Museum-Based Research

Museological, Institutional, Curatorial and Epistemological Challenges

Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir

Thesis for the degree of PhD
in Museum Studies

October 2022

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Abstract

Unlike collecting, preserving, educating and displaying, research is rarely thought of as a core activity in museums. However, it is one of the formal requirements museums must fulfil according to international standards. It is also the most ambiguous and challenging to undertake. Many museums report being unable to conduct research due to lack of manpower, time and funding, while others see research as inherent in everything they do. These two extremes create a climate of confusion around research activity, which, in turn, leads to ambivalence or uncertainty as to what counts as research in the museum workplace.

This doctoral dissertation speaks to this ambivalence by exploring how knowledge is produced, contested and disseminated in museums, with the aim of bringing clarity to the discourse. The dissertation is based on four journal articles that engage with the problem of museum-based research from different angles. Central to the study is the concept of 'research' as it migrates between the two domains of academia and museums. The study draws on literature from the fields of museology, curatorial studies, artistic research and, to some extent, anthropology, as it seeks to illustrate a multifaceted picture of research in the museum context. It unfolds through the lens of four distinct but overlapping perspectives: the museological, the institutional, the curatorial and the epistemological. Each perspective reflects a particular set of research questions, source materials and methodologies, including two case studies conducted in Iceland. The museological perspective explores how the discipline of museology engages with the topic of museum-based research at a theoretical level. The institutional perspective examines research from within museums, including the administrative and legal structures that frame research as a professional museum activity. The curatorial perspective encompasses research from the author's first-hand experience with creating an exhibition and the curatorial process leading up to it. Lastly, the epistemological perspective illustrates a plurality of research models accommodated by museums, regardless of their specialisation. This perspective also addresses the epistemological characteristics of museum-based research with the aim of describing their contribution to the production and dissemination of knowledge, claiming that they are unique among other fields of research. When combined in a multi-layered research design, all four perspectives enable an investigation of museum-based research that shifts from up-close analysis to a bird's-eye view.

The dissertation demonstrates that despite the challenges ingrained in museum-based research, it remains a field of many opportunities. Based on the

extremely disparate forms of research housed in museums, the study advocates for an expanded and pluralistic understanding of research that not only goes beyond the conventional academic usage of the term but also encompasses research that expands beyond the collection.

Ágrip

Meðan söfnun, varðveisla, fræðsla og sýningar skapa algeng hugrenningatengsl við söfn, þá eru rannsóknir ekki endilega í þeim flokki. Samt sem áður eru rannsóknir ein af þeim formlegu kröfum sem eru gerðar til safna vilji þau starfa eftir alþjóðlegum viðmiðum um faglegt starf. Þær eru líka óljósasti starfsþátturinn og jafnframt sá sem flest söfn eiga í hvað mestum erfiðleikum með að uppfylla. Mörg söfn segjast ófær um að sinna þessum grunnþætti starfsins vegna skorts á starfsmönnum, tíma og fjármagni, meðan önnur líta á rannsóknir sem innbyggðan hluta af öllu því daglega starfi sem fer fram á söfnum. Þessi tvö andstæðu sjónarmið skapa andrúmsloft óvissu kringum rannsóknastarf safna, sem aftur á móti leiðir til óræðni um hvað telst til rannsókna og hvað ekki.

Þessi dokstorsritgerð varpar ljósi á þessa óræðni með því að kanna hvernig þekking er sköpuð og henni miðlað á söfnum, í því markmiði að skýra orðræðuna um safnarannsóknir. Ritgerðin er byggð á fjórum tímaritsgreinum sem allar takast á við vandamálið sem fylgir rannsóknahlutverki safna út frá ólíkum sjónarhornum. Miðlægt í gegnum verkefnið er hugtakið „rannsókn“ eins og það birtist á háskólasviðinu annarsvegar og hinsvegar á safnasviðinu, og því lýst hvernig það ferðast á milli þessara tveggja sviða. Því má segja að verkefnið sé rannsóknapólitískt í grunninn, en markmið þess er að víkka út hugmyndina um rannsóknir sem stundaðar eru á söfnum. Kenningaramminn er sóttur úr safnafræði, sýningarstjórnunarfræðum, listrannsóknum og að einhverju leyti úr mannfræði, en verkefnið miðar að því að draga upp mynd af safnarannsóknum sem sýnir fram á margbreytileika þeirra, hvort sem lýtur að aðferðafræði og miðlunarformum. Þessi mynd er mótuð gegnum fjögur ólík en samhangandi sjónarhorn: hinu safnafræðilega, hinu stofnanalega, hinu sýningarstjórnunarlega og hinu þekkingarfræðilega. Hvert sjónarhorn tekst á við tilteknar rannsóknarspurningar og notast við fjölbreyttar heimildir, gögn og aðferðafræðilega nálgun, þar á meðal tvær tilviksrannsóknir sem unnar voru á Íslandi. Hið safnafræðilega sjónarhorn miðar að því að skoða hvernig safnafræðin sjálf fjallar um rannsóknahlutverk safna og hvernig rannsóknaþátturinn er settur í fræðilegt samhengi. Stofnanalega sjónarhornið nálgast safnarannsóknir út frá sjónarhóli safnanna sjálfra, sér í lagi íslenskra safna, auk þess að gaumgæfa stjórnsýsluna og þá lagaramma sem móta rannsóknavirkni sem faglegan starfsþátt safna. Sýningarstjórnunarlega sjónarhornið fjallar um rannsóknir út frá reynslu höfundar, þar sem sýningin „Í bili“ og það ferli sem leiddi að henni eru tekin til greiningar. Loks beinir þekkingarfræðilega sjónarhornið athyglinni að þeim mikla margbreytileika sem felst í rannsóknarstarfi safna, sama hvort þau eru náttúruminjasöfn, listasöfn, menningarminjasöfn, eða hvaða öðru tagi sem er. Þá eru þekkingarfræðileg einkenni safnarannsókna reifuð í því markmiðið að skýra framlag þeirra til þekkingarsköpunar, og því haldið fram að þessi einkenni séu

einstök meðal annarra fræðasviða. Þegar þessi fjögur sjónarhorn eru lögð hvert ofan á annað verður til mynd af safnarannsóknum sem sveiflast milli þess að byggja á víðtækum yfirlitsmyndum yfir í nærmyndir, sem svo fléttast saman í eina heild í ritgerðinni.

Verkefnið sýnir fram á að þrátt fyrir allar þær áskoranir sem felast í rannsóknahlutverki safna, þá eru safnarannsóknir svið fjölmargra tækifæra. Með því að horfa á þær ólíku tegundir rannsókna sem stundaðar eru á söfnum eru færð rök fyrir nauðsyn þess að víkka út viðteknar hugmyndir um hvað felst í rannsóknum og skapa pláss fyrir aðrar tegundir rannsókna en eingöngu hið hefbundna akademíska, eða vísindalega, rannsóknaform.

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First, let me thank my supervisor, Professor Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson, who has, in some magical way, managed to walk the thin line between firm guidance and letting go. His input, support and trust have been invaluable from the beginning to the end. I also thank Dr Peter Bjerregaard and Dr Þóra Pétursdóttir for their sharp and helpful input as members of the doctoral committee. The insights and encouragement from all three of them has pushed this work forward to the current shape.

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Thanks to the Museum Council of Iceland, who commissioned the first survey in 2014 and gave me access to data and information on research activity among Icelandic museums. And many thanks to all the forty-six museums who participated in the two surveys.

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1 Introduction

Since the early Renaissance, museums and their collections have been a defining component in the way Western communities assemble, organise and represent knowledge on humankind and the environment (Hooper-Greenhill 1992). They are also deeply entangled in the complex history of European imperialism and colonialism as the activity of collecting non-western objects laid the foundations for public museums as we know them today. Furthermore, this period gave birth to science and research as they are practiced within most contemporary Western knowledge systems, including museums. Museums store, safeguard and manage material and digital objects in one form or another, not unlike other epistemic institutions like universities, archives and libraries. Moreover, they add value to those objects by describing, analysing, contextualising, and mediating them for the public. This value-generating activity is what constitutes museums as *research* institutions, beyond their status as *educational* institutions, and is one of the defining factors that gives them their authority and agency. However, research as a professional museum activity remains a major challenge, as this dissertation will illustrate.

The international museum community frames research as a basic requirement among museums, parallel to the other core activities of collecting, documenting, preserving, educating and displaying (ICOM 2017). Among those, research is the hardest requirement to fulfil and the least prioritised (Anderson 2005; Graham 2005). Moreover, it is perceived as disorienting by staff, who are not sure if what they do in the workplace is research or something else (Pringle 2020; Sigfúsdóttir 2021b and 2021c). The problem with museum-based research is explained with reference to various practical issues, such as lack of time and funding, shortage of qualified staff, or vague research agendas. Most commonly, low research activity is associated with the consequences of neoliberalism, where short-term exhibitions and other public programming aimed at attracting as many guests as possible leaves less room for slow and time-consuming activity like research (Appleton 2007; Graham 2005). However, as I argue in this dissertation, the problem with research has perhaps less to do with the neoliberal "shift from objects to people" (Weil 1999) than the current conceptual confusion around the term 'research' within the museum domain.

This doctoral project seeks to articulate the role of research in museums. It takes an approach to museums that puts their formal and official roles in the forefront as they have been defined by the global community of museums (ICOM), rather than on the manifold and heterogeneous manner in which they

operate in praxis. By adopting the ICOM definition[1] of museums as public, not-for-profit and permanent institutions that research, collect, conserve, interpret and exhibit, the study leaves out other non-collecting entities, such as galleries, non-institutional exhibition spaces, exploratoriums, science centres, community centres, or other informal spaces involved in knowledge production within the realm of cultural or natural heritage.

It explores how knowledge is produced, contested and disseminated within the museum setting. It examines attitudes towards museum-based research as they emerge through contemporary museological literature, together with two case studies undertaken in the Icelandic context. In particular, it explores the concept of 'research' within the museum domain and seeks to open up a discourse on the complexities of what it means to conduct research in museums. It argues that museums are unique research institutions compared to universities, which are typically understood as key research institutions in today's society.

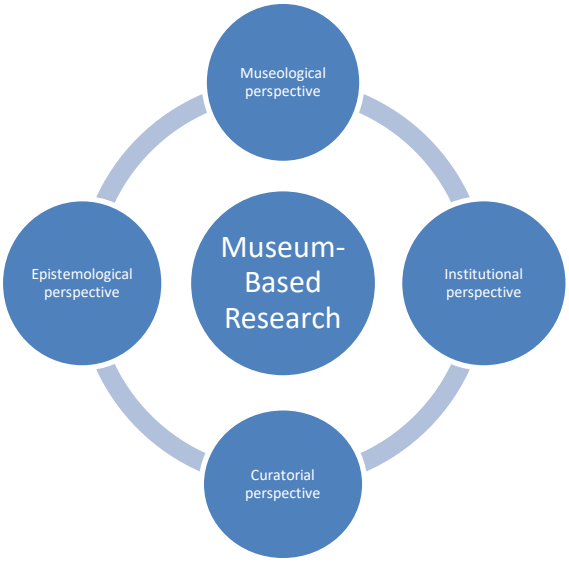

Figure 1 *Project Structure*

Through a multi-perspectival approach, the project explores *how* knowledge is generated in museums, by *whom* and what *form* it takes. Through literature analysis as well as two in-depth case studies, it articulates the many types of

[1] A new definition of museums was approved at the 26th ICOM General Conference in Prague, in August 2022: "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."

research coexisting in museums. Furthermore, it advocates for a pluralistic approach rather than a limiting view of research as only 'academic'. The project is based on a study of four separate but overlapping perspectives: the museological, the institutional, the curatorial, and the epistemological. Each perspective is designed to address different research questions in relation to my broad approach to the subject of museum-based research. Such a wide approach allows the project to shift between viewpoints from the general to the specific, generating a broad understanding of the subject.

Study findings indicate that the idea of research is extremely chaotic within the museum domain, characterised by ambiguous and contradictory conceptions of what it means to undertake research in museums. It argues that museum-based research needs more attention from both the field of theory (museology) as well as practice (museums, funding bodies, policymakers). This argument is developed by highlighting the distinct epistemological characteristics of museum-based research, grounded on material, sensuous and spatio-temporal forms of knowledge. At the same time, the study avoids squeezing museum-based research into a single format or exclusive definition.

1.1 Background and Motivation

When searching for an initial gateway into the project, I found myself drawn to the early history of museums, in particular the Renaissance *curiosity cabinet.* I set out to learn about (and visit, when possible) museums that embodied the very history of museological arrangement of knowledge. I was curious to know how the sensory experiences of looking at, touching, smelling and arranging objects in space once played a fundamental role in making sense of the world. Visits to Peter the Great's Kunstkamera in Saint Petersburg, the Museum of Natural History and the Museum of Art History in Vienna, Museo Galileo in Florence, and the Natural History Museum of Venice provided me with an affirming inspiration to continue down the road of this doctoral inquiry.

When working at the Iceland University of the Arts (first as director of research services and later as director of quality enhancement), I was exposed to intriguing developments within the field of university education, particularly the establishment of artistic research as a new research model within higher art education in Europe. These developments had a strong resonance with the Renaissance mode of knowledge production, where sensory methodologies as well as material and embodied forms of dissemination played a fundamental part. The introduction of artistic practice as a form of research has generated heated debate that, in turn, has caused longstanding and conventional ideas about 'knowledge', 'research' and 'science' to be critically re-examined (Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2013; Nowotny 2012; Rogoff 2017). This

development within the higher art education sector has created a space for spectrums of knowledges other than academic, which I see as exemplary of museum-based research.

This background forms an important context for the subject of this doctoral research. What prompted me to start the research journey was the striking invisibility of research in the museum sector, particularly within my own local context, but also, to a large extent, internationally. Having gone through the research process of this PhD, I have become convinced that the museum domain could benefit from the model of artistic research. In many ways, this project is an attempt to transfer some of the learnings from higher arts education to the museum domain, as both domains foster and accommodate alternative forms of research in their knowledge-making processes. Although museums operate in a radically different way than art academies, I believe they could enhance their profiles as research institutions by learning from the model of artistic research, not least in the way the latter has made an effort to develop a language to describe its uniqueness among other fields of research. As this research project has evolved, I have realised what an important tool concepts are. To let the concepts 'do the work' of developing a consensus around terms that are ambiguous and obscure to many. Or, as van der Tuin and Verhoeff (2022) have pointed out, concepts propose a perspective; they provide meaning, establish connections and generate reflection.

