

# MiD

Why exhibitions?

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## Why exhibitions?

### Editorial

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Museums develop a wide range of different learning and communication activities. They work with new user groups, outreach, and citizenship, and they develop roleplaying sessions, workshops, guided tours, and digital communication. In recent years, temporary exhibitions have become an increasingly important part of the museums' practice – to the point where they have more or less redirected focus away from the permanent presentations of the collections.

In the temporary exhibitions, objects are presented in many new ways, allowing the exhibitions to accommodate general trends in society such as growing user involvement, user demands for a sense of immediate and personal relevance, and experiences conveyed via new media.

In recent years museums have reinvented themselves as socially inclusive institutions that not only keep their doors open to welcome all visitors, but also develop their learning and communication activities via innovative approaches and by proactively considering the nature of their audiences – and through all of this the museums have retained the exhibition as a central aspect of the museum experience.

The exhibition is where visitors encounter the museum's research, collection, and learning and communication activities – the exhibition is where visitors have the opportu-

nity to experience the physical objects that form the basis for our knowledge about our shared cultural and natural heritage.

The seminar asks the question: WHY EXHIBITION? It invites discussion and reflection on the issue of how museums should – now and in future – work with objects, tell stories, prompt interest, ask tough questions and seek to answer them together with the museum's users. And it invites us to discuss how museums can create exhibitions that are relevant to our guests while also attracting new users.

These questions are relevant for museum institutions and for those who work with developing learning and communication activities – which quite naturally means that they are highly relevant to the members of MiD. At MiD we believe that our key task is to ensure and promote the exchange of knowledge and insights between our members, whose ranks include museum educators, directors, communicators, and many other professions within the field of museum learning and communication.

You have many opportunities for taking part in forums that focus on key challenges, opportunities, best practice, and questions within museum learning and communication: The Association of Danish Museum's meeting on learning and communication, 2014, is an important one, as are active membership of MiD, the various MiD-seminars, international study trips, and the MiD Magazine you are currently reading!

- ▶ Parvin Ardalan, Iranian journalist and human rights defender. Malmö Museums Hot Spot Express Yourself. Photo © Andreas Nilsson/ Malmö Museer

## Hot Spot

– a forum for social debate

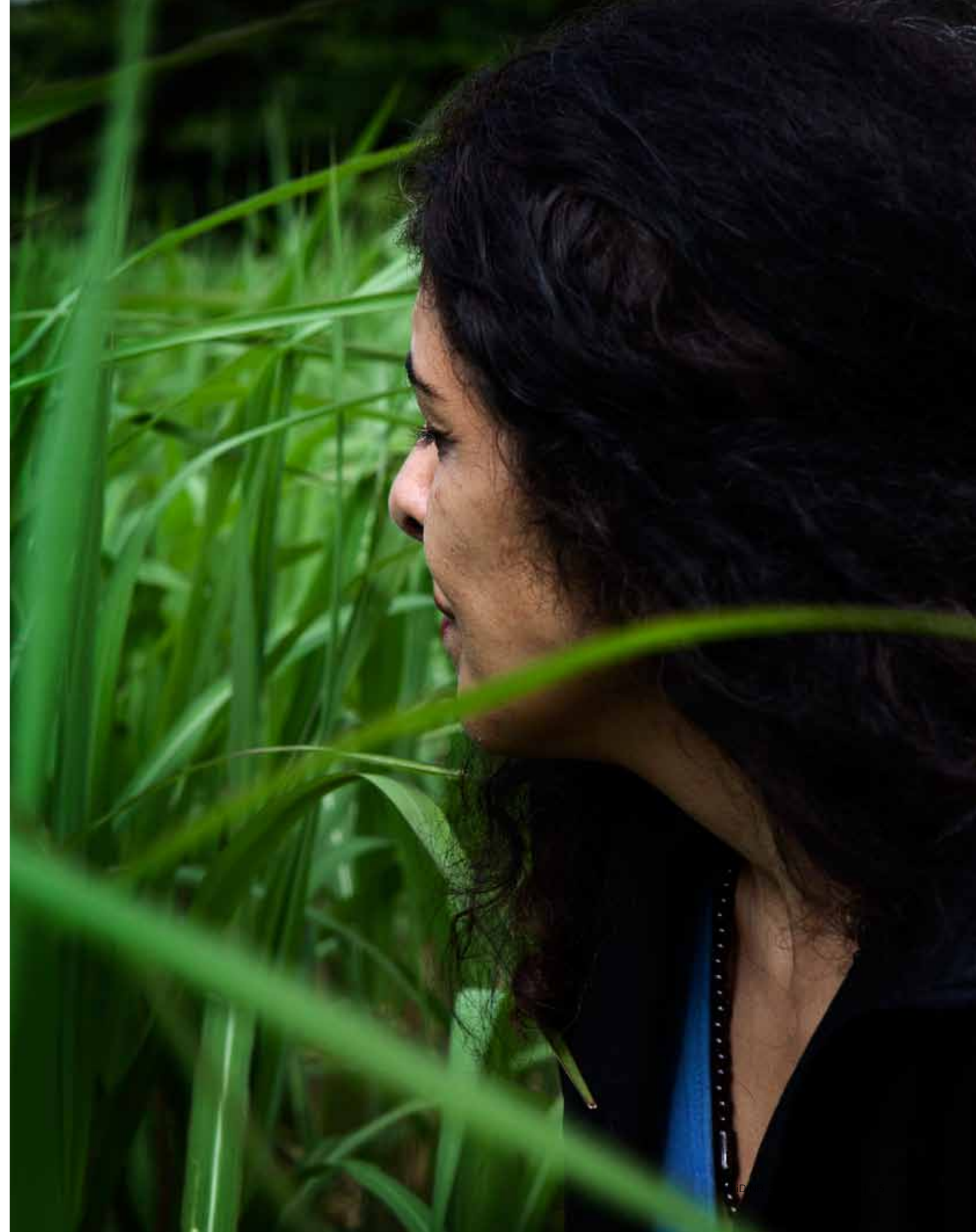
Samuel Thelin, Project Manager/Education Officer, Malmö Museums, Samuel.Thelin@malmo.se

How can museums deal with contemporary issues in society? Is it possible to be controversial and take a stand? This text presents a possible method museums can use in order to make the public aware of specific contemporary issues. The purpose of the Hot Spot is to provide a space for debate, information and education by means of a quick method. By being controversial and taking a stand, museums can appeal to new audiences and contribute to ongoing debates in society.

Museums in general have great opportunities to give alternative, new angles on contemporary and difficult mat-

ters and to invite and engage people in dialogue. Museums also have the potential to be forums for social debate. Through the Hot Spot method, museums strive to raise public awareness about relevant contemporary issues. Museums should aim to create environments for dialogue. Firstly, there is a need to establish an understanding among museum staff about why the museum as an institution should engage itself in current debates. It is important to clarify that the Hot Spot method means that the museum will take a stand on current social issues. Then the museum should appoint a working group that has relevant expertise and interest in the approach. It would be an advantage for the group to include various different skill sets that can complement each other in the working process.

Secondly, select a topic. It is a good idea to define a contemporary 'hot topic' which is important and relevant



to the local community. The content may of course vary depending on which country, region and locality you are working in. Then, take a stand on this issue and determine the message that you want to convey. There are some recommended steps for a museum when introducing the Hot spot method:

1. Establish the Hot Spot method among the museum staff
2. Identify a working group responsible for the development of the Hot Spot
3. Establish long-term procedures for maintaining the Hot Spot method
4. Select a topic to be used in a first Hot Spot
5. Look for relevant collaborators and experts
6. Construct the Hot Spot in such way that it is quick to build and to disassemble. The physical form should be both flexible and eye-catching
7. Try to find new and unorthodox methods, unlike standard museum procedures, for launching and marketing
8. Organise educational programmes and seminars in connection with the Hot Spot Criteria for a Hot Spot

To establish an effective Hot Spot there are a number of criteria which are important to follow:

#### Contemporary issues

A Hot Spot should focus on a hot, burning contemporary issue. Museums should be prepared for quick action. The idea is to tackle issues when they arise – not to plan for the long term. In a museum organization, this is sometimes not very easy to achieve. However, if the museum identifies a Hot Spot team in advance and allocates available resources, they could be prepared for quick action.

#### Accessibility

The Hot Spot should be accessible to the public and offer possibilities for interaction. Collaboration is another important keyword. The museum cannot do this on its own because of the need for quick action. It is essential to use knowledge from the museum's surroundings and local community. Possible collaborators can be journalists, university researchers, individuals with specialist knowledge, and artists. These external groups can give the Hot Spot different angles and perspectives. Events can also be ar-

ranged in conjunction with the Hot Spot to further shed light on the subject, such as seminars and performances.

#### Duration

One possible goal is to have at least one or two Hot Spots per year. Continuity is essential. By regularly presenting a new Hot Spot, the public and the media will learn to recognise the method. This makes it easier for the museum to start a new debate and open up to new audiences.

#### Resources

The museum must make resources (time, personnel, materials and equipment) and funds available for the Hot Spot. A working group with appropriate qualifications should be established within the museum, and the group should include a project manager who coordinates the activities. The composition of the working group may change depending on the skills required for the specific project's implementation.

#### Structure

When the museum deals with difficult matters in a controversial way, the Hot Spot team must have confirmed the support of the museum management before establishing the Hot Spot. Controversial issues often arouse strong reactions from implicated parties. The museum must therefore be well prepared. It must be clear who bears the responsibility. Ultimate responsibility must lie with the museum management.

#### Visualisation

The design of the exterior of the Hot Spot should be permanent, unlike the varying internal content. It is also an advantage if the design is eye-catching so that visitors will easily recognise the Hot Spot. The design should also be based on flexible solutions. Although the exterior form is permanent it should be filled with suitable and attractive content through texts, sounds, photos and objects. To achieve maximum effect the Hot Spot could be placed where it attracts the greatest attention. It can be placed outside the museum, for example at a railway station, a library or a shopping centre. In this case it should be easy to build and dismantle.

#### Ethics

To avoid unwanted partners, such as anti-democratic or racist organizations, always take as a starting point the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the ICOM code of



▲  
Malmö Museums Hot Spot Of the finest wool – before the lambs fall silent.  
Photo © Andreas Nilsson/ Malmö Museer

professional ethics when you plan Hot Spot activities. All actors in society must be free to be provoked and be controversial. For a museum, this implies a significant level of responsibility. Both the UN Declaration on Human Rights and the ICOM code of professional ethics are good summaries of the principles that museums should strive for.

#### Relevancy

The presentations in the Hot Spot should be in line with the museum's mission and primary objectives, but in a sharpened form.

#### Some Hot Spot examples from Malmö Museums

It is a great challenge to follow the method stated above to the letter. On most occasions, the Malmö Museums circumvented the method in different ways. Above all we find it is difficult to respond quickly to the contemporary questions we wish to highlight. The vision is one thing, but the reality another. However, what distinguishes the Hot Spots at Malmö Museums is that we always collaborate with external partners, take a clear position on the debate in question, try to highlight the subjects in an innovative and controversial way, and organise various seminars and educational programmes in connection with exhibitions. We have also exhibited the Hot Spot in various places outside the museum.

The following is a brief presentation of some of the Hot Spots produced in Malmö Museums. Here I explain the choice of topic and working position.

#### Express Yourself

We chose to highlight Malmö's former guest writer: Parvin Ardalan, Iranian journalist and human rights activist. The exhibition was a response to the dramatic developments in Northern Africa and the Middle East during the Arab spring. The fight for freedom was manifested in numerous ways, not least by several women struggling for democracy.

According to PEN International, more than 700 authors and writers around the world have been imprisoned or persecuted for using their right to express themselves. The aim of this exhibition was to put forward the opinions of these writers, as a reminder of their importance in the promotion of democracy all over the world. It is a great and important decision to invite a persecuted author to live and work as the city's guest. It is a commitment to democracy, transparency and the freedom of expression. Our mission with the Hot spot was to involve more cities in the international refuge network.

