The curriculum for materials and construction for bachelor’s in architecture at The Royal Danish Academy is organized as a full-time course of five weeks at the beginning of the second year. Under the title ‘Materialer’ the approximately 150 students are presented to lectures, workshops, debates, a syllabus and asked to complete a written assignment and a practical assignment. This presentation focus on the practical assignment comprising a majority of the course.

The assignment is to reconstruct a particular building detail from a pre-selected work of architecture. It is assigned the title ‘biopsy’ as a reference to the medical method of extracting matter from bodies revealing an ‘inner’ that is inaccessible from the surface. Though the architectural biopsy in this case does not in fact remove matter from the works themselves, a main focus of the assignment is to represent the detail as true to the reality as possible.

We discourage conceptual creativity from the students in order to focus on information search, drawing analysis and qualified guessing in the case where information is unavailable. Representation of materials is avoided in favor of material plainness. The assignment generates a range of discussions: Where is a biopsy taken to best reveal the inner? Where do you cut to create a biopsy and not a module? What is the difference between a casting surface, a component surface and a cut surface?
The assignment refrain from assigning a particular moral position on the relation between architectural expression and the use of material resources. Through exposing the students to the material reality of the works, we wish to allow for their own critical approach to architectural materiality.

In the presentation we discuss the approach to teaching materials and construction in a relation between the substance matter and the more speculative aspects of architectural production.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):
Morten Birk Jørgensen is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at The Royal Danish Academy – Institute of Architecture and Culture. He is affiliated with the research group of Cultural Heritage, Transformation and Restoration, presently working on the research project ‘Forankring og Forandring’ (English: ‘Change and Anchorage’), co-funded by The Royal Danish Academy and Realdania. His main research interest concerns valuation as a practice within architecture and architectural heritage. Morten co-founded ‘Jävla kritiker!’ (English: ‘Damn critics!’, with Andrea Ougaa and Anders Rubing) – a Nordic platform for experiments and discussions on the conditions, potential and future of architectural critique. He recently curated the exhibition ‘Jävla kritiker!’ involving some of the most renowned critics and practices in the Nordic countries. Morten has published ‘At Hylde Arkitekturen’ (English: ‘Praising Architecture’, with Martin Søberg) examining architectural awards as a mode of critique. Following this article, he has been in charge of the award ‘Årets Arne’ (English: ‘Arne of the year’) handed out by the Architectural Association Copenhagen. Morten has taught extensively at The Royal Academy since 2014, running studios on various topics, courses on architectural critique and since 2018 in charge of ‘Materialer’ (English: Materials, with Stine Sundahl, formerly with Stine Henckel Schultz).

Stine Sundahl is a Phd and teacher in architecture at The Royal Danish Academy – Institute for Building Arts and Design (IBD). Stine is part of a research cluster working with ‘The Spatial Adaptive Window’ focusing of thermal aspects of space and its role on the interior. Stine is teaching in a variety of formats from studio-teaching to large course teaching containing both theoretical and practice aspects of architecture. Stine has a wide experience from larger danish offices as well as her own practice where she has been rewarded ‘Årets Arne’ for the project ‘Under Construction’ and several economical scholarships. Stine has exhibited her own work in galleries and is a member of the Society of Artists at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts.