

SIMIAN



I.

This show has changed many times, “changed” here as in unkept promise. Markus and I started our thread with everything in the mix, discussing a new movie about dealing with the gift of an acoustic guitar from a lover (“You always say you wanted to play more again.”), colleague (“Bring the band back together.”) or army sergeant (“He wanted you to have this, Sir.”) etc. It became clear that the budget for this even on a simplified level (cardboard sets) was nowhere near and would not come any closer. This changed the movie into the plan for a new animation featuring a walking stick with some sort of silver eagle as a handle/ knob and a constantly jingling bell walking in a landscape that they no longer recognize as their own (“Look what they’ve done to the place!”). This then merged into the project to work with industrial-sized kilns and produce a new set of ceramics on the island of Funen, where the globally acting brick producer Wienerberger agreed to let me work in their factory, featuring a 24/7 tunnel kiln that will never stop firing. I was generously equipped with clay, about a ton, and set up a workshop in the very back of the huge factory. The factory fires one sort of brick per week, for which the color of the week is set up and there is no alternative within this time, in my case the clay of the week was of a desperately hopeless brown. It was very nice to bike to the factory in the early mornings in late August, passing farms, pheasants, and sheep.

The work was also interesting as the clay is very coarse and far away from the artistic pottery zone that I set out to leave behind with all its carefulness, glaze, and somewhat meditative goals. Most of the things I built collapsed, and I would throw them back into the tub in the evening, clean up, and bike home to swim with Irina. Clemens joined for a few days and we built long sculptures that looked like rudimentary forms of accommodation, rain soaked and brown. The ones that did not collapse broke during drying/firing and we got only three sculptures out that look extremely old and weathered, possibly bits of decor for a facade of some building with official function near to the sea that no longer matters. There was a

bit of a relief there too, as the idea of handling the pieces of 300 to 400 kg of clay made my back hurt and I was investigating into lighter, tiny options and alternatives that need little drying time and not a forklift to handle. The anecdote goes on and eventually will lead to a show, some result of a meandering production. The attempt was or is to shift the way of working away from ideas towards an openness to impulses so flimsy, that it is difficult to say if they are suitable or supportive to any bigger project, like re-training yourself the sensibility to touch and to be touched.

II.

Within these two months in Denmark, shifting from expensive and somehow lopper-hungry city days, to the simulation of factory work in a rural setting by the Baltic Sea, the shifts were too abrupt for slow re-learning processes, too disruptive for that, structurally forced, more like trying to animate a patient no longer responding with electric devices, for weeks. This brings me to my grandmother who died in August at the age of 93 in a home near Kiel. My grandfather who died in 2008 introduced the idea first to be cremated and then dropped to the bottom of the Kieler Förde in an urn of pressed salt that would then dissolve. A plaqueless approach of double cancellation, definitely no horses, no servants, no lovers in that grave that would not form any soft bump with old oaks on top in any landscape anywhere. On that ship, I was trying to conjure some images of my grandmother, some link, some specific memory, but found not much. Suffering from depression and anxiety, she was treated with electric shocks in her twenties and I spoke about that sometimes, in a weird way of disease bragging, as if that would add deepness to my own CV. Major misunderstanding, dude, I thought when the foghorn in a feeble attempt of nordic-rebranding, tooted some neo-traditional sequence of nautical sounds.

