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## Simon Dybbroe Møller: *Thick & Thin*

By [Alice Godwin](#)

JULY/AUG 2024



Installation view: *Simon Dybbroe Møller: Thick & Thin*, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 2024. Courtesy Kunsthal Charlottenborg. Photo: David Stjernholm.

**On View**

### **Thick & Thin**

*Kunsthal Charlottenborg*

June 8–August 11, 2024

Copenhagen

Simon Dybbroe Møller is an artist driven by the back-and-forth between objects and images, ideas and the way they are represented. His survey *Thick & Thin* veers restlessly between mediums, contexts, and motifs in service of this fascination. In fact, each room at the Kunsthal Charlottenborg could be a solo show in its own right—a single star in the constellation of Dybbroe Møller’s universe. The title refers to the tussle between an object (thick) and an image (thin) through the lens of a society obsessed with documenting everything and assigning value based on those external documents.

The room that perhaps best illustrates Dybbroe Møller’s practice features several scaled-down lampposts—the kind that illuminated Paris in the nineteenth century—bedecked with children’s dress shoes (*Boulevard of Crime* [2022]). The lanterns are surrounded by *Architecture’s* (2019) black-and-white photographs of the ImmoScout24 headquarters, the leading online real estate marketplace in Germany and Switzerland. The installation pays homage to the early daguerreotypes of Paris’s Boulevard du Temple (known as the Boulevard du Crime for its theatrical dramas) taken by Louis Daguerre, which captured the ghostly figures of a shoeshine and customer. In Dybbroe Møller’s hands, though, the power dynamic is reimaged with the trading model of ImmoScout24 viewed as its own crime scene.

The most striking work in the exhibition is undoubtedly the film *Bag of Bones* (2023), which explores the story of the “Grauballe Man” in Denmark. In 1952, a Danish peat cutter stumbled upon a two-thousand-year-old body in a bog that quickly became one of the country’s most famous prehistoric discoveries. The body was so well preserved that some thought it might be a local missing drunk. Through 3D-scans and animation, Dybbroe Møller brings the Grauballe Man back to life and fills the gallery with the sound of his eerie breath. Part object, part image, *Bag of Bones* tests what empathy we might afford the Grauballe Man as an artifact or a corpse.

The artist destroys the image in *Performance* (2006), in which pictures show him smashing projector slides, entangling action with image with object. He appears again in *Picture* (2024) as a digital recreation of his teenaged self. The artist waits at a bus stop in the rain, before the splash of a puddle from oncoming traffic finally soaks him. For Dybbroe Møller, it’s a commentary on the naturalism of computer-generated imagery and its dependency on photographic sources.



Simon Dybbroe Møller, *Animate V*, 2012. Installation view at Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, 2024. Courtesy the artist and Kunsthall Charlottenborg. Photo: David Stjernholm.

Dybbroe Møller pokes fun at our expectations of an image and the reality of an object via the French car industry in *Animate V* (2012), where he draws upon the story of the ill-fated Renault Avantime. The car was launched in 2001 and appeared at glamorous art world events before going out of production a few years later. Similarly, in the totemic *Timepieces* (2023), the wristwatches are absent from vitrines that ordinarily protect and display valuable items. All that is left of our expectations is a residue of dust.

There are further jarring moments between object and representation in the playful series *Negative Plate* (2013), which makes a wry nod to photographic negative images in its title. Porcelain plates adorn the walls, covered in plastic versions of meals that Dybbroe Møller has eaten with family and friends. They mirror the Japanese tradition of making plastic replicas of menu items for foreigners.

And then there are the two bronze casts of a nineteenth-century dock worker by Constantin Emile Meunier which now face off. Dybbroe Møller is interested in the way bronze has been used historically to replicate ancient marble statues and can be cast in multiples for different venues to differing effect. Here, the relaxed dock worker, with hand on popped hip, counters our assumptions of heroic public sculpture and raises questions about what idealized masculinity looks like.



Simon Dybbroe Møller, *Video*, 2020. Courtesy the artist and Kunsthall Charlottenborg. Photo: David Stjernholm.

An entire room is given over to such male characters, like a fiberglass figurine of a butcher serving up cuts of his own body (*Self Serving* [2018]) and a mustachioed man clad in bandages, running on a loop (*Homo Slomo* [2011]). Between them is a sports floor, as if they might test their machismo on the sports field. Elsewhere, athletes lounge in *Sporting* (2013) and clasp pieces of sports equipment, their bodies coated in concrete. Dybbroe Møller suggests the material evokes the weight of modern sculpture.

There are moments when the push-pull between object and image, motif and representation is perhaps more oblique—like the children’s school bags filled with stones to represent the weight that young people carry on their back. And yet, Dybbroe Møller’s choices of materials and titles are very intentional. They are ingrained with myriad meanings and insider jokes: take the column lying on a psychoanalyst’s couch in *χωρίς τίτλ* (2014), which means “without title.”

Dybbroe Møller’s sprawling universe ends with a dummy that is nearly blown away by a special effects wind machine from the film industry (*Video* [2020]). We can empathize, feeling slightly disheveled ourselves by the incredibly ambitious and rigorous concepts that drive this survey.

## Contributor

[Alice Godwin](#)