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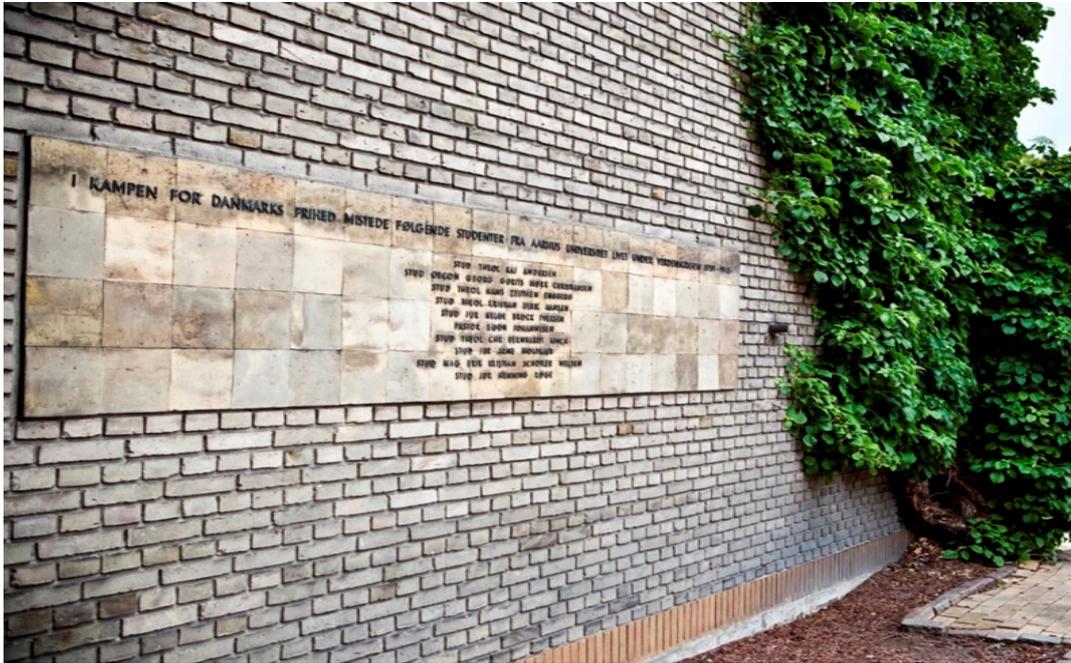
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The entrance: Memorial tablet for AU students who fell during German occupation

Another topic relevant in the context of representation, is keeping alive the memory of student resistance fighters during World War II. This plate lists victims of the German occupation who studied or had studied at AU: „I kampen for Danmarks frihed mistede følgende studenter fra Aarhus Universitet livet under verdenskrigen 1939-1945”/“Fighting for Denmark’s freedom the following students from Aarhus University lost their lives during the world war 1939-1945”. AU’s annual report for the academic year 1944/1945 outlines what happened to each of the students: some were executed, some were killed during sabotage, and others lost their lives in concentration camps (Aarhus Universitet 1945).

The entrance to the university’s assembly hall

The Danish flag ‘Dannebrog’ is officially flown at several university venues. Here, the impressive number of ten flags frame the otherwise rather unpretentious entrance to the main assembly hall. Flags are only flown on special and official occasions, still, the flag does not exclusively represent citizenship in a narrow official and institutionalized sense. Flags can also be found on employees’ desks, lunch and dinner tables, and come in all forms (for a discussion of Danish national symbolism and political instrumentalisation, s. Jenkins 2011). The Dannebrog is often pointed to as the “most important symbol of Danishness, that is, the idea of a bond between all Danes independent of all (class-) differences.” (Adriansen 1999, 100).

Above the entrance, we see the relief ‘tree of science’ by Olaf Stæhr-Nielsen. The relief shows the university seal, thus reflecting the bond with the town of Aarhus; and it also shows two common illustrative figures: a dolphin, and an anchor as a Christian symbol (Lykke 2011).





