

Who or what is really alive today? Being beyond Das Beckwerk and Funus Imaginarium.

Seminar at University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Humanities, November 19th 2010
Arranged by the Funus Imaginarium Think Tank, Das Beckwerk and the Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, Copenhagen University

Claus Beck-Nielsen became a major figure with a ground-breaking impact on the art scene in Denmark and Scandinavia when he was pronounced dead in 2001. Afterwards the spectre, the ghost of Claus Beck-Nielsen, has continued to haunt not only the cultural reality of Scandinavia, but also Das Beckwerk in the following democracy projects in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and the US.

Now might be the time to put an end to this endless wandering by giving the departed person a proper funeral, one which may give birth to a new form of being beyond identity and the contemporary human state of mind and action.

The burial of Claus Beck-Nielsen in the centre of Copenhagen October 9th 2010 immediately raises a lot of problems. First of all, the essential question today, as Slavoj Žižek puts it in one of his latest books, is: *Who* is really alive today? But also: *What* is really alive today?

These questions relate to all the crucial notions within contemporary society: Democracy, art, politics. How alive is democracy, how alive is art, how alive is politics today? Or how dead?

The fundamental claim put forward by Das Beckwerk in relation to the funeral is: The world needs new concepts of being human, new forms of being beyond identity, in order to elaborate and generate new ways of action. But what concepts, what forms?

These are the questions that will function as the point of departure for the seminar – which will serve as a platform, bringing together students, professors, critics and artists to engage with the deepest and widest ramifications of Funus Imaginarium and Das Beckwerk.

Thus, the aim of the conference is twofold: We are seeking papers that engage specifically and analytically with Das Beckwerk and the event of Funus Imaginarium, but also contributions that use the funeral as a take-off for a more general reflection on the broader problems, questions and perspectives that arise from the grave, so to speak.

Possible questions to be dealt with:

1. Funus Imaginarium & Das Beckwerk

Is this burial of Claus Beck-Nielsen also the burial of Das Beckwerk and the way of maintaining a *praxis* in the gap between life and death, art and politics? – in other words: is this it? Is the funeral a political event, if an event at all? Or is the funeral a perfect picture of the end of real politics and art in the world of today?

2. Being(s) beyond

In what ways is it possible to haunt and maybe transform the world as we know it? What does the ghost, the zombie and similar phenomena have to offer emancipatory project? How can one practice world politics? How can one practice politics at all? How can one practice political art? How can one do it, if one is not ready to risk everything? What does true radicality consists of? Does real change really require the death of identity? Is there any life beyond the death of identity? Is the position of the *homo sacer* problematic or is it the only way out into the future?