#### She has to die – power, murder and honour

The very first Hot Spot launched by Malmö Museums was about honour killings in Sweden. A young woman, Fadime, was fatally shot by her own father. The exhibition explored both the historical and social perspectives of power and its misuse in honour killings. The museum contacted local experts in different subject areas. For instance, a lecturer in history supplied the project with facts about the concept of 'honour' in Swedish history. A professor in Islamology described how the phenomena of honour killings could take place in a community. The overall angle was the misuse of power.

#### Police versus demonstrators

This Hot Spot wanted to investigate the limits of our democracy. Here we let participants give their story about a demonstration in Malmö which went very wrong when the police forced them to stop. Over 250 young people were arrested. This exhibition was our way to start a debate by presenting thoughts and contrasting pictures to the ones that the general public could read in media. We invited young people to participate in building the exhibition together with us. There were various issues discussed in the exhibition, including such questions as: what does democracy and freedom of speech mean to you? Should freedom

of speech be unlimited? Should the wearing of masks in demonstrations be banned? What blame can be attached to the police if demonstrations degenerate? We organised several seminars and debates in conjunction with the exhibition.

#### Of the finest wool – before the lambs fall silent

The exhibition shed light on animals and how they are treated in Sweden and around the world. The main theme was the disclosure of cruelty in the treatment of Australian merino sheep. The issue attracted international attention after documentary reports were broadcast on Swedish TV. The exhibition also dealt with issues relating to international transportation of live animals for slaughter and Swedish animal husbandry in general. Our goal with this Hot Spot was to challenge and change people's conceptions, not only about acceptable treatment of animals but also about the environment and issues of sustainable development. The exhibition, the resulting TV coverage and press articles, in over 40 countries, had a direct influence on big companies and their policies. This led to a boycott of merino wool by the European and American markets. The production companies were forced to incorporate new rules and policies about animal treatment.

#### Conclusion

The strength of the Hot Spot approach as an alternative to ordinary exhibition work lies in the possibility of taking quick action and incorporating multiple expressions. It also relies on the museums' willingness to actively take a stand. All this provides a potential for changing the role of the museum in relation to today's society and for direct dialogue with citizens. With very little expenditure the museum is able to deliver significant messages.

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Hot Spot – awareness making on contemporary issues in museums. 2004. 2nd edition.  
Methodology report with examples. Language: English

The Hot Spot method was first implemented by the Swedish museum network Samp ([www.samp.org](http://www.samp.org)) between 2001 and 2002. Three museums were involved: the Mutare Museum in Zimbabwe and Malmö and Skellefteå museums in Sweden.

#### Facts

Britta Tøndborg, post.doc funded by a Velux Foundation grant, at the Centre for Museums Studies, Aarhus University, March 2014 Director of Research at Museum Vest-sjælland, and Head of Department Museum Odsherred. This paper is based on my article "The Dangerous Museum: Participatory Practices and Controversy in Museums Today", published in *Nordisk Museologi*, 2013:2, 3-16. I was guest editor of this particular issue. It is a theme issue on *Museums and Controversy*, and it received papers from museum professionals and scholars throughout Scandinavia that have had firsthand experience with controversy in museums, or carried out research in relation to this particular subject. [www.nordiskmuseologi.org](http://www.nordiskmuseologi.org)

# Why do museums act dangerously?

– a new museum practice

#### Britta Tøndborg, ph.d.

In recent years there has been an increase in museum exhibitions that address 'hot topics'. This is a stark contrast to traditional museum exhibitions that present rounded arguments and balanced opinions, making an effort to avoid dissonant viewpoints and debate. This paper looks at some of the factors that define this new museum practice.

Firstly, this article looks at what controversy in cultural history museums means to the museum professionals who deploy it. Secondly, exhibitions where museums use 'hot topics' are analysed in order to understand the implications of this growing infatuation with controversial subject matters. Finally, the aim is to explore the relationship between this development and another important trend in museums today, that of audience participation.

#### Exhibitions as contested sites

Three recent publications form a point of departure for this paper. In 2010 Fiona Cameron and Linda Kelly edited the anthology *Hot Topics, Public Culture, Museums*. The anthology explores how museums, primarily in Australia, have dealt with hot topics in exhibitions. Also in 2010 an

anthology was published in Sweden, based on papers from a conference held in Belgrade in 2009, *Why Museums and to Whom – Museums as Forum and Actor* (Svanberg 2010). Similarly, a 2013 special issue of *Museum Management and Curatorship*, edited by Bernadette Lynch, was dedicated to sharing the outcomes and analyses of a series of museum exhibitions in the UK that focused on differences of opinion or conflicts within the institutions and between the museums and their visitors.

All three publications were initiated by museum professionals and theoreticians and were based on practical experience with setting up exhibitions that deal with controversial subject matter. Simultaneously, they also express the need for museums to change and "become more self-conscious actors in society" (Svanberg 2010:9). What has to change, as it is stated in one of the publications, is culture production as:

"... one-way communication where the one and only truth is presented; about us, the others, the past, our country and what kind of art is good and bad. [...] Museums may assume the role as forums in which issues relevant for society can be raised, addressed, debated and reflected upon in new and constructive ways." (Svanberg 2010:9)

The quote illustrates that these museum professionals feel that museums have the potential to play a new and more active role in a changing society, and that one of the vehicles in the museums' new assumed role as such forums is to engage with hot topics and controversial subject matters.

The authors relate this change of paradigm to New Museology, which first expressed the need for museums "to deal with complex political and social issues, arguing that museums must develop a function of critique and see themselves as a forum for debate." (Svanberg 2010:16 ff.). As Fredrik Svanberg explains, this new approach is a practical response to implementing what is essentially a theoretical approach and developing New Museology into museum practice using audience participation:

"Firstly, the idea of the museum as a sort of inclusive social forum, letting people take part, influence and be seen, and creating a platform for democratic discussion, where many voices and perspectives are shared rather than as a place for authoritative indoctrination. Secondly, the idea that museums should not be passive in current important issues" (Svanberg 2010:20).

Based on the above statement, it appears that the introduction of controversial subject matter in museums is linked to the idea of a change of mission for the museum as an institution, from being a solidifier of culture to an institution that mirrors and creates change in society. It is based on a new approach to collecting and to audience participation, where dialogue about identity and cultural understanding is key. Objects are curated and narrated in order to initiate and sustain such a dialogue, and one of the ways to achieve that is to pick a controversial topic.

### Hot Spots

The pioneers of this exhibition format in Scandinavia are Malmö Museum and Skellefteå Museum. Since 2001 they have collaborated with Mutare Museum in Zimbabwe on developing an exhibition format called "Hot spot – awareness making on contemporary issues in museums".

The museums in both Sweden and Zimbabwe have staged Hot Spot exhibitions on a regular basis. The exhibitions are generally small in format, but designed to have a strong impact on visitors. The topics addressed have included

rape, obesity, aids, drug addition, use and abuse of animals in the clothing industry, freedom of speech – amongst others.

This exhibition format differs in a profound way from the traditional museum exhibition. Education and learning is replaced by awareness making. Subject matters that traditionally preoccupy academia and museums are replaced by topics that usually concern political organizations and the news media.

### Child pornography or fine art?

Awareness making, uncovering, investigating issues that matter to society at large, and acting as a watchdog lies at the core of journalistic practice. So does the hunt for the next good story that can create headlines. In a bid to engage its visitors in how journalists work, the Mediamuseum in Odense, Denmark, also makes use of the aforementioned Hot Spot exhibition format. It does this because the format resonates with the museum mission to stimulate debate and support freedom of speech by arranging exhibitions where visitors are prompted to emulate a journalistic approach to investigating news stories, posing critical questions, and considering different agendas. With the exhibition format *Mediemixeren*. *Speak your Mind*, the Mediamuseum presents a topic or dilemma with relevant arguments and provocative standpoints in order to prompt the visitors to discuss matters and form opinions of their own. Documentation is not the primary object in the display. The debate that arises becomes the exhibition. The utterances of the visitors in different media are the objects that go up on the wall and shape the exhibitions. This format could not work if it did not rely on controversial issues to spark conversation.

The first exhibition in this format was put up in 2010 and was about erotic Japanese Manga, or Hentai cartoons. It was an exhibition that prompted visitors to think about whether erotic Manga cartoons are child pornography or fine art, and the exhibition raised a media storm (Mortensen & Vestergaard 2011:48). This format is quite radical in that it replaces the traditional display of historic objects and museum labels with a participatory, audience-based approach. Participation is widely used in museums today as a way to engage visitors, but seldom exclusively, and rarely in this form where participatory practice is the sole purpose of the exhibition.

### Audience participation and controversy

Audience participation is de rigeur in museums today and in society in general. The museum professional who deserves the accolade for promoting participatory practice in museums is Nina Simon. Simon's widely read go-to-guide *The Participatory Museum* (2010) and complementary blog *Museum 2.0* have started a virtual participation movement. In participatory museum practice, visitors are encouraged to enter into a dialogue and subsequently learn through that experience. Central to this paper is that Nina Simon sees the potential of controversy, or in this case provocation, to stir up a conversation. In her chapters on how to design exhibits for participation Nina Simon stresses the powerfulness of social objects:

"Imagine looking at an object not for its artistic or historical significance but for its ability to spark conversation. Every museum has artefacts that lend themselves naturally to social experiences [...] It could be an art piece with a subtle surprise that visitors point out to each other in delight, or an unsettling historical image people feel compelled to discuss [...] These artefacts and experiences are all social objects. Social objects are the engines of socially networked experiences, the content around which conversation happens." (Simon 2010:127).

Audience participation prompts a new type of museum visitor, one who no longer needs specialist knowledge to appreciate the displays; all that is required of the visitor is to participate. This new inclusive trend seems to attract present-day visitors that have grown accustomed to taking part and sharing their thoughts through social media.

This replaces the preoccupation with aesthetics and history of the past with a politicised urge to create change in society. According to the museum professionals working with the Hot Spot exhibition format, "museums should aim to create an environment or space for dialogue" and focus on "awareness activities" based on the following topics: socio-cultural issues, such as religion, health, migration, education, modernism; economic issues, such as poverty, unemployment, gender, discrimination, globalisation, child labour; political issues, such as human rights, conflicts, corruption, abuse of power, democracy, and good governance (Bergkvist 2004:18).

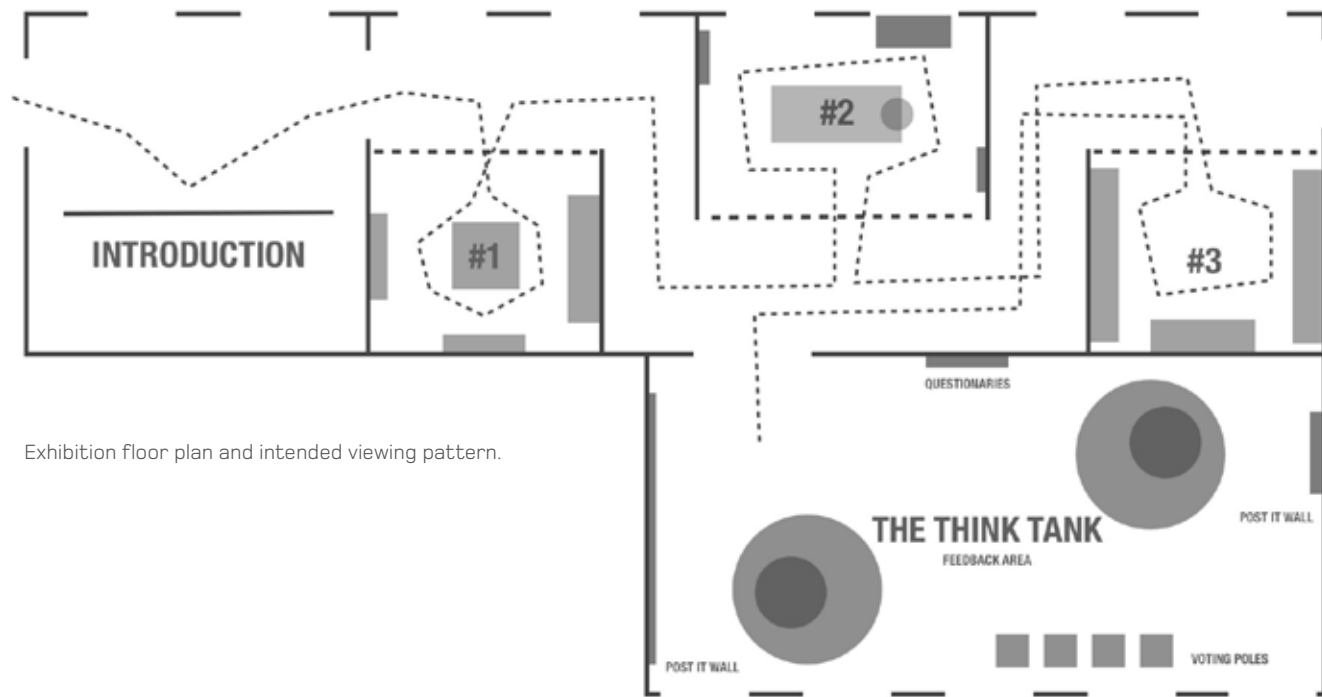
### A new role for museums?

