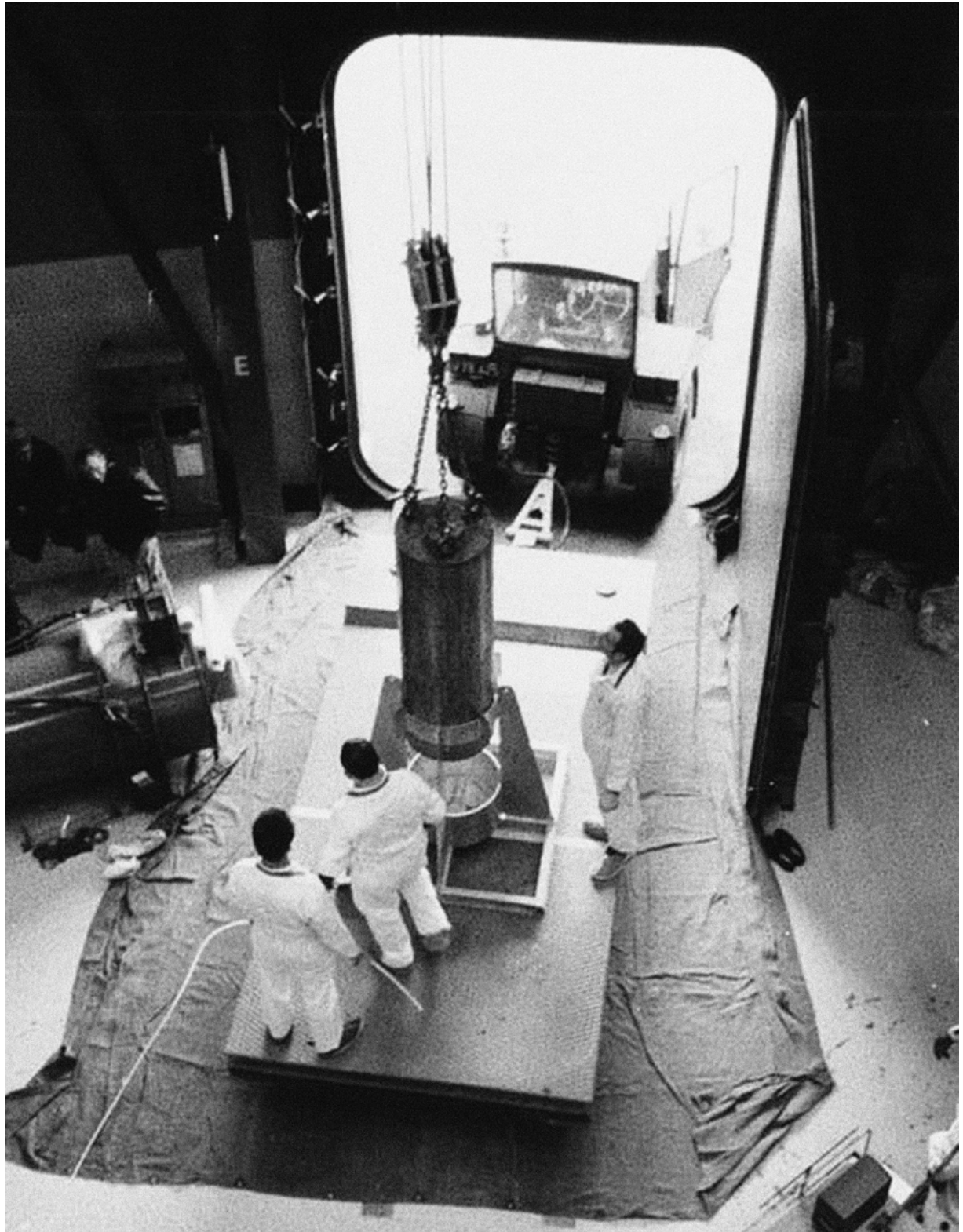


# SIMIAN



Kirstine Aarkrog’s exhibition *Risø* brings together two spaces that might initially appear disparate: the Danish nuclear research facility Risø and a therapy room of the kind we see in psychoanalysis. In Aarkrog’s imagery these two spaces share a formal likeness, and the processes with which they are concerned correspond logically: radioactive material implants itself in the body and affects it from within, as does psychological trauma.

Risø nuclear research facility was inaugurated in 1958 on a peninsula in Roskilde Fjord, and throughout the following decades the centre served as a hub for research in the peaceful utilisation of nuclear energy. Three reactors were built, and enriched uranium was flown in from the US. Meanwhile, the Cold War unfolded in the form of an arms race in the East and West, and the superpowers’ nuclear bomb tests were detectable as radioactive fallout everywhere on the planet. Some of it landed on pastures and was consumed by cows that produced radioactive milk, and radioactivity could subsequently be measured in small concentrations in baby teeth.

