

DECEMBER 2014 VOL. 1 ISSUE 7

**COPENHAGEN
EDITION**

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Obama**

**Nostalgia
for a
good old
Caribbean
Christmas**



The merry julefrokost

Pork, booze and misbehaviour – celebrating Christmas the Danish way

CULTURE COLUMN

I can't remember the number of times that journalists have asked me why I started Distortion – a festival that between 2007 and 2014 grew from a crazy party crawl for 600 people, into a tsunami carnival with over 140,000 guests across the city. Where did the idea and motivation come from?

How do you answer the great "why" question? I never really know what to say, but I remember being pleased with myself the day I replied, "I just like to have a good time with my friends – what else makes sense in life?"

I have been impulsive and instinctive for many years but lately I started to feel like a settled grown up – having 4 kids and all – so I thought the time had come to reflect and try to share some deeper thoughts. It's about more than me or Distortion: it's a short reflection on people, art and social status.

In the fields of fashion, music and art, like-minded people in different parts of the world often seem to agree without connecting with each other. New bands, graphic patterns and social habits appear simultaneously in different cities, questioning the very nature of art and taste.

Are we genuine and distinct, or do we all follow trends to fit in? Some argue there is a nepotistic and "creative elite" who do their utmost to keep their own kind in and shut out everyone else. But it is, of course, nonsense to suggest that a single cool clique is responsible for picking trends and tastes for the rest of us to follow.

What actually happens is that society evolves. People like things and nobody has any control over what or how trends evolve. People don't choose to drink cortados rather than cappuccinos to be cool. Coffee is not a trend for superficial hipsters, it's something humans actually like to do. And who would be so insecure that they would choose their favorite band not based on what they like, but because they see the band as "cool"?

Trends emerge out of the sum of people's tastes. But it is interesting that we do converge on particular types of music, tastes and ideas – whether it's the hunger for information on the internet, or being drawn to the sounds of break-out artists like Ice Age.

If these choices are subconscious and genuine but also shared, are we witnessing a type of social evolution in action? Our interests are constantly in motion and are never universal, but at some point some things are simply right. We agree that some things are moving the world ahead, in politics, in culture or in the arts.

Nature has no plans for mankind and the universe evolves randomly. But I do think there exists a nerve that – while not clearly defined or absolute – defines the future evolution of the homo sapiens sapiens. When you hit that nerve – that subconscious flux at the very tip of human evolution, the nerve of novelty – it is like standing at the edge of the universe.

Thomas Fleurquin

Fear is the strongest and most devastating emotion. It divides us and makes us selfish and cruel

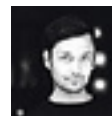
JOSHUA OPPENHEIMER

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CONTRIBUTORS



Carl Coleman A 29-year-old Australian sexual refugee living in Copenhagen for the past six years. A musician, Carl plays in Sink Ships and Palace Winter. This issue he took a long hard look at the ultimate Danish tradition – the julefrokost.



Erik Duckert Erik Duckert is editor of the art blog Opaque, which features emerging Scandinavian artists and artist run spaces. He wrote the interview with Jan S. Hansen.



Mark Walker A graduate of the UK's National Film & TV School, Mark has directed award-winning short films, music videos and several dramas for UK television. He interviewed Joshua Oppenheimer for this issue.



Lesley-Ann Brown A Caribbean American freelance writer living in Copenhagen, Lesley-Ann studied writing at The New School, NYC. She interviewed an Obama impersonator and wrote about holding Christmas in the Caribbean.



Thomas Fleurquin Co-founder of The Copenhagen Post newspaper and founder of the Distortion Festival. He writes our monthly Culture Column.



Aileen Itani Born and raised in New York, Irish-American soprano Aileen Itani is a regular guest soloist with the Royal Danish Opera and the Danish National Opera. She is The Murmur's proofreader.

MASTHEAD

Peter Stanners Editor-In-Chief, peter@murmur.dk

Kevin McGwin Journalist, kevin@murmur.dk

Mark Millen Head of Sales, mark@murmur.dk

Mette Salomonsen Art Director, www.salomet.dk

SALES For advertising sales, please contact: advertising@murmur.dk

CONTACT THE MURMUR, Hedebygade 14, st.tv., 1754 Copenhagen V. info@murmur.dk

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DANSK?

At Denmark's largest language school



I just came from the bank where I have taken a loan out on an apartment. The interview was conducted in Danish - and I understood most of it! The first months of my intensive course at IA Sprog were tough, but I want to learn Danish quickly and it's already going much better. The teachers have a lot to do with it!

Paolo Ratti, Italy

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IA Sprog Vibevej 9-11
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OBSERVED

SPYCATCHER APP

We all know that the NSA is spying on us. Our awareness of it is as ordinary as cat memes and Kim Kardashian's need for attention. But now the good folks at Amnesty International have released 'Detekt', which scans your computer for known spyware, allowing you to look at shameful things in peace. More here: bit.ly/detektapp



Jan Fog

FORTRESS ISLAND FOR SALE

For a cool 165 million kroner you can be the proud owner of the historic landmark and world's largest artificial island Middelgrundsfortet. Lying just off the coast of Copenhagen, the island fortress is best known for its role in the German occupation in World War II. A German Destroyer sailed past it en route to Copenhagen, but the military forces station were unable to get the island's cannons working, thus allowing the attackers to take the Royal Palace in peace.

UBER PROBLEMS

The problems keep piling up for car share and informal taxi service Uber. The company launched its services last month in Denmark and already it is under fire. The transit authority has reported them to the police for lack of permits and licenses, and the tax office is claiming that the services might lead to tax fraud.

