situated interaction. Is it conceivable that we should return to our own matter, to the hands, and try to understand that all the spoon and all creation is a product of interaction, ultimately of matter with itself? The event creates because what is, is created by what happens and all creation is magical - 'Magic Materialism'.

There is just this “aber dabei” that digital reality drastically reduces the weight of movement and touch through the difficult-to-interpret multiplicity it refers to and the way in which the carnality of sensation is disenchanted. Virtual reality cannot compensate for this. There is thus a bad blindness. Sometimes it is associated with too good a hearing, or too great a tendency to reverberate. Weakness your name is the screen.

The Stoics spoke of *aproptosis* or *apropéia* as expressing a critical reflexive attitude that exceeded what we express when we fall into the common sense

mood. It is called “*aneikaióteta*”, and means “not to be misled by appearances”. This existential seriousness is anticipated in a materialism that takes matter upon itself, both the overpowering, destructive side, and its motherly, careful and welcoming side. But the overcoming of common sense can only happen in the event that knows itself as magical. When what happens ends up being about the infinite forces of matter, an ability arises in us to see through the unimportant. Touching the braille of matter guarantees us its truth, because this is an primordial script, a code in which the secret of the universe is chiseled out with the hammer of event.

So there is a blindness, ‘The Golden Blindness’ that makes one rich, caring and wise. This wealth grows out of the encounter of our fingertips with matter. Of course, as we meet the intrepid and as we let our hands see on our behalf, - hence the disenchantment name “Magic Materialism”.

Mille Kalsmose has also for a long time worked



within the framework of magic materialism, even if she at first identified herself with new materialism and made a unique contribution to its manifestation almost since the beginning of her career.

Kalsmose has developed several types of installations underlining man's inherent relation with matter as a virtual fountain of spiritual forces through a meta-sense manifested by the hand and fingertips (installation: *Universal Blindness*) pointing to cosmic relations. She operates inside an epistemological frame of vibrant and conscious matter (Installation: *Made in time*). She has also created the archetypes of our social existence through a setting of transparent figures made by iron and skin (installation: *Tribe – my survival*).

To Kalsmose being (“ousía”) is comprising and reconciling the paradox of pan-technologism, that everything, including us, can be conceived as technology, and hence, matter can be mastered by itself,

and this act of mastering, this cosmic happening, a real, magic eventing, is identical to the phenomenon of mind.

Taking the full step from the concept of a living matter implies a notion of collective or collected memory/subconsciousness. This is due to the facts that being alive means being creative, and being creative means to be occupied by life-force, spirit, or soul (psyche).

Mind is both individual and shared, and even the individual soul in its unique essence cannot be conceived as isolated. The infinite chain of interpretations created by Kalsmose manifest that. We are others, and we are otherness, hence, there is no fundamentally alien realm of being. Following this ideation Kalsmose has created a brass container consisting of shelves for everybody's memories, consisting of sheets of paper on which we are invited to write them down (Installation: *Collected Memory*) in collective reports.





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The way mind relates to itself is manifested in the alchemy of the Golden Blindness that makes us able to touch the bodymind, or the Epicurean phenomenon of “akatonomáston”, the secret place inside us where spirit and flesh, mind and matter, meet each other and make existence possible. Magic Materialism is Humanism.

- Ole Fogh Kirkeby, Writer & Philosopher

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This way of thinking is repeated in the mentioned installation *Universal Blindness* or *Golden Blindness*, because our capacity to transform our inner life to text is identical to nature's capacity to produce realms of sense in anything it generates, material codes to be read by the fingertips in analogy with the Braille Alphabet.

Through her installations Kalsmose underlines the fact that matter must be understood through forms shaped and created by a semantic or semasiological becoming which demands a leap: The sheer emergency of matter lacks the needed force to produce the images of thought. They must appear through the analogy of the body, and consequently through the working mind.

The way mind relates to itself is manifested in the alchemy of the *Golden Blindness* that makes us able to touch the body-mind, or the Epicurean phenomenon of "akatonomáston", the secret place inside us where spirit and flesh, mind and mat-

ter, meet each other and make existence possible. Magic Materialism is Humanism.