In the view of some museum practitioners and theoreticians, this development has the potential to change the museum as we know it. For Fiona Cameron, it has the potential to renew the museums' contract with society in a profound way, by making museums central to cultural and community life:

"Engaging [...] controversial topics and controversy is now a fundamental role for many museums in an increasingly complex and globalizing world. Controversy is no longer something to be feared, but signals the contemporary relevance the museum form in public political culture [...] museums have a critical role in activating controversy as a productive means for engaging their audiences; in formulating new knowledge; in contributing meaningfully to current debates to more effectively operate within an increasingly pluralistic society" (Cameron 2010:53).

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Exhibition floor plan and intended viewing pattern.

# The Exhibition Lab

Exploring exhibition design

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How does museum exhibition design relate to the visitor's engagement in and experience of the exhibition? And is it possible to formulate some basic guidelines for the design of engaging exhibition experiences? This article describes some of the thoughts behind the experimental exhibition project "The Exhibition Lab", created as part of a PhD research project and exhibited at Designmuseum Danmark 04.10.13-02.03.14.

## The concept

"The Exhibition Lab – 3 Perspectives on Everyday Design" was a recent exhibition, which in an attempt to mediate and experiment with the complexity and nature of exhibition practices explored the relationship between exhibition design and the visitors' experiences and engagement. In a few words, The Exhibition Lab was a single exhibition divided into three minor exhibitions displaying exactly the same 25 objects, but in three different ways. Each of the three sub-exhibitions was designed and staged by using aesthetic, didactic and affective mediation principles and strategies corresponding to almost stereotypical representations of exhibitions (i). The exhibitions were experienced side by side in three small, separate rooms confined

## Notes

(i) These principles or museum exhibition types are described by e.g. Michael Belcher in *Exhibitions in Museums* (1991) as well as in Sally Thorhauge and Ane Hejlskov Larsen's *Museumsgrundbogen – Kunsten at læse et museum* (2008).

(ii) The team behind the exhibition comprised: curator Laura Liv Weikop, exhibition designer Benjamin Monrad, and graphic designer Jarl Christian Axel Hansen.

(iii) Norman, Donald A. (2004): *Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things*. New York: Basic Books.

(iv) Even though the exhibition imitated that of traditional displays, visitors have pointed out that the display of modern artifacts in old cases gave it an interesting turn, which many found visually appealing, and which made them more interested in the objects than if they had they been old and historic ones. Despite this, the most common words used to describe this exhibition and type of display in the Think Tank area were: boring, old-fashioned, mu-

seum, distanced and traditional (preliminary data based on 446 word entries collected in the period 04.10.13-02.01.14).

(v) According to the preliminary post-it data from the Think Tank this emotional feeling of homeyness and casualness was quite successfully carried out. The most common words used to describe it were: home, fun, realistic, fantastic, alive and touch (preliminary data based on 577 word entries collected in the period 04.10.13-02.01.14).

(vi) One of the first and most obvious points giving in the Think Tank was that this exhibition worked well because of the information it gave, but also that people would like to touch to understand the things described and characterised in the texts about the specificities of the objects and how they also fulfil our needs by their tactility and physical form. The most common post-it words were: informative, boring, interesting, educational, untouchable and functional (preliminary data based on 502 word entries collected in the period 04.10.13-02.01.14).

by walls and semi-transparent fabric, the museum visitor entering one curtained space after the other before ending up in a Think Tank: a feedback area that asked and encouraged, through different approaches, visitors to reflect, express and communicate their own experiences – thereby creating an empirical foundation from which to gain insight into the visitors' experiences through interaction and communication.

## The context: objects, budget and timeframe

The 25 objects on display were all common Danish design objects from everyday life ranging from high-end icons such as Arne Jacobsen's Ant Chair and Poul Henningsen's PH50 jubilee lamp to an insulin pen, stoma bag, hearing aid, beer bottle and ice spoon. None of them were museum pieces, but had been collected for the purpose of the exhibition and so had to be exactly alike – and all of them are examples of design that are already or possibly should be in the collection of the museum.

The budget and timeframe of the exhibition itself was quite demanding and challenging as the exhibition had to be not only fully conceptualised but also materialised within less than five months on a very limited budget. This in itself demanded imagination and a creative approach. Most solutions were solved by creative thinking and by utilising existing materials within the museum as well as hard work from a small and determined three-person staff (ii).

As an exhibition, The Exhibition Lab was humble yet ambitious with the aim of visualising, communicating and testing curatorial work and exhibition practices whilst at the same time creating and mediating three different object and exhibition experiences and encounters. In that way, the exhibition experiment was a process contributing to and attempting to develop the existing exhibition practice at Designmuseum Danmark, which resembles that of many other conventional museums, as well as the way we think about exhibition design and the research thereof.

## Three exhibitions, three mediations, three designs

### #1: "Attractive things work better"

By framing a statement through the well-known quotation of Donald Norman (iii), the first exhibition worked on the basis of aesthetic design and mediation principles. By using the authoritative voice of the curator in the introductory text and by creating a very conventional and classic display using the museum's wooden glass cases, the aim was to resemble one main part of Designmuseum Danmark's current and permanent exhibition.

Every object was given its own label providing the most necessary information about designer, production year and producer. But besides this, the objects were led to speak for themselves as works of art as seen in many traditional museums of e.g. art and ethnography (iv).



## #2: What you own is who you are?

The second exhibition was called "What you own is who you are?" As tentatively indicated in the title, this exhibition worked from an affective approach trying to connect to the emotions and social aspects of people's everyday life. In the introductory text, this was done by using a more personal, questioning and less authoritative tone of voice as well as by literally inviting people to enter the 'home' as a guest. This was emphasised by the hand-drawn door as well as by the imitated handwriting used for the visual and typographic layout of the texts.

The exhibition space in itself was designed and orchestrated as a sketched home, and visitors were allowed to touch, redecorate, try and experience the objects on display as they wished. To support the affective approach, we worked with emotions so as to create a homely, casual and perhaps slightly 'Ikea-ish' impression (v).

We worked around basic elements from everyday life and tried to create a dynamic relationship between the scenography of the room and the objects' placement and use. We wanted people to feel at ease, experiencing the objects with their whole body and in a context that in some ways could resemble that of their own without being a replica or a historicised representation.

We therefore also played a subtle audio track of everyday noises recorded from a city window integrating sounds such as muffled talk, cars, washing up, distant birds etc. People observed in the exhibition seemed quite relaxed and touching the items came very naturally – as did the 'use' of the objects themselves.

## #3: Design fulfils needs

The third and last exhibition was called "Design fulfils needs" to underline its didactic approach to mediation and design. In terms of design we wanted to have an atmosphere of production, transportation and process, prompting us to use table bucks, OSB-plates and pallets to have the rough and almost unfinished atmosphere of an industrial workplace.

Once again the visitor was met by an introductory text that framed this exhibition's approach, focusing on aspects of design processes, materials, production and use. But they were also met by eight small books inside the exhibition itself; colour-coordinated with specific themes and paired with tape in a matching colour, so as to define and encapsulate the related objects on display.

Each book was created as a kind of analogue layered information device. The books gave the visitor the possibility of choosing quite easily which objects he or she wished to gain information about. This was done by using the tabs on the right side of the book, each showing an icon of the specific object in question.

As well as these books, the exhibition also featured a production film about one of the objects: Arne Jacobsen's Ant Chair, explaining the production process of the chair and its material: moulded plywood. Even though the objects were displayed without cases, people were told not to touch via labels on the displays.

The point of this was to resemble another part of the permanent exhibitions at Designmuseum Danmark, where especially chairs and other furniture are displayed in the perimeter of touch – a thing that naturally tempts the visitors' hands (vi).

- ◀ ◀ Attractive things work better – a conventional display. Photo © @lauralivweikop
- ◀ What you own is who you are? Photos: @designmuseum-danmark. Photo © @lauralivweikop and Pernille Klemp

## The experimental objective

Besides exploring the relationship between visitor experiences and different exhibition design and mediation approaches, the hope of the exhibition was and is to create dialogue – and, through the subsequent research, a more critical awareness and understanding of our exhibition design practices both within and outside the museum itself.

The Exhibition Lab had many weaknesses, but it was a way of demonstrating and exploring the effect exhibition design has on the users and their experiences by framing the stories and discourses we as museums tell and create. It also contributed to the visitors' understanding of what we actually do at museums – and how different it can look based on the design and strategy we undertake.

Design fulfils needs. Photo © @designmuseumdanmark and @lauralivweikop







◀ The Blue Planet, Kastrup, Denmark. The swirling architecture of the building located by the seaside draws the audience close and gives a sensation of being under water. This feeling is furthered by animated lighting and underwater sounds in the whole building – in this picture, the lobby.  
Photo © Nicolai Perjesi

## Magic spaces and magic moments

Exhibitions have more – and different – qualities than other media

**Arne Kvorning, Exhibition designer and owner of Kvorning design & communication, arne@kvorning.dk**

Exhibitions are fantastic at creating magic moments for both grown-ups and youngsters. Engaging exhibitions prompt physical reactions as well as truly heartfelt ones – because this medium has at least three, but often four or five dimensions to draw on. Interacting light, sounds, movements, time, space and scents may create a magic feeling when organised in a certain manner.

### Moving experiences

For more than 25 years Kvorning design & communication has created exhibitions and applied production design

and scenography as a method and form of expression. Producing exhibitions by applying production design is not a traditional technique, but it is a well-known approach for structure and suspense within movie making. When creating movies, filmmakers always present experiences in a premeditated order and deliberately structure sequences to evoke excitement and anticipation. Nothing is left to chance, and even the smallest detail is carefully plotted and planned. Filmmaking and exhibition design have a lot in common. Both of these creative and complex processes aim to create an experience that touches the audience – and moves, informs and entertains them – often and preferably all of this at once. When we create Scandinavian and international exhibitions, all the elements are well-considered; materials, colours, light, sound, surfaces, pace and rhythm. The way we choose and gather those

instruments are closely connected to and support the general idea and purpose of the project. Concepts are often influenced by a filmic mindset and yet, at the same time, invite various interpretations. The story and the content is the power behind the design – the physical expression.

Interactive experience centre breaks boundaries of time and space

In 2012, Kvorning design & communication won an international competition issued by Norsk Vegmuseum<sup>1</sup> in Lillehammer, Norway. The project was to create a permanent exhibition exploring the concept 'The World's most beautiful road – an exhibition about the DNA of Norwegian roads'. The concept applies storytelling and dramaturgy to let the audience look back into the past and ahead into the future. Recognisable objects and stories are continuously intermingled by elements jumping in time and space. The Viking Age and the Middle Ages are suddenly replaced by a distant future, where roads might be superfluous or have a completely different structure. The exhibition has something to offer all members of the family: simple everyday stories and digital monitors with interactive elements, information in several languages, staging of events in animations and film projected onto surfaces. The exhibition at Norsk Vegmuseum opens in June 2014.