Elias Thorsson

The long kiss hello

Every month we report on a new 'exciting' trend for lonely singles, and this month is no different. Tired of talking to people? Do your Tinder dates end in misery? Why not just meet up and make out? This is the concept behind the new Facebook page 'Kysse Date'. It's just like being a drunk teenager again. <http://bit.ly/kyssedate>



See-ming Lee

bookenstjerne.dk



AN 'A' LIST GREETING

Recognise the man in the picture? Well neither did we, but this is Jan Ø. Jørgensen, who is one of a host of celebrities that us normal people can order a video greeting from through the website bookenstjerne.dk. The website was started by Mads Laudrup, you know, the son of that really famous Laudrup.

THE MURMUR



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MARKETING FACEPALM

Build it and they will come, they said. Have a moustache, a fixie bike and a sailor tattoo and they will stay, they said. This seems to have been the idea the owners of Urban House had when they came up with the video for their cliché Vesterbro hipster hostel that has now roundly been mocked. Watch it here: <http://bit.ly/>



Den Blå Planet

A STAGE TRAGEDY

A fire has devastated large parts of the theatre Sort/Hvid on Skindergade in downtown Copenhagen. It is uncertain whether the theatre will continue its season and if the damages can be repaired. At any rate The Murmur would like to send out a heartfelt get well soon to its thespian friends.

ALL OF THE LIGHTS

In keeping with tradition, historical hotel d'Angleterre on Kongens Nytorv has been adorned with a glorious light show in celebration of Christmas. 50,000 light bulbs cover the façade and will light up the winter darkness until the New Year. If you can ignore the green wall of the Metro construction, these lovely lights are definitely worth a visit.



Comrade Foot

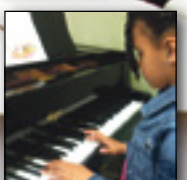
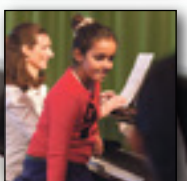
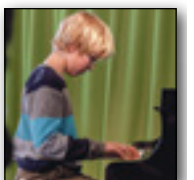
Bopa Plads lives!

Last year middle-aged local politicians decided that from now on Østerbro should only be for people with kids. To accomplish this ambitious goal they decided to close down the lively Bopa Plads and create a kindergarten. Thankfully the people rose up in protest and now, a year on, Bopa Plads and can celebrate the survival of culture. Hurrah!

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CULTUREMAKER

STEGT FLÆSK FIGHT

Danes have waited hundreds of years for this moment – the crowning of its national dish. The fried pork delicacy destroyed the competition, which prompted the started of another tedious celebrity bickering match

LAST MONTH the nation took to the polls to settle an argument that no one had been having: what is Denmark's national dish? The 24 contenders were a collection of nostalgic traditionalism, ranging from a classic open-faced smoked salmon sandwich, to duck with cucumber salad and cabbage. The winner by a hefty margin was the heart-attack-inducing fried pork with parsley sauce, *stegt flæsk med persillesovs*, which raked in a staggering 44 percent of the vote.

Agriculture minister Dan Jørgensen initiated the competition to get Danes thinking about their country's culinary tradition. The outcome was, however, questionably representative of Danish tastes, given that only around 63,000 Danes – just over one percent of the population – bothered to vote. This, unsurprisingly, didn't prevent it morphing into a larger debate about nationalism and immigration.

Former TV chef Camilla Plum lobbed the opening salvo as she took up the charge for Semitic culinary customs, writing on her Facebook page that with the selection of the pork dish "we can be certain that our immigrants will not feel really Danish".

The return salvo was swift and devastating. While attending a gala premier for the opera *The Nutcracker*, MP Pia Kjærsgaard expressed her delight that cooked pork won the election, before adding that Plum was a "crazy bitch".



A rather refined version of the classic stegt flæsk dish

Elias Thorsson

She later wrote on her Facebook page about the matter, and complained that the competition had cost 1.1 million kroner.

Kjærsgaard was promptly backed up by personal friend, fahsion guru and camp nationalist Jim Lyngvild, who posted a video on his Facebook page in which he instructed Plum to "knead dough with her tits and let us love our Danish pork". He went on to bemoan the "political correctness" espoused by Plum and other "pork fearing spelt pussies".

Both reactions were met with

wild adulation on social media with tens of thousands sharing and liking their updates on the matter.

After the substantive hullaballoo and anger, head of Nationalpartiet Kashif Ahmad joined in the debate on Twitter in an attempt to settle the waves, writing "Oh, come on, this can't be discrimination. Just as long as we can have a nice time around the dinner table".

Ahmad thereby managed yet again to cause massive confusion and puzzlement among ordinary Danes, by managing to be both sensible and a Muslim. **M**

Stegt Flæsk med persillesovs

Fried pork with a white parsley sauce has been served in Denmark since the late 1800s.

The strips of meat must not be more than five millimeters wide and must be cut from the streaky belly or sides of the pig. The pork can be either pan fried or cooked in the oven.

It is traditionally served with a white sauce with chopped parsley that is poured over boiled new potatoes.

For more information, visit sfmps.dk



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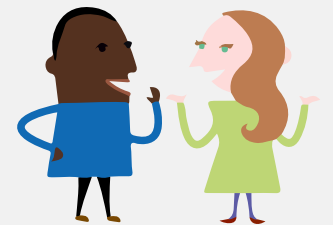
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Film maker Joshua Oppenheimer

THE MECHANICS OF FEAR

INTERVIEW Indonesia's military dictatorship murdered upwards of one million people during an anti-communist purge in the mid-1960s. Joshua Oppenheimer has directed two documentaries about these horrific events. The first, *The Act Of Killing*, has been universally praised for its original vision and profound effect on Indonesian society. His second film, *The Look Of Silence*, is set to emulate that success

W

hen I first arrived in Indonesia in 2001, it was like entering today's post-holocaust Germany, but discovering that the Nazis are still in power."

