

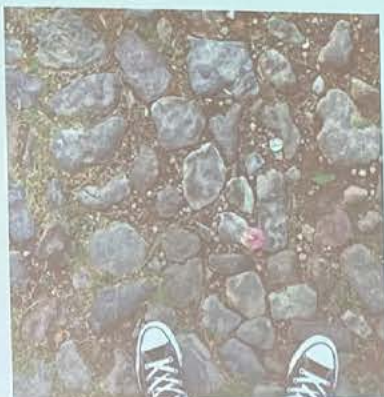
# SITE STORIES: EXPLORATIONS OF URBAN SPACES THROUGH DRAWING AND ANIMATION

*Danish title: "Stedets Fortælling: undersøgt gennem håndtegning og animation"*

**The story of a workshop**

*25.04 to 29.04.2022, Aalborg University in Denmark*

*Institute for Architecture, Design and Media Technology*



## Introduction to the workshop

The workshop “*Site Stories: explorations of urban spaces through drawing and animation*” represented a unique educational opportunity for working both interdisciplinary and across semesters in the Bachelor program of Architecture and Urban Design in Aalborg University. Furthermore, it gave the opportunity to engage in topics beyond the established teaching practices and curriculum.

In the workshop we challenged the traditional technical-engineering mind-set and more factual understanding of the materiality of an urban space with an artistic, fictional, and bodily-sensual perspective. Inspired by, among others, architects like Carlo Scarpa and Sverre Fehn, we explored the concept of ‘storytelling’ in the attempt to train the poetic and imaginative sense of place. A topic that has also been investigated in recent times by scholars like Professor Jane Rendell and Architect Shelley Smith, who both very kindly agreed to give guest lectures at the workshop.

In continuation of the inspirational guest lectures the students first worked with hand drawing. This with the aim to study the materiality of a place and train how to capture its special characteristics. We encouraged students to pay extra attention to surfaces and detailing in selected urban spaces and historical building sites. As well as to start experimenting with their understanding of materiality; begin to fantasize about how we as humans are sentient bodies and narrative beings. Thus, the aim and purpose of the workshop was to strengthen students’ future understanding of how to design urban spaces. But- importantly- also to give room to make their own discoveries and explorations. To explore different drawing techniques and discover the potentials of animation as valuable design tools in the creative design process. Not least, experimenting with refining the stories around an urban space.

## The structure of the workshop

Overall, the workshop was divided into five phases and associated themes: 1) *The Material*, 2) *The Emotional*, 3) *The Remembered*, 4) *The Dreamed*, and 5) *The Imagined*. In the first two phases, focusing on drawing techniques, we moved the students’ explorations from the smaller drawing paper and the technique of vignettes, into paper that was larger than themselves and the technique of frottage. As well as exploring the narrative impact of the technique of bricolage and different retelling opportunities through the technique of collage.

In the final three phases of the workshop, we encouraged the students to immerse themselves in the world of animation and examine how fragments of the materiality of place, their different hand drawings, and narrative techniques, as well as the sensory impressions and personal stories could merge together. Could their visual retellings come to life? And could the different stories weave into each other across time and place? With the help of the two award-winning animators; Michelle Kranot and Uriel Kranot leaders of the ANIDOX at the Center for Animation, Vizualization, and Digital Storytelling at VIA University College in Denmark, our students reinterpret ways of *telling about* and *exploring* a place. In the end, all the drawing explorations and animations was collected for a joint exhibition.

## Detailed structure of the workshop

### Phase 1: The Material

Based on the two guest lectures by Jane Rendell and Shelley Smith, this first phase encouraged the physical-sensory exploration of selected urban sites in Aalborg city centre. Each group was informed to collect material evidence from their specific site using frottage technique on large paper, simple quick hand sketches and through small memorabilia. In addition, a small essay was written with the immediate sensory impressions. In this way, new methods were trained to try to collect sensory impressions of a physical place.

