Copenhagen 20/11-20

Declaration of solidarity with Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeldt and Anonymous Artists in connection with the sinking of a plaster cast of a portrait bust depicting Frederik V at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.

On 6/11-20, a video was published showing a plaster bust of Frederik V as it was sunken into the inner harbor.

The bust was a plaster cast dated approximately 1950. The original is a portrait bust of King Frederik V, by Jacques Saly, cast in bronze, from approximately 1766 (original model from 1754). The bronze sculpture from 1766 is still possible to see in the Assembly Hall at Charlottenborg, by appointment with the Academy Council. In the Academy Council's statement 12/11-20, the impression is put forward that the bust pushed into the harbor was the original, unique bust by Saly. However, this is inaccurate. It was a plaster cast made of the original sometime after 1950.

Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, Head of the Laboratory for Art Research at the Academy, and Post-doc Fellow, took responsibility for the action as an Happening, and was expelled from her job the same day.

We do not believe that Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld should be expelled, and we call for the rehabilitation of her position at the Academy of Fine Arts. We do not perceive the action as an attempt to eradicate Danish cultural heritage, but as an attempt to activate it it, by carrying out an act of resistance against Frederik V in effigie and his leading role in the Danish colonialism and the Danish slave trade.

This type of image-based act of resistance plays an important historical role in Denmark. We perceive the happening as an attempt to address the continued presence of the colonial era today and we cannot avoid seeing it in the context of similar events in the world the past several years, following the rise of Black Lives Matter demonstrations. One such example is the red paint spray-painted on the Hans Egede statue in Nuuk, Greenland in June of 2020.

We support the students at the Academy of Fine Arts and recognize the Academy of Fine Arts as an institution that is not free from the imprint of the colonial era, which, among other things, is expressed in the institution's image politics, which accommodate monuments of colonial depots. We recognize how this creates different and more painful and insecure experiences among racialized/ BIPOC/ minoritized students and we demand action to change this inequality.

As artists, we want to act in solidarity with the students at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in the joint struggle of decolonization.