Joshua Oppenheimer is an arrestingly sunny presence with a warm and soft-spoken manner. It's something of a surprise, given the horrors that his documentaries convey. Oppenheimer has spent over a decade exploring the aftermath of Indonesia's 1965 military coup, following which more than a million alleged communists, sympathisers and ethnic Chinese were brutally murdered at the hands of state-appointed 'gangsters' who acted with total impunity.

"I had no connection to Indonesia until I travelled there to help a group of plantation workers who were making a film about their struggle to organise a union," Oppenheimer explains.

"There I found that women were routinely dying in their forties from liver disease after spraying a herbicide for which they had no protective clothing. Many people were terrified of forming a union to fight this kind of thing because the spectre of 1965-1966 still loomed large. Their parents and grandparents had

I don't really see myself as a storyteller, I see myself as an explorer

been unionists, were accused of communist behaviour and killed for it. I realised that these people, many of whom had become my friends, were dying, not only as a result of their working conditions, but out of fear."

Oppenheimer's films attempt to show the consequences of this fear. His Oscar-nominated *The Act of Killing* followed death squad leader Anwar Congo and others responsible for atrocities committed during the genocide. In the film, they're seen boasting about their murderous misdeeds and, at Oppenheimer's invitation, they stage re-enactments of their killings.

Oppenheimer followed up with *The Look of Silence*, turning his focus to the lasting affects these killings have had on survivors and the families of those killed. In particular he follows one man's attempt to break free of the fear that has engulfed his family. This November, the film took the DOX:AWARD, the highest accolade at CPH:DOX - Copenhagen's international documentary film festival.

Both films were produced in Denmark, and Texan-born Oppenheimer is now a Copenhagen resident. Seated in the first floor of the Grand Theatre, he speaks about Indonesia with an impassioned eloquence. His insight into the coun-



try's political history and collective psychology is sharp and clear-minded, leaving little doubt that his 13-year relationship with the country has left a deep mark.

"I don't really see myself as a storyteller, I see myself as an explorer. Good storytellers have command of their stories throughout, and to do that, you need to be the same person from beginning to end. If your whole identity and value system is in flux, then it's unlikely you're in command of your story. But I don't want to be in command. I want to take journeys that will change me. I have been profoundly changed by this journey—my whole idea of what cinema can or should be has been changed by making these two films. The next film I make, the next journey – I don't know what that is yet – will also be marked by these first films."

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

It's not just Oppenheimer and his future filmography that will carry the stamp of these works.

Back in Jakarta, *The Look of Silence* is premiering to an Indonesian audience at a sold-out, state-organised event. Earlier this morning, Oppenheimer held a videoconference with 150 Indonesian journalists. That's a historic shift from just two years ago, when *The Act of Killing* was first screened in total secrecy.

Since then, *The Act of Killing* has been seen

by millions. A major Indonesian newspaper responded by breaking its silence about the genocide, effectively opening the floodgates for public debate. Oppenheimer's long journey has not only changed his life, but has, incredibly, set an entire country on a path towards healing. This year saw the election of a new President, Joko Widodo – a man who has drawn comparisons to Barack Obama.

"I hope he's less disappointing than Obama," Oppenheimer says laughing.

"But, sure, the comparison is apt in that both had strong grassroots mandates and progressive things that they'd like to do, but both are also beholden to oligarchs. Joko Widodo is the first Indonesian president not to come from the elite or have a military background, or some connection to the Suharto dictatorship. He says he wants to address human rights issues. I'm always, always hopeful."

THE FEAR REMAINS

Despite his hopes for the future, Oppenheimer has no illusions about returning to Indonesia. "I'm confident about getting in, but I'm quite certain that I wouldn't get back out again." He also believes there's cause to fear for the lives of several Indonesian friends, who risked everything to help make the films.

"The recent abating of on-the-record threats and boasting bears little relation to whether

I have been profoundly changed by this journey—my whole idea of what cinema can or should be has been changed by making these two films

the perpetrators and thugs, the paramilitary groups and the military, still enjoy impunity to intimidate and harass - and harm."

Adi is one such friend. Concerns over safety led to the relocation of him and his family. He's the protagonist of *The Look of Silence*, an optometrist whose clients are neighbours from both sides of the political divide. In the film, Adi confronts men who were directly or indirectly responsible for the murder of his brother, Rabli. Rabli was one of a large group of prisoners who were escorted by the military to the banks of 'Snake River' to be butchered by death squads. Despite severe wounds, Rabli managed to escape, reaching his parents' house, only to be recaptured, after which his genitals were sliced off and he was left to exsanguinate.

Living and working for lengthy periods in such close proximity to this mass trauma took its toll on Oppenheimer.

"I think the most unpleasant scene in *The Act of Killing* is when [the gangster] Herman is re-enacting an occasion where a mother had begged Anwar for her child's life. We used a teddy bear to represent the child, and Anwar started knifing away at it and making threats. I could hear his microphone was rubbing, so I stopped filming to adjust it and Anwar said 'Josh, you're crying!' It was the only time in my life I'd cried and not realised it. We continued

The Indonesian Genocide

In 1965, an attempted coup by communist forces, was thwarted (and possibly organised) by the Indonesian military, fuelling the fear of an imminent communist uprising. This led to the downfall of President Sukarno and the installation of a military government that transitioned into a dictatorship. Throughout this period the government – with the tacit approval of various western powers who feared the spread of communism in Asia – hired thugs to systematically mass-murder at least 500,000 alleged communists, unionists and ethnic Chinese. Indonesia's first direct election was held in 2004, and the country is only now starting to face the horrors of the dictatorship and start the healing process.