### Phase 2: The Emotional

This second phase, in continuation of the physical-sensory examination of the selected urban sites in Aalborg, moved into the psychological-imaginary and emotional investigation. Here, the individual sensory impressions and feelings were unfolded through Bricollage and Collage technique. With the collage technique, the boundaries between what is experienced in the moment and what is remembered are dissolved, and thus the boundaries between the physical and the emotional layers of the place are also dissolved.

### Phase 3: The Remembered

As a continuation of the second phase, the third phase moves from the expression and unfolding possibilities of hand drawing to animation. Here the focus is on unfolding the potential narratives that the various urban sites produce through their materiality, atmosphere, and emotions that are awakened in the observing students. In this way, we moved the students from engaging the physical place and the emotional place into the interpretive and fabulating layers of an urban site. This is where the retelling arise, and in the gap between 'fact' and 'fiction' we allowed our students to engage in their own personal memories and not least their vivid imagination to help unfold the historical, cultural and poetic aspects of storytelling.

### Phase 4: The Dreamed

This fourth phase experimented, as part of the work with animation and the retellings of the sites, freely with the significant and interpretive layers. The work encouraged exploring formats across time, where various connections between past, present and future could crystallize. Students started exploring storylines and building up narratives with situations and sequences. It was essential that the students were allowed to investigate what happens to the stories of the site, as they started to play with the relationship between people, places, time, space and objects, as well as consciously produce new qualities and layers to the site.

### Phase 5: The Imagined

Was the final phase of the workshop and where the retellings, as well as the students' imaginations about the different urban sites came to life. We collected all the different input and impressions from the other phases of the workshop, as well as the various exercises with hand drawing and animation and turned it into a joined exhibition.

## Didactics and techniques

As mentioned above, the workshop was divided into five overall phases and associated themes: 1) The Material, 2) The Emotional, 3) The Remembered, 4) The Dreamed, and 5) The Imagined. The didactic aim and underlying teaching structure was to introduce one new phase per day in the workshop. Each of the phases was inspired by the books "Site-writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism" and "The Architecture of Psychoanalysis: Spaces of Transition" written by our guest lecturer; Jane Rendell from the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL) in England. One of the points in her books is the investigation of the psychological layers and imaginary qualities in the understanding of buildings and urban spaces/ places. She emphasizes, among other things, the importance of exploring the gap between the conscious and the unconscious, the experienced and the imaginary. Based on her theoretical perspective we worked with stories that gave meaning to spaces and places. It was also a pedagogical and methodological understanding that invited the students to explore, write, draw, walk, and talk about places from different perspectives than the more classic site analyses and micro-climatic mappings that they have previously been introduced to in the various semester teachings. At the same time, it was an approach that examined the boundary between architecture and art.

### Peer-learning and mix of individual/group exercises

At the first day of the workshop all participants were put into 10 groups of 3 persons. The groups were made by the course responsible, aiming for a mix of students across the 3 different bachelor semesters, so first year students could get to know- and learn from both second year and third year students. Those groups were encouraged to sit together during the workshop and were expected to do a series of exercises together, throughout the week. Finally, they should 'submit' an animation/ presentation on the final day of the workshop. However, in the first days of the workshop we also focused on introducing a smaller series of more individual exercises, training the individual drawing techniques.

### Unfolding the stories: From material to imaginary layers

We chose 10 specific sites located around the city center of Aalborg. Some of them were more familiar to our students, while others were perhaps less known and of an uncannier character. The aim with each site was to provide the student with a place less pre-defined and clear as the urban spaces or architectural settings they would normally engage in, during their traditional semester project work. Some of the sites are defined by an object, a small building detail or a structural element. Others by a material choice or material combination. The point was, that each site potentially provoked and pushed the students' understanding of how spaces and places afford bodily experiences, triggers certain atmospheres and possibly reveal both emotional layers and entire stories which connect past, present and future.