But what does Humanism mean? Its origin is from PIE *dhghem-, "earth", and *(dh)ghomon-, "earthling, earthly being", as opposed to the spiritual realm, it means matter. A human is organized matter, it is nature. "Nature" comes via Latin, "natus", "born", and "natura", "course of things", and comes to mean the forces and processes of the material world, and consequently the resulting order among living things, cosmos.

Humanism then is the term describing nature, confronting nature in the capacity of man. We have the first nature, forests, fields, mountains, oceans. We have the second nature, social organization, and culture including mind and technology. And then we have the third nature, the realm of the digital.

While the second nature masters the power to enchant, the third nature only retains the power to enforce, hence, it functions de-enchanting.

Plato interpreted this de-enchantment as a function of perception (aísthesis) without anticipation through knowledge (epistémē). Understanding would be deceived by phantasms (eikón and eidolon), and the way to genuine enlightenment blocked. The famous cave image of Plato from “The republic” depicts a universal blindness, because man being released from the cave cannot even stand the look of the real phenomena, to speak of the light of the sun.

Today we must be satisfied by the eikons and eidolons of the screen. Consequently, the world is de-encharnted when the relation to our flesh and to the substance of matter is being cut. However, the universal blindness is also re-enforced by common sense and its wealth of prejudices. We are misguided by appearances. Matter is deeply entangled with death. Death makes life matter, and challenges na-

ture to a resurrection in mind and technology. That is the magic of matter, the trick it plays on itself, to eventuate spirit.

When happening joins the forces of matter, we are forced to make appearances transparent. We thus transgress both the appearances of doxa and the secrets of nature by returning to matter in the capacity of matter, because we become able to read the Braille of nature by our fingertips. This writing is written in the true alphabet, an arche-writing, a code, in which the secrets of the universe and of our being is chiseled with the hammer of the event.

The Braille-cubes of Kalsmose are square lifebelts send to us from the future but shaped in extremely old matter already-always known to us.

This is the golden blindness, the antidote of universal blindness.





COLLECTED MEMORY

BUILDING COLLECTIVE STORIES

Written by Jérôme Sans, Critic & Curator

Collected Memory is a work that is silent from the outside yet filled with voices as painting has always been.

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.

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, 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.