The Act Of Killing (2012)

At the invitation of Oppenheimer, death squad leader Anwar Congo and fellow gangsters recounted and re-enacted their killings during Indonesia's anti-communist purge between 1965 and 1966. Scenes are produced in the style of their favourite American film genres: gangster films, westerns and musicals. Although Anwar is seemingly unrepentant, even proud of his actions, he suffers from terrible nightmares. When Oppenheimer begins to dramatise those nightmares the film becomes increasingly surreal, probing deeper into Anwar's fragile conception of reality, and his contribution to one of the worst mass murders in recent history. Top left: Anwar Congo is said to have personally killed over 1,000 people by methods such as strangulation with wire.

Top right: Using a toy prop, Anwar Congo (left) reenacts his murder of a young girl while Herman Koto, playing the child's mother, looks on.

The Look Of Silence (2014)

Through viewing Oppenheimer's video footage of 'gangsters', who describe their misdeeds during the Indonesian genocide, a family of survivors discovers how their son was murdered – and the identity of the men who killed him. Adi, the surviving brother, is determined to break the cycle of silence and fear, under which all survivors live, and so ventures into the homes of his neighbours to confront men responsible for his brother's murder. The film follows his unimaginable act of bravery and defiance, in a country where the same killers remain in power. Bottom left: Adi (left) confronts Amir Siahaan, one of the men responsible for the death of his brother.

Bottom right: Adi watches footage of two men boasting about the murder of his older brother.

to film, but I knew I'd glimpsed this monster. I went home feeling tainted by it. I suffered from nightmares and insomnia every night for eight months afterwards."

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Oppenheimer's work shows that fear resides not only in the survivors, but also in the perpetrators. With *The Look of Silence*, Oppenheimer's friend Adi was motivated to confront them—men who had so deeply damaged his family—by his desire to forgive them. Many felt threatened and presumed Adi was seeking retribution, to which they responded with thinly-veiled death threats.

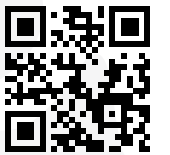
"One of the things that Adi taught me is that you cannot run away from the past. It will be there until you deal with it. Only then can you move on. In looking at the past, we have to separate human beings from their crimes. If they're still justifying it, they're still identifying with it. So you can't separate them. But once they say, 'I see this was wrong,' and if you have reason to believe they mean it, then of course the human being must be forgivable. The crime isn't forgivable. It's not for us to forgive the crime, that's only for the victim to do – and these vic-

tims are dead. But the human being has to be forgivable."

Oppenheimer believes that Indonesia's rehabilitation is far more likely through this process of reconciliation than through any top-down political solution. He suggests that the contribution he has made to the process has been to comprehensively show the devastating, paralysing effect of fear on everyone in the country.

"Fear is the strongest and most devastating emotion. It divides us and makes us selfish and cruel. In the long term, confronting our most painful truths is fortifying, because we overcome the fear of looking at the frightening aspects of our reality that we all know are there, but are too afraid to see. It's like overcoming any big fear. We all know that our normality is built on violence. And that it sits at arm's length. We know that everything we buy is produced in exploitative conditions. The suffering of the people who make this [gesturing to a bag] or your shirt – it haunts everything we touch. We don't want to look at that, but if you do look at it and choose to do something about it, then you won't live in fear – not in the same way." **M**

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– a very Danish Christmas

Pork, candles, schnapps, beer, more pork, more schnapps, hands where they shouldn't be, drunk driving. Welcome to the Danish Julefrokost.

In early November, invitations to traditional Danish Christmas meals start to trickle into inboxes. First it's your office, then one arrives from your mate's indoor soccer team, next your old high school friends organise a get together – some Danes will have commitments to these often-raucous occasions every weekend in the run-up to Christmas. Because in Denmark, the Christmas spirit isn't restricted to a present-opening spree on a late-December morning. It's a month-long booze-and-food fuelled marathon.

The festive season kicks off on J-Day, a Friday in November when Carlsberg releases its Christmas beer, the Julebryg. This is the starting pistol, the cue for adolescent men to don their Santa hats and start uttering incomprehensible nonsense as they stagger from one bar to the next. The vomit-stained sidewalks the next morning attest to J-Day's reputation as the alcoholic D-Day.

It is also drunk driving season, and the police are on high alert. But the flood of akvavit is not just a danger for road users: relationships are also imperilled. One in five Danes has hooked up with a colleague at the company Christmas party, according to a survey by Avisen, and a quarter of those intimate moments were acts of infidelity. Perhaps it's not a coincidence that divorce rates jumped 70 percent between December 2012 and January 2013.

AN UNCIVILISED AFFAIR

It's an open secret that the Julefrokost is an occasion where adultery is both expected and

In Denmark, the Christmas spirit isn't restricted to a present-opening spree on a late-December morning. It's a month-long booze-and-food fuelled marathon

Carl Coleman

even somewhat acceptable. It could even be argued that some Danes, famously allergic to political correctness, rather relish the idea that the holiest time of year has become a celebration of Bacchus rather than Jesus.

But it wasn't always this way. In the late 1940s, an employee might be invited into the boss's office on Christmas – celebrated December 24 in Denmark – for a glass of port, a piece of marzipan, and some seasonal greetings before hastening home to be with his family. A brief party it was, but a celebration nonetheless and, in those days, a rare opportunity to bridge the gap between manager and worker. It wasn't until the 60s that the boss actually joined the table to rub shoulders with the entire staff for lunch.

The Julefrokost remained a civilised affair until the release of the 1976 cult film *Julefrokosten*, which depicted (and celebrated) a "wet and wild" Christmas lunch. Life imitated art, and thereafter the celebration lost its inhibitions – bring on the binge drinking and frolicking on the copy room floor.

AN EXERCISE IN NOSTALGIA

The Julefrokost is the ideal platform to break down barriers and discover some truths about your colleagues' private lives, so it's not surprising that many managers choose not to attend. As the artist, actor and cultural treasure Storm P said, "you can preserve anything in alcohol, except a secret".