Since I embarked on this research journey, the study trajectory has been sporadic and irregular, sometimes linear, sometimes discontinuous, yet always intriguing and inquisitive. Undertaking this project has enabled some personal transformations, as it has revealed how my own way of doing research is conditioned by the very context I am embedded in as a doctoral candidate at a conventional university. As the process evolved, the importance of practice and experimental methodologies became increasingly important for my understanding of 'research' as an extremely complex and multi-layered concept. Additionally, my undergraduate and post-graduate learnings within the field of anthropology have equipped me with openings towards the very act of conducting research, including a self-reflective approach while maintaining as wide a view as possible. Lastly, having one foot in academia and the other in museums has allowed me to oscillate between theory and practice, where the activities of reading, writing, doing and reflecting have equally informed and enriched the research process from the beginning to the very end.

1.2 Aims and Research Questions

Despite my personal obsession with the eighteenth-century knowledge system, my aim is not to revive museums as Enlightenment institutions. Rather, my aim

is to explore the many challenges bound up with museum-based research, whether at the museological, institutional, curatorial or epistemological level, and to provide suggestions on how they can be dealt with. Among the research questions are (presented in further detail in Chapter 2.1):

- How does museology articulate the role of research in museums?
- What is the state of research among Icelandic museums?
- How can curating illuminate museums as research institutions?
- What types of research do museums accommodate, and how can their epistemological characteristics be described?

Throughout this dissertation, I advocate for a pluralistic approach towards museum-based research, inclusive of all the disparate types of research accommodated by museums. In particular, I address the need for museums to look beyond the conventional idea of research based on academic methodologies and discursive forms of output. Instead, I point to the need to carve out a space for museum-based research and its unique epistemological contributions within both domains of museums and academia. By doing so, I believe museums can escape the current tension between research activity and public programming, a recurrent dichotomy reflected throughout contemporary museological discourse (Appleton 2007; Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018; Weil 1999). Following the suggestion by Emily Pringle (2020), Head of Research at Tate, I believe that integrating research into daily museum practices rather than setting it apart from other activities will enhance research in museums. At the same time, I am aware that not everything is research. This project deals, in large part, with this dilemma.

1.3 Contribution

This dissertation is a contribution to the field of museology, particularly the study of museums as epistemic institutions. Its findings add to the discourse on research in museums, both in theory and as practice. By illustrating the many challenges museums face when confronted with research, the project confirms the outspoken need among museum practitioners to prioritise research activity in a landscape that does not readily accommodate it. In particular, the project adds new knowledge and understanding to the local museum sector in Iceland through an in-depth case study reflecting the state of research within the sector.

The research process has generated four journal articles forming the core of this doctoral project. Each article reflects one perspective of the project, brought together in the form of this dissertation. All four articles have gone through extensive peer review and are now published in internationally acknowledged journals (see summary of each article and the articles themselves in full length in Chapter 4).

Table 1 *List of Articles Produced through the Research Process*

Article I	2020	"Blind Spots: Museology on Museum Research." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 35 (2): 196–209.
Article II	2021	"The State of Research among Icelandic Museums." *Nordisk Museologi* 2–3: 81–95.
Article III	2021	"Curatorial Research as Boundary Work." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 64 (3): 421–438.
Article IV	2022	"Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration." *Museum Management and Curatorship* (published online 22 March).

1.4 Structure of This Dissertation

This dissertation is written in the form of a binder. It ties together in one coherent piece the four articles that form the bulk of this doctoral project and provides them with theoretical and methodological contexts. The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the research topic, provides relevant background to the project and describes my aims and personal motivations in undertaking this doctoral research. The second chapter describes the sources and types of data that have been used to address the research questions, how they have been collected and what methods have been applied in their analysis. This chapter also presents an overview of the research design, along with the four perspectives underpinning it. The project's strengths and limitations are also discussed in this context. The third chapter provides a theoretical context for the project by presenting definitions and discussions of the anchoring terminology and how it has been used in this project. The fourth chapter presents a summary of each of the four accompanying articles as well as the articles themselves in their entirety. The fifth and concluding chapter discusses the main findings of the study and reflects on possibilities for further research. Lastly, the three appendices provide supporting material in relation to the two case studies: i) a list of survey questions, ii) a list of accredited museums involved in the survey, and iii) the *In Between* exhibition catalogue.

2 Research Design, Material and Methodology

This chapter outlines the material and methods I have used to engage with the topic of this doctoral research. It describes the types of empirical data generated through the research process as well as the numerous secondary sources informing the study. Additionally, it presents the mixed methods deployed in addressing the different perspectives of the study, together with the rationale for my methodological choices. First of all, the chapter starts by illuminating the project's overarching research design.

2.1 The Research Design

When understanding research as "a *process*, not just a product" (England 1994, 82), then designing the process becomes one of the fundamental elements in the shaping of any research. Consequently, choosing an appropriate design becomes essential to the process ahead, particularly the correlation between research questions, choice of methodology, and findings (Bordens and Abbott 2005). As this doctoral research engages with the broad (and, sometimes, vague) subject of museum-based research, it encompasses a wide scope so as to include multiple angles and viewpoints. To this end, the project has been formulated through the lens of four separate but overlapping perspectives: the museological, the institutional, the curatorial and the epistemological. Each perspective consists of a particular set of research questions, data, method of analysis, and output. Table 1 (next page) illustrates the research design, including the raw material or the building blocks of each perspective. A detailed description of each perspective follows consecutively.

Table 2 *The Research Design*

	Museological perspective	**Institutional perspective** *Case Study*	**Curatorial perspective** *Case Study*	**Epistemological perspective**
Research Questions	How does museology articulate the role of research in museums?	What is the state of research among Icelandic museums? How do local museum practitioners understand the concept of research?	How can curating illuminate museums as research institutions? What kind of knowledge does curatorial research generate?	What types of research do museums accommodate? How can their epistemological traits be described?
Empirical Data		Survey data 2014. Survey data 2020. Interviews.	*In Between* exhibition. Documentation from the curatorial process.	
Secondary Sources	Literature from the fields of museology and artistic research.	Literature from the field of museology, Nordic emphasis. Legal documents. Policy documents. Website content. Public and non-public data from the Museum Council of Iceland.	Literature from the fields of museology, curatorial studies and artistic research.	Literature from the fields of museology, artistic research, curatorial studies and anthropology.
Methodology	Literature analysis.	Literature analysis. Quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis.	Literature analysis. Curation.	Literature analysis.
Output	**Article I** Conference presentation at the Inclusive Museum, Buenos Aires, 7–9 Nov. 2019. Conference presentation at Louisiana, Between the Discursive and the Immersive, 3–4 Dec. 2015.	**Article II** Two research reports (Icelandic). Conference organisation and presentation with the Museum Council of Iceland, 6 Nov. 2014.	**Article III** Exhibition 26 Aug.–23 Oct. 2011. Exhibition catalogue. Conference organisation and presentation with Hafnarborg Museum and Iceland University of the Arts, 15 Oct. 2011.	**Article IV** Conference presentation at Breaking Boundaries: Museum Education as Research, National Museum, Oslo, 25–26 Nov. 2021. Conference presentation at Research and the Museum Ecosystem, Tate Modern and the British Art Network, Oct. 2020.

2.1.1 The Four Research Perspectives

As the table above indicates, the museological and epistemological perspectives of the research are constituted by a bird's-eye view, based on an analysis of contemporary literature within the fields of museology, artistic research, curatorial studies and anthropology. The other two perspectives shift the focus to a closer examination, based on original data collected through case studies accommodated by institutional and curatorial perspectives. Together, the four perspectives form an approach to the study of museum-based research that is multivocal and heterogenous. The act of zig-zagging through the research trajectory between wide and narrow angles has enabled a broad understanding of the subject that museums should be able to identify with, regardless of their specialisation or geographical location.

The museological perspective explores how museology addresses the topic of museum-based research[2]. It involves an analysis of how museology theorises this component of professional museum activity, seeking to understand the relationship between museums and *knowledge* on the one hand, and museums and *research* on the other. As part of this perspective, I propose artistic research as a model for museums to learn from when it comes to carving out a space for alternative modes of inquiry in the borderland between science and culture.[3]

The institutional perspective explores research through a closer lens from within museums, namely, from the viewpoint of practitioners themselves. The aim is to understand the institutional context of research and to gain a better picture of managerial, organisational and legal frameworks around this activity, particularly within the Icelandic context. This perspective is based on a case study consisting of a two-point longitudinal survey among Icelandic museums, conducted first in 2014 and again in 2020.

The curatorial perspective studies the research process from an even tighter angle: the personal. It is based on my own experience as a curator in the project's second case study. It describes curating within an art museum setting as an open-ended, experimental and collaborative research process, and contextualises it within forms of curatorial research emerging from the literature. By systematically exploring the idea of curating as research as it appears in the

[2] Here, I understand the term 'museology' as the academic discipline that studies museums from a theoretical and external point of view. This approach is to be distinguished from another common understanding of the term 'museology' as professional museum work conducted by museum staff.
[3] The term 'science' in this context includes the social sciences and the humanities in addition to the natural sciences, which are typically understood as synonymous to 'science'. The term 'culture' in this context refers to public platforms and institutions that host cultural events, such as museums, galleries, concert halls, theatres, opera houses, etc., and beyond to the broader anthropological understanding of culture as collective patterns of learned and shared human behaviour and beliefs.

literature as well the case study findings, this perspective creates a mapping of three distinct curatorial research models. Furthermore, it applies the concept of 'boundary object' to the idea of the exhibition as a vehicle for knowledge production, using artistic research again as a paradigm.

The epistemological perspective allows again for a wide approach, similar to the museological perspective. Here, the aim is to explore the plurality of research forms accommodated by museums, regardless of their specialisation. It proposes a five-fold typology of museum-based research as an attempt to create some clarity within what I perceive as a very chaotic field. To this end, this perspective focusses on the epistemological characteristics of the various museum-based research forms detected in the study, beyond the conventional understanding of research as academic.

2.2 Material and Method of Analysis

This research project sits at multiple intersections. In part, it is situated within the social sciences, in part within the humanities. It is housed in part within the academic domain, in part the museum domain. The research design involves a gathering of empirical data consisting of surveys, interviews and an exhibition. While this data plays an important part in the research, the secondary sources used in the project are also significant, such as published literature, official documents, administrative data, web content and other informal material. This plurality of material calls for a mixed methods approach, which I have conducted throughout the four study perspectives. A mixed methods approach is based on the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods when studying a particular subject, typically within a social science research context (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Tashakkori and Teddlie 2010). For this research, the mixed methods approach extends into practice-based research, particularly curation. The first case study generated both quantitative and qualitative data, and the second case study created purely qualitative data. The following subsections explain how the data has been collected and analysed, starting with the secondary sources, followed by a discussion on surveys, interviews and curation as the methodologies used in the project.

2.2.1 Literature and Other Secondary Sources

The literature review was based on two approaches: a scoping review and a systematic review. The scoping review generated a general understanding of my research topic through an exploration of the literature within a wide frame (Heyvaert, Hannes, and Onghena 2017). After conducting this broad scoping review, a systematic review – which generally starts with a clearly defined question – was deployed as part of all four perspectives. My question in this case

was broad*:* How does the concept of 'research' emerge through museological literature? Another subset of questions was: What is the place of 'research' within museological theory? What is the place of 'research' within museum practice? And how does the literature reflect different forms of research within the museum space?

While reading through the bulk of literature published over the last three decades or so, I highlighted texts that had the word 'research' in their title, abstract or headlines, and from there, a picture emerged of the scope of the discourse on museum-based research within the literature. When diving deeper into each text, I conducted an analytical reading to draw out themes and trends in the literature (this is particularly evident in Article I: "Blind Spots: Museology on Museum Research," Article III: "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work," and "Article IV: Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration").

A systematic review of literature is a specific method developed for identifying and synthesising research evidence from published sources (Victor 2008). Various fields of literature were used to contextualise the perspectives, typically in overlapping fashion. In the museological and epistemological perspectives, the review was limited to literature emerging at the dawn of the so-called New Museology (a term coined by Vergo 1989 and consolidated by scholars such as Bennett 1995, Hooper-Greenhill 1992, Karp and Lavine 1991, and Macdonald and Fyfe 1996) (see Article I, "Blind Spots: Museology on Museum Research" and Article IV, "Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration"). When studying the institutional perspective (Article II, "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"), the focus was directed at Nordic literature to contextualise the state of research among Icelandic museums, as the local museum sector is heavily influenced by its Nordic neighbours (Fjell et al. 2020; Grinell and Högberg 2020; Huseby and Treimo 2018; Johansen 2000; Petterson 2009; Sørensen 2008). Lastly, when exploring the discourse on artistic research, literature emerging in the early 1990s onwards was reviewed (Biggs and Karlsson 2010; Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2013; Kaila, Seppä, and Slager 2017; Michelkevičius 2019), in addition to scholarship from the newly established field of curatorial studies (Bjerregaard 2020; Hansen, Henningsen, and Gregersen 2019; Martinon 2013; O'Neill 2012; O'Neill and Wilson 2015 and 2010; O'Neill, Steeds, and Wilson 2017; Rito and Balaskas 2020). This work fed mainly into the curatorial perspective (see Article III, "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work"), although it informed all four perspectives of the research as a whole. The next chapter discusses the theoretical framework in more depth.

Performing such a review allowed for an understanding of the field and an identification of key concepts and terms (Soaita, Serin, and Preece 2019). The analysis and interpretation of existing sources on the topic of museum-based

research enabled a synthesis of those sources, identifying trends and attitudes as an indication of the state-of-the-art on the subject. Deploying this method allowed for an identification of gaps in the current museological discourse on museum-based research and facilitated a development of research questions as the project evolved. This activity created a firm foundation for the research and pointed towards spaces for further theoretical development in the field. It also led to a habit of creating overviews of the discourse by identifying emerging trends and conducting mapping exercises of the various research models existing within the museum domain.