### Sensual and dramatic storytelling

In 2011, Kvorning design & communication created one of the largest permanent AV-shows in Europe for English Heritage. 26 metres into the ground – deep inside the famous White Cliffs of Dover in south east England – the show displays 'Operation Dynamo – Rescue from Dunkirk', a genuinely dramatic and captivating recreation of the evacuation of the English troops from Dunkerque to Dover in 1940. The animation is a compilation of hundreds of movie clips and is displayed as an almost 60 metres long sequence of video footage. This is an experience that centres on the audience in every sense of the term – no one will be

left unaffected after a tour through the three-storey, 6.000 m<sup>2</sup> tunnel system below Dover Castle<sup>2</sup>. Being by nature a very restricted path, the tour through the tunnels is designed as one long cinematic sequence; including a classic dramatic structure with a deliberately placed and staged conflict escalation, a 'point of no return' and of course a resounding climax in the final room with the almost 60-metres long movie projection. Interactive exhibitions, graphics, light, sound, advanced AV-technology, moving pictures and animated objects have given Dover Castle and its authentic tunnel system a degree of drama which matches and challenges the earlier secrecy of the fortress. In 2010, Kvorning design & communication won the contract in an international competition in collaboration with Danish and British suppliers.

### Aligning expectations

Exhibition design is an obliging collaboration between the exhibition space and the exhibition designer. The goal is to transform a shared story into a physical rendition and experience. Challenging work for both parties of course. As the exhibition medium has been chosen as a common framework for achieving a set goal with the audience, the responsibility and interest in meeting these goals lies with both parties. Before, during and after the opening.

Kvorning design & communication has worked with several Scandinavian and international museums, experience centres, and companies in creating interactive exhibitions of various sizes through the years. In Denmark we have for instance designed and delivered concepts for exhibitions and communication solutions with interactive installations, digital screens, monitors etc. for 3XN's The Blue Planet<sup>3</sup> in 2013, exhibition design for Foster & Partner's new elephant stable at Copenhagen Zoo<sup>4</sup> in 2011, and visitor's centres for a number of significant Danish companies.

In our experience, when museums and experience centres consider interactive attractions it is important to take



▲ Norsk Vegmuseum, Lillehammer, Norway. Visuals from the upcoming exhibition. Time warps convey the historic eras of Norwegian roads, and a spiralling red timeline ties the history together, just like the road network ties Norway together and form a backbone for its society.  
Illustration © Kvorning design & communication



▲ 'The Secret Wartime Tunnels', Dover Castle, England. From the story about the evacuation from Dunkirk in 1940. 24 video projectors display an almost 60 metres long panorama within the tunnels. An animated machine gun follows the German planes and shoots them down in the harbour of Dunkirk.  
Photo © Nicolai Perjesi

into account the need for technological know-how and staffing to meet the audience's expectations and needs. Every day. Every year. As an exhibition owner, it is essential to have a service contract covering the interactive installations so that the responsibilities of all parties are clearly defined, understood and reconciled from day one. At exhibitions with a large number of visitors and hence a lot of wear on the interactive elements, it is particularly important that nothing is unclear regarding staffing and that a service contract is signed well ahead of the opening.

Unfortunately, it is a common mistake for exhibition spaces to realise this too late and thus they are unprepared. However, if the service contracts are all clear in advance, as was the case with the aforementioned Dover-project, success is ensured and the visitors will have a good time.

#### International view

Museums pop up like mushrooms – particularly in China and the Gulf States of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Qatar. China alone builds 400 museums each year. Both the Gulf States and China are fond of and appreciate the exhibition's unique qualities when it comes to forming experiences. Both regions focus on restoring national identities and communicating important cultural heritages. In collaboration with Erik Møller Arkitekter, Kvorning design & communication is currently working on exhibition design in Qatar for Copenhagen University and a visitors' centre in Zubarah Fort. The latter introducing the great archaeological site of Al Zubarah – a city buried under the desert sand, which recently was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.

#### From one-dimensional communication to staging of spaces

Today it is common for exhibition designs to be produced by multidisciplinary teams. This goes for Scandinavian projects as well as international. All competences are in play and this tendency challenges the definition of the exhibition as a medium as well as the designer's self-understanding and tools. What characterises today's exhibits? Has the exhibition designer become a stage designer? The most important tool of the successful exhibition designer is empathy – imagination and vision to translate a complex subject into a sense of space, which no single medium is able to match on its own. In this, the collaboration with the exhibition space is crucial. The designer does not create something out of the blue. Everything he or she does is based on a committed, professional collaboration with the exhibition space. Down to the smallest detail. Form correlates to function, and form and content are inextricably linked together and live in

symbiosis. Creative exhibitions require an open dialogue in which the exhibition space and the designer listen, discuss, reflect, understand the contexts and pass this on to each other. There can be no shortcuts here; the audience opt out of off-handed solutions. Therefore, it is paramount for the exhibition spaces to define what they want to convey and why. This then becomes the starting point for the dialogue with the designer. The exhibition as a genre is continually evolving, moving away from being a one-dimensional form of communication to become an artistic staging of spaces. The current tendency is to make the audience participate actively in the exhibition. Not in the sense of old-fashioned interaction, but by having an effect on the space by being present. This is what makes exhibitions as a media so extremely fascinating to work with.

Exhibitions have more and different qualities than other media, and as designers we are contributing to the exploration of their opportunities.



- ◀ Visitors interact with a 40-foot multi-touch Micro-Tiles wall to browse the artworks on display in the galleries via the Collection Wall, which alternates between curated, theme-based image collections and a continuous randomised stream of all images of artworks on view.

Photo © Andrea Caption

- ▶ The Beacon, dynamically reporting Gallery One visitor activity on a seven-minute loop, invites visitors into Gallery One to explore artworks and immersive technology combined in a single installation.

Photo © Andrea Caption



# Gallery One

## Transforming the Art Museum Experience

Jane Alexander, Chief Information Officer, Cleveland Museum of Art, [JAlexander@clevelandart.org](mailto:JAlexander@clevelandart.org)  
 Caroline Goeser, Director of Education and Interpretation, Cleveland Museum of Art, [cgoeser@clevelandart.org](mailto:cgoeser@clevelandart.org)

A spirit of exploration and innovation pervades the one-of-a-kind Gallery One. Unique interactive and immersive technologies share the space with significant works of art from the Cleveland Museum of Art's permanent collections, together engaging visitors in a museum experience never before seen in museums worldwide. The project affirms the museum's permanent mission of helping visitors connect with its art collections using the best in interpretive technologies and design.

Gallery One blends art, technology, and interpretation to inspire visitors to explore the museum. The gallery features the 40-foot Collection Wall (the world's largest interactive touchscreen display that lets visitors explore images and information for more than 4,100 works of art), as well as standalone multi-touch kiosks and the free ArtLens app, all of which provide educational and curatorial information about CMA's entire collection. Together these create an immersive and memorable experience not only for visitors on site, but for art lovers around the world. Gallery One has been heralded as a revolutionary space in the world of museums by The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Fast Company, Mashable.com, and The Plain Dealer, among other media outlets.

"In the museum world, everyone's watching Cleveland right now. Though other museums have experimented with interactive technology, the extent of Cleveland's program is unprecedented. They've put a lot out there for other museums to learn from." The New York Times, March 20, 2013

As word spread about this most extensive digital program of any museum, Gallery One inspired visits from directors, technologists, and educators from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and many other top museums.

### Designing through Collaboration

In a pioneering model of departmental and technological collaboration, Gallery One and the ArtLens app were developed through collaboration among the museum's curatorial, information management and technology services, education and interpretation, and design departments. The Project Team was led by the following people at Cleveland Museum of Art: Jane Alexander, Director of Information Management and Technology Services (Technology/Project Manager), Caroline Goeser, Director of Education and Interpretation (Curator/Interpretation), and Jeffrey Streaan, Director of Design and Architecture (Design Oversight). This collaboration was groundbreaking, not just among museums, but within user-interface design in general. The process integrated each department's contribution to create an unparalleled interactive experience, with technology and software that has never been

used before in any venue, content interpreted in fun and approachable ways, and unprecedented design of an interactive gallery space that integrates technology into an art gallery setting.

### Putting the Visitor Front and Centre

A year after opening, visitor excitement is as exhilarating as on the opening day. Art and business professionals, regular museumgoers, and the newest and youngest visitors continue to display awe and wonder as they enter Gallery One and discover exciting, surprising, and playful new ways to enhance their understanding and enjoyment of art.

One of the most transformational aspects of Gallery One involved the goals for visitors' take away: experience rather than specific content. The team wanted visitors to 1) have fun with art, 2) use the interactive games and interpretation as tools for understanding and to spark social experiences with art, and 3) find transformative moments of discovery that make art relevant for them today.

Gallery One and ArtLens were designed to honour visitors' behaviour. Audience evaluation showed that CMA visitors preferred browsing according to their own preferences, and thus there's no preferred path through Gallery One; visitors can move from one art installation to another, each with its own story. The Collection Wall asks visitors to browse rather than search: to find artworks they like



▲ Visitors browse the collection via the Collection Wall by selecting an artwork and opening an iris which links to related artworks via metadata fields.  
Photo © Andrea Caption ▶



▲ Lens activity encourages kinetic interaction with the artwork – showing how our bodies inspire art.



▲ Lens kiosks place artwork in context for visitors – artwork is overlaid on images of where it was created, used or displayed.



▲ Visitors use the image recognition software in ArtLens to view additional content about artwork on display – materials, techniques, and historical context are a just a few examples of themes explored.

visually, and to discover connections to related works by theme, medium, or time period. The ArtLens app follows browsers as they meander through the permanent collection galleries, indicating where they are in the building and the artworks near them.

Gallery One understands visitors as participants rather than as passive observers. In Studio Play, CMA's youngest visitors and their families can find myriad ways to actively create art and to use interactive technology to discover their own connections to art in the collections. The ArtLens app allows visitors to create their own tours—playlists of their favourite objects with their own catchy titles. They can share favourite objects through Facebook and Twitter.

Gallery One is composed of two spaces; the former special exhibition gallery in the Marcel Breuer addition and a portion of the Rafael Vinoly north wing. These spaces are very different in character. The Breuer is a large, free span hall. The Vinoly space is a low, bright space that opens onto the atrium. We decided to take advantage of this and begin the experience in the former exhibition hall and conclude it with the large digital display of our collections in the one that addressed the atrium. With that, the team hoped, visitors would develop a tour on their iPads and head out to the galleries to experience the collections—and conversely, because the collection wall is prominently visible from the atrium, visitors who bypassed Gallery One on the way in could be inspired to stop in after browsing the galleries to learn more.

### Behind Gallery One

Gallery One has captured the attention of the museum world, as well as other institutions whose focus is on engaging and educating the public. One example is the new Cuyahoga County Public Library's interactive "Tech Wall," which incorporates Gallery One interactives and the ArtLens app. Visitors browse our digital collection and are inspired to visit the museum. The collaboration between CCPL and CMA has inspired other libraries nationally to explore similar partnerships in their own communities. Technology specialists also see Gallery One as a game changer because of its integrated approach to technology and information management. A digital strategy plan guides the collection and digital asset management systems, all of it underpinned by modularity, sustainability, and data efficiency, exemplifying best practices in the industry.

For example, any one of the 125 MicroTiles display squares that make up the Collection Wall display can be swapped at a moment's notice in the event of failure. A comprehensive digital media strategy encompasses all the technology for art information, interpretive content/secondary assets, research resources, and relationship management. The descriptions and images for artwork flow automatically from the asset management systems used and maintained by the collections management staff, and thus the Collection Wall and ArtLens reflects up-to-the-minute gallery installations. In addition, these art object records are paired with video and interpretive content stored in a system geared for fast, efficient delivery via iPad and

smartphone. Cloud technology provides efficient access to ArtLens video across the globe.

The technology design of Gallery One focuses on sustainability and reliability. During the many benchmarking visits the Design Team conducted to other museums, a repeated theme was equipment failures and downtime. It was critical to the Design Team that Gallery One should experience minimal downtime through robust equipment and being able to completely replace any component within 60 minutes of a technician being on-site. To make this a reality, the Lens housings have been designed as interchangeable modules that separate the display, interactive and control components. Wherever possible, common components have been selected and spare parts for each are stored on-site.

The Collection Wall and Line+Shape Interactives use the latest in modular technology, and this is the key to the sustainable design. Each of the 162 video tiles in the Collection and Line+Shape walls is a modular 16"x12" cube which can be completely rebuilt from the front without removing the chassis from the wall. Complete replacement of a tile's internal components can be completed in 30 minutes. The Touch Interactive technology is so new that the exhibit was initially opened with beta hardware from the manufacturer.

