Conference
November 15, 2018, 10.00 - 16.30

*Museum: A Culture of **Digital** Copies*

Venue: University of Copenhagen, Auditorium 4A.0.68, Njalsgade 76, DK-2300 København S

This conference takes its point of departure in the apparently obvious paradox: Museums are commonly described as storehouses for the real and authentic object, but have eagerly been embracing new copying technologies since the beginnings. On the one hand, digitalization can be seen in continuation of older practices. On the other hand, digital technologies apparently offer the possibility of reproducing, recreating, reconstructing, re-enacting, replicating and disseminating originals and copies in an abundance of new (and mixed) ways.

In order to unfold this paradox, we will address the following key questions: How can these changes in new reproduction technologies help us pose new questions to the history of museums and collections? Are they altering the status of objects and collections? Are the roles of museum users and the work of museum professionals being redefined as curatorial agency with digital copies is not limited to the latter? What are currently the best digital museum practises and how do they influence the museum institution and its users.

Confirmed speakers

- **Anais Aguerre**, Director, Culture Connect, UK [the project ReACH (Reproduction of Art and Cultural Heritage), strengths and challenges]
- **Anders Houltz**, Head of Research, Docent, Centre for Business History, Stockholm.[3D digital cultural heritage projects]
- **Jenny Kidd**, Senior Lecturer, School of Journalism, Media and Culture, Cardiff University [interactivity, contemporary museum practice]
- **Cecilia Lindhé**, Director of the Centre for Digital Humanities, Gothenburg
- University [visualisations]
- **Ross Parry**, Associate Professor, Museum Studies, and Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (digital), Leicester University [museum computing, digital documentation]
- **Sarah Werner**, PhD, independent researcher, http://sarahwerner.net/blog/about/cv/ [digital media, book collections and early book history]

Final programme will be available by October.

The conference is organised by professor Hans Dam Christensen, University of Copenhagen, and associate professor Lise Skytte Jakobsen, Aarhus University, as a part of the research project Museum. A Culture of Copies, funded by the Research Council of Norway: http://www.hf.uio.no/ikos/english/research/projects/a-culture-of-copies/

Motivation for the conference *Museums. A Culture of Digital Copies*

Museums are commonly considered as storehouses for authentic and real objects. Simultaneously, museums are omnivores when it comes to applying new technologies in their practices.

As is well-known, photography and audio-visual media have been in use for long time. Historically, an example might be the initiative taken by the director of the South Kensington Museum (today Victoria and Albert Museum) already in 1867 to a convention which praised casts, electrotypes and photographs as reproduction technologies. Since the 1990s, the emerging digital media has obviously changed the ways museums communicate their collections.

Museum websites and presence on, for example, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook are mandatory; ten years ago, numerous museums were to be found in Second Life, and QR codes became en vogue because of the development of smartphones. In the same period, other mobile devices such as PDAs and, increasingly, iPads have, together with smartphones, offered digitally augmented layers and replaced touch-based interaction technologies in the exhibition room. Today, 3D printing and downscaled virtual reality glasses are increasingly becoming the tools that forerunner museums have to embrace in their communication and learning.

However, preservation and documentation are also areas where museums have implemented new technologies. The mainframe computer as a repository for museum databases was discussed already in the 1960s. Digital retroconversion of catalogues waved through museums in the 1980s-90s, and, shortly after, databases became accessible online. Today, 3D technology is enriching the potential of documenting a site or a find without damaging the objects. Simultaneously, 3D, virtual reality, mixed reality, augmented reality and like are useful in reconstructing historical objects, buildings, monuments and places – and exhibitions. In fact, all the above-mentioned technologies are potentially capable of making new images of authentic museum objects.

Discussions about what will happen to museums with the advent of different digital technologies loomed large back at the beginnings of the 2000s. Would objects disappear and immaterial digital technologies take over? In light of the rapid technological development, a crucial point has to be recapitulated: So far, collections last while technology pass.