

# The Exhibition as Research: Histories, Theories, Methods

PhD and Research Seminar, June 13-15, 2024

Thursday 13 and Friday 14 June at ROM for kunst og arkitektur, Oslo, Norway

Saturday 15 June at The Museum of Cultural History, Oslo, Norway

## Call for Papers



From left: Wilhelm von Bode's display of Italian Renaissance Sculpture at the Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin, 1904; Sverre Fehn's exhibition architecture from 1979 in the Medieval Hall at the Museum of Cultural History, Norway, and research-by-display at ROM for kunst og arkitektur, 2023.

Museum exhibitions are intimately related to research. From the systematic display of natural history in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to current 'citizen science' experiments, exhibitions have displayed research in various ways, intending different outcomes. Museum exhibitions can be based on research, disseminate research, provide data for research, be a meeting point for interdisciplinary research collaborations, or generate new research questions. However, according to the current research qualification system in Norway, researchers working in Norwegian museums must demonstrate their research activities in the form of written blind peer-review articles or books. Exhibition making is not qualified as research in itself. As the Publication Indicator will be reevaluated in 2024, there seems to be a momentum for exploring if exhibitions can be qualified as research-in-itself. If they can, then how? Which criteria should be the basis of evaluating and verify research exhibitions? A first step towards a redefinition of exhibitions as research is to build a solid knowledge-base for understanding the relationship between exhibitions and research in the past and today, in order to collectively explore potentials and challenges for what can be called *research-by-display*.

Investigating exhibition-specific research from theoretical, historical and practical perspectives, Mattias Bäckström (2016) discusses thoroughly what he calls 'the exhibition essay' and he argues that "the exhibition as essay can be justified and realised as a practice in the form of inter-, intra- or para-institutional research projects" (p. 11). In the book *Exhibitions as Research* (2020), editor Peter Bjerregaard develops a conceptual framework for reclaiming the exhibition as a laboratory. He writes that "the orientation towards exhibitions as research is exactly an effort to formulate new constructive potentials for museum based research and thereby reclaim the museum as a research institution" (p. 3). In the recent book *Tingenes metode – museenes kunnskapstopografi* (2023), the editors and authors propose a method for exhibition research, developed by the research project "Tingenes Metode" [The Method of Things], led by Henrik Treimo. The authors highlight that the method is somewhat different from the academic model; having more in common with art practices than scientific discourses.

Yet if exhibitions could be considered research-in-itself, there must be an acknowledgement of the exhibition beyond being an experimental, open-ended research method. The exhibition as a robust

argument, a *research result* – or ending-point – that can be verified and then challenged, must be reconfigured and perhaps even reclaimed.

This PhD course explores the exhibition as research through the terms ‘research-based’, ‘research dissemination,’ ‘the exhibition as essay’, ‘laboratory,’ and ‘method’ in an attempt to explore research through exhibition making. Which histories, theories, and methods could unpack the exhibition as research, in itself?

With these perspectives as a starting point, participants are invited to reflect on different questions of exhibitions as research, and how these pertain to their dissertation subjects empirically, analytically, or epistemologically.

**Program:** The three-day program will consist of plenary lectures from invited speakers, paper presentations from PhD Fellows (20-minute presentation, 20-minute discussion), group work, and discussions of articles and chapters from reading list.

**Contributors or relevant scholars/curators** (to be confirmed)

- Inga-Lill Sundseth (Director of the Department of Cultural Heritage and Museums at Arts and Culture Norway)
- Liv Ramskjær (Secretary General of the Norwegian Museum Association)
- Gjertrud Steinsvåg (Curator and director at ROM for kunst og arkitektur)
- Karoline Kjesrud (Senior curator at the Historical Museum)
- Marianne Løken (Head of Research at Østfoldmuseene)
- Henrik Treimo (Senior curator at the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology)
- Thea Aarbakke (Senior curator at the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology)
- Annelise Bothner-By (Senior curator at Oslo Museum)
- Peter Bjerregaard (Head of Programme at the Danish Museum of Science & Technology)
- Anders Bettum (Senior curator at Oslo Museum and Associate Professor at University of Oslo)
- Gustav Jørgen Pedersen (Head of Research at the Munch Museum)
- Tominga Hope O’Donnell (Senior curator at the Munch Museum)
- Lars Toft Eriksen (Senior curator at the Munch Museum)
- Talette Simonsen (Head of Research at the National Museum)
- Bente Solbakken (Senior Curator at the National Museum)
- Christina Peck (Senior lecturer at the University of Oslo)
- Tim Anstey (Professor at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design)
- Mari Lending (Professor at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design)
- Jérémie Michael McGowan (Associate Professor at The Oslo School of Architecture and Design)
- Matthias Bäckström (Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- Insa Müller (Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- Steffi de Jong (Associate Professor at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology)
- Brita Brenna (Professor at the University of Oslo)
- Hugo Reinert (Associate Professor at University of Oslo)
- Helge Jordheim (Professor at the University of Oslo)
- Bodhisattva Chattopadhyay (Associate Professor at University of Oslo)

The contributors will comment on papers and presentations, and take part in plenary discussions.

