

Madeleine Andersson: SHOCK VALUE

3 April – 24 August 2025

In a world where Artificial Intelligence is taking more space, it seems important to reposition what “human” is and what we can define as human intelligence, if “intelligence” is the right concept: Random behavior, surreal connections and other possibilities are open via what traditionally has been considered not productive thinking (or stupidity). In *SHOCK VALUE*, a solo exhibition by Madeleine Andersson, bringing together new and existing sculptures and video works in a total installation, Andersson presents what she calls “Degenerative Knowledge”; a concept which questions the western notion of progression.

One of the works presented at Index is *Degenerative Knowledge Production*, a new video-work made for the exhibition series*. The starting point of the video is the procedure of determining legal death, which from the late 1960s and onwards, is in almost all cases no longer tied to the cessation of heartbeat but the lack of electric activity in the brain. This shift resulted from painstaking efforts in scientific research with the use of electricity to observe mental behaviors and mechanisms. Andersson explores the specific methodologies, processes and uses of electricity within brain research and neuroscience, also reflecting on the electrical system of our body and mind. Thrashing through medical history and juxtaposing it with viral video material, the video-work explores random connections, unexpected paths, surrealist approaches and puts forward a radical and visceral viewpoint on the framework of sense-making for understanding the human brain.

Degenerative Knowledge Production and the other works presented in the exhibition shed light on the paradox of the so-called scientific method, where on the one side science must be constantly questioned to further evolve whereas on the other it must be considered a fact, to not fall into conspiracist or reactionary thinking. In the post-truth times we’re living in, the importance and societal implications of science is in free-fall. From this contemporary state Andersson’s exhibition questions the inherent idea of *objectivity* and the result-based practice of scientific research and instead explores its experimental, absurd and almost artistic nature. The exhibition space at Index is filled from floor to ceiling with white plastic buckets, which is a replica of the world’s largest preserved brain collection, housed in Odense, Denmark. The title of the work is *10K Virgin Brains* and gives a glimpse into science’s constant need for research material and the ethical precarity within the field.

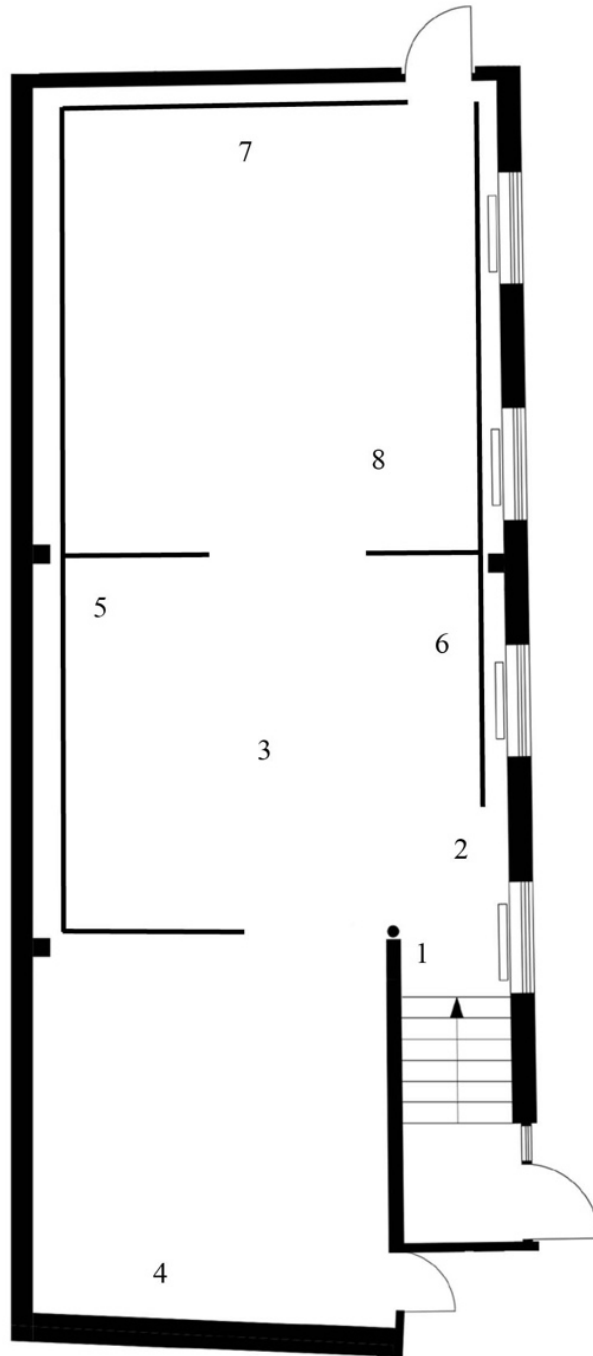
Much of the video-works presented in the multimedia installation of *SHOCK VALUE* are based on found material and replicate the fast-pace and attention-grabbing editing techniques of online click-bait, pseudo-scientific and conspiracist video material. Further connecting the shocking-nature of our attention economy and our magnetic need for the abject with the *dirty* and messy aspects of science and its implications in grasping the human mind.