Social Meeting Room: The "studentforeninger" maintain their own bars

Students' associations and unions are given much space and room for representation on campus. The many student organizations are responsible for maintaining their Friday's bars: around 40 rooms at AU are given to the 42,000 students for social gathering as well as the regular Friday afternoon parties (sometimes regular lecture halls). The price lists in the background of this picture display the beer selection.

Wall in an auditorium

Pictures and representations of state representatives or even members of the Danish royal family are unlikely to be found in Danish universities. Instead, paintings, often contemporary expressionist and – quite unusual in other European university landscapes – sculptures are to be found in lecture halls and hallways at Aarhus University (AU). This picture by Danish artist Niels Reumert (1989) is displayed in one of the largest auditoriums of the Department of Business and Social Sciences, right next to the blackboard.





The auditorium

This large assembly hall ('Aula') fosters an understanding of a Danish display of culture and education in three ways:

The assembly hall was designed by C.F. Møller – the renowned architect of all university buildings in Aarhus since 1933. C.F. Møller has – almost consistently over the decades – stuck to a functionalist and strictly 'anti-monumental' ("umiddelbart antimonumental", Wiggers et al. 2006, 13) building style. C.F. Møller is, with his work for Aarhus University, represented in the Danish "Kulturkanon", a list of 108 artworks essential for the Danish cultural understanding and heritage (Kulturministeriet 2006).

The large wooden representations by sculptor Bent Sørensen (installed in 1970, Dreisler et al. 2006, 8) remind viewers of Christian cross symbols and Nordic natural religions at the same time - and especially so in the cathedral-like surroundings.

The lamps are designed by the Dane Poul Henningsen. Danish design interior is of considerable importance in constructing and discussing 'Danishness', be it in common literature (Kingsley 2012) or in the academic Bourdieu-inspired discussion about what cultural capital in a comparatively homogenous society such as in Denmark could be (Prieur et al. 2008). The symbolic meaning of Danish design may be reflected in the tendency to give preference to domestic Designers in university interiors as well.



The auditorium

The interior design of this assembly hall was inspired by Grundtvigskirken in Copenhagen (Lykke 2012). Yet, Christian references, other than in artwork, are scarce. In this hall, too, it is rather the absence of decoration that constitutes the university's approach to cultural signifiers and a "regional dansk karakter" (Wiggers et al. 2006, 13). The pendant lamps, "Spirallampen" were designed especially for the university, again by the Dane Poul Henningsen. They are a rather dominant feature of the otherwise decoration-free room, reflecting the emphasis on design as a form of cultural representation. The room's understatement is deceptive considering that even later versions of the spiral lamp are auctioned for around 10.000 Euro and more (Bruun Rasmussen 2013).



The entrance to the student council

The student councils are different from the student clubs, in that they are political associations for presenting students' perspectives on the university and politics in general. Student councils have regular offices, right among academic staff offices, and often display their claims on their office doors.

Danish design: The Hoptimist

The every-day usage of the national flag is apparent in several decorative objects, such as a special edition of the popular desk-decoration "Hoptimist". The Danish flag appears further in form of napkin prints, food flags, garlands, stickers (often found on students' laptops) and small to medium sized desktop banners. This extensive use of the flag is one issue that has contributed to discussions, in the media and in academe, about the possibly conflicting notions of Denmark as an ethnic-culturally homogenous society, on the one hand, and a modern pluralistic nation state, on the other hand (Berdichevsky 2004). Considering the banner motives on diverse bibelot objects, some researchers differentiate between the flag as a symbol of state belonging and citizenship and the use of "one's own private flag" ("sit eget private flag", Adriansen 2002, 133). As Richard Jenkins observes, the flag can "symbolise celebration and joy" (2011, 155) and "grief, respect and solidarity" on private occasions (ibid, 157), and commercially, it can "be used to sell almost everything" (ibid, 158). In this chosen case, the interlocking of national symbolism and domestic design objects may predominantly emphasize the importance of Danish design as national representation.