The manager's attendance at the Julefrokost has its pros and cons. On one hand, you can't blame them for wanting to protect their reputation, lest they end up being Instagrammed doing body shots off a colleague. But what is a boss if not a leader? If they won't put

on leather chaps and do the limbo, can they really expect to be considered one?

But enough about offices and drunken debauchery and back to the food – the method in the madness. It's a carnivore's dream. First there's the surf. You'll inevitably be offered a variety of pickled herring, mountains of small peeled shrimp, smoked salmon or even eel. And then comes the turf: either a beautiful roast duck or huge pork loins with crunchy, salty crackling. If you're lucky, both. On the side, you'll find red cabbage and potatoes caramelised in sugar.

The meal is closed with risalamande. The linguistically alert may collect more than ten different spellings of this dessert in the course of an ordinary December, but all are bastardisations of the French ris à l'amande, or rice pudding with chopped almonds and cherry sauce. At parties, the bowl of pudding has a whole almond hidden in it – whoever finds the almond gets a gift (usually more booze). The feast sails along, floating on copious waves of akvavit, beer and wine.

The Julefrokost's traditional culinary spread is pure nostalgia, a heritage connecting present-day Danes with their pre-industrialised forefathers, argues food anthropologist Gry Jacobsen.

"Christmas lunches are an interesting phenomenon indeed. The food traditionally eaten at Christmas is based on the products that were available at that time of year: cereal-based foods such as bread and porridge, cabbage, conserved foods such as pickled herring, mature cheeses, and then all imaginable variations of pork meat," explains Jacobsen.

In Viking times, Christmas festivities were celebrated in mid-January to rejoice in the ar-



rival of longer days. In other words, it was like Game of Thrones minus the dragons and that little shit Joffrey.

Jacobsen explains that while the menu has been tweaked over the years, one element remains strong – alcohol.

"While many still serve the traditional menu, the success of the Christmas lunch depends heavily on the meal format: many small courses accompanied by drinks and often schnapps between each course. Both a mouth cleanser and social lubricant, schnapps is imperative to the Christmas lunch," Jacobsen says, adding that globalisation has led to the introduction of new dishes to better accommodate vegetarians and non-pork eaters.

"I have even been served sushi at a Christmas lunch, so I would say the restrictions are quite loose."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

The Christmas dinner is still a close-knit affair, however, and while some Danes will be running from party to party, newcomers may find themselves without a single invitation during the holiday period. Jacobsen does draw a distinction between the dinner and the less formal lunch, however.

"Christmas dinner is most often an exclusive event for closely-related kin, but Christmas lunch is a form of celebration which involves relations that are less tightly knit.

This event offers an opportunity to get to know each other as actual human beings, instead of an individual that serves a particular role."

So busy are some Danes that the celebrations spill into January, making the Danish Christmas season far longer than in most of the Anglo-Saxon world. But the tradition is deeply integrated into the Danish spirit and psyche. As the days get shorter, the partying gets longer. If you're stuck indoors, you might as well eat roast pork and wash it down with beer along with your friends, family and colleagues, right? The question is, will you be up all night wondering what your partner is getting up to? **M**

TRINIDADIAN SWEET BREAD

One of my best culinary experiences while living in Trinidad was having access to coconuts 24/7. I love everything coconut – and in this spirit, I'll share with you a recipe for something that features the coconut, 'sweet bread'. Did you know that one of the ways the Bougainvillean people survived almost a decade-long trade embargo launched by Papua New Guinea and the rest of the world was their ingenious use of the coconut? They used it for everything from car fuel to lamp oil.

Sweet Bread is a traditional Trinidadian recipe, flavoured with coconut and fruit.

TIME: less than 30 minutes preparation plus 60 minutes cooking time

SERVES: 4

INGREDIENTS:

200g sugar
grated meat of 1 coconut
1 egg
3 tsp baking powder
180ml milk
1 tsp vanilla extract
60g mixed peel
120g raisins
420g flour
100g margarine
1 tsp Angostura bitters
75g cherries
75g currants, chopped

PREPARATION:

Preheat oven to 180°C. Combine sugar and coconut in a bowl. Add a little of the milk for moisture. Add the egg and stir to combine, then add the vanilla extract, bitters and margarine. Stir to combine. Sift the dry ingredients into a separate bowl before adding to the coconut mix. Stir in, and then add the remaining milk so the ingredients come together as a soft dough. Add the fruit and mixed peel, then bring the mixture together. Pour into a greased and floured cake tin, then transfer to oven and bake for 50 to 60 minutes, or until the cake is risen and golden, and a skewer inserted into the centre emerges cleanly. While the cake is still hot, remove it from the tin. Then make a paste of a little sugar and water and use to glaze the top of the cake. Return to the hot oven to cook for three minutes, then remove and set aside on a wire rack to cool completely.



That's me, my sister Shelley and my brother Gerry in front of the Christmas tree, circa 1982. It was the last Christmas we would celebrate as a family before I moved to Trinidad.

A Caribbean Christmas

THE DAY I experienced a Caribbean Christmas was the day I realised that, despite my ancestors' origins, I rather like temperate climates. For me, Christmas without snow just wasn't Christmas. There were barely any Christmas trees, and the big-city hustle and bustle was replaced by the lackadaisical swaying of palm trees in the breeze, Christmas carols sung in Spanish, and my grandmother's careful unpacking and setting up of her nativity scene – something I had never seen before moving to live with her in Trinidad as a 10-year-old.

GROWING UP IN BROOKLYN, I was a seasoned and dedicated consumer of Christmas. I watched all the Christmas cartoons and movies, and coveted the many toys that flashed in between the morning animations. By age ten, I had seen enough on television to know that my experiences were very different from the lives that lit up that box. But I still wrote lists of what I wanted my parents to get for me, and prayed that I would wake up one day with a name like Judy and find that my parents didn't have accents that rendered them incomprehensible to our neighbours.