Connecting to the *10K Virgin Brains* is another sculptural work, *Knock, Knock (I-II)*, which also confronts the unethical history of stealing corpses and body parts for scientific purposes. The sculptures are a reinterpretation of the *mortsafe* – a protective iron cage used by British and American churches in the 17th and 18th centuries to prevent grave robbing.

In a parallel path to the research on brain activity, the exhibition brings to the forefront a dialogue between materiality: plastic, wood, metal, chewing gum, saliva and isolator gloves. These seemingly banal and everyday materials are all examples of likewise simplistic and sophisticated processes of human production and result of our scientific inventiveness. Andersson merges this range of materials in different bizarre performative gestures, which incorporate reminiscences of the human body; teeth marks on a gum, hands holding a briefcase, hair leaping out from plastic buckets and human fingertips on gloves.

Madeleine Andersson (b. 1993, Jönköping, SE) is an artist based in Copenhagen, with a research-based practice which concerns the absurdity of technology, science and human intelligence. The work by Andersson has previously exhibited at O–Overgaden, Copenhagen (2024), documenta institute, Kassel (2024), Vermillion Sands, Copenhagen (2024), Färgfabriken, Stockholm (2023); NSFW, Gothenburg (2023), Bærum Kunsthall (2022) and Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2022).

*This exhibition has been developed in collaboration with O–Overgaden in Copenhagen and Kunsthall Trondheim.



1. *Bataille's Flies*, 2024
video, 1:41 min

2. *Ding-dong-daddy*, 2024
Briefcases, silicone hands

3. *Knock, Knock (I-II)*, 2024
Wood

A sculptural reinterpretation of the *mortsafe* – a protective iron cage used

by British and American churches in the 17th and 18th centuries to prevent grave robbing. At the time, state-controlled autopsies were limited due to Christian doctrine, giving rise to an illegal trade in corpses to advance medical research.

4. *Reversed Labgirl*, 2025
Lab-gloves, magician's fake fingers, sugar

5. *My Ordering a Mind Control Spell on Etsy to Be Cast on Myself*, 2024
video, 3:25 min

A video recording created by a spellcaster hired through the online marketplace Etsy to cast a mind-control spell on the artist.

6. *10K Virgin Brains*, 2024
Buckets, human hair

Replica of buckets used in the world's largest preserved brain collection, housed in Odense, Denmark. The collection comprises 10,000 so-called "virgin brains" – specimens taken/stolen from individuals diagnosed with mental illness who were never subjected to medication.

7. *Degenerative Knowledge Production*, 2024, video, 75 min

Degenerative Knowledge Production is a speculative documentary in four chapters exploring how human intelligence and stupidity have been controlled and defined

by electricity as both a physical and metaphysical force throughout history. Through examples of self-experimentation, exploitation, and linguistic patterns, the documentary reveals how the "cogiocratic system" shapes human cognition by influencing our electrical impulses and thought pathways. The film is primarily composed of found materials from social media and was co-written with Thomas Moynihan.

8. *Self-portrait*, 2025
Ball cart, gums, nail polish,