The Integrator, Zenith Systems, worked closely with CMA and Christie Digital through the development of the Touch

Interface so that Gallery One was the first installation to take advantage of the new technology. The Touch Interface is designed in standard 12" and 16" sections that can easily be replaced in the event of a hardware failure. This approach maximises the "up-time" of this signature exhibit through a sustainable design.

In 1996, the museum's strategic plan established a commitment to becoming a national leader in the use of new and emerging technologies. It all started with the purchase of collections management database and digital scanners and a commitment to digitising the collection. Now, nearly two decades later, that visionary commitment culminates in Gallery One.

The Cleveland Museum of Art's mission is part of a greater shared mission among all museums, and the Gallery One and Art Lens projects are proving to be inspirational across the world. Says Carrie Rebora Barratt, associate director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York: "Gallery One has enlivened the space of public access to collections in a remarkable way, not only to visitors on site at the museum, but also in conferences where museum professionals are newly inspired by Cleveland's example to be creative and thoughtful about engaging visitors in new ways."

Watch a two minute video on Gallery One: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWJqd6lyJ-E>



# Working with hot topics

Be agenda setting, not reactive

Lasse Bo Handberg, Head of the Theatre Mungo Park Kolding, [lasse@mungoparkkolding.dk](mailto:lasse@mungoparkkolding.dk)

Hot topics are something we create, not tendencies which can be copy-pasted and transformed into exhibitions or plays. As an artistic institution with long-running processes, we automatically fall off the official “news wagon”. Therefore I believe that we must be agenda setting rather than reactive.

At Mungo Park Kolding, we don’t let tendencies dictate a season’s repertoire. Our repertoire choices are founded in ideas that we can’t ignore. These ideas must satisfy a number of carefully selected requirements: they must involve a high degree of social relevance, they must be innovative, and they should ideally come from a predominantly local source.

We don’t exhaust ourselves chasing an idea because it’s currently a hot topic, since it’s our strong belief that we can move the world from where we stand.

◀ Maja Juhlin as the reporter from Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR).  
Photo © Palle Peter Skov/ Mungo Park Kolding

## RINDAL: From idea to hot topic

If an idea is significant enough, we press the button, and then we let the transformation from rough outline to relevant story begin.

The making of the play RINDAL, which premiered last fall, is an excellent example of this process.

RINDAL is inspired by Peter Rindal, a warehouse manager from Kolding, who in the mid-1960s became famous overnight for collecting 62,000 signatures protesting against the creation of the Danish Arts Foundation. The press nicknamed the ideology of Rindal’s protest movement “Rindalism”, derived from Peter Rindal’s last name. Nowadays, “Rindalism” is popularly translated as “resistance to modern art”. Rindal didn’t agree with this description, as he protested against state funding of the arts, not the art itself.

RINDAL is a clear example of an idea I couldn’t ignore. After taking up the position as director of Mungo Park Kolding in August 2012, I began searching for inspiring stories from the local area. I quickly came across the story of Peter Rindal’s protest and became fascinated by the cultural conflict and division between the cultural upper class and the working class that followed. Later on, it hit me that very few people have heard about Rindal. Even people in the art world didn’t remember him. Furthermore, the debate about state funding for the arts was not even close to being a part of the public agenda. So it was entirely up to us to revive the debate and transform RINDAL into a “hot topic”. But how does one transform a play inspired by a warehouse manager from the ‘60s into a “must-see”? Good question.

## Creating a hot topic

When researching ideas for a new play I always ask myself: Where is the world going right now? What do I have on my mind? Why do we need to tell this story? Who will listen? At first glance, the story of Peter Rindal may seem more “not” than “hot”. But by combining my answers to the five questions above, I saw huge potential in the play RINDAL. There was more

to his story than the black and white tale of a publicly sentenced “enemy of arts”.

I believe that the story of Peter Rindal is one of the most defining moments in modern Danish history. At first glance, it was just one man’s simple view of one simple law. But in the big picture, Rindal’s resistance was a turning point in the whole idea of the Danish Welfare State.

And that was the story I wanted to tell the world. I believe that the public agenda feeds off the “big” stories, which not only concern us as individuals, but also poke at the bricks on which our society is built.

So my advice is: Find the big narrative in your idea and you’ll have the foundation for creating a hot topic.

## Working with hot topics

When you work with hot topics, whether they are controversial or simply high profile issues, you’re in official territory. You touch and poke into matters that concern other people. Consequently you have to prepare yourself for reactions, resistance, and criticism, and be ready to invite the public voice inside your project.

This is possible through different channels such as social media, websites, message boards at museum cafes, books or even debates. But the bottom line is that hot topics demand two-way communication. That’s why my policy is that theatre (and especially theatre that works with hot topics) is an art you create in community with your audience. Intimacy and dialogue are two very important components in these sorts of processes.

## Maintaining a hot topic: Press and marketing

A hot topic is very much a phenomenon created by marketing and public relation forces.

In the case of marketing and PR we utilise five specific criteria when aiming to catch the public eye:

1. Timeliness – Is there a recent event or news story you can connect your play or exhibition to? An anniversary? A campaign? An example: Danish Arts Foundation turns 50 years in 2014 – an anniversary we used actively as a news hook in our communication with the press regarding RINDAL.



▲ "At first glance Rindal may seem more not than hot, but we succeeded in transforming Rindal into a "hot topic"". Maja Juhlin, Frank Thiel and Jesper Riefensthal in the play Rindal.  
Photo © Palle Peter Skov/Mungo Park Kolding



▲ Jesper Riefensthal as Peter Rindal.  
Photo © Palle Peter Skov/Mungo Park Kolding

2. Identification – Who does your product concern or impact? A specific age group? Women? A specific profession? Target your information towards your audience and emphasise how they will profit from experiencing your product.

3. Conflict – Is there a debate potential? Politically? Publicly? Prolong the life of your product: Start a debate in the social media. Arrange live debates. Write letters to the newspapers. Encourage public voices to engage in the debate.

An example: In the case of RINDAL we hosted two live art debates – one of them was filmed by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation DR in November and will be airing this February on the channel DR K.

4. Substance and relevance – Emphasise why this play/product is important now. Can we learn something? Have you discovered something new? Why and how does your product concern the society/world/universe?

5. Sensation – Is your product provocative? Does it have a "glitter and glamour" effect?

With these five criterias in mind, we have succeeded in transforming the story of a small town in the South of Jutland<sup>1</sup> and the story of a warehouse manager from the 1960s<sup>2</sup> into "hot topics". With that in mind, the conclusion of the discussion of hot topics must be that it's not a question of finding the hot topics, but of creating them.

#### Facts

The psychological drama *Honningkagebyen* is inspired by the small town south of Kolding called Christiansfeld, which was founded by the Moravian Mission more than 165 years ago. *Honningkagebyen* had an occupancy rate of 80% and made national press on several occasions. *Honningkagebyen* premiered at Mungo Park Kolding in 2013.

*Rindal* (the play) has appeared 101 times in various media during the period August 2013 to January 2014. Reference: [Infomedia.dk](http://Infomedia.dk).

*Rindal* had an occupancy rate of 76% and is going on a nationwide tour next season.

Both *Rindal* and *Honningkagebyen* are critically acclaimed.



▲ Children at the Children's TB Sanatorium at Grefsen, Oslo, 1953.

## The Sanatorium Children

Putting painful personal memories on display

**Olav Hamran, Historian, Head of The Medical History Department at The Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, [Olav.Hamran@tekniskmuseum.no](mailto:Olav.Hamran@tekniskmuseum.no)**

In June 2008 two curators from the Norwegian museum for science, technology, industry and medicine visited a former children's tuberculosis sanatorium in Oslo. They were accompanying two men who had been there, as patients, when they were children, in the first half of the 1950s. During the visit the two former patients explained that the stay at the sanatorium had been very difficult for them both. They had been there for one or two years, away from their families. They remembered being regularly punished in

different ways (beaten, isolated) during their stay. One of them also explained that he had been sexually abused in a room on the upper floor. Their statements were filmed by one of the curators. The original plan had been to make a documentary about the different uses of the building (the former sanatorium was converted into a kindergarten). But what should the museum do with this film, given the sensitive nature of what the two men had told? Delete it? Put it in the archive and keep it there for further reference? Publish it? Make an exhibition?

The museum decided to make an exhibition. The two men had chosen to tell their story to the museum. What they said might be important for other people in the same or a similar situation. The museum hired a professional film



◀ Front page of Aftenposten the day before the opening of the exhibition.

▶ Two pages from Bjørn Oscar Hoftvedt's diary written in January 1955 during his stay at the Children's Sanatorium at Grefsen.



director. He converted the nearly 3 hours of recorded material into a 7-minute film. A small exhibition was planned, where the film would be the main object on display.

#### Challenges in planning the exhibition

While planning the exhibition the museum dealt with two major difficulties / challenges.

1) Was the museum a suitable venue for an exhibition about children being isolated, punished, or abused? The other exhibitions in the museum presented the history of communication, industry, technology and science. How would a story of sexual abuse be understood in these settings? The museum also had a science centre which attracted many children and families. How would they react to an exhibition about abuse? Could this topic fit in with the rest of the museum?

2) What would the exhibition eventually be about: The true history of the sanatoriums in the 1950s? Or about two men, today, visiting a place that brought back painful memories to them?

The first of these questions - whether the museum, or a museum (rather than a newspaper, for example) was a suitable place for such an exhibition - was an open question. It was probably important for the two men that a museum has a reputation different from e.g. a tabloid newspaper. A museum guarantees quality and seriousness.

The next question also proved to be quite open-ended. Most of the exhibitions in the museum were about a fact, a phenomenon or trend in the past, or "told a story" of how something was, or how it had been developed. The museum was a "neutral space" where historical objects were put forward as examples and representatives of a broader history. A spinning machine represented industrialisation, a telegraph or a telephone told a story of communication. In the exhibitions the audience could

"understand", "see" or "learn" what life had been like in the past. The exhibited objects were displayed as representatives of historical facts. If the 7-minute film from the children's sanatorium were to be exhibited and understood in this way, it would be understood as a description of the overall situation at The Grefsen Children's Sanatorium in the 1950s. The exhibition would then be interpreted as an exhibition about the situation at other sanatoriums, too, and within TB-care in general during the same period.

#### Repression and remembering

During the planning process the project group tried to take these different aspects into consideration. It was important to avoid having the exhibition interpreted as the only true story of TB care in 1950s. First and foremost it was important to take care of the two men and to present their story in a way that they would be satisfied and comfortable with.

Furthermore, it was important for the museum to verify their story. Another former patient confirmed that TB hospital discipline was run on firm lines. She herself had never experienced any instances of sexual abuse. The museum was in close contact with the Norwegian author and historian, Dag Skogheim, who himself had suffered from TB and had interviewed more than a hundred former TB patients. He had escorted the two men when they visited the sanatorium. When the museum decided to make the exhibition it was known that Skogheim's interviews backed up what the two men had told. But the museum did not go into any further studies or historical examination of the sanatoriums and TB care in Norway in the 1950s and '60s. The story told by the two men was strong and credible. To initiate a more comprehensive study of the history of Norwegian TB care would have taken a lot of time and resources.

The museum then chose to focus on how the two men, now, remembered their stay at the sanatorium. The film and exhibition focused on repression and on remembering. This was stated in the title: "Vonde minner fra Grefsen barnesanatorium 1951-54" [Painful memories from the Grefsen Children's TB sanatorium 1951-54]. It asserted that the exhibition was about memories, now, not about historical facts, then. The matter at hand was memories from The Grefsen Sanatorium, not other sanatoriums, and they were related to the specific years 1951-54, not earlier and not after.

#### On the front page

This strategy did not work too well. And probably (most likely) it was not at all a clear and comprehensible strategy. The Information service at the museum presented this exhibition in the same way as the museum's other exhibitions, as displays of an undisputed truth about a historical fact or trend. And the media interpreted it in the same way, as being about the historical conditions at the sanatoriums, nursing homes and other TB care institutions in Norway in the 1950s and 1960s.

The day before the opening the leading newspaper in Norway, Aftenposten, put the exhibition on the front page and presented it as the final disclosure of the dark truth about coercion, forced feeding and abuse at sanatoriums and within TB care.