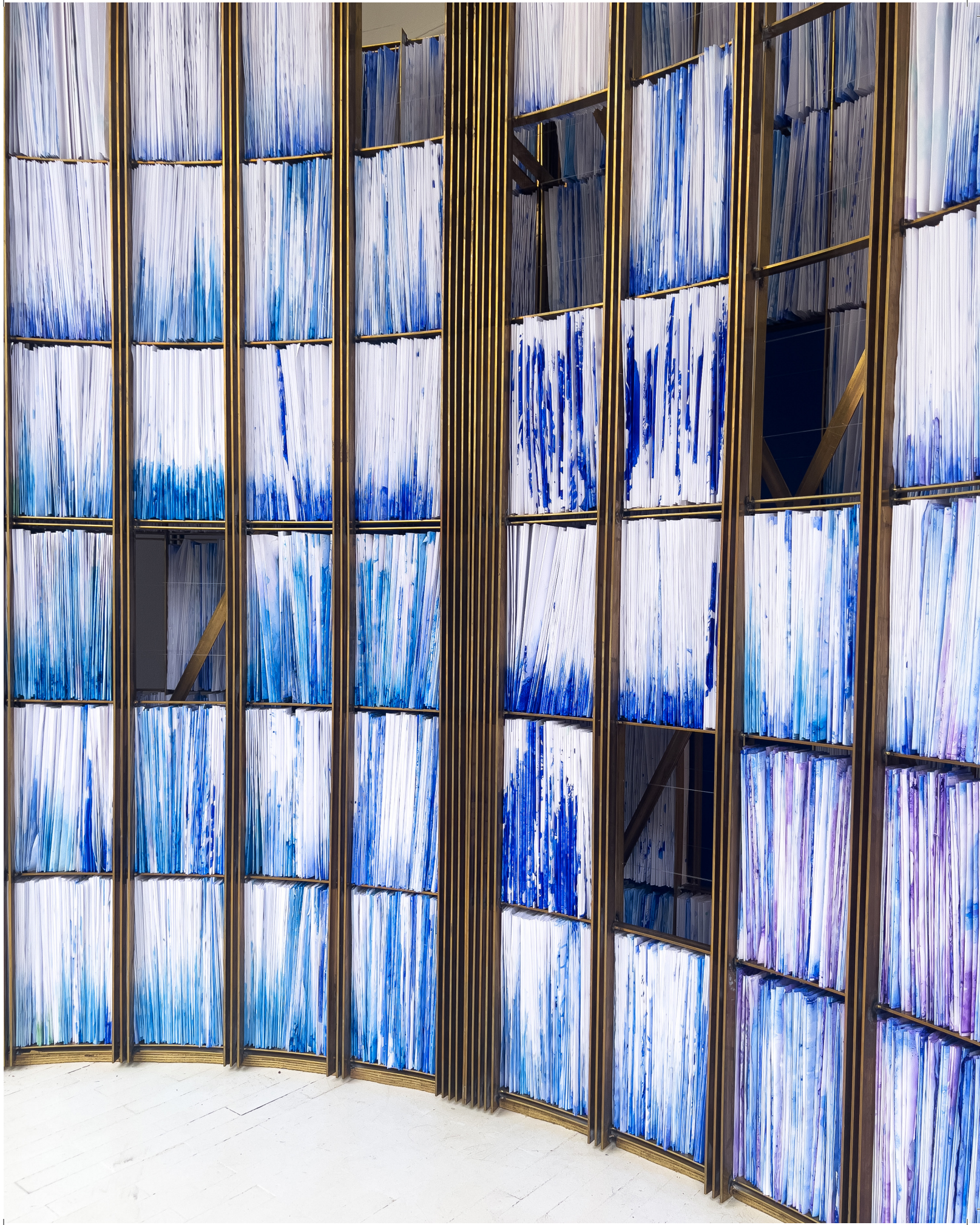
The latest iteration of *Collected Memory* consists of three large brass shelves cabinets that houses folded Chinese paper stained with hand-coloured blue pigments. These subtly pleated scrolls are as many memorial archives of anonymous individuals. Both a sculpture and an open library, it becomes the miniaturization of an architectural project as an image of our living spaces, between promiscuity and intimacy. For 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 on-line 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 and displayed at the national news light-board, located 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 valorizes 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.

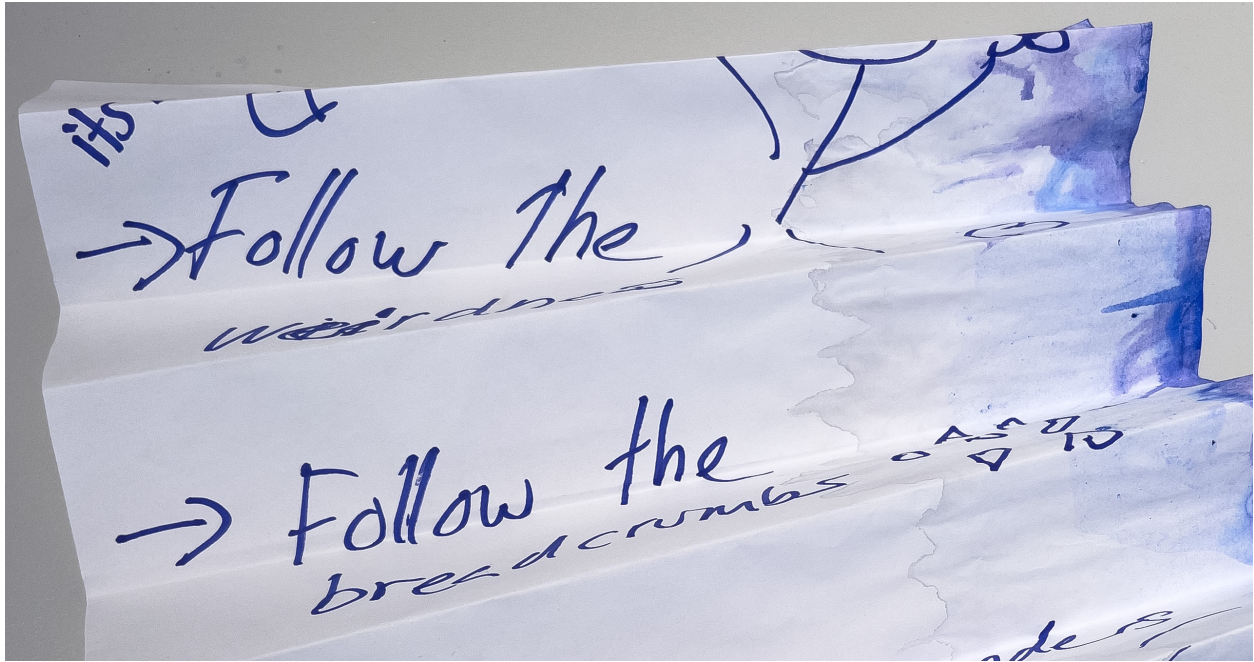
Kalsmose constantly refers to the representations that a group accepts and shares of its past, present and future: a collection of memories, conscious or unconscious, an experience lived/or mystified by a living collectivity. Multiple memories coexist, such as the memory of events and sensations that we do

