

Objects and Meaning Making



Museum conference
Thursday 29th of september

At Roskilde University

Building 00, Auditorium

Arranged by RUCMUS and Danish Center of Museum Research

RUC



Program

- 09.00: Registration and coffee
- 09.30: **Objects and Meaning Making—conference introduction**
Michael Haldrup, Associate Professor, Roskilde University
- 09.45: **Learning With and from Objects as Mediatlional Means and Cognitive Tools**
Shawn Rowe, Associate Professor, Oregon State University
- 10.45: Coffee
- 11.00: **Reversals: museum rituals from the object's perspective**
Sandra Dudley, Dr., Leicester University
- 12.00: **Our Museum: History. Design. Evaluation**
Kirsten Drotner, Professor, University of Southern Denmark
- 12.30: Lunch
- 13.30: **We've always been cyborgs! How people have always been intimate with things and why this matters to museum design**
Michael Shanks, Professor, D-school, Stanford University
- 14.30: Coffee and cake
- 14.45: **Emerging objects of COLLAPSE**
Peter Bjerregaard, Senior Adviser, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo
- 15.45: Closing remarks
- 16.00: Wine and snacks

Objects and Meaning Making Conference theme and point of departure

Michael Haldrup, Associate Professor, Roskilde University

In the past decades, the authority of the meaning making that takes place in museums has gradually shifted from the objects and the curator to the visitors. This shift is reflected in concrete cases of exhibition development, where the involvement of users has become a central concern in the elaboration of new exhibition formats. In museum research, a movement away from the object, towards the users, has paralleled this shift. This has been expressed, among other things, in the emergence of more focused user analyses and ethnographies as well as critical deconstructions of the dominant narratives presented by exhibitions.

Taken together, these developments have caused the question of the role of the object in meaning making to be raised again, both with respect to museum dissemination practices (cf. Dudley 2009, 2012; Bjerregaard 2014), mediated learning in informal learning environments (Jakobsson & Davidsson 2012; Rowe & Bachmann 2012) and the cultural education role played by the museums and the disciplines disseminated in them (Shanks 2012). This conference focuses on the status of the object in relation to museum meaning making by involving both semiotic and material perspectives.

Learning With and from Objects as Mediational Means and Cognitive Tools

Shawn Rowe, Associate Professor, Oregon State University

Museums and museum experiences have always been built around objects, whether physical, digital, or living things. Anchored to the special places and narratives of museums and similar settings, objects take on a kind of magic and allure for learners and casual visitors. In this talk, Shawn will explore a range of ways for learning researchers to conceptualize objects from their role as symbols and indexes to their role as communicative and cognitive affordances. Special emphasis will be paid to complex hybrid objects that encompass both physical and digital components such that physical objects become user interfaces for digital content.

Reversals: museum rituals from the object's perspective

Sandra Dudley, Dr., Deputy Head of School, Joint Director of Postgraduate Research School of Museum Studies, University of Leicester

It is not new to describe museum visits as a form of ritual, and, indeed, to think of the museum itself as a ritual space. It is also not unprecedented to draw on Victor Turner's use of notions such as liminality and drama to show how museum experiences are opportunities to reflect anew on oneself and one's culture, society etc., (e.g. Duncan 1995, Fraser 2004). In this talk, Sandra attempt to refresh conceptualisations of the museum encounter as ritual, but looking primarily from the object's point of view rather than the visitor's. This produces not only an illuminating reversal of perspective; it also reveals interesting (and potentially productive) switches between people and things in the course of the ritual process.

Our Museum. History. Design. Evaluation

Kirsten Drotner, Professor, University of Southern Denmark

Museums have historically been shaped in a tension between a conception of the museum as a tool for the education and enlightenment of the population and an object for visitors experiences. "Our Museum" is a new, transdisciplinary project examining this tension in its historical as well as contemporary contexts joining together museum researchers from five Danish universities.

We've always been cyborgs! How people have always been intimate with things

Michael Shanks, Professor of Archaeology, Stanford University

Confirming the genealogy of the contemporary museum in antiquarian practice, Michael will take a long term view of hybrid humanity, augmented and amplified by companion artifacts, to which tasks are delegated, and with which experiences are shared. With examples from pre-history, classical antiquity, and the archaeology of the contemporary past, he will sketch the museum as again “home of the muses”, critical and inspirational sounding board for reflecting upon the future.

Emerging objects of COLLAPSE

Peter Bjerregaard, Senior Adviser, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

Peter's talk will consider how 'the object' emerges in the process of exhibition making. What he has realized from exhibition making is that while we may have a lot of 'things' to work with, 'the objects' emerge through the process. They come out of discussions, of concrete practices of relating things, of concrete distances, lighting, audiences' access etc. This also means that we deal with a kind of 'meaning' which is not reducible to text but is based in presence.

Theoretically the talk will draw on Böhme's work on atmosphere and (probably) Malraux' thoughts on 'Le Musée Imaginaire', while empirically Peter will draw on the making of "COLLAPSE – human being in an unpredictable world" which will open at Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, on December 1st 2016.

Keynote speakers

Find out more about the works of our keynote speakers.

Michael Shanks: <http://www.mshanks.com/>

Sandra Dudley: <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/about-the-school/people/dr-sandra-dudley>

Shawn Rowe: <http://education.oregonstate.edu/people/shawn-rowe>

Kirsten Drotner: <http://findresearcher.sdu.dk:8080/portal/da/person/drotner>

Peter Bjerregaard: <http://www.khm.uio.no/om/organisasjon/seksjon-for-administrative-stottetjenester/ansatte/peterbj/>

Practical information

Time: 29th of September 2016 from 9.30-16.00

Place: Roskilde University, Auditorium in building 00

Sign up here: <http://events.ruc.dk/rucmus-konference>

Registration deadline: 15. September.

Limited number of participants.

Participation is free, but there will be a no show fee (350 DKK).

We look forward to seeing you!