*Our first story began in the transition zone between Nørresundby and Aalborg. At the top of the bridge above the fjord. To be more precise by the colorful bridge tower, our site no. 01. From the bridge tower we moved towards Vesterbro, crossing the iconic monument, the bull. Our site no. 03 and the potential of a new story. Then, we moved down Bispensgade and turned right towards Gravensgade, exactly half-way down, we found the very small passage 'Latinergyden'. Our site no. 02 and yet another story. We entered carefully. As we did not know what – or who – we might run into. A few steps away, lies the old Aalborg Kloster. Here we found our site no. 08 with the small basement entrance located in the west-wing of the monastery. In the area of the monastery, we walked along Adelgade, turned left down Østerågade and soon arrived at our site no. 07, the entrance area of Salling facing Nytorv. A place of much transition and renewal. But also, of many different stories. We soon left this busy part of the city and moved towards the Eastern harbor area. Near the tip of the pier, we found an industrial area in heavy transformation. Here was our site no. 04, the old hoist or crane located in near the waterfront. Across the city, in the Western part, we found our sites 06, 09 and 10. A few streets apart, they each reveal a part of history and cultural heritage with great many stories for further exploration. Finally, we moved towards the south, perhaps down Dannebrosgade and Kong Christians Allé. Behind Kunsten Artmuseum, in- between the woodland area, and we found site 05; the Aalborg Tower. Many stories are already told about this place, but could we reveal anything new?*

For all the above sites, we wanted the students to try and find their way through the specific site; witness its current state, discover the material layers, and try to reveal the hidden stories of the sometimes not-so-distant past. Perhaps even discover the mysterious apparitions and changing presence? Try to pay attention to how the lights, shadows, sounds, reflections, and nuances of the colors of the city reveal itself to them on an embodied and emotional level. Collect the small material clues, the little emotional pits, and pieces through drawing. Afterwards, when they returned to campus, they were encouraged to start a reconstruction in their imagination of what might have occurred, as well as speculations about what they could do in the future. Thereby, unfolding narratives where reality and imagination come together. Retold in the language of drawing and animation.



## Workshop output:

### Hand drawing and animation techniques

**Vignettes:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a short descriptive literary sketch” or “a brief incident or scene (as in a play or movie)”. We use it in this workshop as a small drawing, approximately size 10x10cm, to capture the surface character and tactility of a given material and/or object as you see it and can express with various drawing tools.

**Frottage:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the technique of creating a design by rubbing (as with a pencil) over an object placed underneath the paper” and “a composition so made”. We use it in this workshop as a X-large drawing, approximately size 30x200cm, to capture the surface character and tactility of a given material and/or object as you feel it and can express with various drawing tools.

**Bricolage:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “construction (as of sculpture or a structure of ideas) achieved by using whatever comes to hand” and “something constructed in this way”. We use it in this workshop as a medium drawing, approximately size 20x20cm, to re-construct the way you remember the site, and can express it with various drawing tools.

**Collage:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “an artistic composition made of various materials (such as paper, cloth, or wood) glued on a surface” and “a creative work that resembles such a composition in incorporating various materials or elements” or “the art of making”. We use it in this workshop as a large drawing, approximately size 40x40cm, to re-construct the way you imagine the site, and can express it with various drawing tools.

**Memorabilia:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “things that are remarkable and worthy of remembrance” and “things that stir recollection or are valued or collected for their association with a particular field or interest”. We use it in this workshop as small physical items you collect from the site, which can help you remember and express the character of the site throughout the different exercises.

**Maquette:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “a usually small preliminary model (as of a sculpture or building)”. We use it in this workshop as quick mock-ups you model from the site, which can help you re-tell the character of the site and illustrate the imagined site stories.

**Animation:** is defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the act of animating” and “to give life to” or “to move to action” or “to make or design in such a way as to create apparently spontaneous lifelike movement”. We use it in this workshop as a storytelling method, which can help you re-tell the character of the site and illustrate the imagined site stories.