not experience, that are not of our time and yet, in some cases, would be self-activate 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.

Carefully arranged, these archives overflowing with stories 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. 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 colours in a painting. The artist seems to give back to the work its orality through its multitudes of entangled and fragmented stories. Each contribution; 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.

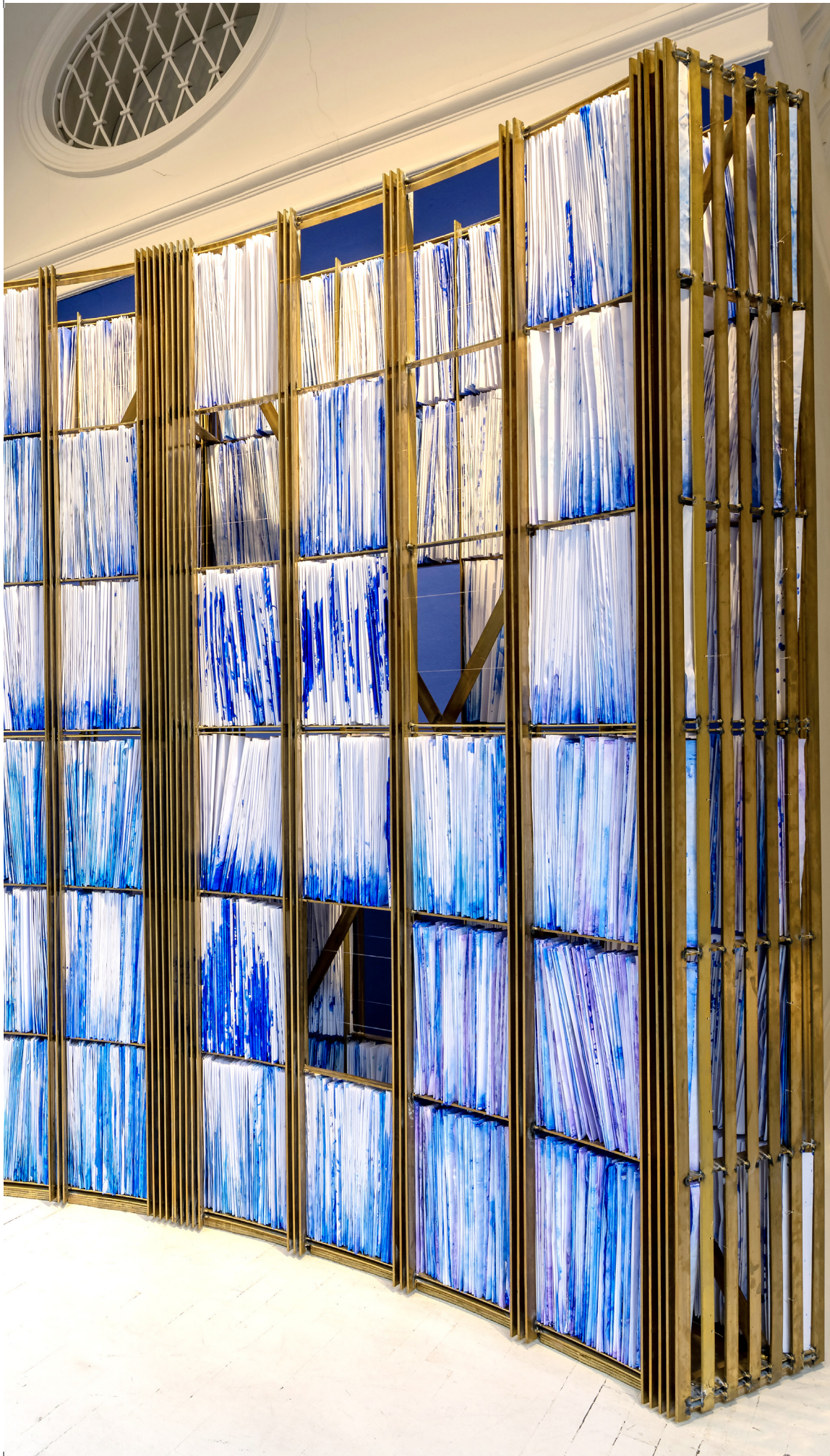
In fact, Kalsmose’s project is being constantly activated by the participants in order to build together a story that is perpetually revived. All these fragments of stories with no beginning and no end make it possible to reconstruct as many stories where things can be grafted together, amalgamated with 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 homogeneous 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.