Kirstine Aarkrog’s maternal grandfather, health physician Asker Aarkrog, worked at Risø from its founding until his retirement in 1999. Her grandmother was a psychiatrist. The nuclear family (a term that was introduced in the same period) lived in employee housing on site, and Kirstine’s mother’s baby teeth were used in radioactivity research.

The threat of a nuclear third world war loomed large. In such a war, the entire globe would be contaminated. People prepared in several ways – at Risø, among other things, by developing a method for purifying milk contaminated with radioactive material. The purification of milk was a balancing act: if purified too zealously, you risked losing the milk’s nutrients, thus rendering it ineffectual. Conversation between Kirstine Aarkrog and her grandfather about the purification of milk forms the basis for the exhibition.

Milk – this miracle drink which builds up children’s bones and, in doing so, maintains the body of society. In milk, the collective and individual are unified. What other invisible

entities flow through families along with milk? Which traumas are passed down from generation to generation, and which decay over time? And if radioactivity could be eliminated from milk with the help of chemical processes and instruments, could psychological trauma be treated in the same way?

The exhibition *Risø* resurrects Risø, this time as a research centre for trauma therapy. The instruments and protective gear used here have been developed with the aim of purging psychological trauma. An attempt is made to expel these invisible entities through physical experiments and mental games in the same precarious balancing act between contamination and nutrient loss as applied to milk.

The objective at Risø was to develop nuclear energy in Denmark, but public opposition mounted throughout the 1970s, and in 1985 the plan was abandoned. The facility continued as a research centre, and the dependable reactors attracted scientists from across the globe. In 2000, the biggest reactor was shut down after a suspected leak, and it was decided to decommission the facility. Risø was converted into an interim repository for radioactive waste, which will serve until 2073, by which time a final repository must be found.

Like at the original nuclear research facility, it is not only clean energy that is generated at this research centre for trauma treatment – there is also an accumulation of contaminated material that is passed on as a task for current and future generations to handle.

*Amalie Smith*

**Kirstine Aarkrog (b. 1986, Denmark) lives and works in Copenhagen.** In her work, she is occupied by the concept of human orientation in space, both physically and mentally. Aarkrog uses sculptural and functional objects to concretize fictions and unrealities with the body as a central element.

...But if I want to take radioactivity out of milk.

Yes.

How would I do that?

*Well you can do that in two ways. You can do it by having the milk in a big glass, and then you pour a little ion exchanger into the milk and stir it for some time, well should we say for about half an hour or something like that. All of these things are not accurate things because I cannot remember all those numbers. I cannot remember them.*

Do the numbers have to be accurate?

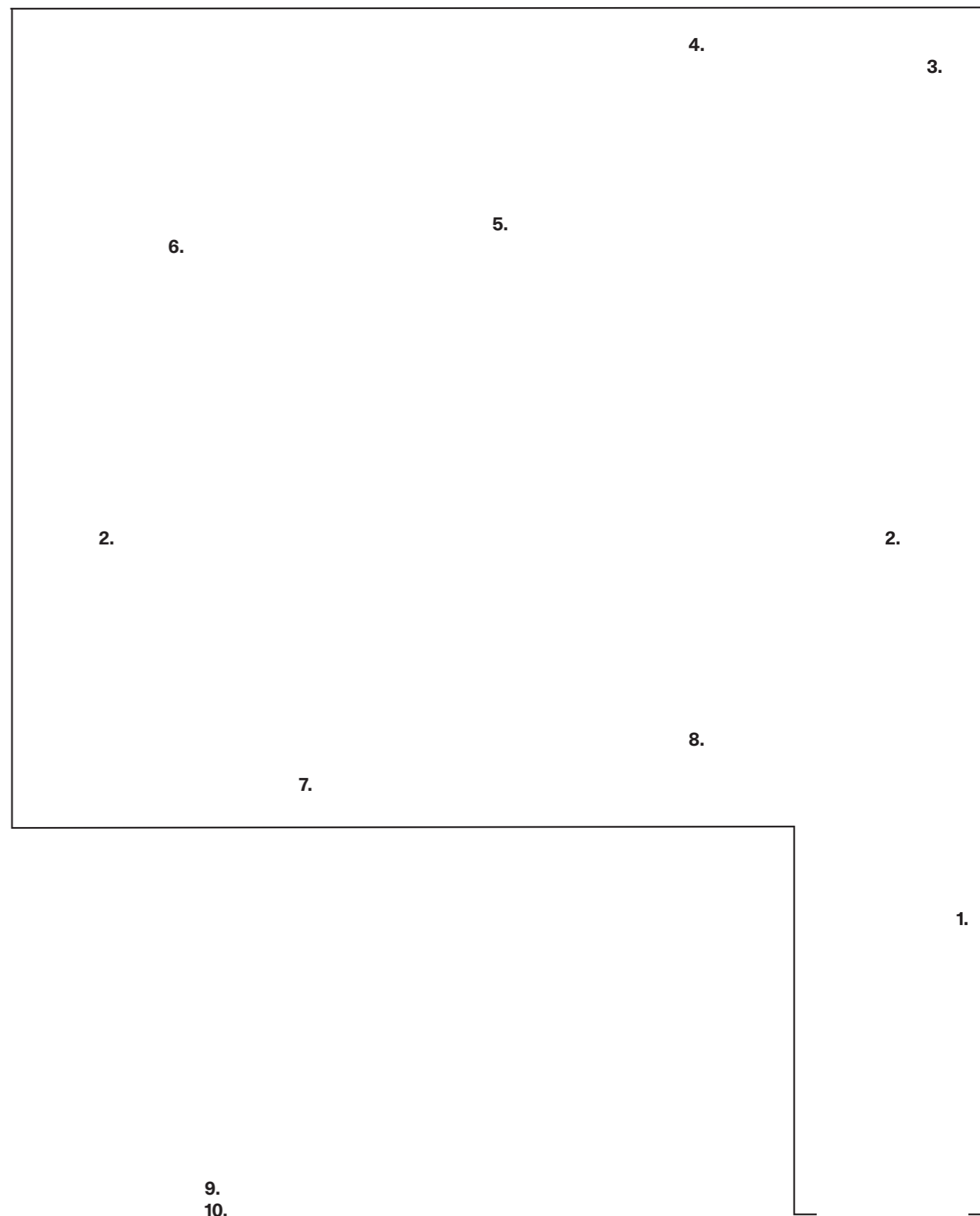
*Yes they have to be accurate because if you do it for too long, you may remove too much calcium from the milk and it may end up tasting unpleasantly. And there also has to be the correct ratio of ion exchangers to milk. This ratio you will have to calculate and test out. But it is the easy way to just put the ion exchangers into the milk and stir it, and then afterwards remove the ion exchangers through filtering, and you are left with the purified milk. That is quite easy. And the other method.*