Other secondary sources used include material in the public domain, such as public policy papers, legal documents, annual reports and web content. Various non-official data was also used, particularly to illuminate the institutional perspective within the Icelandic museum domain. No official statistical data on museum-based research activity exists in Iceland at the time of writing of this dissertation. As explained in Article II ("The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"), the Museum Council of Iceland reports annually on general museum activity by all accredited museums, with emphasis on operational and financial management, housing, facilities, safety, documentation and public programming, while information on research activity is not addressed in its annual reports.[4]

2.2.2 Surveys

Most of the empirical data in this research was generated by a survey. The survey was conducted twice among accredited museums in Iceland: the first one in 2014 (commissioned by the Museum Council of Iceland) and the second in 2020 (conducted independently by me).[5] The survey was designed to capture the institutional perspective of museum-based research within the local context, providing findings comparable between years (Article II, "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"). In general, surveys are used to gather relatively large samples of data from a predefined population, typically through a standardised questionnaire, creating a "snapshot" of a particular situation at a particular time (Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia 2003). Therefore, as Bordens and Abbott (2005) have pointed out, surveys are an excellent tool for detecting

[4] Annual reports issued by the Museum Council and made public on its homepage were analysed at the time of writing Article II ("The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"). The most recent report was dated 2019 at the time of the research process. Since then, however, the Council has introduced a new grant scheme called Grants of Excellence through which museums can apply specifically for research grants (amongst other things). For the time being, no official statistical data exists on that category.

[5] The Museum Council's aim with the commission was to create, for the first time, an overview of the state of research among accredited museums in Iceland. Findings were published in a detailed research report in Icelandic (Sigfúsdóttir 2014), followed by a symposium hosted by the Museum Council.

common attitudes towards an issue or a problem – in this case, for identifying attitudes among local museum practitioners towards the idea of research.

The data generated by the survey is both quantitative and qualitative, although the former makes up the majority. Quantitative data is generally used to quantify a subject by generating numerical or statistical information, often comparable over time (Creswell and Creswell 2018). In this case, it includes quantifiable information on the organisation, management and scope of research among Icelandic museums. On the other hand, the qualitative data reflects subjective information on individual attitudes towards the idea of research among museum practitioners.[6] In the absence of previous examples at the local level at the time of the first survey, the list of questions was developed with a view to similar studies in the international context, particularly the Nordic museum sector (Forskningsstrategi for Kulturministeriets område 2009; Heen and Salomon 2013).

In a total of 27 questions, the survey inquired about institutional research policies, time devoted to research, research funding, human resources devoted to research, research support, research collaboration (with other museums and other types of institutions such as universities), research subjects, relations between research and other core museum activities, and forms of dissemination.[7] Using the QuestionPro online questionnaire software, the survey was sent by email to museum directors, first at a total of 38 museums in 2014 and then a total of 46 museums in 2020 (eight additional museums had been awarded accreditation between those years).[8] The survey software allowed an extraction of answers to each question into visual charts or other illustrative forms depending on the question type, usually shown as a percentage in relation to each answer choice.[9] The visualisation of results was particularly helpful when comparing findings between years.

The response rate was 70% in both cases, creating a legitimate foundation for the results. An introductory letter accompanied the survey link, with an explanation of aims and assurance of anonymity. Twenty-five questions were presented as predefined multiple choice questions, generating standardised and

[6] The survey was addressed to the directors of accredited museums instead of all staff members within each organisation. It might well be that attitudes and ideas would vary even more than already indicated by the survey had it been sent to all staff members, particularly within those museums with more than ten FTE employees (however, those comprise only 10% of all accredited museums).

[7] See Appendix II for a full list of questions (in Icelandic).

[8] See Appendix III for a list of museums receiving the survey.

[9] A detailed dissemination of findings from both surveys are found in Sigfúsdóttir 2014 and Sigfúsdóttir 2021c (research reports in Icelandic). Article III ("Curatorial Research as Boundary Work") presents the main results from both surveys, including a theoretical discussion and a contextualisation with the Nordic discourse on museum-based research.

numerical data. At the end of the survey, two open-ended questions invited participants to reflect more subjectively on their understanding of research in their own words. When working with the open text fields, all written answers were exported into an Excel document, read over several times and colour coded. This allowed for repeated themes and commonalities to emerge through the text. Looking for similarities and identifying patterns in this way is typical of analysis of qualitative data (Esterberg 2002).

2.2.3 Interviews

Interviews allow for an in-depth understanding of the subject and provide further insights based on quantitative data (Denzin and Lincoln 2017). On the occasion of this research, a total of four in-depth and semi-structured interviews were conducted in relation to the institutional perspective of the research (Article II, "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"). Three of them were with the directors of the central museums (the National Museum of Iceland, the National Gallery of Iceland, and the Icelandic Museum of Natural History), and the fourth was with the managing director of the Museum Council of Iceland. All interviewees gave their verbal consent for participation in this research. Due to the Covid pandemic, three of the interviews were conducted and recorded online on Zoom in November and December 2020; the interview with the Managing Director of the Museum Council took place during a physical meeting in September 2020 and was audio recorded on a phone.

The recordings were listened to several times and analysed into thematic notes. This way, common themes were detected, particularly among the three central museum directors, while the one with the director of the Museum Council had different questions. The interviews with the central museum directors inquired about their role in providing leadership to accredited museums when it comes to the management and planning of research. They resulted in an in-depth understanding of the state of research within these particular museums. Questions were developed beforehand with the aim of inquiring about similar aspects as in the surveys for accredited museums, such as public policy on research, human resources and time allocation, funding, planning for research, collaboration, and forms of dissemination, as well as relations to other daily museum activities, such as documentation, preservation and curatorial practice. The interviews also explored more general aspects of research activity in these museums in particular, such as challenges to a thriving research culture as well as successful ways of enhancing research within these institutions. However, as explained in Article II ("The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"), the learnings from these three interviews were not directly applied to the case study on the state of research among Icelandic museums, as the three central museums are state owned and operate under different legislation than the accredited museums under scrutiny in

the survey (Museum Act no. 141/2011, art. 4). Each adhering to its own separate legal act, the central museums are exempt from the formal accreditation process and do not officially operate under the auspices of the Museum Council of Iceland.[10] Nevertheless, a discussion on the role of the central museums provides an important understanding of the Icelandic museum landscape, as described in the article.

The interview with the managing director of the Museum Council illuminated the institutional perspective of the state of research among accredited museums in Iceland from the standpoint of the public administration. Questions were shaped with the aim of understanding the agency of the Council as a public authority when it comes to research activity, particularly the role of research in the accreditation process, regular monitoring of research activity and annual reporting on research. In addition, it clarified processes of the accumulation of statistical data on research activity among accredited museums. A detailed description of the museum landscape in Iceland is presented in the article.

2.2.4 Curating

The idea of curating as research indicates the role of non-discursive elements, such as objects, space and the body, in the knowledge-generating process. The museum is seen as a site for research and the exhibition as an embodiment of theory, together forming a complex "locus of theory" (Message and Witcomb 2015, p. xxxvi). To illuminate the curatorial perspective of the doctoral project, a case study was conducted at Hafnarborg – the Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art in 2011 (see Article III, "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work"). The aim was twofold: first, to use Hafnarborg as a platform to study the ways in which knowledge is generated, disseminated and contested within a public art museum; and second, to conduct that study in a practice-based manner by using curation as a methodology. The process culminated in the exhibition *In Between*, which I curated, along with a series of related events. As this doctorate is in the field of museology rather than curatorial practice, the contribution of this part of the project lies in the post-rationalisation and critical analysis of the exhibition, rather than the exhibition itself in its physical form. However, the exhibition, along with the curatorial process leading up to it as well as the public programme accompanying it, is an important part of the empirical data collected for this

[10] The National Museum, established in 1863, operates under the Act on the National Museum no. 140/2011 and the Act on Cultural Heritage no. 80/2012. The National Gallery, established in 1884, operates under the Act on the National Gallery no. 58/1988 and the Act on Visual Art no. 64/2012. The Museum of Natural History, established in 2007 and based on the Icelandic Association of Natural History established in 1889, operates under the Act on the Museum of Natural History no. 35/2007.

research.[11] It allows for a closer look at research as practice within the museum setting – in this case, from a first-hand experience – and shifts the focus from overviews and mapping exercises from the standpoints of the museological and institutional perspectives of the project.

In the context of this perspective of the doctoral project, the term 'curator' is used for someone who conceives, develops, manages and executes a thematic exhibition rather than someone who cares for the collection in the traditional sense of the word (Boylan 2011; Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018; Thomas 2016). *In Between* was an experimental, open-ended and collaborative research process. The research process was documented through multiple media including photography, audio and video recordings, sketches, notes, drawings and diary entries, in addition to written reflections by the artists and myself, together with informal interviews and dialogues with the museum director and staff. The methodology was left open and experimental (MacDonald and Basu 2007), and the process was designed to create conditions within the museum setting where knowledge was emergent rather than found, driven by the instigation of further questions rather than providing definitive answers. This emergent nature of the project was integral to the methodology: knowledge production is about testing and pushing boundaries, which also means testing personal and institutional potential. As a role model for this type of research (which I had not previously engaged with), I looked towards the example of artistic research, particularly in terms of how the research process unfolds in a constant flow of doing and reflecting, and insofar as findings are disseminated simultaneously within a cultural setting (museum) and academic setting (peer-reviewed article). Ten years later, I learned that artistic research is often considered the "first cousin" of curatorial research (Sheikh 2015, p. 35), an affinity I readily subscribe to.

In Between was an unusual exhibition in terms of the artists' collective engagement and contribution to the project beyond their own individual artworks. Throughout the duration of the project, the group met regularly with invited scholars and museum staff in multiple onsite visits, workshops and seminars. As the project's curator and primary researcher, my role was to lay the foundation for the curatorial research process and to establish the theoretical context, develop themes and topics for exploration, select the participating artists and invite relevant experts to workshops and seminars I organised as part of the exhibition. This integrated method of regular input from the artists to the curatorial vision created unexpected turns as we progressed towards final decisions about how the exhibition would be produced, installed and managed within the museum space (see further description in Article III, "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work"). In line with Herle's (2013) understanding of curating as a research methodology,

[11] See Appendix I for the exhibition catalogue.

a range of exhibitionary technologies were used to convey understanding, reflections and knowledge coming out of the curatorial process. These can also be understood as 'exhibition rhetorics', where the particular way of installing the artwork in the gallery space, the lighting, the colours of the walls, the labels (or the lack of them) and the overall curatorial premise formed a fundamental part of the study (Ferguson 1996). In this particular case, the museum architecture became a fundamental element in the dissemination process. The main gallery was left empty while the artworks were installed in the museum's back rooms and interior spaces, places usually not accessible to the public. Emptying the gallery space was an affective means of creating a conceptual disruption, an exhibitionary strategy that unfolded within the arranged gap, functioning as a rupture between the exhibition as a temporary event and the museum as a permanent institution (see images and further discussion in the article).

2.3 Positionality

Positionality refers to the stance of the researcher in relation to the socio-political context of the study, such as the surrounding community, organisation or group in question (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller 2014). Furthermore, the adopted position of the person conducting the research affects every step of the study process, from the initial phase of developing questions and the research design to the execution of the research, as well as the ways in which the researcher constructs their knowledge and presents it to the public. As a researcher in the field of museum studies, I am closely involved in the Icelandic museum scene. At the same time, I am an outsider to the professional domain of museums, as I have never been employed at one (apart from contracted and temporary project-based work). As an avid participant in the local museum discourse, this is both an advantage and disadvantage. Being an outsider to the professional realm makes me perhaps less biased than other professionals who are affiliated with a particular institution or particular specialisation at work (Marstine 2011). This also creates a balanced distance between myself as a researcher and the museums I am researching in the local context, and it is particularly relevant for the two case studies in this project. As I am aware that academic texts, such as the journal articles accompanying this work and the present dissertation, usually do not reach a wide audience outside academia, I have made an effort to channel my work into the local museum scene by other means, such as publishing detailed research reports in the Icelandic language, participating actively in public discourse within the local scene, and giving regular public reviews on exhibitions and museum programmes on RÚV, the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service. On the other hand, being a researcher with no employment history within museums or particular institutional ties within the field has its disadvantages as well. Obviously, my knowledge of the field is predicated primarily on a theoretical and

abstract approach, and less so on professional employment experience. At the same time, my academic voice provides me with trust and accountability within the local professional domain.

From another perspective, my close involvement within the research data has some implications for my position as a researcher. This applies particularly to my engagement with the curatorial perspective, where I was both the producer and the analyst of the research data. The artists involved in the exhibition did not have a say in my post-reflection and contextualisation, which took place almost ten years later (Article III, "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work"). Despite its collaborative nature, my role in the research process weighed more in terms of decision-making, choosing which scholars to invite into our working process and in designing the overall frame for the exhibition. Clearly, this creates an imbalance between the participating artists and myself in terms of decision-making, contextualisation and the theoretical framework of the curatorial perspective of this doctoral research. Simultaneously, my concern was not to hide behind a cloak of objectivity but to invite the participants to join me in my learning process of becoming a researcher–curator. This way, my positionality was clear and reflexive from the beginning, creating transparency, open dialogue and trust with the participants (Etherington 2007). The artists' input, feedback and reactions were extremely valuable and had a fundamental impact on the final arrangement of the artwork within the exhibition, as well as the instalment of the exhibition itself within the museum space.

2.4 Strengths and Limitations

The strength of this doctoral research lies in its ample and cross-disciplinary approach, both in terms of its theoretical framework as well as its methodology. The project creates broad overviews by casting its net wide on the subject of museum-based research, while also generating in-depth insights into the problem through concrete case studies. Furthermore, the project fills a gap in museological discourse that has, until recently, neglected research as a fundamental component of professional museum practice. Without setting out to solve the problem of museum-based research, the project seeks to identify challenges and opportunities in relation to such research, as a foundation for further development and advancement of this activity.