Kalsmose believes that 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 ARE NOBODY

Written by Emilia Van Hauen, Cultural Sociologist

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, 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.

“Without the others, we are nobody. So concisely can mankind’s history be penned. For without the community, the individual does not exist.”

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

sion. 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 disappear 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.



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The work can be regarded as both an aesthetic work of art, a sculpture, but it can also be experienced as a living, vibrating archive of human memories and memories that manages to create and facilitate connections between people.

- Emilia Van Hauen, Cultural Sociologist

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ARTIST BODY VIBRATION INTERACTION TECHNOLOGY

Written by Julie Horne Møller, Museum Inspector at Horsens Kunstmuseum

With her newest project titled *Collected Memories*, Mille Kalsmose originaive entwines the artwork and its observer through performative processes. Viewing contemporary art, very often we find ourselves standing outside, we become spectators, mechanically gazing at the artwork. The work becomes the artist's imprint, which the viewers observe at a distance.

With *Collected Memories*, Kalsmose is able to take us a step further - the viewers move away from being passive observers and become active participants. The interaction between the work and the audience arises through the concrete, physical act of writing down memory and archiving it in the work. This interaction between viewers and the artist becomes extremely important since Kalsmo-

se allows the project to be free of interpretation and a predetermined context, leaving the work to the viewer. Thus the viewer becomes an essential part of the creative process and contributes to anchoring the work to its physical location and surrounding framework.

In Kalsmose's practice, one of the most important elements is the interaction between the body, matter, and the viewers, which is also clearly reflected in *Collected Memories*. The work can be regarded as both: an aesthetic work of art, a sculpture, but it can also be experienced as a living, vibrating archive of human memories and memories that manages to create and facilitate connections between people across the globe.



ABOUT

MILLE KALSMOSE

Mille Kalsmose is born in 1972 in Horsens, Denmark. She lives and works in Copenhagen and New York.

Kalsmose's work spans from images to sculptural pieces and installation works. For decades her work has suggested themselves as mental survival kits, introducing new ways of exploring and understanding human existence and togetherness. The works embodies family constellations or, most importantly, the relationships between the individual and the world.

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 autobiography with neuroscience, personal experiences with social inquiry, 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.

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 ARoS, Aarhus Art Museum, DK. MAVI, Museum of Visual Arts, Santiago, Chile. United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA. CCA, Center of Contemporary Art, Andratx, Spain. La Virreina, Centre de Imagen, Barcelona, Catalunya. ITAMI Museum, Hyogo, Japan. Fundacion Valentin de Madarigada, Andalusia, Spain. Horsens Art Museum. Den Frie Exhibition Center. Kastrupgaard Collection, and other places. Her work is collected in several private and public institutions.