**“The most wonderful thing we can experience is the sense of mystery. It is a source of all true art and of all science. Whosoever has never felt this emotion, who no longer knows how to stop and meditate and remain transfixed in fearful admiration, is like a dead man: his eyes are shut.”**

**(Albert Einstein in Fei 2004:1)**

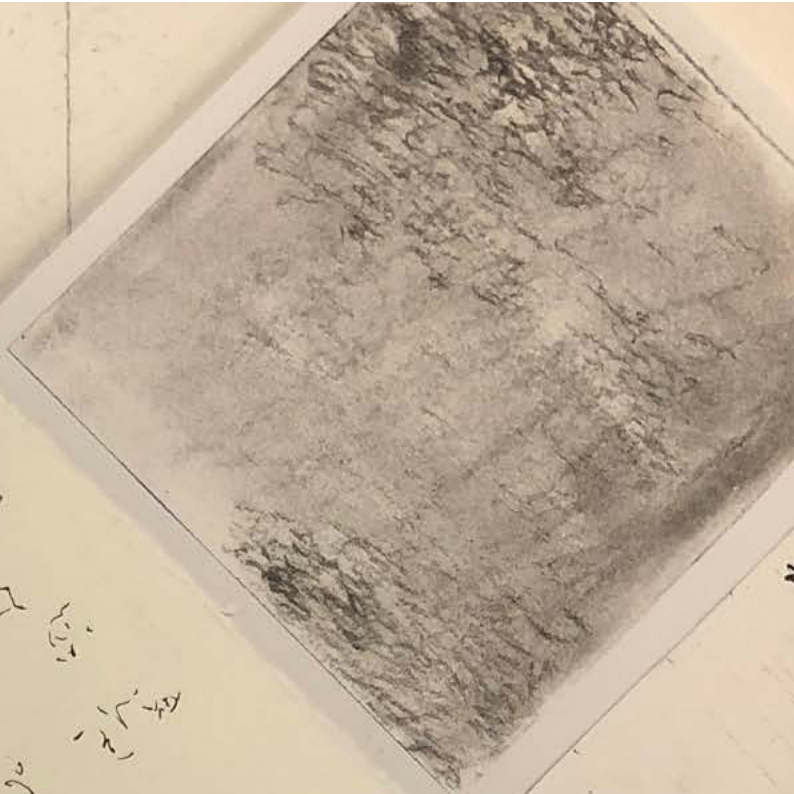
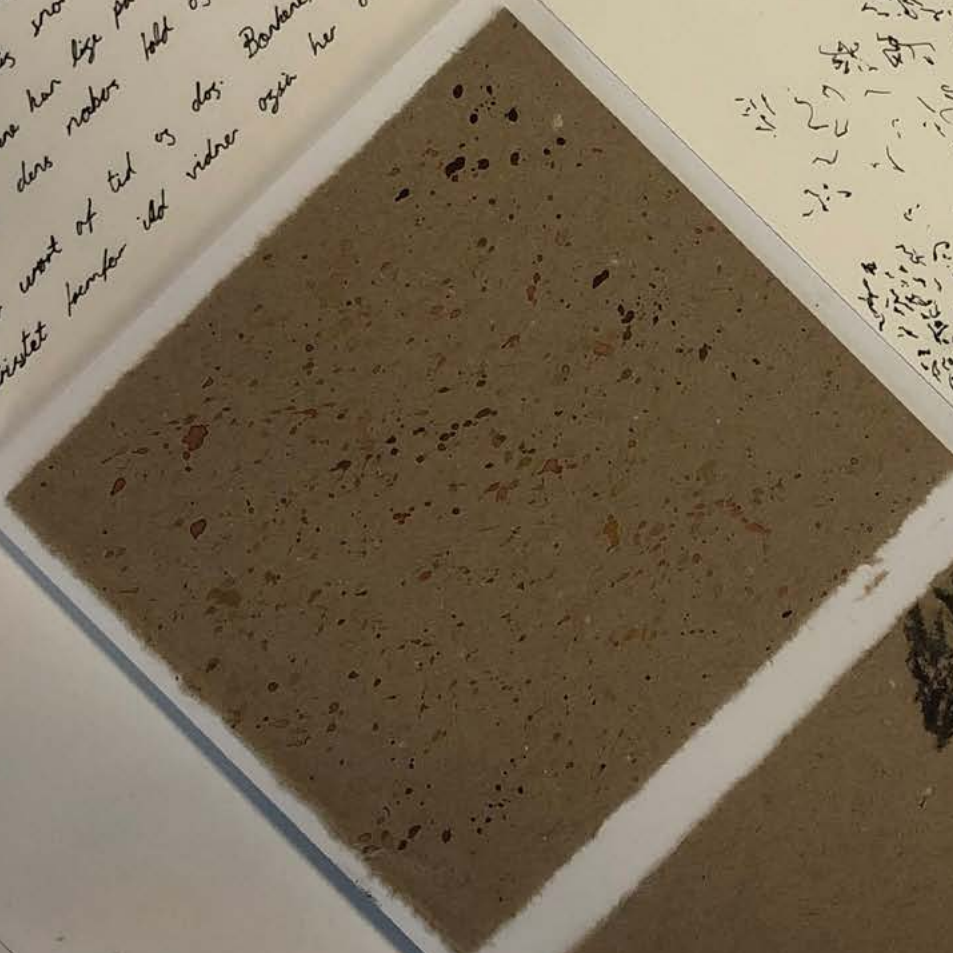