So, in a way, the greatest challenge for the museum when engaging in the task of putting the two former patient's bad memories from the children's sanatorium at Grefsen on display was the museum itself, and how the museum was perceived in society. "Painful memories from the Grefsen Children's TB sanatorium 1951-54" was understood in line with most of the other exhibitions in the museum: as a display about the history of a specific topic or trend,

not a personal story. Most likely this understanding of the museum, of how a museum works, was in keeping with how the two men had thought when they chose to tell their story to the museum and later agreed to work together with the museum on the making of the exhibition.

#### The perception of the museum in society

The exhibition continued to be on the newspaper's front pages for several days. The museum was contacted by about 25 men and women that had been at a TB sanatorium as children. Many of them had bad experiences and memories similar to those presented in the film in the exhibition. About half of them were portrayed in a catalogue that was published about two months later. In the following months more former patients contacted the museum. The Ministry of Health and Care Services started to investigate whether the former patients might be entitled to some sort of compensational schemes. Some patients subsequently received compensation from the county administration. The museum continued to work with these contributors and this theme for several years, and also made a new exhibition on the web.

To sum up: An important challenge for the museum when working with the "Painful memories from Grefsen TB Sanatorium 1951-54"-exhibition was the museum itself, the museum's way of presenting history, how most of its displays were understood by the museum and in society, and how the museum as an institution was perceived in society. The museum's standing in the public eye as a keeper of historical truth was a major challenge when dealing with sensitive themes such as personal narratives of sexual abuse.



- ◀ In the opening installation of the museum, the visitor is cleansed of the worries of everyday life and lured into the fascinating world of maritime history by sirens and mermaids. Photo © Thijs Wolzak
- ▶ The claustrophobic scenography of the exhibition In the Shadow of War shows a ship exploding after being hit by a torpedo with shards of metal flying the air, frozen in time. Projections on the shards tell parts of the story about Danish sailors during the two World Wars. Photo © Thijs Wolzak



## From Clio to Calliope

– A new home for old Muses

**Benjamin Asmussen, curator, Maritime Museum of Denmark, [ba@mfs.dk](mailto:ba@mfs.dk)**

The Greek word museum or mouseion means a temple dedicated to the muses, the ancient goddesses of knowledge and art. In most museums of cultural history, the muse Clio – patron of history – is usually the deity most revered. But in a world where offerings of new experiences are abundant, the temples must allow other muses to reside in their halls. Thalia – the muse of comedy – is most readily welcomed in many exhibitions, but also Melpomene – muse of tragedy – and Euterpe, the muse of lyric poetry and music have their places in the sacred halls. But in this article, Calliope – the muse of epic poetry and perhaps even the narrative exhibition – will play the leading part.

The Maritime Museum of Denmark was until recently located at Kronborg castle in Elsinore, where the museum had, since 1915, displayed exhibitions about 600 years of Danish maritime history. The castle, although a beautiful frame for the artefacts, was no longer suitable for contemporary exhibitions in the 21st century. After various attempts at securing a new location, the large, old dry docks of the former Elsinore Shipyard were offered to the museum. The architects of BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group – were selected to build a new building completely underground, surrounding the old dry dock while keeping it mostly intact as the largest object in the museum.

As for the exhibitions, the first task, beginning in 2008, was to search for inspiration and discover the nature of excellent museum interpretation in the 21st century. After visiting many museums, both of maritime history and others, a number of exhibition designers were invited to provide their idea of how the stories of Danish maritime history might be told. A single company provided a wonderfully inspired proposal, namely Kossmann.deJong of Amsterdam. Their concept Sea Fever told of a voyage to sea using art film and scenography to place the museum artefacts in an engaging setting.

A small team consisting of the museum director Jørgen Selmer and the curators Torkil Adersen, Thorbjørn Thaarup, and Benjamin Asmussen then worked with the exhibition designers on preparing an overall plan for the exhibitions. Due to the construction of the new museum buildings being more complex than first imagined by the architects, the time schedule for the preparation of the exhibitions were not as rushed as might have been feared. One of the fundamental discussions was defining strengths and weaknesses of an exhibition compared to a film or a book. This discussion made the primary objective of the exhibitions clear: to tell stories, rather than show objects.

Working with the exhibition designers of Kossmann.deJong made it clear that a good exhibition must be like a play at a theatre – a good story is important and the museum





▲ In the exhibition about navigation and world views, interactive installations allow the visitors to try classic navigational instruments. An animated sea, varying from quiet weather to storm provides the background for the navigation instruments.

artefacts are the actors of the play. Objects are essential to a museum exhibition, but the realisation of how little they tell the uninitiated visitor made it clear that the setting in which they are presented is of the utmost importance. The muse Calliope were thus invited to enter the museum, which would change from showing artefacts and describing history to telling engaging stories that would reach out and touch the minds of the visitors.

#### Overall principles

During the preparation of the exhibitions a series of guidelines to be followed as much as possible was set up. Below are some of the most important.

#### Interaction as storytelling

Knowing that interactive installations are popular among visitors and seem to convey more knowledge than static displays, it is tempting to create as many as possible to please the visitor. We agreed that the story of an exhibition was the most important, and that all interactive installations should contribute to that story by telling aspects of the main story that other exhibition elements – such as objects, text etc. – were unable to communicate.

#### Strengths and weaknesses of exhibitions

Realising that some stories are better told in media other than exhibitions is crucial to providing a good visitor ex-

▲ Techno Magic in action in the exhibition Tea Time – The first Globalisation. An empty leatherbound book becomes alive when placed at the geographical locations in the exhibitions and allows the visitor to be a merchant in the 18th century.

perience. Especially abstract matters, such as economic theory, are often better described in books rather than in exhibitions that turn into walls of text and scare off the visitor. Selecting stories that made sense in exhibition media thus became a vital task.

#### Thematic exhibitions rather than chronology

The chronological exhibition is widespread in museums and generally works well. The visitor sees artefacts in their place in history and developments through time can be made clear. However, this type of exhibition tends to focus on what is particular in a certain age, rather than what is common among ages. In an exhibition arranged after the chronological principle, the galleries tend to be larger and more object-rich as the visitor progresses through the ages, skewing the perspective of time. We decided to use thematic exhibitions instead, choosing eight stories out of 600 years of Danish maritime history to tell. Thus, the stories can be sharp, fresh and easy to understand and remember. The downside is that many stories will be left untold, but if the thematic exhibitions are changed regularly, a significant number of stories can be told in a course of 10, 20 or even 50 years, while at the same time keeping the overall exhibition fresh and worth visiting again.

#### Techno Magic

Every time a new technology – such as a mobile audio device, the Internet, or even iPads – is made available,

museums (and many others) often assume that this new technology will automatically engage and attract visitors. This might be true for very brief moments in time, but usually the general public gets used to new devices much faster than museums. Therefore we decided only to use technology in order to create something different from everyday life. Technology should be used to create magical effects and not look like the screens, keyboards and smartphones of home and work.

#### Light appearance with great depths

Visiting an exhibition is most often a social occasion – exhibitions are usually visited to be with someone rather than the exhibition being a goal in itself. Thus, an exhibition is not a medium suitable for transferring complex knowledge but rather a place to awake curiosity and inspire people to search for more knowledge. We decided that all texts should be kept to a minimum in the exhibitions. A single text of 200 characters to open each exhibition, a few signs of 500 characters for each main chapter, and finally object captions of just 200 characters. The goal was to avoid the walls of text that often greet the visitors in exhibitions, and to provide a light and less intimidating experience instead. To satisfy visitors with a deeper thirst for knowledge, a system of QR-codes was devised: by scanning a code the visitor can directly access deeper layers of the exhibitions – also available online.

#### Integrating art in films

Art can invoke powerful emotions in the beholder, and museums of cultural history often try to use this almost magical power in exhibitions. In our discussion we agreed that using art, in whatever form, to enhance the storytelling in the new exhibitions was most welcome, but that such works of art were to be means to an end, namely to inspire feelings about maritime history. The film artists De Aanpak from Rotterdam were thus given a relatively open task of producing films that would enhance the story in each of the eight thematic exhibitions. After several meetings discussing the essential stories of each exhibition, the film artists went to work on their own. Not until near the end did the curators see the films, which only needed a few historical corrections to convey the desired emotions and events of each story.

#### Trust others – avoid compromises

In crafting a large and contemporary exhibition, several different skills are necessary. Early in the process, we discussed and acknowledged the need to respect the varied skills of the participants of creating new exhibitions.

Related to this respect was our desire to avoid too many compromises, allowing both designers, film artists, and curators the freedom to realise their vision of a compelling, fascinating exhibition that will inspire the guests to learn and seek out additional knowledge.

#### Variation in exhibitions – scenography must follow the story

From the very beginning, it was important to us that the 3,000 square meters of exhibitions would be as varied as possible in terms of light, density of scenography and objects, general mood as well as in point of view. The new building designed by BIG was very suitable for this, since openings in the old dock walls appeared at irregular intervals, changing the light of the exhibition space from almost complete darkness to bright daylight. It is our hope that these types of variations support the stories being told, keep the visitors fresh and open for new impression and generally prolong the time a visitor stays in the exhibition.

#### Testing the principles in real life

In October 2013 the new museum finally opened after some delays in the construction of the building. The reception of the exhibitions has been very good, and visitors provide lots of happy feedback. Where the old exhibitions at Kronborg received praise primarily from adult males with prior maritime knowledge, visitor groups such as women, children and even teenagers seem thrilled about the new exhibitions! Judging from the feedback we receive from guests in various forms, it truly seems like Calliope – the muse of epic poetry – is now residing in the halls of the museum along with Clio.

We look forward very much to the first results of the survey done by the Danish Agency for Culture as well as to the results of our own surveys later for a deeper understanding of what makes the exhibitions interesting. The lessons learned during the long design process are very valuable to us, and it is our hope that others will be able to benefit from them as well.

#### Facts

For a general discussion of activity versus interactivity in exhibition (in Danish), see [www.formidlingsnet.dk/interaktion-i-udstilling](http://www.formidlingsnet.dk/interaktion-i-udstilling) and <http://historieblog.dk/2012/beskuelse-aktivitet-interaktivitet/>



▲ A good example of risk-taking was the work undertaken by Glasgow Museums for the Curious project. Photo © CSG CIC Glasgow Museums collection.

## Changing exhibitions

– changing what and whom?

**Dr. Bernadette Lynch, Museum writer, researcher and consultant, London, [lynchbernadette@hotmail.com](mailto:lynchbernadette@hotmail.com)**

An unprecedented amalgamation of forms of communication has been harnessed within the modern state, much of it aimed at persuading the population to comply with certain values. The question is – what role do exhibitions play?

Museum exhibitions share the desire to influence at their core, traditionally including a pedagogical impetus as well as an ever-increasing desire to use new technology to communicate with audiences. Furthermore, if, as Enzenberger once put it, museum exhibitions are part of what has been termed the ‘consciousness industries’, they may be simply employing shiny new forms of an old rhetoric of persuasion: *(i, ii)*

“The consciousness industries are contemporary forms of traditional rhetoric; complex expressions of persuasion through complex transmissions of voice and image. Like rhetoric itself, they might best be described as strategic systems of representation; strategies whose aim is the

wholesale conversion of its audiences to sets of prescribed values to alter social relations.” *(iii)*

My concern is with active agency and the museum’s theory of change as embedded within the exhibition, and the institutional values these reveal. If exhibitions aim to persuade, what and who is being persuaded and how? Who produces the exhibition and who is the intended consumer; who is the active agent and who the passive beneficiary? Is there opportunity for different views, for conflict – and a means for effective challenge and debate?

### Who and what will change as a result of the museum’s exhibitionary strategies?

A Chinese woman stood at the far end of a room at a museum’s community consultation session in London and asked why the museum wanted to engage communities? She said, “What’s it for? What is it you want to do to me? What needs changing?”

What values underpin the museums’ exhibition strategy and are they part of the institutions’ commitment

### Notes

*(i, ii)* Hans Enzenberger came up with the term ‘consciousness industries’, as referred to in Bruce W. Ferguson, ‘Exhibition Rhetorics’, in *Thinking about exhibitions*, ed. by R. Greenberg, B.W. Ferguson and S. Nairne, London, 1996, p.178

*(iii)* *Ibid*, p.178

*(iv)* John Kinard (November 22, 1936 – August 5, 1989) was an American social activist, pastor, and museum director. He is best known as the director of the Anacostia Museum, a small community museum founded by the Smithsonian Institution in 1967.