Still, Christmas in Brooklyn was pretty normal. My father would burst through the front door with a huge Christmas tree slung across his shoulder like game he had hunted for dinner. The smell of pine would gently make its way

through our apartment, neutralising the embarrassing odour of my family's immigrant status – Trinidad's famous Chief Curry and the stale air from windows closed for fear of "the draft".

Having a Christmas tree made us more like our American neighbours. It was one of the few times in my life when I could pretend that my family was American, and that I didn't have to play the role of interpreter between them and gawking strangers. I understood from an early age why my parents, and all others like them who braved this new world, were called not "immigrants," but "aliens."

DESPITE THE LACK OF SNOW, I learned there were other things to discover about Christmas in Trinidad. There was parang – a Venezuelan-tinged tradition of singing Spanish Christmas songs. There's the calypso with lyrics that declared, 'Drink a rum and a ponch de crème, drink a rum, every Christmas morning'. Then there is the food, the black cake filled with dried fruit soaked all year in rum, cherry wine and sherry, that can make you a little tipsy from even one slice. There are the pastelles, minced meat wrapped in cornmeal pockets and steamed in banana leaves. Drinks such as sorrel, made from the sepals of the Roselle – a species of hibiscus native to West Africa – and ponche-de-crème, a rum-infused eggnog. There's

One of the ways I sometimes combat heavy doses of nostalgia in Copenhagen is by making food. One of the benefits of living so far away from my family is that it has inspired me to cook the meals that I grew up eating

Lesley-Ann Brown

the homemade ginger beer, sweet breads and 'the lime' – which in Trinidad is the word used to describe the art of hanging out with your friends and family, enjoying each other's company, with copious amounts of food, drink and loud music that usually necessitates yelling for all communication.

It's been a while since I've been fortunate enough to have a Caribbean Christmas. Looking back, I see how privileged I am to have had the experience of another culture, so vastly different from the one I had grown to know in Brooklyn. My experience of living in Trinidad opened me up to the idea that different countries may have different ways of doing things, but that no matter where you went, people were pretty much the same.

One of the ways I sometimes combat heavy doses of nostalgia in Copenhagen is by making food. One of the benefits of living so far away from my family is that it has inspired me to cook the meals that I grew up eating. Whether it's pigeon peas and rice, fried plantains or homemade pepper sauce, having access to these familiar culinary delights is always comforting.

So this Christmas in Denmark, I'm going to indulge in something a little Trinidadian – something that pays tribute to the fact that this heritage is one of the many tools I have available to make myself feel a little bit more at home in my new home country. **M**

THE MURMUR WANTS YOU!

We are looking for an **INTERN** to work with us for at least three months. You are an ambitious young writer with a passion for journalism and feature writing. Your English is native but you can at least speak and understand Danish. You have a broad set of interests, but read more news and magazines than novels. You want to intern with us because you want inside experience at a fledgling publication. You will be writing and editing stories, uploading material onto the website and managing social media platforms. You can come into the office at least twice a week.

The position is unpaid, but published articles are compensated. You will be given responsibility and we will listen to your ideas and help you develop in whatever ways that we can.

Is it you? Email peter@murmur.dk with a CV, a cover letter and at least two examples of your work.

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Talking race with a white boy from Harlem

Ryan Murdock is an Irish-Italian, who made a film about a Puerto Rican man from the Bronx, who looks like the half-black, half-white president of the United States

know how to tell stories to white people," Ryan Murdock tells me in Christiania's Børneteatret Jazz Club.

"I worked in media, at PBS, which is like, very white. I worked at NPR, which is a pretty white audience. I know I can tell a good story. But this film is reaching lots of non-white people. And it's great."

That is perhaps what is so brilliant about Murdock's new documentary 'Bronx Obama'. It examines the life

of Louis Ortiz, a Puerto-Rican whose life was irreversibly changed when he shaved off his beard, and realised he looked like the most powerful man in the world: President Barack Obama.

Murdock's cinematic gaze leaves room for Louis Ortiz's character and humanity to develop and respond to that invisible dialogue that sometimes takes place in discussions of race. It's transformative and magical. The white gaze, which can make watching documentaries unbearable for many people of colour, is neutralised and the film becomes accessible to all.

The film's themes are broad, touching everything from poverty, parenting, race, family,

character and not least of all authenticity. Its balanced racial gaze would not have been possible without the everyday and stately presence of Louis Ortiz, and the discerning lens of Murdock.

FIRST ENCOUNTER

I'm sitting in Christiania's Børneteatret next to Ortiz, who is decked out in an oversized red and white baseball shirt, crispy sneakers and red knit hat with the name Obama emblazoned in rhinestones across the front.

"An interesting part of this whole ordeal – I'm calling it an ordeal because it is an ordeal – was when I finally saw the film. I sat down with my fiancé, his wife, Ryan, the baby, new-

Lesley-Ann Brown

born, a couple of months old. I think ten minutes in I had to go downstairs and smoke. I was like, what did I just see? My life."

The club hasn't opened yet and the DJ is warming up for the evening, spinning Hip Hop classics that get the Bronx native bopping his head to the beat. But the record skips and Ortiz ducks his head, thinking it's gunfire – a result of growing up in the hood being an Obama impersonator, I suppose.

I turn my attention to Murdock and ask how their relationship started.

"I first met Louis in 2011, shortly after Bin Laden was killed," Murdock says. "A few months before that, my wife, who is a public defender in the Bronx, came home one day and was like, 'Yeah, you know this Obama impersonator got arrested for weed?' I was like 'what?' And she was like, 'Yeah, he showed up in court in his suit.'"

Murdock had to wait until after his wife had completed her defense before he could approach Ortiz. When he did, the fascinating and complex racial dynamics were immediately clear.