**Sample reading list and exhibitions:** The reading list will consist of key articles, excerpts from books, and book chapters for understanding the exhibition as research, as well as examples from practice that participants are asked to evaluate as research.

- Arrhenius, Thordis, Mari Lending, Wallis Miller, Jérémie Michael McGowan. *Place and Displacement: Exhibiting Architecture* (2014)  
Exhibition: “Arv” [Heritage] at the History Museum (2023)
- Basu, Paul and Sharon Macdonald. *Exhibition Experiments* (2007)
- Bäckström, Mattias. *Att bygga innehåll med utställningar. Utställningsproduktion som forskningsprocess* [To Build Content with Exhibitions. Exhibition Production as Research Process]. Nordic Academic Press (2016).
- Bäckström, Mattias. “The Exhibition as Essay. Exhibition Production as Research Process” / “Utstillingen som essay. Utstillingsproduksjon som forskningsprosess.” Breaking Boundaries! Museum Education as Research / Spreng grensene! Formidling blir forskning. *Museumsforlaget* (2023), pp. 29–40 in Norwegian / pp. 153–159 in English
- Exhibition: “Beyond Barcode” at Oslo Museum (2023)
- Birnbaum, Daniel and Sven-Olov Wallenstein. *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition* (2019)
- Bishop, Claire. *Radical Museology: Or, What’s ‘contemporary’ in Museums of Contemporary Art?* (2013)
- Bjerregaard, Peter (ed.). *Exhibitions as Research* (2020)
- Exhibition: “Drager og laft” [“Dragons and Logs”] at the National Museum (2024)
- Exhibitions: “Gullramme og gråstein” and “Fra fjellene, fremover?” at Jøssingfjord Science Museum (2024)
- Hawkins, Harriet. *Geography, Art, Research: Artistic Research in the GeoHumanities* (2021)
- Ingold, Tim. *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (2013)
- Exhibition: “Modeller” at the Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology (2024)
- Pringle, Emily. *Rethinking research in the Art Museum* (2020)
- Sigfúsdóttir, Ólöf Gerður. *Museum-based research. Museological, institutional, curatorial and epistemological challenges*. University of Iceland (2022): <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11815/3724>
- Skydsgaard, Morten A., Hanne Møller Andersen and Heather King. “Designing museum exhibits that facilitate visitor reflection and discussion.” *Museum Management and Curatorship*, 31:1, 48-68.
- Exhibition: “The Savage Eye,” at the Munch Museum (2022)
- Treimo, Henrik, Lars Risan, Ketil Gjølme Andersen, Marianne Løken, and Torhild Skåtun (eds.), *Tingenes metode – museenes kunnskapstopografi* (2023)
- Exhibition: “Warburg Models: The Architecture of the Itinerant Archive” at Blaker meieri 2023 / The Architectural Association (2024)

... more literature will be added (the reading list will be approximately 1000 pages)

## Practical information

Working language: English.

Credits: 3/5 ECTS. Participation, paper presentation, and reading preparation will result in 3 ECTS, working over and submitting an edited version of the presentation (10-12 pages) after the seminar, will yield an additional 2 ECTS. Signed and authorized course diplomas will upon request be bestowed upon each participant having completed the course.

Meals: Coffee, fruits, and lunch and will be provided every day. Dinners Thursday night and Friday night are optional, as the expenses for the dinners will not be covered by the organizers.

Travel and accommodation: PhD Fellows are expected to cover their own travel and accommodation expenses.

Reading list: Reading materials and exhibition background material will be made available one month before the seminar (approximately 1000 pages).

Maximum participants: 12 PhD Fellows. If the number of applicants exceeds 12, a selection will be made on the basis of relevance, affiliation and status of PhD training; beyond that, early applications will be prioritized.

Application: Those who would like to participate in the PhD course should submit a short abstract of their paper (300 words). Apply by sending your abstract and a short CV to the convenor, Associate Professor Ingrid Halland: [Ingrid.halland@ikos.uio.no](mailto:Ingrid.halland@ikos.uio.no).

Deadline for application: **15th April 2024**

Deadline for submission of full papers: Participating PhD candidates must submit their full papers by 31st May 2024 latest. After this date, papers will be made available to keynote speakers and participants.

Open lectures: The invited talks and guest presentations will take place from morning until lunch every day and will be open to all, in person or via digital stream (Zoom). Registration is required. In the afternoon, the seminar will be closed (the PhD participants will present papers and invited guests will discuss their presentations and work in groups).

–

The PhD course is a collaboration between The Centre for Museum Studies and The Oslo Center for Environmental Humanities at University of Oslo, Cultural Heritage Management and the research project Museum, Society, Participation at NTNU Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, and ROM for kunst og arkitektur.



UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO

 NTNU  
Norwegian University of  
Science and Technology

 Historical  
Museum