**DAY ONE**





for vind og andes blide. Gent var mellem  
 videren videren. For klokken kunne endre en  
 albert forklare mindst om utallige lodder gys  
 bag stovvægge  
 med gys og flise til passager gys. En hant alle tre  
 men halende slæppe herker over nodulide Dore og skjult her  
 bogst i det ofiser balle. Dore til anordnen og dore til  
 staves o daktet af indbale som en forsonen blitvare stige de regnerne  
 te tonne ofortende men på gerner vunderhede: et miniatu her, en sarkus af  
 navne og en tynd næste ugrde snor stikke is mellem to ruder. En var vise  
 efter fjernst ved de første og gys har lige på vej op. Løgere herre tykke stæfle  
 is højt op i Lyset, uagtet af dore naber balt og opstandelse.  
 Bøttet under bæl, o. vider vort af tid og dore. Bøttene bødere stolare, skontigene af  
 rust, løper dæret af elektristet funder idet vider ogia her om tidene nodulide hennark



The Document











**DAY TWO**





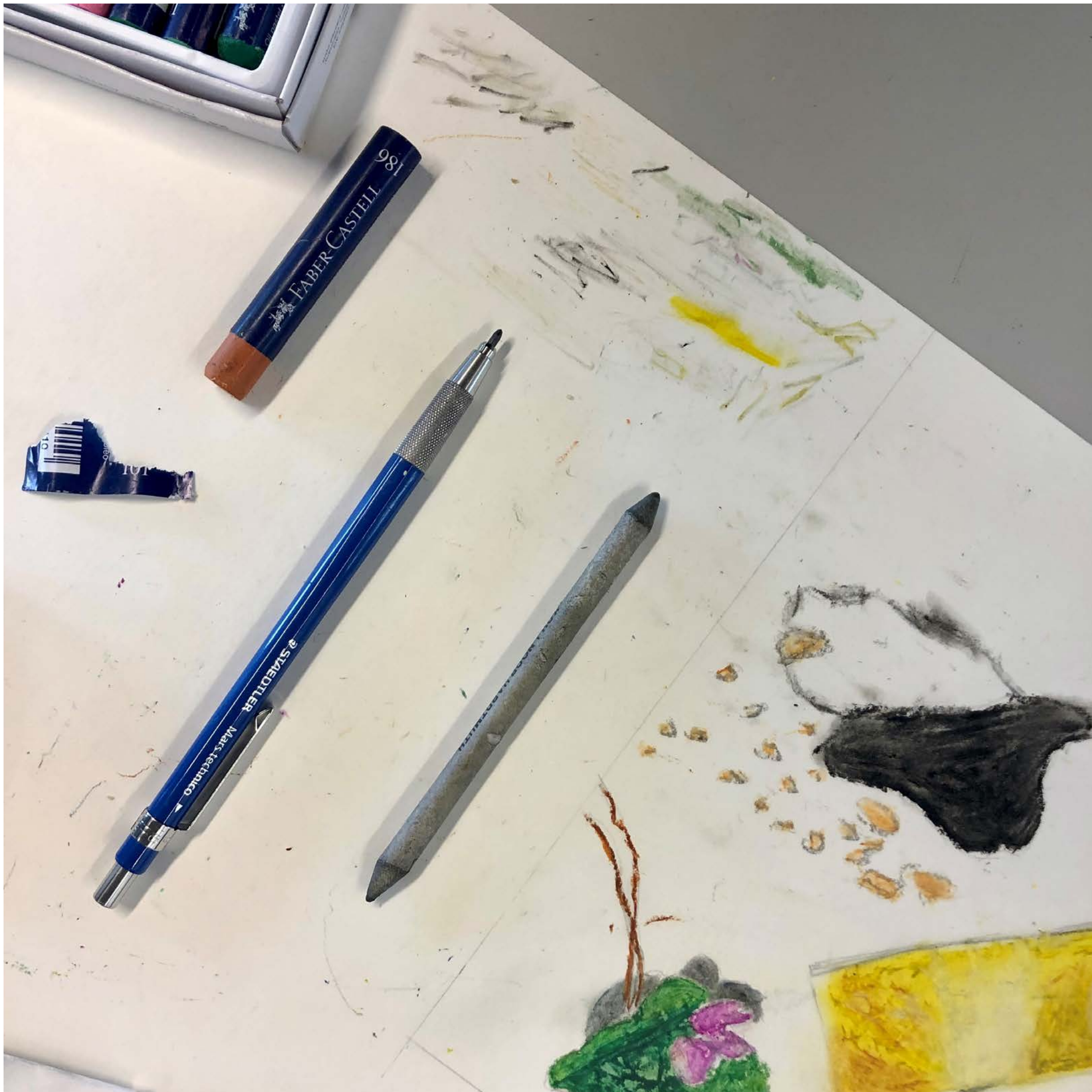
*"The Symbol"*  
Site 10: Industrial heritage at Spritten Aalborg