"The way Ortiz tells it, is that I'm a white guy who makes a film about a Spanish guy who looks like a black guy. The way I would say it is, an Irish-Italian from Boston made a film about a Puerto Rican guy from the Bronx who looks like a half-black/half-white guy from a lot of different places, who happens to be the president of the United fucking States!" Murdock says laughing.

A DIFFICULT CONVERSATION

Murdock learned a lot about race, while making the documentary, particularly that white people don't talk about race unless they're discussing non-white people.

The process also made him hyper aware of his own whiteness, and he hopes the film will spark conversations that bring people together, particularly in schools whose textbooks need to include more diversity. He feels changed by the experience of making the film, and thinks that the story of America needs updating to include stories of experiences of race.

I ask where he thinks the US is in dealing with racial issues, but Ortiz interjects.

"It's fucked up," he says, before returning to his joint. David, an African-American trumpet player from New Orleans who has lived in Copenhagen for the past ten years, jumps in, agreeing with Ortiz.

"I think we're in a really fucked up place. That's why I'm here!"

Murdock's view is that white people are disappointed that Obama didn't facilitate a conversation of race.

"He hasn't and maybe he shouldn't. But the thing is white people don't know what to do. They're like, 'I thought we fixed it. I thought everything was going to be good!' And now, for lots of other reasons, white people are pissed. And I think white people are going to become dicks again in the next election, and they're going to want to get a white guy back into office, and I think a lot of people are going to complain and make noise. It's going to be a difficult, complicated conversation."

Ortiz and Murdock don't want to spoil the documentary that has been three years in the making and which was shown this November at CPH:DOX, Copenhagen's international documentary film festival. Bronx Obama has inspired a real and overdue dialogue about the interconnectedness of race, class and poverty in America, and how this affects everyday Americans, regardless of their background.

SAVE THAT!

Through the process of making the documentary, the men have become firm friends. But during the time, everything needed to take place in front of camera.

"Ryan was invisible while he made the documentary," Ortiz says. "The only time that we would talk a little bit is when it was time for bed, and you wouldn't have camera rolling or the mic on and you would be like, 'no, save that. Don't talk?'"

"Did I say that?" Murdock asks, incredulously.

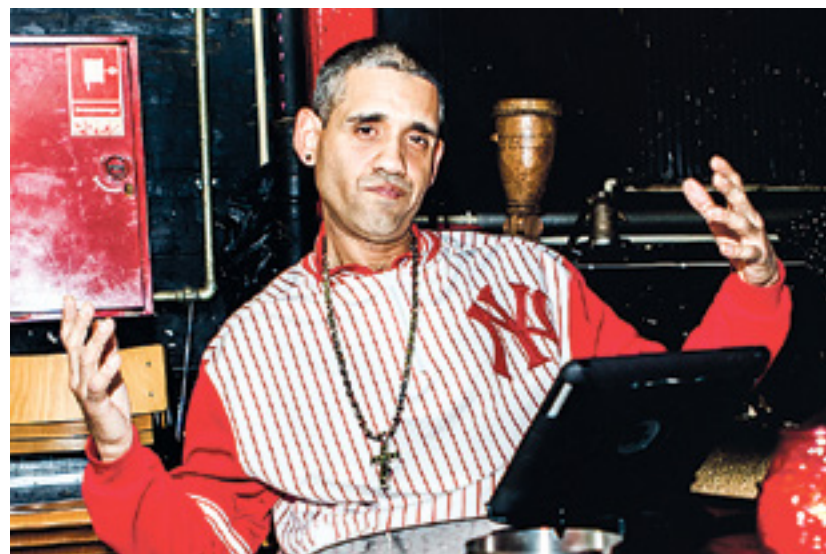
"Every time I had something to say you'd be like don't talk! Tell me that later on camera!"

"But the coolest part," Ortiz continues, "is when I asked him nonchalantly – I didn't want to offend him – 'look, I want to smoke some weed with you'. And Ryan said, 'I would love to man. I would really, really would love to, but, I kind of made a promise'. And I was like, 'What? What do you mean you made a promise?' 'Until this project is done, I'm not going to smoke weed with you'. And I'm like, okay, I could respect that. Especially after he told me he promised his wife. I totally respect that. But when he showed me the film, the gloves were off. We're smoking."

Ortiz hands Murdock the joint and, taking a drag, says, "Like immediately." **M**



Ryan Murdock, director of 'Bronx Obama'



Louis Ortiz, a Barack Obama impersonator from the Bronx, New York City and subject of Murdock's documentary 'Bronx Obama'

Cellar meditations with JAN S. HANSEN

Danish artist Jan S. Hansen works with various media through which he channels an iconographic stream of consciousness and dense moments of pure abstraction

Jan S. Hansen (1980) graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2010, and has since received several awards, and exhibited his work in both Denmark and abroad.

Hansen greets us in his studio on Copenhagen's west side. The big cellar studio was recently flooded and despite a massive clean up, a vague mouldy scent lingers.



HANSEN: "If something like subjective objectivity exists, then I think that's an apt term for my approach; an anthropological approach, but at the same time a personalized adaptation.

H: "My work is pretty personal in the sense that it's made by me, there is something of me in them. However I am very attuned to making my output open to interpretation, so it won't just become an exhibition of stuff from my diary, so to speak. It is important to me that I provide the pieces with a distance to myself, to ensure that they are relevant to others as well."

H: "My stuff is about these dualities amongst things, kind of a yin and yang. That's how I approach my pictures as well; I am trying to create a bigger picture where things have their own place, but at the same time interact with the surrounding elements."



Jan S. Hansen's latest show *Monsoon* was displayed in a two level exhibition space where the first level showed abstract pictures with fleeting imagery of palm leaves, and the second level contained large clip art carpets hung on the wall.



