

# English summary

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Often, artists' art collections and the public or semi public display of them have functioned as configurations of an alternative to more established art historical narratives. As opposed to the public museums that have to justify that their acquisitions are based on a generally acknowledged set of criteria for artistic and historical value, artists have proposed new taxonomies, odd classification systems and archival orders that challenge the notion of universal validity. This article discusses how Claus Carstensen's collecting practice and curatorial research (or "exorcism" as he calls it) on his own collection, as it has manifested in the series of *Shibboleth* exhibitions, present themselves as an idiosyncratic, non-hierarchical and experimental take on the art history of, in particular, the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

With outset in the historically charged notion of *shibboleth* (a word that according to the Old Testament was used to expose the members of another tribe by identifying their dialect and thereafter kill them), Carstensen's 76 exhibitions in his suburban studio were an exploration of borders, codes, and taboos and of how these manufacture inclusions and exclusions. The article proposes that his collection and the logics that inform its display constitute a questioning of excluding and isolating art historical conceptions such as the one of the masterpiece, the separation between high art and low culture, and between aesthetics and politics. Instead, Carstensen's *Shibboleth* exhibitions are concerned with the context around images and a history writing that traces the connections between mental states, political structures and cultural production.

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What does an artist's own art collection reveal about the artist himself? What is the connection between the collection and his own work practice as an artist? How do the choices made by the artist differ from those of an art museum? These are but a few of the preliminary questions asked as part of a new Esbjerg Art Museum exhibition series that focuses on the artistic gaze.

*Bastard* was the first exhibition in this series. It presented parts of Claus Carstensen's comprehensive collection of art works, rarities, and memorabilia, installed in juxtaposition with some of his own works as well as works from the museum collection, chosen by Carstensen. The article *Bastard – the artistic gaze* discusses how a specific artistic gaze potentially affects the artist's own praxis as well as the way he collects items and works by other artists. The argument is that this gaze leads to the integration of not only the production and the collecting of art, but also of the way in which the artist presents art, made obvious by the curatorial outcome of the *Bastard* exhibition.

The discussion – rooted in *Bastard* at the Esbjerg Art Museum as well as in Claus Carstensen's own preceding 76 *Shibboleth* shows – develops through an informal conversation in Carstensen's studio and showroom between the artist himself, the art historian and assistant professor at the University of Copenhagen, Ph.D. Rune Gade, and the authors. In the article the conversation is condensed and organized under the headlines *The Collection, The Gaze, The Body, and The Affection*. These sections form the basis of a semiotic reading of the artistic gaze, which suggests a relocation of meaning production and a dissolution of the borders of both subject and object, the observer and the observed. In this field of floating relations and radical impermanence, the art institution itself is being renegotiated and urged to rethink its ordinary curatorial strategies. By adapting the artistic gaze the museum thus gains the opportunity to revitalize the exhibition media and enhance the spectator's engagement.