*(v)* Lynch, B. 2011a *Whose Cake is it Anyway?: A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in twelve museums and galleries in the UK*. The Paul Hamlyn Foundation: [phf.org.uk](http://phf.org.uk).

*(vi)* Some of this is explored further in a paper I co-authored with Sam Alberti, on the example of an attempt at co-creating an exhibition, *Myths About Race*, at the Manchester Museum. B. Lynch and S. J. M. M. Alberti (2010). *Legacies of prejudice: racism, co-production*

to social change? If so, how effective are they in ‘curating’ these social issues and concerns on behalf of their audiences, or is it more appropriate that they collaborate with their audiences in actively co-producing exhibitions of relevance to them? Should the exhibition take a leading role in promoting change? If so, on behalf of whom? And is the exhibition an effective catalyst to inspire further action?

Back in the 1970s visionary US museologist John Kinard spoke about the neighbourhood museum as a catalyst for social change. He described the Anacostia Neighbourhood Museum in New Jersey as an ‘intermediary institution’ (Kinard 1972, 53) that has a social responsibility to deal with contemporary controversial problems *(iv)*. He said:

“They must employ not only new methods but also a new intermediary that will be unafraid to face the complex problems raised by racism, material affluence, poverty, poor housing, unemployment, drugs, deteriorating cities, urban planning, education – all aspects of human existence – and to find the answers. Exhibitions should be designed to present these controversial problems side-by-side with

and radical trust in the museum. *Museum Management and Curatorship*. 25: 1. 13- 35. Available on line: DOI: 10.1080/09647770903529061 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09647770903529061>

*(vii)* ‘Measuring the impact of museums on their communities: The role of the 21st century museum’, Lynda KELLY, Australian Museum Audience Research Centre (AMARC), INTERCOM 2006 conference paper available online: <http://www.intercom.museum/documents/1-2Kelly.pdf>

*(viii)* Curious was an innovative project delivered by Glasgow Museums. The project included an eighteen-month community-led exhibition in St Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art. For a useful analysis of the project, see an article by Aileen Strachan and Lyndsey Mackay: ‘Veiled Practice: reflecting on collaborative exhibition development through the journey of one potentially contentious object’, in Lynch, B. (ed) 2013 *Working through conflict in museums: Museums, objects and participatory democracy*, *Museum Management and Curatorship*, Special Issue, Volume 28, Issue 1, 2013: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmmc20/28/1>

their counterparts in history, correlating current issues with historical facts. Our museums should be the leaders in the forefront of change.” (Kinard 1972, 53) It has been a long-term interest of mine to ask the following question: as museums adopt social justice and social change as central elements of their work (as many have done in the UK, with active public participation as a key strategy), how do they know it’s working? In 2010 the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, a major funder of community engagement initiatives in museums and galleries in the UK, commissioned me to study the effects of more than a decade of public engagement and participation strategies in museums and art galleries across the UK *(v)*.

As the study unfolded, it became clear that the most widespread experience people had with museums was that of ‘empowerment-lite’, with many well-meaning museums continuing to have difficulty in truly collaborating with participants, particularly in the area of exhibition development.

The Hamlyn study, and subsequent work I undertook with the Tate and its twenty gallery partners around the UK

focusing on youth engagement, as well as with MEG, the Museum Ethnographers Group, on curatorial commitment to public participation, have shown that continued attempts at collaborating have not effectively challenged institutional habits of mind. Here we have a situation where the museum is committed to social change but as an institution has difficulty in changing itself.

As these studies demonstrated, it is through discussion, debate and differences of opinion that all involved (in co-producing an exhibition, for example) might have the opportunity to develop their critical thinking as individuals and express their active agency as citizens in civil society, whether they are museum workers or community partners. The museum or gallery thus becomes, as Andrea Cornwall puts it in relation to the institutions of civil society, a “space for creating citizenship, where in learning to participate, citizens can cut their teeth and acquire new skills that can be transferred to other spheres – whether those of formal politics or neighbourhood action” (Cornwall and Coelho 2007, 8).

#### Centre/periphery model of museum exhibitions

The Chinese woman had asked what it was that the museum had wished to do to or for her. In other words, what changes did the museum wish to bring about in this individual? Frequently the best indication of how these relations are configured is stated within the language and message of the exhibition.

The museum too often remains firmly in the centre, displaying a relationship of teacher and pupil, ‘carer and cared-for’. Meanwhile the rhetoric of service places the subject (the audience) in the role of ‘supplicant’ or ‘beneficiary’ and the provider (the museum and its staff) in the role of ‘carer’. The museum thus inadvertently continues to be based on a centre–periphery model (Clifford 1997). By placing people in the position of beneficiaries, the museum exercises invisible power, and thereby robs people of their active agency and the necessary possibility of resistance.

While in Paris recently, I visited the Museum of Immigration, (La Musée de l’histoire de l’immigration at the Palais de la Porte Dorée), where the permanent displays trace two centuries of immigration in France. While the Museum aims to focus upon the very significant contribution to French culture of two hundred years of immigration, the timeline one immediately follows on the walls as one ascends the staircase outlines the frequently brutal political reality of French immigration policies over those two centuries.

One arrives at the top of the stairs wondering what it was like to live through some of that desperately contested history – and what it is like for France’s migrant populations to live in such an uncertain present. One wants to know, besides eliciting a feeling of being saddened, troubled, or victimised, what is the museum’s intention for the experience of those immigrant family visitors, of which, on that particular Sunday afternoon, there were many passing as we climbed the staircase to the main galleries?

Later, I noticed the museum shop sells works by Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skin, White Masks* Fanon wrote, “make of me always a man who questions... [for] ... what matters is not to know the world but to change it.” (Fanon, 1952: 230–232) I have been reminded of this challenge by Fanon while thinking about how we can usefully work with people in developing museum exhibitions. For, if it is anything, Fanon’s call is surely that museums must do more than cheerlead with some sort of scholarly impartiality while making vague noises about past injustices.

It is unsurprising that the museum’s community partners (if not their audiences) frequently convey frustration and dissatisfaction, finding themselves on the receiving end of a profoundly disabling view of the individual as existing in an almost permanent state of vulnerability – the helpless victim of external circumstances. There is no let-up on museum control (vi).

Back in 2006, there was a large-scale study of museum audiences undertaken in Australia and Canada entitled ‘Measuring the impact of museums on their communities: The role of the 21st century museum’ (vii). The surprise to many was that audiences want to be challenged more than they are currently; the study asked, ‘are museums ready and willing to provide?’ (see image of one of the objects selected by participants) (viii).

#### Developing capabilities

Presenting at the International ODM conference WHY EXHIBITIONS? (March 2014) allows me to consider the current social role of exhibitionary practice in museums and to share examples of current exhibitionary practice in the UK and elsewhere, including the results of my examination of exhibitions in nine museums across Denmark. It is an opportunity to look at exhibitions that are shifting the role of their ‘audiences’ from beneficiaries or consumers to partners and active agents – museums that are transforming their role into one of supporting people in developing their own capabilities, including the capability to resist.

- ▶ Six adolescents talk about changing clothes and bathing with peers in The Locker Room – a space that explores the changing norms of nudity and communal bathing in Denmark.  
Photo © Laura Stamer/Rosan Bosch



## Narratives that facilitate reflection in museums

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In the exhibition *Dear, difficult body*, which opened at the Steno Museum in the Danish city of Aarhus in the autumn of 2011, narratives play a main role in each of its sections. The exhibition’s topic – human body culture – is a very personal one, which is why it is interesting to make visible the attitudes and feelings of the individual. However, body culture is also a broad and rich field of research, which is why it is also important to give visitors a good idea of scientists’ insights to our society’s body culture.

#### An exhibition about body culture

The body is a hot topic for many young people, because their identity and self-perception is closely related to their ideas about their own bodies and physical appearance. Going from childhood to adulthood is a challenging process because the body changes radically. This natural

process has always been a challenge, but the problem has probably been reinforced in recent years by the omnipresent images of “perfect” bodies in the public space. This ideal body is unrealistic and unattainable for most people. A recent Danish study has documented that an increasing number of young people are struggling with eating disorders, and more than 10% of Danish adolescents are “dissatisfied” with their body (Sørensen et al., 2011).

In the exhibition *Dear, difficult body*, young people are invited to explore their views on body ideals, nakedness and their acceptance of their own and other people’s bodies. The aim of the exhibition is to make visitors reflect on and discuss these issues. To reach this goal, four design principles – curiosity, challenge, narratives and participation – have guided the development of the exhibition. These design principles originate from literature studies and practical experiences in previous exhibitions. In this paper we will describe the implementation of one of the four design principles – narratives – and how it stimulates visitor reflections and discussions.



◀ The scientists' stories are not merely hard facts. They also include a personal dimension, and all the talks end with a bit of personal advice from the researcher, such as: "I would put it this way: It's better to be fat and fit than slim and lazy." © Laura Stamer/Rosan Boscht

#### Personal and expert narratives

The potential of a narrative approach in museums has been explored by Leslie Bedford, who argues that, "Stories are the most fundamental way we learn [...]. They teach without preaching, encouraging both personal reflection and public discussion. Stories inspire wonder and awe; they allow a listener to imagine another time and place, to find the universal in the particular, and to feel empathy for others." (Bedford, 2001)

Narratives enable visitors to imagine themselves in an unfamiliar world, and narratives can be told in ways that directly target a specific audience. At museums, stories are often told in a uni-vocal way, but a multitude of narratives representing different people and voices might engage visitors in co-creating a wider and more diverse picture. According to Bedford, "Stories are very much the 'real thing' of museums, that kernel of authenticity that we seek to identify and preserve" (p. 33). Authentic people having different experiences and opinions can communicate different stories in the exhibition. In that way, personal narratives will act as a source of inspiration and information about other people's lives and ideas.

So far, narratives have primarily been presented in museums to tell stories about people's lives. According to Sue Allen, however, they also have the potential to enhance visitors' acquisition of scientific knowledge (Allen, 2004). Stories from scientists with a personal dimension – expert narratives – about research and scientific discoveries can humanise science. This makes science more accessible to non-scientists, also because expert narratives have the potential to link the exhibition to real life.

#### Implementation of narratives

Dear, difficult body addresses a number of contemporary issues: body ideals, nudity, communal bathing, prejudices about obesity, food culture, and our ever-increasing use of machines instead of muscle-power. These issues are communicated through text, objects, films and participatory techniques. The narrative aspect is included in all sections of the exhibition. Most narratives are told by 'ordinary' people describing their experiences, for instance in 'The Locker Room', where there are taped video sequences

of boys and girls (13–14 years old) relating how they feel about communal showering. The narratives in the section 'Prejudices about being overweight' are quite different. Here researchers present the latest scientific findings on obesity and refute some of the myths about being overweight, such as "You get fat because you love food and are lazy," and "Being thin is always healthy". The expert narratives also have a personal dimension, being structured around a personal message from the researcher and a special object (say, a laboratory mouse) illustrating part of the scientific explanation.

#### Investigation

A total of 98 pupils from five school classes participated in an investigation. The pupils were free to choose how they spent their time in the exhibition, and no specific task was assigned. At the end of the visit the pupils filled in a questionnaire addressing issues relating to specific exhibits and to the exhibition as a whole. A week after their visit, 11 pupils were interviewed.

#### Reflections initiated by the exhibition

60% of the pupils indicated in the questionnaire that the exhibition had given rise to new ideas and reflections about their own or other people's bodies. The other 40% indicated that the exhibition had not given rise to any new reflections or ideas, either because they already knew about most of the things touched upon or because they did not find the topic interesting.

#### Narratives stimulating reflection

31% of the 'reflecting pupils' mentioned exhibits with narratives when they talked about what had initiated their reflections. Thus, narratives seemed to be the design principle most frequently facilitating reflection. Most pupils' comments refer to the personal narratives in 'The Locker Room', the personal narrative about anorexia, and the expert narratives about obesity.