At the local level, the project's main contribution lies in the findings of the two case studies. In particular, the first case has generated important empirical data and enabled new knowledge through a survey on research activity among Icelandic museums. The findings can be seen as a baseline on which further public policy and institutional agendas can be built (see Article II, "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"). Beyond the local context, the project has

relevance for the international museum domain, as the problem with research is acknowledged across national borders and museum types. In this way, the project speaks to numerous stakeholders at once: museum practitioners, museum scholars, museum leaders and policymakers. Hopefully, museum practitioners will be encouraged by the many examples of research models highlighted in the project and might begin to understand that much of what they do counts as research, although their institutions might not frame it as such. Similarly, policymakers and public administrators might invest in the development of constructive frameworks and guidelines for museum-based research activity as a way to better accommodate it among the many requirements museums have to fulfil on a daily basis.

The disadvantages of this project lie in its ambiguous use of the very concepts it seeks to define. In the same way that the project criticises the lack of clarity around the concept of 'research' within the museum context, so too is its meaning unclear in the context of this project. This goes particularly for the case study of Icelandic museums (Article II, "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"). As the concept of 'research' remains undefined and unregulated (and, to a large extent, undiscussed) at the local level, its meaning within the survey was also left undefined. It was made clear to the board of the Museum Council (the commissioning body of the first part of the survey) that not defining 'research' might present a methodological risk to the study. After some discussion, a mutual decision was made not to define it top-down, but rather to use the survey findings as a bedrock to create a consensus for a bottom-up meaning. However, six years later, when the survey was conducted again, no official guidelines or criteria had been developed, either by the Museum Council or the museum community itself. Since the conference in 2014 following the first survey, little effort has been made to create a public platform for a discussion on this topic. Furthermore, when approaching the Museum Council on the occasion of the second survey, the board was less enthusiastic about collaborating.[12] Both surveys were consequently performed with no formal consensus on the definition of 'research' for the participating museums. At the same time, had the second survey been presented alongside a formal definition of museum 'research', it

[12] Findings from the 2020 survey were published in a research report by the University of Iceland's Centre for Museum Studies (Sigfúsdóttir 2021c), while findings from 2014 were published by the Museum Council of Iceland (Sigfúsdóttir 2014). As of yet, no formal public discourse has ensued on findings from the second survey, which makes it hard for me to evaluate its impact in the local context. The Museum Council Board did not explain their lessened enthusiasm about developing a public platform for a discussion on research among museums, so I can only speculate that it had other, more pressing issues to work on at the time. Yet, the Council's new Museum Policy has a promising vision on enhancing research among accredited museums (Stefnumörkun um safnastarf 2021, p. 13), although it still awaits a formal action plan and follow-up procedures. See Article II ("The State of Research among Icelandic Museums") for further discussion on the new policy.

would only have skewed the comparability of findings between the two surveys. It would also most likely have constrained participants' answers to the more subjective questions inquiring about their attitudes towards research. And finally, such a top-down definition would also have been premature and perhaps even an arrogant gesture, as it would not have involved the views and experiences of local museum practitioners.

Before continuing on to the next chapter on theoretical framework, the unusually long duration of this doctoral project should be addressed. Whether it counts as a strength or a weakness, the eleven years it has taken for the project to unfold has undeniably had an effect on its development. First, it has allowed for a slow digestion of much of the material I consider to be one of the project's fundamental elements: practice-based research in the field of higher arts education. Much of the development in that field has taken place over the last decade, where the relationship between theory and practice in the knowledge-making process has been clarified, yet also debated and criticised. This has, no doubt, informed my thinking through this project and helped illuminate how practice-based research in the field of higher arts education can be expanded into the domain of museums. Secondly, the long digestion allowed for development and refinement of my own language in speaking about research in the context of museum practice. This is particularly evident in the way that the term 'museum-based research' only appears after the first article had been published (until then I used the term 'museum research'). Thirdly, the long duration of the research process led to some changes in the original research plan, creating an opportunity to reconsider and readjust as the project evolved. For example, it is unlikely that I would have been able to develop the proposed typology of museum-based research forms as presented in Article IV ("Museum-Based Research: A Topological Exploration") had it not been for the long duration of the project. Lastly, the growing interest and scholarly attention towards practice-based research within the field of museology and curatorial studies during the last decade has given the project an unforeseen and strengthened context, as much of the literature used to contextualise my own contribution had not yet been published at the time of the original research plan (see in particular Bäckström 2016; Bjerregaard 2019; O'Neill and Wilson 2015; Pringle 2020; Rito and Balaskas 2020).

3 Theoretical Framework

The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for the collection of articles that lie at the heart of this doctoral research. This framework is drawn from the fields of museology, curatorial studies and artistic research, as well as scholarly discourse on the politics of research and its development within higher education. The crossover between fields has proven necessary to explore the topic of this dissertation, particularly the ways in which terms like 'knowledge production', 'research' and 'science' acquire different meanings as they migrate between the two domains of higher education and museums.

The chapter is divided into four subsections. The first section discusses the concept of 'research' within the context of academia, with a focus on artistic research as one of the most recent research models to gain acknowledgement within the current science hierarchy. As evident in the accompanying articles, I propose artistic research as a key example for museums to learn from when it comes to enhancing research. The second section briefly presents the parallel histories between universities and museums with a view to their research roles. The third and main section of this chapter discusses the idea of research as it emerges within the context of museums, with a particular focus on curatorial and exhibition-making practices. The fourth and last section discusses the unique epistemological characteristics of museum-based research, a discourse I also consider central to the argument of this doctoral study.

3.1 The Idea of 'Research' in Academia

The concept of research is one that gains radically different meanings depending on the context in which it is applied. Apart from the dominant academic understanding of research, it is also widely used to refer to non-scientific activity, such as investigative journalism or police detective work, or to signal a personal exploration of a topic (Sheikh 2015). However, since the early twentieth century, universities have been considered key research institutions in contemporary Western culture (Boylan 1999; Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons 2001), to the extent that they have come to represent a kind of monopoly on knowledge production (Harris 2002); and yet, their research profiles have not always been that intense from a historical point of view.

The University of Bologna is considered the first university in Europe, founded in 1088. Throughout the medieval period, the main role of universities was to function as centres for learning and teaching rather than as sites for knowledge production, with close relations to the church (Nordin 2017). The emergence of the modern university is usually traced back to the German philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt and his foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810, when he introduced research as a vital academic function

alongside teaching (Rüegg 1996). Included in the establishment of the modern research university was the invention of academic disciplines. The notion of disciplinarity is one of the most influential organisational regulators for the operation of universities today: it drives the organisation of teaching into divisions, defines methodological boundaries and divides staff into departments. Furthermore, disciplinarity delineates the allocation of funding and defines criteria for research evaluation systems (Dunin-Woyseth 2010; Moran 2002).

Academic research is predominantly understood as the manifestation of science in its purest form, with universities as the primary hosts of such practice (Ziman 2000). What distinguishes scientific research from other modes of inquiry is the emphasis on the rigour through which knowledge is generated and shared. In this context, research refers to the act of gathering material with the aim of addressing a defined research question or a set of questions, the application of adequate methods, a systematic analysis of the material, and a form of dissemination of findings that is verifiable by others (Bryman 2008). Research typically takes place within a formalised framework and is grounded on rigorous regulations and control mechanisms for evaluation and accountability. The product of academic research is predominantly disseminated in the form of academic peer-reviewed articles and other bibliometric forms, although other types of output are increasingly being acknowledged, such as new technology, commercial products, software, services, patents or artwork, with increasing emphasis on societal impact (AHRC 2021; REF 2019; Good Practice in Researcher Evaluation 2020).

The OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is the organisational body that establishes global standards for research and development, referred to as R&D in the Frascati Manual (OECD 2015). The manual presents a globally recognised methodology for collecting and using R&D statistics, based on standardised criteria on how to measure scientific, technological and innovation activity. The definition of R&D presented in the manual has become a reference point for universities, laboratories, research institutes, industry and policymakers across the world:

> Research and experimental development (R&D) comprise creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge. (OECD 2015, p. 44)

Within this system, basic research has been prioritised over applied research or technological development, and the 'hard' sciences (natural sciences) have been favoured over the 'soft' sciences (social sciences, humanities) (Nowotny 2012). However, during the last twenty years, increasing attention has been given to modes of knowledge production that disrupt this hierarchy of science by highlighting the socio-cultural relevance of research. As a recent development

within the Western university domain, alternative forms of research – with an enhanced focus on societal relevance and impact outside the disciplinary boundaries of each field – are now beginning to gain acknowledgement (Nowotny 2012). Gibbons et al. (1994) have coined this 'Mode 2' knowledge production, as opposed to 'Mode 1', the traditional academic or scientific production of knowledge for knowledge's sake. Mode 2 knowledge production is always carried out in a context of application; it is often transdisciplinary and characterised by heterogeneity, social accountability and reflexivity (Gibbons et al. 1994, p. 3). In sum, Mode 2 allows for an alternative knowledge production that is socially distributed, application-oriented, transdisciplinary and subject to multiple accountabilities, contrary to the "old paradigm of scientific discovery ('Mode 1') – characterised by the hegemony of theoretical or, at any rate, experimental science; by an internally-driven taxonomy of discipline; and by the autonomy of scientists and their host institutions, the universities" (Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons 2003, 179). This type of research links science with society and innovation and is not necessarily conducted within academic settings.

3.1.1 Artistic Research

The section above demonstrates that 'research' has a specific meaning within the context of higher education. But not all research is scientific according to the definition above, and not all knowledge is gained through scientific activity, as it is framed in the conventional academic sense. There is also personal knowledge, public knowledge, discursive knowledge, tacit knowledge, embodied knowledge, sensuous knowledge, material knowledge, digital knowledge, animal knowledge, plant knowledge, thing knowledge, artificial knowledge. These alternative knowledges – some of which are generated through alternative methodologies based on embodiment and sensory modes of inquiry – are increasingly represented within the domain of science and academia, not least with new fields such as post-humanism, feminism, new materialism and artistic research (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012; Feyerabend 1975; Haraway 1988; Kälvemark 2010; Rogoff 2017). Furthermore, as the discussion on Mode 2 knowledge production above reflects, research can also take place in non-university settings. These settings can be private research institutes and laboratories, industry and business, government, or culture (Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons 2001, p. 88). As a mode of knowledge production that takes place both inside and outside academia, oscillating between the two domains of science and culture, artistic research is an excellent example of Mode 2 knowledge production.

Artistic research is a relatively new field that has been developing rapidly over the last thirty years, primarily within European higher art education. As an open alternative research model that resists definition, artistic research develops its

topics, methods and means of dissemination from within the artistic practice itself, often traversing borders into other disciplines and knowledge practices. However, if required to make a distinction between the knowledge coming out of an artistic research process and knowledge coming out of a scientific research process, I would follow those scholars in the field (Borgdorff 2012; Martinon 2013; Rito and Balaskas 2020) who emphasise the embodiment and the situatedness of that knowledge – be it a single work of art, a time-based performance, or an assemblage of objects arranged within a digital or physical space. This is to say that the epistemological contribution of such research is presented in a radically different form than that of conventional academic peer-reviewed text. Similarly, a core component of artistic research is the researcher's critical reflection on the research process, typically focussing on its affect as it oscillates between making and thinking, doing and writing (Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2013; Michelkevičius 2018). The formal definition of artistic research has been a topic of heated debate since its emergence in the 1990s, perhaps best described by its "continuous search for a convincing definition" (Hannula, Suoranta, and Vadén 2005, p. 19). Emphasising the role of artistic practice and creativity in the knowledge-making process, Frayling was the first to coin it as "research through art and design" (1993, p. 5). The output of such a research process is an artwork (physical, performative, audio, visual, digital, etc.) that uses artistic methods and techniques, resulting in an original contribution to new insights and knowledge within the artistic field (ELIA 2016). Typically, the artwork is accompanied by a critical reflection in the discursive form, where it is contextualised within a particular theoretical and methodological framework.[13] In this way, artistic research represents a research model where knowledge and understanding emerge through the creative process by negotiating theory and practice, the formal and the personal, the scientific and the aesthetic. By typically placing its output simultaneously in the form of text on the one hand (discursive knowledge) and art on the other (immersive, tacit knowledge), it has a double epistemological contribution to both science and the arts (Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2014).

Artistic research within the context of academia is rooted in a period of higher education reform in Europe, usually referred to as 'the Bologna process', when research was introduced as a requirement into areas of higher education that used to focus on professional training, such as polytechnics and universities of applied sciences as well as higher arts education (Borgdorff 2012). The output of artistic research is typically twofold: its dissemination occurs simultaneously within academia (through publications) and culture (in art institutions of any sort)

[13] The role of the text varies greatly between national, regional and institutional contexts, and is in some cases not required at all (Wilson and van Ruiten 2013).

(Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2013). It is also commonly known as practice-based research or practice-led research, referring to the close relationship between the researcher and their creative practice in the knowledge-generating process (Gray and Malins 2004; Macleod and Holdrigde 2005; Sullivan 2005). As a creative mode of inquiry, artistic research develops its topics, methods and means of dissemination from within the artistic practice itself, often traversing borders into other disciplines and knowledge practices (Borgdorff 2012). The discourse on artistic research indicates an increasing interest in epistemological issues within the domain of the arts, particularly with regard to how artistic practices contribute to the production of new knowledge, or how artistic and scientific ways of knowing and making converge (Borgdorff, Peters, and Pinch 2020; Huber et al. 2021). Terms that are generally legitimised and controlled by the university sector – such as 'knowledge', 'research' and 'science' – are revisited within the model of artistic research, from the perspectives of different types of practice (Dombois et al. 2012; Biggs and Karlsson 2010; Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2013; Borgdorff, Peters, and Pinch 2020). The European League of Institutes of the Arts (ELIA) has been a leading figure in the implementation of artistic research within the context of European higher art education. Two documents published by ELIA articulate key features of artistic research: the Florence Principles (ELIA 2016) and the Vienna Declaration (ELIA 2020). Both documents focus on artistic research as part of higher arts education, particularly third-cycle education,[14] and are intended as policy documents addressing political decisionmakers, funding bodies, and higher education and research institutions, as well as other organisations and individuals catering to and undertaking this type of research. Fundamental to both documents is the idea of artistic practice as a legitimate form of knowledge production, where artistic products embody an epistemological contribution to whatever field they are disseminated within.