Yes.

*It is a little more advanced. The method is that you have the ion exchangers in a long column and then you simply pour the milk through the column, the ion-column. And then when the milk comes out of the other end of the column there, then it has been more or less purified for its radioactivity. And there one can imagine these big industrial plants. If it really has to have a noticeable effect, you will need to run thousands of liters through.*



1. **Escape room, 2021**  
280 × 280 × 30 cm  
Painted steel, black MDF
2. **Devotion, 2021**  
140 × 140 × 60 cm, 120 × 120 × 10 cm  
Birch wood, larch wood, acrylic paint, foam,  
wool fabric, heat treated stainless steel, steel,  
magnets, acrylic, electromagnets, power  
supply, wire
3. **Sick belly shape, 2021**  
Silk knit, wool knit
4. **Do not leave me, 2013 (reproduced 2021)**  
160 × 50 × 1 cm  
Steel
5. **Ion exchange, 2021**  
62 × 62 × 212 cm  
Acrylic, porcelain, steel filter, steel, wheel, ion  
exchangers
6. **Gift, 2021**  
130 × 70 × 70 cm  
Plaster, heroin  
  
*The Danish word gift means poison; the  
English word gift means present*
7. **Traum, 2021**  
7.41 min  
3D video projection, acting by Danske Misse  
and Carlos, sound by Ane Trolle  
  
*The word trauma stems from Greek and means  
wound, and traum (German) means dream*
8. **Instruction / for use. The object is hollow  
and its upthrust force can carry and keep a  
human being fixed under water. The frame is  
attached to the neck and the object, floating  
in water, will carry the human being below,  
dead or alive, 2019**  
Dia 70 cm  
Porcelain, stainless steel, lacquer
9. **Untitled, 2021**  
120 × 120 × 1.9 cm  
Nine blocked windows, black MDF
10. **N·S·E·W, 22 of March, 2021**  
180 min  
Four German Shepherds



The exhibition is supported by Ragnvald and Ida Blix' Foundation, The Obel Family Foundation, Danish Arts Foundation, 15. juni Foundation, Augustinus Foundation, Amager Vest Lokaludvalg, Ørestad City Grundejerforening, Rådet for Visuel Kunst and Danish Art Workshops.

Works courtesy of the artist.

Thank you: Jan S. Hansen, Paweł Jan Snopek, Nina Schack Kock, Asker Aarkrog, Amalie Smith, Miriam Kramer, Ane Trolle, Sara Wrist, Anker Bak, Denice Klarskov, Markus Von Platen, Christian Vindelev, Toke Flyvholm.

**Simian, Kay Fiskers Plads 17  
2300 Copenhagen  
Denmark (DK)**

**Opening hours during exhibitions:  
Thursday, Friday, Saturday 12-17  
or by appointment**