Foto: Claus Rene Pedersen, Aalborgnu.dk







**DAY THREE**

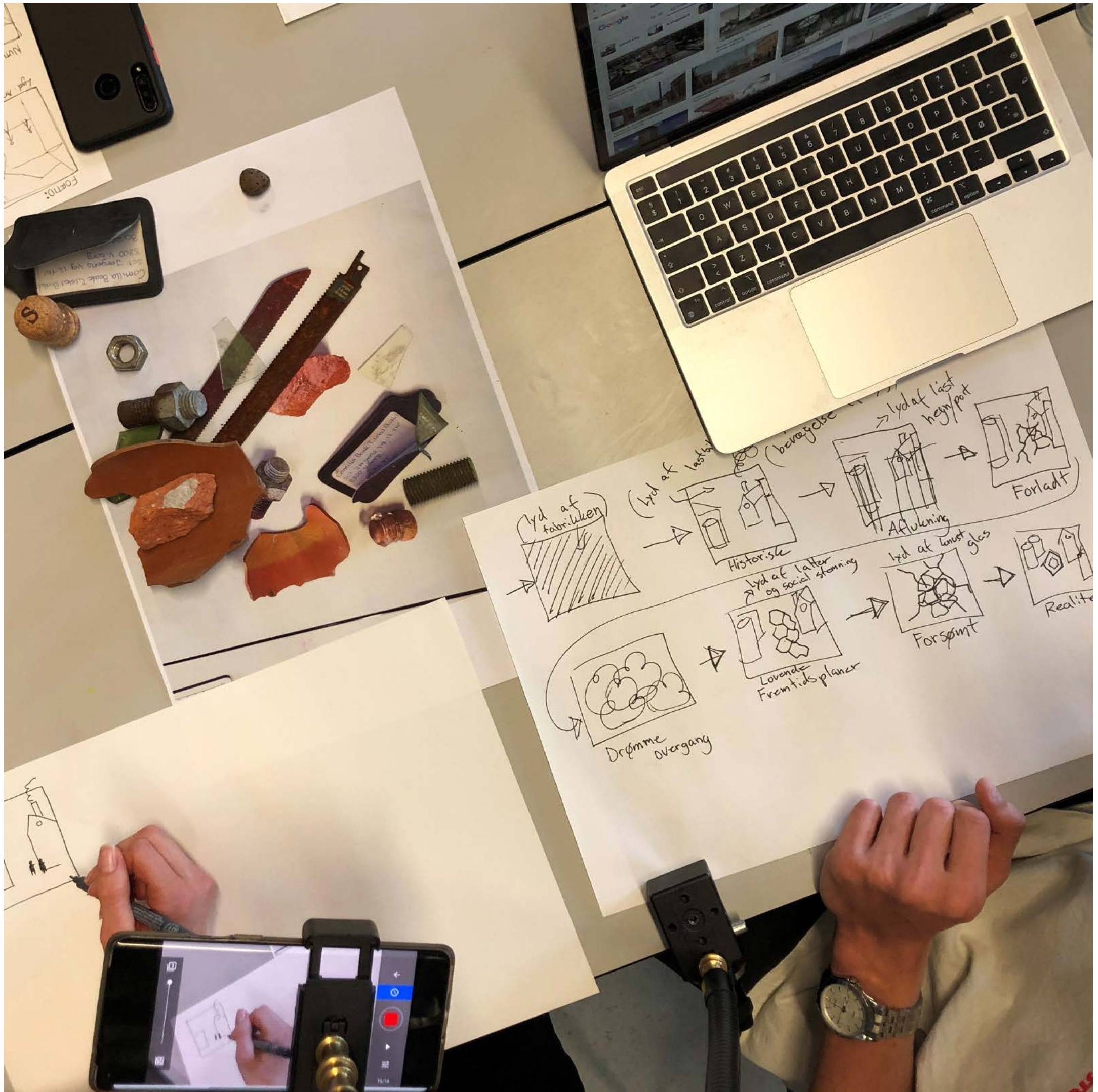






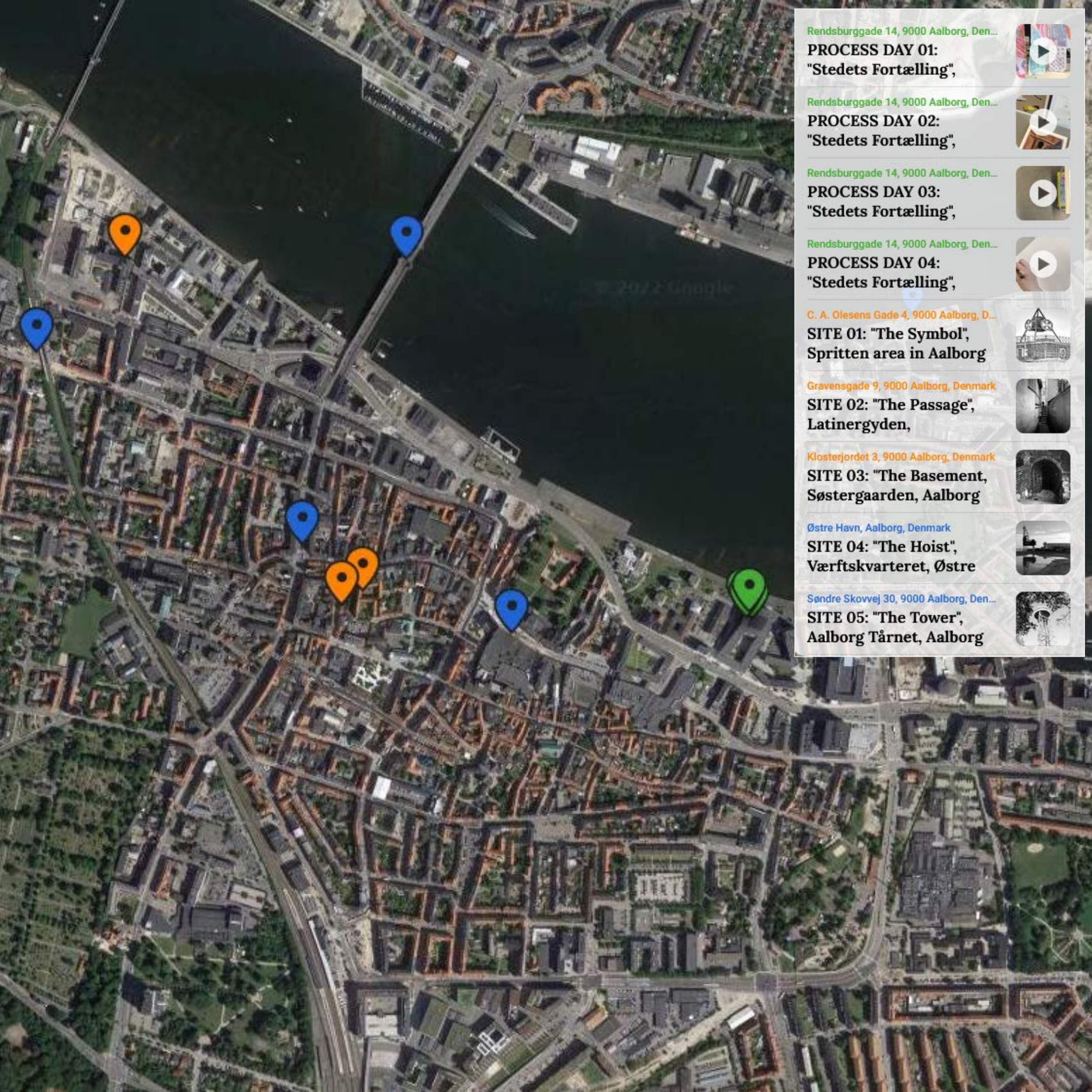






**EXHIBITION**





Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Aalborg, Den...

**PROCESS DAY 01:**  
**"Stedets Fortælling",**



Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Aalborg, Den...

**PROCESS DAY 02:**  
**"Stedets Fortælling",**



Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Aalborg, Den...

**PROCESS DAY 03:**  
**"Stedets Fortælling",**



Rendsburggade 14, 9000 Aalborg, Den...