As the above shows, the discourse on artistic research is closely tied to higher art education. Artistic research, as an alternative research model, has had to advocate for its place within the hierarchy of science (meaning fighting for access to funding and doctoral-level education for artists). In doing so, it has developed a language/discourse that articulates its epistemological significance within other fields of science, one that describes the plethora of methodologies and forms of output that are immersive (spatio-temporal) as well as discursive (textual). It is not least because of this that I see artistic research, and its surrounding discourse, as a useful model for museums to learn from. But before discussing the idea of

[14] Since the implementation of the Bologna process within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), university education has been organised into a three-cycle structure: bachelors, masters and doctorate.

research within the museum domain, let us briefly look at the parallel histories of universities and museums as public institutions engaging with research.

3.2 Parallel Histories of Universities and Museums

When translated into the museum domain, terms like 'knowledge production', 'research' and 'science' gain ambiguous connotations, whereas they hold relatively fixed meanings and established regulatory frameworks within the domain of higher education. Many of the first museums in Europe were affiliated with universities. Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, established in 1683 in England, was founded as a university museum specifically to support the teaching functions of the university by providing students with access to its archaeological and art collections (Ver Steeg Jr. 2022). Later, in the nineteenth century, many universities established science museums to house their natural history collections, providing access for scholarly purposes. Today, museums can have disciplinary affinities with almost any academic field, such as natural history, art history, design history, anthropology, archaeology, medicine, cultural history, prehistory, or science and technology studies. The main role of university museums is to support object-based learning as well as showcasing research work by the university as part of their social outreach (ibid.).

The relationship between universities and museums has been a matter of museological discourse, in particular the close links between museums and the construction of the disciplines (Conn 1998; Haxthausen 2003; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Whitehead 2009). Scholars from various fields have established how museum collections contributed to the foundation of natural history and empirical science (Daston and Park 2001; Findlen 1994; Freedberg 2002; Pratt 1992), art history and archaeology (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Preziosi 2003; Whitehead 2009), and anthropology and ethnology (Bouquet 2001; Clifford 1988; Karp and Lavine 1991; Stocking 1985). From their early history on, museums not only operated as spaces for object-based learning and teaching, but they also functioned as platforms for collections-based research (although it might not have been considered 'research' at the time). Entangled in the knowledge system of each historical period is a complex belief system, a particular worldview or a certain structure of thought that gives way to a particular type of knowledge, or an *episteme* (Foucault 1970 and 1974). Hooper-Greenhill (1992) has shown how the activity of generating new knowledge by handling objects has been at the root of museums since their birth in the Renaissance. In the early Renaissance, 'research' in museums had multi-layered associations with broader cultural and historical phenomena, such as European expansionism, imperialism and colonialism (Smith 1999). Furthermore, technological advancements in the Enlightenment paved the way for quantitative, objective measurements and

empirical observations, a methodology still fundamental to the idea of science and knowledge production today (Daston and Lunbeck 2001; Daston and Park 2001; Freedberg 2002). Research activity in museums began to diminish at the beginning of the twentieth century when universities took over as primary knowledge producers, leaving communication and education as the main role of museums (Boylan 1999). Today, research still remains a formal museum activity, although it comes with many challenges.

3.3 The Idea of 'Research' in Museums

Recurring throughout this dissertation is the argument that research remains an ambiguous component of professional museum practice. In theory, research is defined as one of the five core requirements in museums, alongside collecting, documenting, preserving and exhibiting (ICOM 2017). In practice, however, it remains a major challenge. Many museums struggle with fulfilling their research requirements, and research is often described as the least prioritised among daily activities (Anderson 2005; Graham 2005; Pringle 2020). As this project maintains, research activity is not only challenged within the realm of museum practice. It also remains underarticulated within scholarly discourse as it appears within museological literature. While other core components of museum practice have enjoyed the spotlight within museological discourse (particularly with regard to public programming, social outreach and ethical concerns), research remains a marginal topic in the field. Apart from user-friendly manuals on the management and administration of research (Ambrose and Paine 2018; Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018; Lord, Lord, and Martin 2012) and some position papers on the status of research in museums (Anderson 2005; Fuller 2005; Graham 2005; Reid and Naylor 2005), museological discourse on museums as sites for knowledge production is to a large extent neglected. But how is the idea of research reflected in the existing literature?

In their handbook *Key Concepts in Museology*, Desvallées and Mairesse (2010) define research in the museum context as the following: "In the museum, research consists of the intellectual activities and work aimed at discovery, invention, and the advancement of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out" (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010, p. 73). Although rather abstract, the definition is broad and flexible enough to accommodate the rich research activity fostered by museums and is well aligned with the OECD definition of research discussed above. Curating, in one form or another, has been at the heart of museums since their early establishment in the Renaissance (Boylan 1999; Norton-Westbrook 2015). To curate in the museum context entails "the collection of and care for objects in museums, in archives or in digital platforms, as well as the design of access to and exhibition of these

objects for the public" (van der Tuin and Verhoeff 2022, p. 66). The primary mode of knowledge production in museums has been curatorial research, conducted by 'scholar-curators' as extensions of academic work (Boylan 2011; Viau-Courville 2016).

In this way, exhibitions, along with the curatorial process leading up to them, are excellent vehicles to explore a particular topic and to disseminate the findings of that process (Bjerregaard 2020; Herle 2013; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010; O'Neill and Wilson 2015; Moser 2010, Treimo 2020). This type of research could perhaps best be described as the archetype of museum-based research. In the traditional sense of curating, experts engage with the collection behind the scenes and generate new knowledge and understanding in the act, knowing in detail the object and its historical and theoretical contexts (Arrhenius, Cavalli-Björkman, and Lindqvist 2008; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010; Thomas 2016). The output of such research is not limited to exhibition catalogues or peer-reviewed publications (although it often is), but is also embedded in the material, physical or spatio-temporal form of the exhibition itself (Bjerregaard 2020; Herle 2014; Moser 2010; Thomas 2016). Moving from monographic exhibitions within the scholar-curator model, thematic curation through group exhibitions (particularly within the art museum domain) presents a new form of curatorship where the exhibition itself is understood as a medium for storytelling or narrative (O'Neill 2012; Greenberg, Ferguson, and Nairne 1996, Martinon 2013). Most recent forms of curating as research include what Irit Rogoff describes as "curating in the expanding field" (Rogoff 2013, p. 41). The notion of the expanding field refers to programmes and events that extend beyond the form of the exhibition to publications, conferences and public talks that reach beyond the museum institution itself, while at the same time raising the profile of the museum as a site for research.

Moving beyond curatorial research, museums have now broadened its scope to include a vast array of topics, including thematic curatorial research, pedagogical and educational research, scientific and environmental research, visitor research, wellness and health research, conservation and chemical research, marketing and consumer behaviour research, and media and communication research. In addition, museums are increasingly expanding their research practices to include co-curating with communities, also called citizen science (Pringle 2020, Silverman 2015; Sforzi et al. 2019; Krmpotich and Peers 2011). Article IV ("Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration") presents an overview of the various types of research conducted in museums, including their methodologies and forms of dissemination, listed as 'the scholar-curator model', 'the 'practice-based research model', 'the laboratory model', 'the model of co-researching with communities', and 'the museological research model'.

The allegedly diminished status of research as a museum activity during the last two to three decades is commonly described as a consequence of the neoliberalisation of culture (Appleton 2007; Poulot 2013; Rectanus 2020; Weil 1999; Walsh 1992; Wu 2002). The neoliberalist funding framework pressures museums to shape themselves as service institutions with a focus on budgetary accountability and managerial efficiency (Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018). As Rosalind Krauss (1990) has pointed out, the introduction of neoliberal ideology into the field of cultural production created a profound shift in the identity and programming of public cultural institutions. Consequently, time-consuming and resource-demanding research projects have inevitably become less urgent than blockbuster exhibitions, community service and other public events that attract high guest numbers. Alexandra Bounia (2014, p. 2) describes this as "the prioritization of people rather than objects". This development has not only left museums with fragile research profiles, but also with weakened research identities and disorientation about what research means in the museum context.

Emily Pringle (2020) has been outspoken about what she describes as confusion amongst staff in relation to their role as researchers, where the ambiguity and uncertainty around this element of museum practice leaves them unsure as to whether their work counts as research or not in the eyes of their institutions. Pringle's work has also contributed significantly to contemporary discourse on museum-based research, particularly through her 'Practitioner Researcher model' (2020, p. 65). This mode of inquiry reflects an understanding of research as an integral part of the museum profession, rather than an autonomous and individual action set apart from other professional practices. She proposes a working definition of research as rooted in reflexive and creative processes predicated on three key elements: a) the importance of questions, often emerging from practice; b) a structured process of enquiry, often taking place in a cyclical fashion where investigation and learning feeds back into the practice; and c) the generation of new knowledge or new insights that are shared publicly (ibid., pp. 34–35). Although situated within an art museum setting, Pringle's work can be transposed onto other types of museums that aim at enhancing their research practices. Her vision of expanding the 'scholar-curator' model to the 'practitioner-researcher' one speaks directly to the Mode 2 knowledge production presented above, as she emphasises the need to expand the academic notion of knowledge production. Museums are thus able to reconcile their scientific and social functions, generating contextualised knowledge. Pringle proposes that museums break out of the habit of endorsing only the research of a few experts and acknowledge the need to discontinue the culture of exclusivity when it comes to research activity (ibid., p. 10). This point of acknowledging other forms than the academic in museums is one of the main arguments in this dissertation,

running through all four accompanying articles. By acknowledging other forms, museums could perhaps work towards a less hierarchical and more inclusive approach to research.

3.4 Epistemological Characteristics of Museum-Based Research

Arnold (2016) claims that museums, through their experimental and temporary exhibitions and events, are able to procure an "enhanced epistemological significance" (Arnold 2016, no page numbers). He sees this potential especially in exhibitions and events that enable new understanding and new ideas, beyond their inherent ability to reflect and disseminate previously established knowledge. Behind exhibitions of this sort lies a research process that is unique to museums in the way that it generates knowledge through the non-textual quality of objects, welcoming of interpretation and open-ended questions (Alpers 1991; Arnold 2016; Bjerregaard 2020; Macdonald and Basu 2007). Furthermore, the output of such a process is disseminated in the spatio-temporal form of a display that uses exhibitionary and other museum-specific technologies. In some cases, the research process extends into the exhibition period itself, where an exhibition is understood as a tool for engaging in continuous knowledge generation, a platform for knowledge-in-the-making rather than a static form of dissemination (Bjerregaard 2020; Hansen et al. 2019; Herle 2013; Krysa 2017; Rito and Balaskas 2020). When understood in these terms, exhibitions have the potential to create what Peter Bjerregaard calls a "research surplus" (Bjerregaard 2020, p. 1). Through the making of exhibitions, Bjerregaard states, researchers are liable to learn more about a topic or a subject, accommodating alternative ways of knowing and understanding. When acknowledging museums as open and inclusive public institutions, they become unique platforms for alternative research practices that are able to reach a wider audience than conventional academic research, perhaps with a greater promise for impact. Moreover, museums have the unique ability not only to cross borders between disciplines but also to operate equally in the domains of science and culture. This is one of the main characteristics that underpins their ability as research institutions and lends them their epistemological agency.

Beyond their exceptional means of dissemination through displays and other public programming, museums also foster unique methodologies as part of their research activity, based in their early formation in the *curiosity cabinet* of the Renaissance. This period witnessed a shift from textual knowledge to objective knowledge, where touch, smell, taste and vision played a vital role in the knowledge-making process. As Findlen (1994) has illustrated, the act of collecting "provided an important mechanism to facilitate the transition of natural

philosophy from a largely textual and bookish culture to a tactile, theatrical culture that spoke to a multiplicity of different audiences" (Findlen 1994, p. 9). Daston and Lunbeck (2011) have also shown how from the seventeenth century onward a hybrid hermeneutics of reading and seeing (through observing) constituted the study of nature, where the two techniques were closely intertwined. An intermediate between the word and the thing was the image, or sometimes a pressed plant between the pages of a botanical catalogue. However, as Latour and Woolgar (1986) have observed, this type of materiality, or physicality, of research has disappeared from the scientific process today, leaving only text as the durational form of knowledge. Museums, on the other hand, encompass both in their very embodied form: the textual and the material, the discursive and the immersive.

4 The Articles

This dissertation is based on a collection of four peer-reviewed articles that have been published in internationally acknowledged journals in the field of museology. This chapter presents a summary of each article, followed by the articles themselves in full length.

4.1 Blind Spots: Museology on Museum Research

The first article is the result of a literature analysis on the subject of museum-based research, addressing the museological perspective of my study. The aim was to understand how the discipline of museology addresses research as a core activity in museums and how it theorises it. The review led to an identification of blind spots in the literature, where the concept of 'research' gains far less attention within critical discourse than other core activities, such as collecting and public programming. The article reveals the ambiguity of the term within scholarly discourse, and how theoretical discourse on museum-based research remains an underdeveloped topic within contemporary museology. It covers the historical relationship between museums and knowledge production from the Renaissance onwards and discusses current definitions of research within the museum context. It suggests that two main strands on the topic emerge through the literature: the recurrent discourse on museums and knowledge on the one hand, and what I identify as counterproductive division lines between research and public programming on the other. Finally, it contextualises museum-based research within other fields of science and introduces artistic research as a useful model for museums to enhance their research as a legitimate form of knowledge production.

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Blind spots: museology on museum research

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ABSTRACT

Research is considered to be one of four fundamental museum practices, equal to collecting, preserving and display. As such, it is understood to provide the basis for many other activities carried out in museums. Yet research remains an ambiguous component of museum practice, sometimes entirely invisible to the public eye. Moreover, it remains a neglected topic in museology, with only a few publications on the subject since its disciplinary reinvention at the turn of the '90s. In this article, I explore museological strands towards research in museums and identify gaps in the literature. By carving out a space for a critical analysis of museum research within contemporary museology, my aim is to explore the place of museum research within the wider hierarchy of science. By doing so, I take an epistemological approach to museums as public institutions in the borderland between science and culture.

