

Joachim Koester / Matthew Buckingham
Sandra of the Tulphouse or How to Live in a Free State
2001

Section 8/11

The Motorcycle gangs of Copenhagen, fighting over control of the hash market in the Free City, turned it into a war zone in the 1980s. Perhaps they saw themselves in some way as contemporary knights. Free-agents, riding over the land, choosing vengeance over mourning. But they must have known that the image of the knight on horseback was always distorted. The medieval patrons of knights in armor not only paid for the chivalry of their personal warriors, they also paid artists and poets to exaggerate the importance of these figures in much the same way that Hollywood glorified cowboys by reconstructing them as heroes.

Motorcycle gangs like Copenhagen's Hell's Angels and Bullshit spread their control over Christiania through random acts of intimidation. When he was a teenager, still living with his mother in Christiania, Elisabeth's son, Jonah, encountered some Bullshit Gang-members in the stairway of the club Loppen. They were enormous. One stopped on the stairs to tie what he called his 'fighting boots.' The one in front kept climbing until he saw Jonah. "I think I found something up here..." he yelled to his friends. When they had all assembled on the landing they pinned Jonah against the hand rail and the one who seemed to be in charge, leaned over so that his nose was nearly touching Jonah's. Then he slowly licked Jonah's face up and down from chin to forehead. Suddenly the action of the bar-door opening distracted the gang-leader. Jonah used the opportunity to fall to the floor and roll under the railing onto the stairs below, escaping into the night.

The Motorcycle gang problem was serious. In 1987, after an intense investigation, police discovered the body of a 27 year old man buried in the floor of Bullshit's strong-hold at the Multi-Media House. The gang had excavated the dirt floor, placed the victim's body in the hole, poured a new cement floor on top, and converted the space into a motorcycle repair shop. The discovery caused an uproar in Christiania. That night 150 people surrounded the Bullshit gang and forced them out of the Free City.

Bullshit gang-member Peter Espensen, alias Peter Panik, also twenty-seven years of age, was charged with murder. Peter Panik's father told the Danish press that he thought his son was innocent. He said, "This is not at all Peter's style. He wouldn't hide the body—he would've left him where he fell."

After that, the open war between the motorcycle gangs resulted in the annihilation of Bullshit. By the early '90s most of its members were dead. Motorcycle gangs were eventually banned from Copenhagen altogether and, like Machiavelli in the sixteenth century, the surviving members of Hell's Angels were exiled to the country, outside the city walls.

Byens Lys, Christiania
backstage videoinstallation
August 25th - September 15th 2019

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AFTALER, FÅ NOGET FOR
HÅNDEN OG KAN ARBEJDE
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