**PROCESS DAY 04:**  
**"Stedets Fortælling",**



C. A. Olesens Gade 4, 9000 Aalborg, D...

**SITE 01: "The Symbol",**  
**Spritten area in Aalborg**



Gravensgade 9, 9000 Aalborg, Denmark

**SITE 02: "The Passage",**  
**Latinergyden,**



Klosterjordet 3, 9000 Aalborg, Denmark

**SITE 03: "The Basement",**  
**Søstergaarden, Aalborg**



Østre Havn, Aalborg, Denmark

**SITE 04: "The Hoist",**  
**Værftskvarteret, Østre**



Søndre Skovvej 30, 9000 Aalborg, Den...

**SITE 05: "The Tower",**  
**Aalborg Tårnet, Aalborg**











## Students

the group SPRITTEN  
**'THE SYMBOL'**

- ANNA SOFIA JAKOBSEN
- KATRINE RECHNAGEL POULSEN
- MAGNUS HYLDGAARD MORTENSEN
- SOFIE ASTRID STEFFENSEN DALL

the group KLOSTER  
**'THE BASEMENT'**

- DANIEL WEINREICH STAFLIN
- NINA MØRK KEJ
- RENÉE WEIGELT RASMUSSEN

the group LATINERGYDE  
**'THE PASSAGE'**

- LAURA GAARDE FISHER
- TORKIL EYDUNSSON LISBERG
- JULIE LÜTKEMEYER ZANDERSEN

## Teachers

Associate professor, Tenna Doktor Olsen Tvedebrink  
Assistent professor, Tina Vestermann Olsen

## Guests

Michelle Kranot  
Uriel Kranot

Shelley Smith, architect and urbanist  
Jane Rendell, professor