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Overlooking museum research

Museology is the discipline that studies museums as public institutions and develops a theory of their role and function in society. With the disciplinary reinvention from 'old' to 'new' museology (Vergo 1989), the former interest in the know-how and practicalities of running a museum was replaced by a critical analysis of the socio-political and ethical relevance of museums, as well as directing a critical view towards the administrative and organisational structures museums are founded on. Launched by Vergo's *The New Museology* in 1989, contemporary museology makes the socio-cultural foundations and philosophical basis of museums its main subject of study, with an aim to enhance museums' relevance for the communities they are embedded in. From this turning point onwards, museology has been influenced by post-colonial theory, post-structuralism, feminism, and institutional critique, studying museums through the conceptual lens of agency, authenticity, governmentality, inclusivity, gender, and ethics.[1] More recently, the turn to visual theory and material culture studies in the humanities and social sciences has further reinforced the discipline as a critical field of study.[2] This theoretical renewal has generated 'a new set of expectations for the museum, including greater accountability, sensitivity, and openness' (Marstine 2006, 21). However, the study of museums as research institutions has only had limited attention in the renewed museological agenda. While core components of museum practice, such as collecting,

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documenting, preserving and display have enjoyed the spotlight, research has gained less academic interest. Consequently, museum research remains a marginal topic within contemporary museology, and organised discourse among museum professionals on this core museum practice proves to be relatively rare.[3]

Apart from some user-friendly manuals on the management and administration of research[4] and a few position papers on the status of research in museums,[5] museological focus on museums as sites for knowledge production is scarce throughout the history of museology. Similarly, fundamental anthologies and textbooks, whose role is to reset the stage for critical museology, only marginally address the subject of museum research.[6] Sporadic case studies provide informative accounts on singular research projects,[7] however rarely articulated in a wider context of museological discourse. Lastly, the two edited compilations that systematically address research in museums, while nonetheless informative and illuminating, are already a decade old.[8] This scholarly neglect creates an opportunity for an enhanced focus on museums as research-based institutions, or as epistemic institutions, as I prefer to call them. To underpin the idea of museums as epistemic platforms, I will outline emerging trends in the literature during the last three decades or so. Furthermore, I will discuss museum research in relation to scientific fields. I limit my discussion to collections-based research whose output is disseminated through exhibitions or other three-dimensional display techniques within the museum space. By singling out museum research I do not mean to prioritise it over other fundamental activities, nor can it be separated from them.

Museological trends

When exploring the literature on the topic of museum research, two main lines of inquiry emerge. The first line focuses on the general relationship between museums and knowledge production without directly discussing research as such, and the second focuses on the state and status of research in museums, with more emphasis on descriptive accounts of particular research projects than theoretical articulation or contextualisation with other fields of research.

Museums and knowledge

Museologists have established the fundamental impact museums have had not only the shaping of knowledge in the Western world, but also on what form that knowledge takes (Bennett 2018; Haxthausen 2003; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Macdonald 2007; Pearce 1995; Whitehead 2009). Tucker (1992) describes museums as metanarratives through which society is constituted. Seminal studies within the discipline address the early development of museums and their relationships with other epistemological formations, such as the construction of academic disciplines, science and universities (Conn 1998; Haxthausen 2003; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Whitehead 2009). These studies can be seen to form a sub-theme within museology based on an epistemological approach to museums, where the nature of knowledge production in museums is critically examined and analysed, along with its rationalisation and legitimisation within the museum space. What these studies have in common is highlighting a vast array of knowledge practices – from the acquisition of objects and documenting, classifying and archiving them, to

labelling, installing and exhibiting them – without contextualising these practices into contemporary discourse of research politics (on which I will expand below). Similarly, an abundant area of study is the relationship between collections and science, but with limited reflection on the impact of current museum practice on the hierarchy of science and research. Scholars have however shown what fundamental role collection objects have had on the formation of disciplines from the Renaissance onwards, such as natural history and empirical sciences (Daston and Park 2001; Findlen 1994; Freedberg 2002; Pratt 1992), art history and archaeology (Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Preziosi 2003; Whitehead 2009), and anthropology and ethnology (Clifford 1988; Bouquet 2001; Karp and Lavine 1991; Stocking 1985). Of these, Hooper-Greenhill's is the most influential, studying the interrelations between museums and knowledge. In her seminal work, she describes the role of museums in developing epistemological orders throughout different historical periods. Her work illustrates how ways of knowing and understanding were expressed through particular forms of collecting and display, mapped onto Foucauldian epistemic periods: the Renaissance, the classical period and the modern period.[9] In a similar manner, Whitehead (2009) explores the parallel histories of museums and the formation of art history and archaeology as academic disciplines. Like Hooper-Greenhill, he emphasises the epistemic role of museums by explaining 'how cultural actions such as collecting, classification, conservation and display are in fact ways of theorising the world' (Whitehead 2009, 20). Other museologists have discussed the relationship between museums and knowledge from the perspective of power and politics (Bennett 1995, 2018; Hetherington 2015; Macdonald 2007).

Counterproductive division lines

The juxtaposition of research and public programming as competing museum activities runs as a leitmotif throughout museological discourse. Museologists have been explicit in their criticism on how neoliberal funding models have pressured museums to shape themselves as service institutions with focus on budgetary accountability and managerial efficiency (Appleton 2007; Hafsteinsson 2014; Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018; Weil 1999). As Krauss (1990) pointed out in her influential essay on *The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum*, the introduction of neoliberal ideology into the field of cultural production created a profound shift in the identity and programming of public cultural institutions. Museums have not only become entangled in the corporate nature of the contexts they operate in, but also is this development closely linked to the emergence of globalisation and supported by the flow of capital, human mobility and new communication technologies (Mathur 2005; Hafsteinsson 2014). Consequently, time-consuming and resource-demanding research projects are inevitably less urgent than blockbuster exhibitions, entertainment and attractive public events. Bounia (2014, 2) describes this as 'the prioritization of people rather than objects', a development that has sparked debates on the role and function of research in museums (Anderson 2005; Cavalli-Björkman and Lindqvist 2008; Graham 2005; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010a). In this political climate museologists criticise how curators have been pushed to the margins while their work is left to service managers and helpdesks (Anderson 2005; Appleton 2007; Roth 2008; Schubert 2009; Viau-Courville 2016). This perpetuation of division lines between the two activities is not only a consequence of the neoliberal funding model.

The rather recent establishment of separate museum departments has also contributed to this development, where education staff does the work of public programming while curators perform their work on the collection behind the scenes (Roberts 1997; Lord, Lord, and Martin 2012). Not only does this create internal divisions among staff, but also a disconnection between research and its dissemination. This way, in Spalding's view, museums risk developing into two separate institutions: a research institution behind the scenes and a popular theme park out front (Spalding 2002). On a similar note, Fink (2006) shows how popular entertainment in museums has led to reduced use of archives and primary research material hosted by museums, and Bounia (2014, 2) discusses how this development risks leaving traditional curatorial research to be considered 'elitist' and of 'secondary importance' to museum leaders and funding bodies. O'Neill (2006) offers an interesting compromise between the two roles. He describes this as a tension between 'the essential museum' on the one hand, and 'the adaptive museum' on the other, both being dangerous naturalisations of what a museum is. The former sees museums as permanent and essentialist institutions whose priority is to conduct specialist research on their collection, regardless of surrounding socio-political changes (O'Neill 2006, 96), while the latter sees museums' primary obligation as service to their visitors (O'Neill 2006, 97). Appleton (2007) goes as far as understanding the current focus on social inclusion as a distraction from the collection, which she sees as the museum's central responsibility. Before discussing ways to overcome this approach to research and public programming and antagonistic opposites, I will first explore museums as epistemic institutions.

Museums as epistemic institutions

The research museum is considered to originate in Enlightenment Europe, coinciding with the inception of public museums (Anderson 2005; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). Anderson (2005, 298) states that 'all early museums, some being described as cabinets of curiosities, were concerned with investigation, even though the research might not today be considered systematic'. Up until the emergence of new museology, museums were largely operated as places for advanced object-based research and specialised disciplinary exhibitions, curated by 'scholar-curators' as extensions of academic work (Boylan 2011; Viau-Courville 2016). This understanding of museums as research institutions was upheld until the beginning of the twentieth century, only to be replaced by universities as the legitimate knowledge producers (Boylan 1999). Today, the role and relevance of research for museums is disputed amongst museum scholars and professionals, although not much of it has been documented in printed publications. Already at the turning point of museology into new museology, Macdonald understood museums and exhibitions as 'embodiments of theory' (Macdonald 1996, 14). Only recently has this notion been re-examined, with scholars paying closer attention to the agency of museums as sites for knowledge production. Describing museums as sites for proactive production of knowledge, 'where theory is generated *within* the museum', Message and Witcomb (2015, xxxvi; original emphasis) offer an alternative to the understanding of museums as passive sites for the presentation of knowledge produced elsewhere, like in universities. A useful term to understand such an epistemic reading of museums is what Conn (1998, 22) describes as the 'object-based epistemology' around which museums are usually organised: the objects themselves on the one hand, and the systematics into which they are placed on

the other. It is in this sense that I understand museums as 'epistemic institutions', where the content of collections and their arrangement into abstract or physical orders, create a system of knowledge that is contained and sustained by the museum itself.

Museums have disciplinary affinities to diverse research fields like natural history, art history, design history, anthropology, archaeology, cultural history, and science and technology studies.[10] These research fields have numerous subfields and are typically grouped into larger scientific domains, namely, the natural sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts – in that hierarchical order. Each discipline is rooted in its own genealogy, which, in turn, generates disciplinary methodologies and intellectual attitudes (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, and Sylvan 1993). Research in museums, like in any other research field, has its subjects, methodologies, means of dissemination and systems for the management and storage of research data. Museum research addresses as diverse subjects as pedagogy and education, visitor experience, health, conservation, marketing and consumer behaviour, and media and communication, just to name a few. Similarly, methodological frameworks range from visual and formal analysis to textual analysis, as well as material analysis, chemical analysis, and historical and theoretical analysis, depending on the specialisation of the museum (Cameron 2012). The management of museum research data requires complicated systems that have their own logic and infrastructure, such as inventories and archives, card catalogues, filing cabinets, electronic database registries, and many others. Furthermore, museums have multiple means of disseminating their research to the public: architectural spaces like exhibition halls and galleries, the open environment, material objects and installations, printed publications, websites, apps, podcasts, other interactive digital technologies, and so on. When assembling these elements – research subjects, methods, dissemination and frameworks for research administration – the museum takes on an epistemic form.

My view on museums as epistemic institutions is close to Thomas's approach to 'the museum as method' (Thomas 2010, 2016). Thomas uses the idea of the museum as method to challenge the generally accepted understanding that theory is primarily aligned with academic disciplines and limited to academic discourse. In his view, the museum as method is a space for 'a happening upon', emphasising the importance of curiosity and contingency when conducting museum research (Thomas 2010, 7). The 'methodological potency' this kind of research activity entails is found in the researcher's preparedness to be open to the unexpected, to be taken by surprise by material objects and the collection, even if at odds with canonical academic knowledge already out there. In this sense, museums are unique platforms for alternative research practices that are able to reach a wider audience than conventional academic research, with a greater promise for impact. This approach is inspired by Phillips's (2005) view that museums operate 'as an object archive or repository, making available unique collections that can lead to the development of data not retrievable from other sources. Such research requires specialized skills of description, technical and stylistic analysis, documentation, and attribution' (Phillips 2005, 88). This broad scope of research subjects and methodologies gives rise to Anderson's (2008, 11) point on 'the remarkably disparate nature of research in museums'. Consequently, museum research manages to resist any formal definitions. Instead, it takes on an abstract form as defined by Desvallées and Mairesse in their handbook, *Key Concepts in Museology* (2010): 'In the museum, research consists of the intellectual activities and work aimed at discovery, invention, and the advancement

of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out' (Desvallées and Mairesse 2010, 73). This understanding of museum research aligns with what is typically understood by the concept of research in academia: 'creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge' (OECD 2015, 44).

Museum research in the hierarchy of science

Silverman and O'Neill (2004, 41) understand the role of museums as being 'about something and for somebody at the same time'. This notion of the twofold nature of museums could also serve as a useful ground for an understanding of museum research in the context of other research fields. I draw this assumption from Borgdorff's (2012) discussion on artistic research, where he explains the twofold epistemological contribution such research output holds. In epistemology, he explains, a distinction is made between kinds of knowledges: on the one hand, knowing *that* something is the case (theoretical knowledge, propositional knowledge, explicit knowledge, focal knowledge), and on the other, knowing *how* to do something, to make something (practical knowledge, embodied knowledge, implicit knowledge, tacit knowledge) (Borgdorff 2012, 122). In a similar way, museum research operates equally in the two spheres, oscillating between academic discourse (publications) and cultural space (museums, galleries), or between the discursive and the immersive. Here, Thomas's (2016, 100) notion of the double role of curators 'as specialists in a particular field (art historian, archaeologist, entomologist), and as museum curators' is particularly relevant. It is precisely this unique ability museums have, not only to cross borders between disciplines but also to operate equally in domains of science and culture, that underpins their agency as research institutions. In this way, museums are in a unique position to undertake research practices in the borderland between science and culture, whose relevance and validity are judged within both worlds. If museums took a stronger position as such border-crossing institutions, then perhaps current advocacy for museum activism would gain momentum, as Janes and Sandell (2019) call for (see also Janes 2009). On a similar note, Bishop (2013, 27) criticises what she calls 'post-2000 thematic collections' in relation to museum marketing and neoliberal culture politics. She sees such a museum practice to be bound to 'please every demographic, without having to align the institution with any particular narrative or position' (Bishop 2013, 27).