H: "The works downstairs move in a borderland between abstraction and the concrete. Some of them are completely dissolved; others have imprints of palm leaves. Thus the abstract works on the lower level appears(to be) void; whereas the works upstairs were created first by photographing the abstract ones, and then adding clipart.

H: "So in a way you can see the abstract ones as an empty sort of meditative situation; in meditation you sometimes reach an 'empty state' where the mind is completely tranquil, and you are able to see your thoughts float by. Observe them."



H: "So the downstairs pieces can be read as that empty state of mind, and upstairs you have this clipart imagery floating around like cropped thoughts in various constellations."



H: "The topics of a lot of these things are pretty fundamental and existential but in guise of a general everydayness. During the day you think about a lot of things, some more profound than others - these images really just contain an average day."

Written by
Erik Duckert
Portraits by
Martin Kurt Haglund

OPAQUE
opaquejournal.com

WHAT'S ON • DECEMBER

ALL MONTH

PIONEERING NUDES
A new Louisiana exhibition showcases the works of expressionist pioneer and first female painter to paint nudes Paula Mofersohn-Becker.

Louisiana
louisiana.dk
Opens December 5



Jonas Smith

ROCKING THE RINK
An ice rink will be Located at the entrance to Frederiksberghave, which is open to everyone. However, no ice hockey and, please, skate counter-clockwise.

Frederiksberg Runddel

ALL MONTH

CRACKING CHRISTMAS
The showpiece for Christmas in Tivoli this year is the classic winter ballet the Nutcracker. Set and costumes were designed by her majesty Queen Margaret.

Tivoli
visitcopenhagen.com
Ends December 28



Flickr / Charley1965

CHRISTMAS MARKETS
Try your luck at the many Christmas markets around the city from Nyhavn, Christiania and Højbro Plads to Papirøen – to name just a select few.

visitcopenhagen.com



Roger Wollstadt

WALK IN THE HOLIDAYS
Explore the city of Aarhus while a guide tells all about Chirstmas time traditions dating back to the Viking Age.

Aarhus Cathedral, Store Torv
aarhusguiderne.dk

1

BAKERY POPPING
Art collective ArtRebels are hosting a pop-up bakery and art gallery lasting all month. But today there is a group show about baking. Come hungry, leave arty.

ArtRebels, Blågårdsgade 18
http://on.fb.me/1y4U4J3
Ends December 22

1

A WORLD OF MUSIC
The Aarhus music school invites you to a musical journey through all continents in the Great Hall.

Musikhuset Aarhus
aarhusmusikskole.dk

4

OF TWO LAWS
This two-day conference will explore the difficulties of transnational law. Free to attend, but you must register at the link below. The conference is in both English and Arabic.

The National Museum
http://bit.ly/1xLdlKg
Ends December 5

6

CITY SKIING
Skiing in Fredriksberg? Why there are no hills there. Well maybe not above ground, but underground there are plenty. So bring your skis and snowboards and hit the slopes.

Lindevangsparken
http://on.fb.me/1uLUYTU



Andreas Bloch

NØRREBRO FAIRYTALE
Experience Christmas in one of the hippest streets in Copenhagen, Jægersborggade. During the two day event you can shop, drink and be very merry.

Jægersborggade
Ends December 7

10

THE VOICES OF REFUGE
Four singers interpret songs written by torture victims now living in Denmark in support of refugees. Each ticket purchased includes a copy of the songs.

Lille Vega
vega.dk

Nereya Otieno

13

A VIKING KIND OF XMAS
Travel just west of Copenhagen and get transported back to Viking times for a Christmas market complete with costumes, a light show and salty fried herring.

Havnegade 5 A
Frederikssund
vikingespil.dk

YOU HAVE REACHED
THE CULTURE SECTION,
PLEASE TURN OVER

WHAT'S ON • DECEMBER

13

LIVING THE LOOP

Swedish hip hop legends Loop-troop Rockers will bang up Pumpehuset, with their political rhymes, rocking beats and usual antics.

Pumpehuset
pumpehuset.dk



Lunchbox LP

A VERY 90S CHRISTMAS

Legendary RnB group Boyz II Men will perform a concert right before Christmas. Come take a trip back to simpler time, when boy bands walked the Earth.

Vega
vega.dk

21

SAND SCULPTURES

Walk amongst giant sand statues that tell Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. Hurry, this is the very last day to experience it.

Musikhuset Aarhus
musikhusetaarhus.dk

31

NEW YEAR'S GALA

Welcome 2015 in the company of Weber, Wagner, Borodin, Verdi and Puccini. Each ticket comes with a complimentary glass of bubbly.

Koncerthuset
dr.dk/koncerthuset

ARE YOU AN ACCOMPANYING SPOUSE IN PURSUIT OF A CAREER AND RESIDING IN COPENHAGEN?

COPENHAGEN CAREER PROGRAM WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO AN INFORMATION MEETING IN INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, GYLDENLØVESGADE 11, 2nd FLOOR - 1600 COPENHAGEN V.

Thursday the 18th of December at 10 am – 12.30 pm

At the meeting you will receive information about:

- Danish courses
- Measures promoting employment such as internship, employment with salary subsidy, mentor at the work place and upgrading courses.
- Job seeking courses.
- Recognition of international qualifications.
- Unions and unemployment funds.
- Where to get information about starting up your own business.

Please register for the meeting by sending an e-mail with your full name and address, latest latest on Tuesday the 16th of December, to:

cphcareerprogram@bif.kk.dk

Sandwiches will be served during the meeting.

Copenhagen Career Program is based in Jobcenter Copenhagen International in International House, Gyldenløvesgade 11, 2nd floor, and is one of Copenhagen Municipality's services targeted expats.

www.facebook.com/copenhagencareerprogram