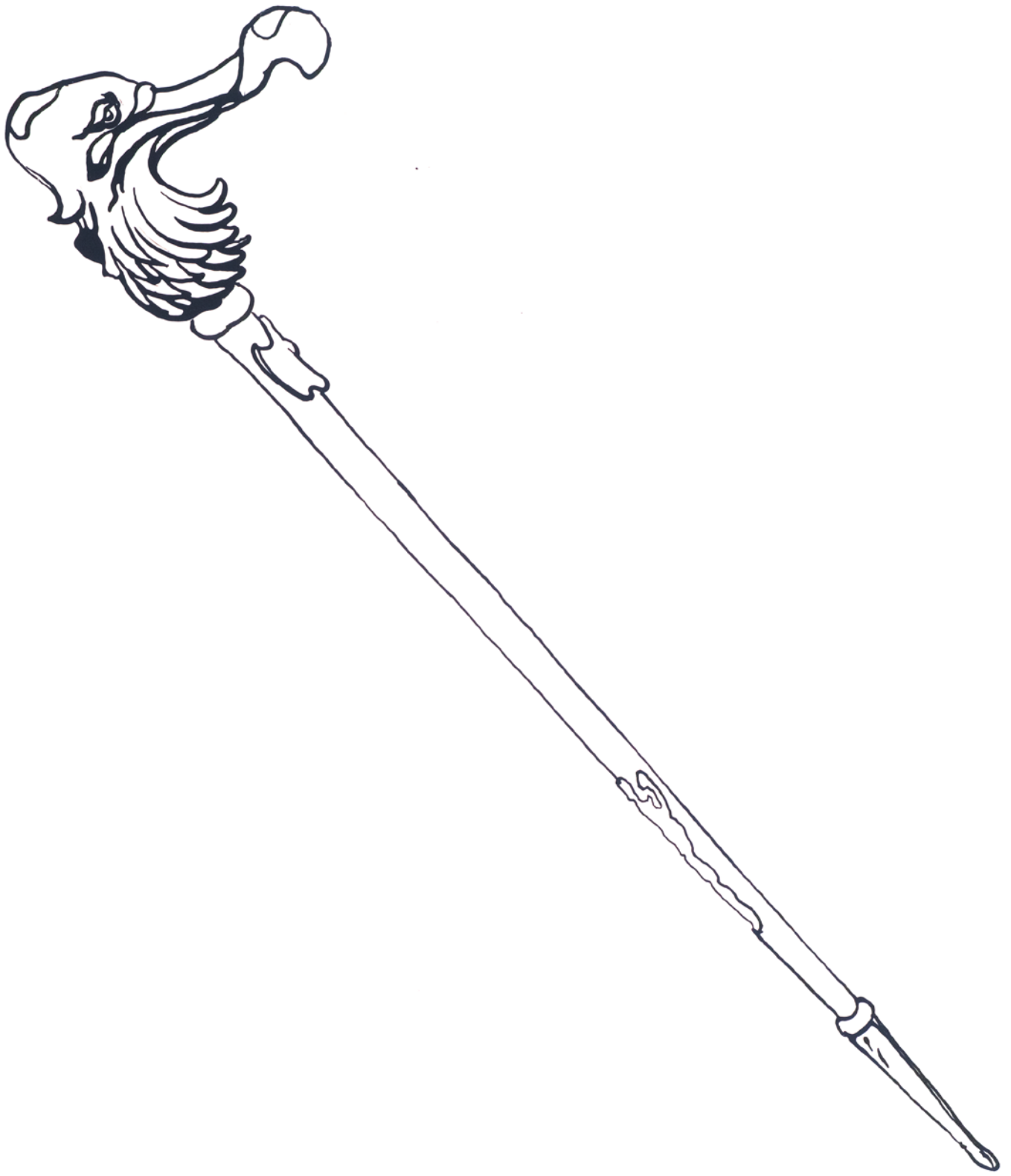
Electric convulsive shocks are still performed on patients today, and I have no idea what it actually is or does. But for me, through my grandmother and *One flew over the cuckoo’s nest*, it turned into that fearful, non-scientific horror story in which the fogs

are lifted by wrathful flashes of lightning send out by the god of Pull-yourself-together, which then enable a new start, a clean slate based on violence towards yourself. Without the need of sickness bragging, I can say that I am familiar with the longing to forcefully lift this or that fog as well as with the structural need of forced change of the self that come along with the seven dwarfs of discipline: ideas, projects, self-neglect, self-enlargement, self-shrinking, and loathing of everything (cramped facial expression dwarf with blue hat).

After the funeral, I tried to make it back to Copenhagen on the same day, but locked my keys inside my car on the Bauhaus home store parking lot in Kiel, and it took two hours and a mobile car mechanic to get going again. Night fell and I decided to drive the 40 minutes back to Eutin and stay another night there. The moon was very full and I turned off the car's headlights on the empty Autobahn, as it was so bright and the pale, soft light was very beautiful on the landscape so familiar to me. Me and my rowdy family travelled this very same road many times to spend a stiff Sunday at my grandparent's table, with everybody wishing to be somewhere else. I floored the gas pedal while cranking up *Gimme Shelter* in my Tesla. Of course not. Instead, I tried to understand the feeling of having buried a phantom, of somebody who was already gone before, a ritual lacking the actual person, the body, the memory. Instead it was a weirdly formal, tear free event, except for that one moment my uncle slightly sniveled when he himself was mentioned in the funeral speech. The phantom feeling wasn't only because of the dementia she was suffering from. Her ways for me always had a slight sense of disconnection or came with bystanderish feeling. After my grandfather died, she was medicated anti-anxiety medicine with strong side effects on short- and long-term memory and she chose angst free days over memory. Or so goes the legend.

(...)