Museums are the largest self-organised franchise in the world, consisting of 55,000 museums worldwide that have developed common codes of practice and promoted a critical self-understanding (ICOM 2017). Janes and Sandell (2019) stress the role of museums in bringing together information, scientific knowledge and options for action, advocating that museums not fall prey to neutrality. In this sense, museums have an advantage over universities and other institutions of higher education, whose role is usually understood to be neutral rather than proactively positioned on an issue or within a debate, e.g., climate change or right-wing nationalist populism. Museums, on the other hand, have the possibility to responsibly position themselves openly and actively for or against an issue, preferably in collaboration with the communities in which they are embedded. Perhaps recent emphasis within museology on open-ended, experimental and

creative research practices (Arnold 2016; Grewcock 2014; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Message and Witcomb 2015) will enhance this possibility.[11] The rupture in the current science establishment could potentially open up a space for an enhanced interest in museums as epistemic platforms, not only within museology but also amongst other fields of research that are interested in border-crossing activity. Division lines constructed between the disciplines during Modernism are now increasingly blurring, and today it is commonly accepted among scholars for theories and concepts to migrate between disciplines (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018). Moreover, conventional distinctions between basic research and applied research are disintegrating, and boundaries between science and culture are dissolving, creating a porous relationship between the two domains (Borgdorff 2012). This development prompts a closer look at the relationship between academia and museums. Cannizzo (2001) and Phillips (2005) discuss the tension between academic approaches to exhibitions versus museum approaches, noting how museum researchers tend to stick close to the former instead when it comes to disseminating results. They stress limitations of the academic model, illustrating that academic research culture is individualistic and competitive, apart from the obvious fact that academic culture is primarily a written one. Put into context with Bal's (2018) critique on the peer-review system in academic publications, which she sees primarily as a consequence of the neoliberalisation of universities, the formal limitations of academic research become clear, whether in terms of methods or forms of dissemination. Trends in the literature, such as the work of Bouquet (1992, 2001), Cannizzo (2001), and Phillips (2005), indicate that museum researchers are being encouraged to release themselves from the limitations of the academic research model and use the potentiality of museum research and exhibitionary techniques of dissemination to their fullest. In this sense, a number of museologists see continuous reflection as the basis for a renewal in museological approaches to museum research (Grewcock 2014; Message and Witcomb 2015; Moser 2010; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010b; Karp and Kratz 2015).

Grewcock (2014) suggests museum staff practice what he calls 'relational museology'. To research relationally, in his view, 'is to keep asking questions of the ways in which we come to know the world, how that knowing is made and re-made, of attending to the hidden and not-so-hidden' (Grewcock 2014, 6). Similarly, Message and Witcomb (2015, li) see museums 'as agents for promoting reflexive understanding', and Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler (2010b, 5) state 'the need to reflect on the intimate and at the same time delicate relationship between research activities and the making of an exhibition'. Furthermore, Moser (2010) criticises the lack of reflection on the importance of exhibitions in contributing to the development of society. On a similar note, Herle (2013) illustrates how museums have increasingly become passive repositories for research conducted elsewhere. In her proposition to this problem, Herle stresses the curatorial process as a legitimate tool in the production of knowledge: 'Exhibitions as research provide an opportunity to systematically investigate, develop, and demonstrate the fecundity of particular theoretical approaches' (Herle 2013, 114). In a similar fashion, Macdonald and Basu (2007, 2) insist that 'contemporary exhibition practices cannot be conceived merely as means for the display and dissemination of already existing, preformulated knowledges'. Rather, they argue that exhibitions are sites for the generation rather than reproduction of knowledge. On a similar note, O'Neill provides a critical analysis of what he calls 'the flawed structure of museum epistemology' (Macdonald and Basu

2007, 103), a paradigm that supports positivist and Victorian approaches to permanent exhibitions, where knowledge is presented as enduring, complete and permanent. Instead, he proposes that museums create room for exhibition practices that support displays capable of evolving over time, according to emerging knowledge at any given time.

The entrance of new and emerging forms of research offers an interesting insight into the interrelationship between theory and practice in the production of knowledge. Increasing attention is drawn to nondiscursive manifestations of research output, where concepts like 'tacit knowledge', 'material knowledge' and 'sensuous knowledge' are being legitimised (Borgdorff 2012; ELIA 2016; Kjörup 2006; Wilson and van Ruiten 2013). Ruptures in the science hierarchy of this kind create an important opportunity for new and emerging forms of knowledge production, including museum research. However, this would only work if museum research allows more space for alternative forms of research, by embracing open-ended, experimental and creative museum research practice, as advocated by Bouquet (1992), Cannizzo (2001) and Macdonald and Basu (2007). In particular, museums (especially those who do not operate in the art sphere) could look towards the recent entrance of curatorial practice as a form of research (O'Neill and Wilson 2010, 2015; Martinon 2013; Sheikh 2015). This newcomer to the field of research has been described as 'the expanded field of curating', where curatorial output extends beyond both the museum and the academy (Rogoff 2013; Sheikh 2015). It has developed an articulation of the curatorial as 'research action in itself' (O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 12), where knowledge production is problematised and destabilised. This paradigm is, of course, no news to museum researchers, but the discourse that surrounds it does not yet seem to have entered the museological domain.

Conclusion

Although O'Neill's (2006, 99) vision for an epistemology of museums that would 'integrate all the forms of knowledge which museums acquire, produce, deploy and disseminate' is perhaps too broad, his approach has nevertheless served as a point of departure for my approach to museums as epistemic institutions. In this article I have explored recurrent trends and attitudes towards museum research within museological literature during the last three decades or so. I have also discussed how the double agency of museum research, with simultaneous impact in the fields of science and culture, is one of the fundamental qualities of museum research output, making it unique among conventional research practices. I have identified gaps and pointed out blind spots when it comes to developing a theory of museum research, and I have pointed to the recurring theme of juxtaposing research against other core components of professional museum work. This dichotomous approach is only counterproductive and contributes to a segmented and compartmentalised view of museum practice, a view that favours a neo-liberal approach to culture. As new museology advocated for socially embedded museums and democratically driven cultural activity, museums enhanced their visitor services and public relations, leaving less capacity for research-based museum work.

As I have established above, I believe that only by articulating the distinct epistemic qualities of the museum research process, including its methods and means of dissemination, are we able to carve out a space for research, not only within museology but also as practice in museums. And by doing so, its relations to other core components of museum

practice emerge. By identifying the role of the material, the temporal, the spatial and the sensuous in museum research practice, we are able to construct an epistemology of museum research and to contextualise it within other scientific fields. And only by understanding these qualities are we better equipped with tools to debate the very content of that knowledge.

Notes

1. The reformation of museology into new museology has generated a number of core anthologies and monographs. Among the most influential are Anderson 2012; Bennett 1995, 2018; Duncan 1995; Hooper-Greenhill 2000; Levin 2010; Macdonald 2007, 2011; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Marstine 2006, 2011; Vergo 1989; Watson 2001; Witcomb 2003. These core texts unveil the socio-political and ethical complexities and challenges of museum activity, but with very limited attention to research as one of the fundamental components of museum practice.
2. Among major studies in material and visual culture that have informed contemporary museology are, e.g., Appadurai 1986; Bennett 2010; Clifford 1988; Coombes 1994; Errington 1998; Gell 1998; Gosden and Knowles 2001; Karp and Lavine 1991; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Marcus and Myers 1995; Miller 2005; Mirzoeff 1999; Myers 2008; Pearce 1995; Phillips and Steiner 1999; Pratt 1992; Price 1989; Taylor 1994; Thomas 1991.
3. International conferences with museum research as the main theme are sporadic. A search over the last 15 years brings up only a few conference events with documentation and proceedings available post-event: *The Museum Research Summit* in Ottawa, 2005 (organised by the Canadian Museums Association), *The International Symposium on Research and Museums* in Stockholm, 2007 (organised by the Nationalmuseum, the Nobel Museum, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Science), and *The Global Summit of Research Museums – The Transformative Potential of Research* in Berlin, 2018 (organised by the Natural History Museum Berlin and Leibniz Research Museums). Local conferences with a focus on museum research are likely to have taken place at the national level where proceedings are not accessible to international audiences. Anderson (2005) points out that research has been a topic of concern among curatorial staff in museums, though little has been published on the subject.
4. See e.g. Ambrose and Paine 2018; Mason, Robinson, and Coffield 2018; Lord, Lord, and Martin 2012.
5. See e.g. Anderson 2005; Arrhenius, Cavalli-Björkman, and Lindqvist 2008; Fuller 2005; Graham 2005; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010b; Reid and Naylor 2005.
6. See e.g. Anderson 2012; Carbonell 2012; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Macdonald 2011; Marstine 2006.
7. For case studies on collections-based research projects, see e.g. Cavalli-Björkman and Lindqvist 2008; Fleming 2010; Herle 2013; Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010a; Meineke et al. 2018; Moser 2010; Tybjerg 2017.
8. *Research and Museums (RAM): Proceedings of an International Symposium in Stockholm 22–25 May 2007* (Cavalli-Björkman and Lindqvist 2008) and *The Exhibition as Product and Generator of Scholarship* (Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler 2010a). Other significant contributions can be found in a special issue of *Museum Management and Curatorship* 2005, consisting of conference proceedings from the Canadian Museums Association's 2005 meeting on research. In that issue, Anderson's paper offers a wide-ranging illustration of the position of research in museums at that time, largely from a British perspective.
9. Foucault conceived of the *episteme* as a tool to describe a particular world-view or a certain structure of thought that characterised a total set of relations, bound to particular periods in history. For further reading on this subject, see *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Foucault 1970) and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1974).

10. To name a few examples of research-intensive museums, see the Natural History Museum London, the British Museum, Tate Modern, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the German Historical Museum, the National Museum of Denmark, and the Gothenburg Botanical Garden. Research profiles are also common in museums affiliated with universities, serving as teaching and research platforms, e.g., Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Cambridge, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia, the Design Museum at Zürich University of the Arts, the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo, Glyptoteket in Copenhagen, and the National Museum of Iceland as part of the University of Iceland.
11. This trend is in line with other new and emerging forms of research as seen for instance in feminist and posthuman research; see e.g. Barad 2007; Feyerabend 1978; Haraway 1988; hooks 1990; Harding 1992; Smith 1999. A fertile field of creative research forms is also found in visual anthropology and sensory ethnography, e.g., Pink 2009; Schneider 2013; Schneider and Wright 2005, 2010. Also, the emerging field of artistic research offers an interesting debate within the field itself on the development of art practice into art research, e.g., Borgdorff and Schwab 2014; Borgdorff 2012; Dombois et al. 2012; Kaila, Seppä, and Slager 2017; Michelkevičius 2018; Rogoff 2017.

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4.2 The State of Research among Icelandic Museums

The second article makes the *institutional perspective* its main focus, with a survey among Icelandic museums as a case in point. The survey was conducted twice over a six year period, first in 2014 and again in 2020. The aim of the survey was to understand research as a professional activity from the standpoint of museums, and to illustrate a picture of the managerial and organisational frameworks around this activity in the national context. To that end, the survey inquired about issues including human resources, time, funding, research support and management, collaboration and forms of dissemination. The survey generated, for the first time in the national context, quantitative data comparable over time, in addition to qualitative data resulting from open questions. Furthermore, a set of open questions allowed respondents to express their attitudes towards the notion of research, creating an important indication of current research culture among Icelandic museum practitioners. Findings are grouped into discussions on i) research activity, funding and collaboration; ii) forms of dissemination and staff qualifications; iii) research policy; and iv) research culture. A section of the article describes the public administrative framework under which accredited museums in Iceland operate, such as the legal landscape, accreditation process and regular monitoring of professional activity. Lastly, the article discusses the confusion over research in museums, not only among Icelandic institutions but also among Nordic museums and beyond.

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The state of research among Icelandic museums

Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir

Abstract: *Museums are faced with complex challenges when seeking to fulfil their role as research institutions, whether at the organisational or the conceptual level. These challenges are particularly prominent in the Icelandic museum sector, where research remains obscure, undefined and unregulated. Based on findings from a survey conducted among accredited museums in Iceland, this article illustrates the state of research among Icelandic museums. Inquiring about institutional approach, management and capacity for research, the survey shows how Icelandic museums struggle with scarcity of time, funding and human resources, a picture well known throughout the international museum domain. Furthermore, the article reveals how discrepancies between formal research requirements on the one hand and the lack of criteria on the other create further ramifications for the development of research in Icelandic museums. This, in turn, leaves museums with mixed messages on how to embed research in their agendas and how to account for it.*

Keywords: Museum-based research, research management, research culture, public administration, Icelandic museums.

While research is defined as one of the five core activities in museums, alongside collecting, documenting, preserving and exhibiting (ICOM 2017), many museums struggle with how to manage their research. The problem with research seems to prevail at all levels, whether practical, conceptual or theoretical. First, practical issues, such as the lack of time, funding, human resources and institutional support, present major obstacles when it comes to embedding research into the museum agenda. In this way, research is commonly reported as the least prioritised among daily tasks, having to "elbow its way" into the list of institutional agendas to justify its role in the life of museums (Graham 2005:288). Secondly, ambiguous notions of what "research" means in the museum context create further confusion about this key activity (Pringle 2020). And thirdly, the notion of museum-based research remains underarticulated in contemporary museological discourse, leaving this fundamental element of museum activity rather unattended from a theoretical perspective (Sigfúsdóttir 2020). Overall, this challenging state of research in museums is

reflected through the literature, and is generally attributed to the shift in focus from the collection to visitors and public programming (Anderson 2005; Appleton 2007; Boylan 2011; Fuller 2005; Reid & Naylor 2005; Weil 2002).

However, recent discourse indicates a growing interest in the topic, particularly the relationship between research, curating and exhibitionary practice (Bjerregaard 2020; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist 2008; Hansen *et al.* 2019; Herle 2013; Lehmann-Brauns *et al.* 2010; O'Neill & Wilson 2015; Pringle 2020; Sigfúsdóttir 2021a). This rising attention to museum-based research calls for critical discourse on how to frame it in relation to other museum activities and how to account for it in the museum context. The Nordic museum domain has shed some light on this, where administrative and managerial challenges in relation to research activity are articulated, particularly issues like funding, staff qualification and forms of dissemination (Fjell *et al.* 2020; Grinell & Högberg 2020; Johansen 2000; Petterson 2009; Sørensen 2008; Treimo 2020; Vilje til forskning 2021; Ydse 2007). This discourse is less pronounced in Iceland, where the notion of museum-based research remains elusive, not only internally from the perspective of museums themselves, but also externally from the perspective of the public administration regulating museum activity in the country.