The personal narratives from 'The Locker Room' initiated reflections about the body and nudity:

"The Locker Room, it caught my attention because you heard other young people say that you're not the only one who's in doubt as to whether you are OK the way you are." (Girl)  
"Because you heard the opinions of other young people, so you could identify with them." (Boy)

The personal narrative from an anorexic girl prompted reflection and communication about eating disorders:

"I think it was interesting to know how they actually felt and all that. And then, when I was done reading, I just thought: 'No, I'm not going through that. I'm not going to eat anything like that.' Never." (Girl)  
"I talked with Freja [...] and we talked about that anorexia part [of the exhibition], and about, you know, 'No way are we ever getting into that'. And we just thought it was so horrible that she ate washing-up liquid." (Girl)

The expert narratives stimulated learning and reflection in relation to obesity:

"I think that the part with the explanation and the video, that is probably the part I got the most out of [...] I watched them all. First I just took the one with – with bullying, I took that first [...] You know, I always thought that they [obese children] got bullied because they were big and heavy, but then there was that talk about how maybe, when they were bullied, it got them to eat more [and they therefore became overweight]." (Boy)  
"... because there I got ... I don't know ... there you found out something, you learned something." (Boy)

Personal and expert narratives have affected pupils' reflection and discussions in different ways. The personal narratives make pupils think about their own and other people's bodies because they can identify with or withdraw from other peoples' stories. While the expert narratives did not have the same affective effect, they did have a stronger cognitive effect. These narratives contributed to pupils' knowledge about obesity by introducing some interesting information.

The narratives were presented in videos, sound tracks, and written text. Most of the interviewed pupils preferred the videos. Their positive feelings were probably stimulated by the whole setting around the videos, which included chairs and large-scale video projections. A few pupils preferred the written narratives, because the format allowed them to look for and digest the information at their own pace. So narratives can influence visitor reflections and discussions in different ways, depending on their format and content.

### Combining design principles

The small section on 'Anorexia' had a strong effect on some of the pupils. The exhibits there made them discuss the issue with friends and family days after having visited the exhibition.

The section consisted of a number of objects: a written letter, a self-portrait, and various kinds of enemas. Here, the narrative told in the letter was enforced by the displayed objects, which aroused curiosity. Combining the design principles can strengthen the effect of the principles, because they play different roles. The curiosity-stimulating element, another design principle, draws visitor attention towards a particular exhibit, and the narrative elements sustain visitor interests, making them reflect and discuss.

### Future studies

In the future, we would like to apply the design principles in another exhibition to investigate the effects of the design principles in another context. When planning and designing future exhibitions it is essential to be aware of the strengths offered by the various design principles, and of how they combine to reach their full potential relative to the aim of this new exhibition. The unpredictability of how exhibits will work in practice implies that there is still a need for testing ideas and prototypes. Design principles are no guarantee for success.

### Literature

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Sørensen N.U., Nielsen J.C. and Osmeč M.N. "Krop og ydre" [Body and exterior]. In: Når det er svært at være ung i Danmark [When it's hard to be young in Denmark], Center for Ungdomsforskning [Centre for Youth Research], 2011: 138–43.

### Facts

The exhibition design was created in collaboration with the Dutch-born visual artist and designer Rosan Bosch, and it received DKK 2 million in funding from the charitable foundations TrygFonden and Nordea-fonden, from the Danish football pools and National Lottery, and from the Central Denmark Region.

## NEWS – ICOM CECA

CECA Committee for Education and Cultural Action



### ICOM CECA Marts 2014: President's Message

Dear Members,  
as re-elected President, I have the pleasure to contact you to share with you some important information about the policy that CECA will follow in the period 2013 – 2016. CECA new Board members were appointed during ICOM General Conference that took place in Rio de Janeiro last August. You will find their names and responsibilities at the following address: <http://network.icom.museum/ceca/the-board/board-members/>

The three main issues on which I am basing my personal activity are usefulness, involvement, transparency. Starting from them, members should find a good answer to the question: why should I be a CECA member?

CECA is ICOM's second largest international committee. Its president has a challenging responsibility. The annual conference gives all members the unique opportunity to meet each other. However only 20% of members can attend it. Therefore it is necessary to ensure other means to give membership the necessary dynamism. In my first term the website was completely redesigned, 3,000 pages of publications were made available, a Best Practice document was defined, the Best Practice Award allowed members to present their work according to a shared model.

For two consecutive years, the five members who won the award were invited to take part in the annual conference. Now it is necessary to increase what has already been done. Therefore I would like to invest my energy in the



development of new activities on the website addressed to all members, in order to enhance the dialogue between different cultures. A second aim is to launch external international projects that could ensure CECA funds from outside ICOM. This money could be used to finance members' participation in the conference through the Best Practice Award, to encourage young professionals to take part in CECA activities, to make the website more and more appealing.

My most important aim is to develop deep and large communication with all members. I would be very grateful if you could contact me for any new idea or comment that can improve my work.

Best wishes  
Emma Nardi  
(ICOM – CECA President)  
Rome, 30th September 2013

### ICOM-CECA Annual Conference 2014

CECA will hold its next conference in 2014 in Alexandria (Egypt) together with the UMAC committee (University collections and museums) from 10 till 15th October 2014. More information will follow soon regarding the political situation and feasibility of having the conference there.

# SKOLETJENESTEN

## Skoletjenestenetværk klar til start!

I forsommeren 2013 besluttede undervisnings- og kulturministeren at etablere et Nationalt netværk af skoletjenester. Projektsekretariatet blev lagt hos Skoletjenesten på Sjælland for at trække på erfaringerne med at skabe netværk, der praktisk understøtter kulturinstitutionerne i deres daglige arbejde med at skabe læringstilbud til skolerne. Pr. 1. marts er det nye skoletjenestenetværk klar til start.

Vi skal bl.a. arbejde for at skabe national sammenhæng og kontinuitet, understøtte kvalitetsudvikling af og kendskab til kulturinstitutionernes mange tilbud og skabe samarbejder mellem kulturinstitutioner og skoler. Koordinatorerne skal understøtte netværket, men selve netværket består af skoletjenester bredt: En skoletjeneste kan være museumsinspektøren, der som en del af sine mange opgaver tager sig af skoleklasser, der besøger museet – eller det team af medarbejdere, der på en større kulturinstitution udvikler en mangfoldig pakke af læringstilbud, materialer, projekter og partnerskaber til brug for skoleverden bredt. Eller det kan være en kommunes indsats for at sikre, at de lokale kultur-, kunst- og naturtilbud gøres tilgængelige for kommunens skoler. Organiseringen, økonomien og rammerne er vidt forskellige for skoletjenester landet over, men fokus er det samme: at styrke anvendelsen af kulturinstitutionens læringsressourcer i skolernes undervisning. Og det er det, der er vores opdrag i skoletjenestenetværket.

I løsnings af denne opgave vil vi samarbejde med eksisterende netværk – herunder MiD – og bygge på de mange erfaringer, der er skabt de seneste år: Centrene for

museumsundervisning, Learning Museum, Interface, de museale og kommunale skoletjenester (nye såvel som gamle). Nogle af de eksisterende netværk og erfaringer er blevet tænkt med i projektudviklingen, men vi har brug for at sætte endnu flere i spil i den kommende periode. Vi håber, I vil samarbejde og dele jeres erfaringer med os.

## Hvem er koordinatorene?

Randers: Birthe Bitsch Mogensen er lærer og selvstændig med 16 års erfaring med undervisning, udvikling og kvalificering af læring i uformelle læringsmiljøer.

Esbjerg: Dorte Vind er lærer, proceskonsulent mv. med 19 års erfaring med undervisning, pædagogisk udvikling og konsulentarbejde fra skole og kommune.

Fredericia: Ulla Kjær Kaspersen er cand. scient. med 12 års erfaring fra læreruddannelser i Aalborg, Odense og UCL med undervisning og udviklingsprojekter.

København: Kirsten Hegner er cand.mag. med en grad i museumstudier og 13 års erfaring i Skoletjenesten med udvikling og drift af undervisningsafdelinger på flere kulturinstitutioner.

Projektleder er Marie Damsgaard Andersen, cand.mag. med 8 års erfaring i Skoletjenesten, og i 2014 er tidl. projektleder for Learning Museum, Tine Seligmann tilknyttet med henblik på at integrere værdifulde praksiserfaringer i netværket.

I kan finde os på [www.skoletjenestenetværk.dk](http://www.skoletjenestenetværk.dk), hvor I bl.a. også kan tilmelde jer nyhedsbrev

Vi glæder os til det fremtidige samarbejde!

# MiD INFO / OPSLAGSTAVLEN

## TEMADAG

### Etiske udfordringer og etiske fordringer i museumsformidlingen

Der stilles i disse år større og større krav til museumsformidling og museumsundervisning, idet museer i stigende grad beskæftiger sig med kontroversielle eller følsomme emner som f.eks. krig, voldtægt, æresdrab, dyremishandling, ytringsfrihed og klimaforandringer.

Disse emner vækker ofte stærke følelser hos børn, unge og voksne, og der kan optræde etiske dilemmaer i formidlingssituationen. Temadagen vil med afsæt i formidling af emnet krig klarlægge og diskutere etiske dilemmaer i formidlingen og undervisningen af følsomme emner, og hvordan disse emner kan og bør udfordre og opfordre museumsformidlere til at stille etiske fordringer, der er forbundet med at vække følelser hos de besøgende til at agere.

## 9. april kl. 10-16 – Nationalmuseet

Tilmeldingsfrist: 4. april på [kasserermid@gmail.com](mailto:kasserermid@gmail.com)

Pris: Deltagelse inkl. frokost er gratis for medlemmer (2014). Er du ikke allerede medlem, kan du tegne et medlemskab for 2014 i forbindelse med tilmeldingen og deltage gratis: 300 kr. Deltagelse i temadag for ikke-medlemmer: 350.

Yderligere information: Dorthe Godsk Larsen, [dgl@oems.dk](mailto:dgl@oems.dk)

Temadagen er arrangeret i samarbejde med Skoletjenesten på Sjælland, Koldkrigsmuseum Stevnfort/Østsjællands Museum og Nationalmuseet.

Welcome to the three new board members elected at MiD's general assembly in February

## Mette Liv Skovgaard

Education development manager at The National Museum of Denmark. National coordinator for The National Museum Education Network. Associateship mentee of British Museums Association (AMA). Former Head of Education at The Royal Arsenal Museum, project manager and consultant on visitor participation and evaluation at The Museums School Services of Zealand. Has worked with developing inclusive and co-creating museum learning since 2006 and was in 2013 visiting Nina Simon on a field study to her Participatory Museum in California.

## Tine Seligmann

Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art. As head of the educational department at the museum, Tine has 16 years of experience in educational programs for schools and institutions. She is editor and writer of a wide range of educational courses, teaching materials and articles. As Project Manager for the nationwide Danish project Learning Museum, Tines responsibility is to set goals, create momentum and consistency in the project. Tine is very engaged in collaboration between museums and the educational world in order to define and develop new and alternative working cultures in a lifelong learning context.

## Mie Ellekilde

Board representative in the working group for ODM's Annual Academic Meeting from 2009 to 2013. Has worked with museum education, exhibitions and collection management since 2005, e.g. at the agricultural museum Oldemortstoft in the south of Denmark and at the Historical Museum of Aalborg. Currently Project Manager at Meaning Making Experience, an independent organization created to support the Danish museums in their digital endeavors. Works with social media, Knowledge Sharing and managing of projects focused on digital experiences, museum education and the collaboration between museums and ICT businesses.



## MiD

- is the association of museum educators and communicators in Denmark – and is also open to others with a particular interest in presenting art, culture, and nature to wider audiences.
- puts emphasis on professionalism in education and communication – the contents must be of the highest professional standards.
- wishes to promote interdisciplinarity.
- provides a professional network for everyone working in the field.
- promotes co-operation on education and communication activities in Denmark and abroad.

### MiD membership

Membership costs DKK 300,- a year and gives you access to professional networking opportunities. Join MiD by contacting: [kasserermid@gmail.com](mailto:kasserermid@gmail.com).

Join us on [Facebook.com/pages/Museumsformidlere-i-Danmark](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Museumsformidlere-i-Danmark)