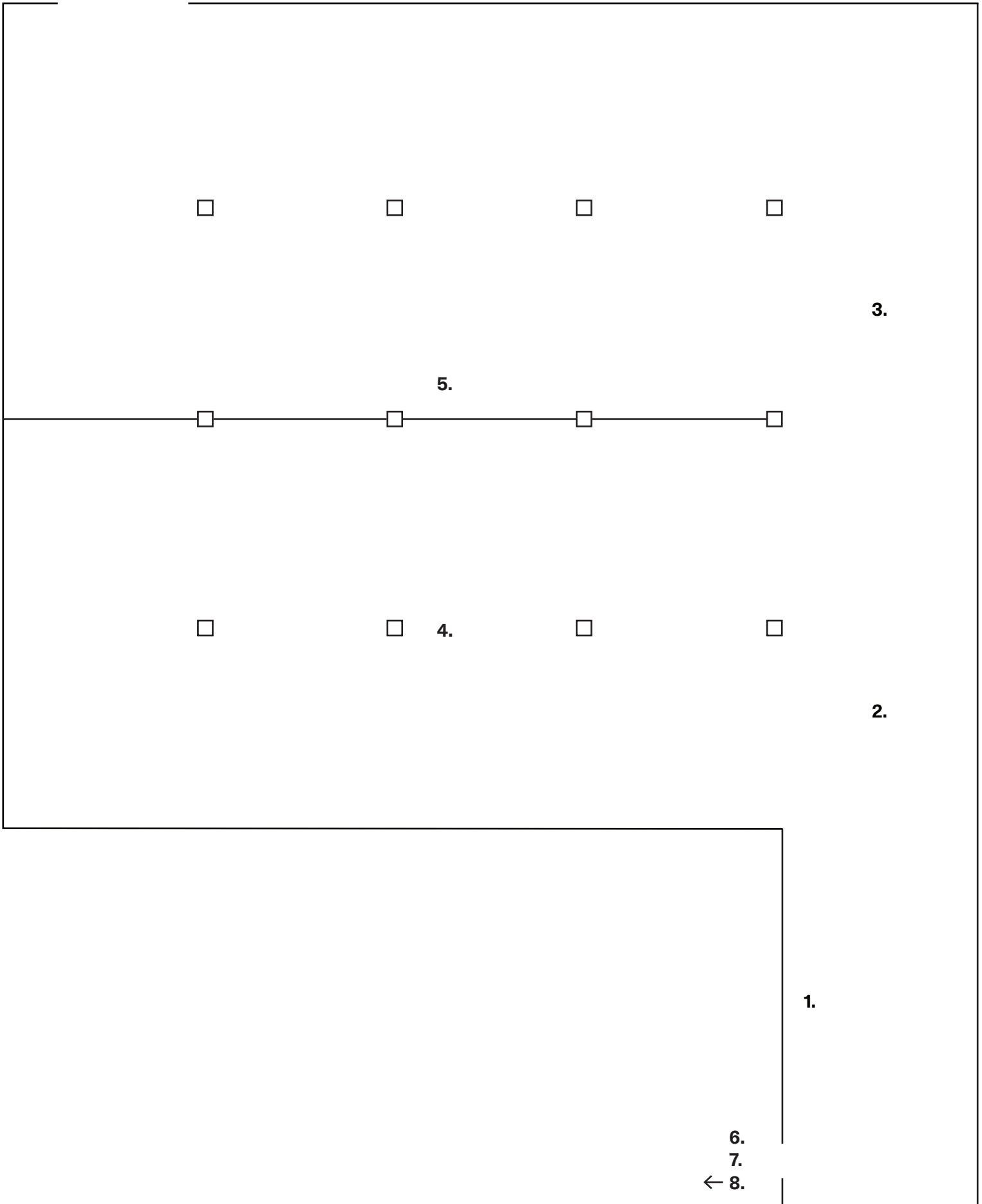
Peter Wächtler



List of works

1. ***Untitled, 2024***
Ceramics. Variable dimensions.
2. ***Studio I, 2024***
Steel, glass. 75 × 95 × 41 cm.
3. ***Studio II, 2024***
Steel, glass. 75 × 95 × 57 cm.
4. ***Crackers (sculptures), 2024***
Porcelain. Variable dimensions.
5. ***Crackers (paintings), 2024***
Pastel, linseed oil. Variable dimensions.
6. ***Like a Palace, 2022***
HD video, 33:35
7. ***Untitled (vampire), 2019***
HD video, 12:09
8. ***Bell, 2024***
Bronze, edition of 7. 29 × 14 × 14 cm.

Exhibition overview



Simian is supported by:

By & Havn
Realdania's campaign Underværker
Lauridsen Skilte
Kvadrat
Fredericia Furniture

The 2024 program is supported by:

Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansen Foundation
The Obel Family Foundation
Danish Arts Foundation
Augustinus Foundation
New Carlsberg Foundation
City of Copenhagen
Knud Højgaards Foundation

Crackers is supported by:

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen
New Carlsberg Foundation
Dansk Tennis Fond
Lizzy og Mogens Staal Fonden
Danish Arts Workshops
Egersund Wienerberger

Works courtesy of:

Dépendance, Brussels
Lars Friedrich, Berlin
Reena Spaulings Fine Arts, New York City

The artist would like to thank:

Clemens Dod Mantle
Henriette Heise
Solvej Heise
Mads Bartholin Herved Johnsen
Laurits Honoré Rønne
Robert Campbell
Lukas Lund
Henrik Christensen
Johannes Wächtler
Irina Jasnowski Pascual

Peter Wächtler (1979 in Hannover, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions include Culturgest, Lisbon; dépendance, Brussels; Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York City; The Power Station, Dallas; Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich; Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen; Foundation Antonio Dalle Nogare, Bolzano, and Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin.

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

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