This article seeks to address this ambiguity by providing an overview of museum-based research in Iceland built on findings from an extensive survey sent to all accredited Icelandic museums. The survey was conducted twice over a long period of time and thus provides opportunities for comparison between years. Main survey findings reflect how practical issues, such as time allocation, funding, human resources and institutional support, emerge as common challenges to the advancement of research in Icelandic museums – issues that extend far beyond the Icelandic museum context. Furthermore, the study reveals general confusion with research on the conceptual level, that is, how to define it in the museum context and how to account for it. Again, these results do not come as a surprise to the international museum domain as they are shared by many museums, notwithstanding their regional or national contexts. However, what is of particular interest in the current study is the lack of guidelines and criteria on behalf of the public administration – the authoritative body that defines research as an obligatory activity for museums to obtain formal accreditation. This discrepancy between formal requirements on the one hand and the lack of criteria on the other puts museums in a challenging position and only fuels the existing confusion around this key museum activity.

The article is divided into four sections: the first describes the public administrative framework surrounding the Icelandic museum domain, with a particular view on how the notion of research emerges through legal acts, accreditation procedures and public policies; the second describes the survey on research activity among accredited museums and summarises its findings; the third discusses the findings in relation to public policy and regulatory framework as exercised by the Museum Council of Iceland; and the fourth contextualises the findings with current museological discourse on museum-based research.

The Icelandic Museum Landscape

Of all the 46 accredited museums in the country, cultural heritage museums comprise the largest group, or one half; art museums

make up the second largest group, followed by museums with multiple fields of specialisation, and natural history museums comprise the smallest group. Almost 60 per cent of all accredited museums are the property of municipalities and town districts, one third are self-governing institutions, and the rest are state owned. When it comes to museum size, a vast majority (nearly 70 per cent) are small institutions with only two to five full-time, year-round staff positions, and almost one-fifth operate with only one full-time, year-round staff position. Considering the extremely limited capacity when it comes to human resources and the generally low annual subsidisation, many museums struggle to fulfil their legal responsibilities and official roles, let alone their roles as research-active institutions.

Legal framework

When considering the legislation surrounding the Icelandic museum domain, a complex landscape emerges. Different legal acts apply to different types of museums, and numerous public policies come into play for daily operations and tasks. The current Museum Act divides the sector into three types: a) accredited museums, b) central museums, and c) numerous other bodies referred to as "other museum-related activities, museums in the making, centres and exhibitions" (Museum Act no. 141/2011). Enterprises in the last category are not formally defined as "museums" and are therefore not subject to any regulatory control or competitive funding.

In this article, museums in the first category are of main interest, as they are the only ones regulated by the Museum Council of Iceland, undergoing a formal accreditation process and subsequent annual monitoring of that status. Museums in the second category, on the other hand, are state owned and operate under separate legislation; these institutions are the National Museum of Iceland, the National Gallery and the Museum of Natural History. From an organisational perspective, their role is to act in an advisory capacity towards other accredited museums in the same field. Each adhering to its own separate legal act(s), central museums are exempt from the formal accreditation process and do not formally operate under the auspices of the Museum Council of Iceland.[1] Finally, public libraries and archives are not included in the category of museums and are therefore not subject to the Museum Act.

Accreditation

The Icelandic museum sector has adopted international standards for professional practice as reflected in the Code of Ethics for Museums (2017). The code is inscribed into Icelandic law on museums and is one of the requirements for formal accreditation (Museum Act no. 141/2011, article 10). Furthermore, the Museum Act stipulates that the role of museums is to safeguard the Icelandic cultural and natural heritage through the five core elements of museum activity, namely, "of collecting, cataloguing, preserving, studying, exhibiting and communicating in other ways" (Museum Act, article 3). Museums apply for accreditation based on criteria and requirements laid out in the Museum Act, including standards pertaining to finances and organisational structure, facilities, storage and safety, as well as standards for documentation, cataloguing and access (Museum Act, articles 10 and 14). Applications are evaluated by the Museum Council of Iceland, which makes recommendations for accreditation to the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, or mandates withdrawal from accreditation. The Museum Council serves as an advisory

board for the Ministry and has the main role of supervising museum activities in Iceland, engaging in various tasks relating to the standardisation and professionalisation through the accreditation process. The Museum Council also allocates grants from the Museum Fund, to which only accredited museums have access.

Upon accreditation, museums acquire a formal legal status bound in the Museum Act, overseen and regulated by the Museum Council of Iceland in its annual follow-up and regular monitoring. Once accredited, museums "must satisfy minimum requirements with regard to collecting, cataloguing, preserving, *research* and communication activities" (Museum Act, article 14, author's emphasis). The "minimum requirements" are developed by the Museum Council of Iceland and are incorporated into its regular monitoring through formalised checklists and annual reporting from accredited museums. Among these requirements, research is the least formalised, with no guidelines on the quality, quantity, management or evaluation of research output. This puts museums in a difficult position, as they are required to conduct research but are left with no criteria as to how to satisfy those requirements. In comparison, standards for other core activities, such as finances and organisational structure, facilities and safety, documentation and cataloguing, are clearly defined as part of the accreditation process (Ársskýrsla Safnaráðs 2019). Consequently, museums can be awarded their accreditation status with little to no research activity at all.

Public policy

Numerous public policies circumscribe the museum domain in Iceland, creating guidelines for museums and their authorities on how to conduct professional museum work.[2] In addition to policies issued by the governmental authorities, each central museum is to issue a subject-specific policy in its field of specialisation. When put together, all these policies indicate a national ambition for the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage, but they lack cross-referencing, coordination and clear action plans. In only one case has there been a formal impact analysis or evaluation on how museums have benefitted from these policies or how they have enhanced institutional operations (Dal 2021).

The current Museum Policy, issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in June 2021, presents for the first time a coordinated policy for all museums nationwide (accredited and central museums). The policy was developed by the Museum Council of Iceland in consultation with the three central museums, along with the participation of accredited museums and other stakeholders in the Icelandic museum sector. The policy addresses aims and actions in relation to all basic elements of museum practice, including research, where the aim is to "enhance research in all areas of museum operations" (Stefnumörkun um safnastarf 2021:13). It clearly recognises research as part of core museum practice, stating that "extensive research labour takes place through daily activities in the museum, where knowledge is collected and mediated" (ibid.). As a means to reach this goal, museums are encouraged to develop their own research policies as part of their annual planning, and emphasis is put on research diversity, disparate forms of dissemination of research output, access to the collection as primary research data, and collaboration with universities. Furthermore, the policy stresses the need for support in relation to museum-based research, both in

terms of human resources and funding. By dedicating a separate chapter to research, the policy clearly articulates an understanding of the importance of research in museums, although it reflects a rather passive notion of research where "knowledge is collected and mediated" rather than generated, critiqued or produced.

In addition to the new Museum Policy at the national level, distinct subject-specific policies have been developed by the central museums, serving as guidelines on key museum practices for accredited museums in each subfield. The National Museum of Iceland has issued a subject-specific policy for museums in the field of cultural heritage (Safnastefna á sviði menningarminja 2017), and the National Gallery has recently issued the first subject-specific policy for museums in the field of fine art (Samræmd safnastefna á sviði myndlistar 2021). The Icelandic Museum of Natural History is currently developing its subject-specific policy for museums in the field of natural history, forthcoming in 2021. When looking at the category of research within the two existing subject-specific policies, it is generally understood as one of the fundamental museum practices, embedded within the other professional activities of collecting, documentation, preservation, education and display. Both policies stress the importance of collaboration when it comes to research, either between museums or between museums and universities, and emphasise the need to reinforce museums as vibrant research institutions. Furthermore, the two policies recognise the need to enhance practitioner research across the national museum sector through capacity building and staff development as well as by organising public platforms for discussion and sharing of knowledge and experience.

The Survey

The survey was a two-point longitudinal study using an online questionnaire sent to all accredited museums in Iceland. The questionnaire was first sent to a total of 38 museums in 2014 and again to a total of 46 museums in 2020.[3] The response rate was 70 per cent in both cases.

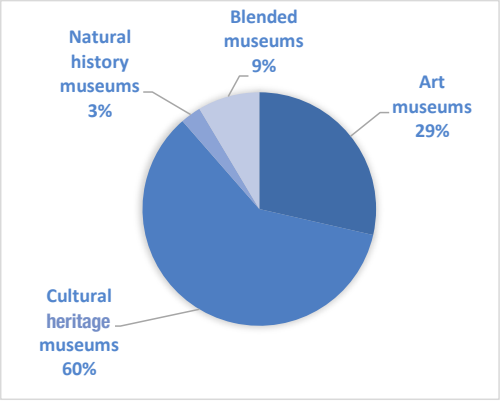

Fig. 1. Types of museums participating in the 2020 survey.

Aims

As a means to enhance the discourse on museum-based research at the local level, the aim of the survey was to generate a general picture of the state of research among accredited museums in Iceland. Rather than putting the focus on particular cases or specific institutions, the intention was to get as wide a picture as possible. Hence, the survey was designed to address topics like institutional research policies, time devoted to research, research funding, human resources, research support, research collaboration, research subjects, relations between research

and other core museum activities, and forms of dissemination. In the absence of previous examples in the national context at the time, the list of questions was developed with a view to similar studies in the international context, using the Nordic museum sector as a benchmark (Forskningsstrategi for Kulturministeriets område 2009; Heen & Salomon 2013). Answers were submitted anonymously, and participants were informed that results would not be traced to individual institutions.

Methodology

The survey was developed with the Question Pro software and sent by email to museum directors according to a list of accreditations published by the Museum Council of Iceland.[4] The survey consisted of a total of 27 questions. The same set of questions was delivered in 2014 and 2020, with the former inquiring specifically about research activity during the period 2010–2013 and the second addressing the period 2017–2020.[5] The majority of questions were presented in a closed format with multiple choices, some of which offered the respondents the possibility to explain their answers further in open text fields. At the end of the questionnaire, two open-ended questions invited participants to reflect more generally on their approach to research in their own words. The mixed methodology of open and closed questions created an important combination of quantitative and qualitative data. The closed-format questions generated quantitative and statistical data comparable over time, while the open-ended questions generated important qualitative information on attitudes and approaches towards research.

Limitations

While the high response rate enabled a fairly comprehensive picture of the state of research among accredited museums, the survey also had some limitations. These apply mainly to terms and definitions, as the concept of "research" was not pre-defined in the survey itself. As the local museum sector had not yet developed a consensus as to what counts as research in the museum setting, and the Museum Council of Iceland had no formal criteria on how to account for research, the survey would certainly not have been the appropriate platform to propose a definition. Consequently, the respondents replied to the questionnaire according to their own understanding of the term. The lack of a common understanding of the term "research" will have most likely affected the survey results, particularly with regard to questions addressing the embeddedness of research in daily activity, output, time and funding devoted to research or division of labour. However, as the problem with definition and meaning is a common one when it comes to research throughout the global museum domain, the survey still has valuable information on attitudes and understandings of research among the local scene. Further steps towards a more shared understanding of museum-based research would be in the hands of the public administration and the central museums, with active bottom-up participation of accredited museums and scholars, possibly using the results of this survey.

Findings

Research activity, funding and collaboration

Almost half of the participants claimed that research takes up a large part of daily activity in their museums, with a general range of one to five ongoing research projects during both survey periods. Two of the 46 museums participating in the 2020 survey stated they

currently had no ongoing research activity, compared to none in 2014. When asked about funding, half of the participants said they invested up to ten per cent of their annual budget on research each year, while a vast majority claimed they needed more support for their research activity, whether financial or infrastructural. Nearly 70 per cent of the participants applied for competitive research funding during both survey periods, most commonly to the Museum Fund, managed by the Museum Council of Iceland. Museums are also eligible to apply to the Icelandic Research Fund (IRF), although projects hosted by museums with funding from the IRF are extremely rare, with only three cases since 2005, all of them hosted by a central museum.

Examples of ongoing research projects provided by respondents illustrate a diverse picture of knowledge production among Icelandic museums, most of which were said to be tied to the museums' field of specialisation and the collection. Documentation was mentioned by a vast majority of the participants in relation to research. One participant claimed that behind the gathering of information "lies a small research" and that "the documentation is the communication of research". Other and "bigger" research projects would then be based on these "small" research steps taken through the process of documentation. The same respondent speculated further that the reason why museum staff were generally not aware of the direct link between documentation and research was because of a lack of staff identifying as researchers. This is yet another indication that research culture is relatively underdeveloped within the Icelandic museum sector, and will be addressed in the discussion below.

The survey addressed the question of research labour with the aim to determine who the researchers are in museums (in-house staff members, external academics or other collaborative partners). This was done to create a picture of the research capacity of the participating museums, as well as to gain insight into the collaborative aspects of research activity. When asked about the division of labour when it comes to research activity, the majority of the participants reported that a combination of permanent museum staff and external researchers typically conduct the research. This is a clear indicator that museums commonly seek external contractors to execute their research. Collaboration turned out to be the most common form of research among the participants, with 70 per cent participating in formal collaborative research projects, most often with independent researchers, universities or other museums. The data did not offer a deeper analysis at this point, but the notion of collaboration surely needs to be explored further in this context.

Collaboration could well be seen as one of the most important tools museums have to enhance their research capacity, whether it is between accredited museums, between accredited museums and the central museums, or between accredited museums and universities. Collaboration is likely to facilitate research amongst museums with low research capacity, scarce research funding and low staff numbers; judging from the survey results, Icelandic museums seem to depend on it to a large extent. In this context, Pringle's (2020) view on the benefits of collaboration is relevant. Whether with regard to co-researching with academics, communities or visitors, her study shows how collaboration enriches a museum's knowledge base and makes it more pluralistic, as it allows stakeholders to share and exchange experience and knowledge around a particular topic. She identifies different

ways to collaborate in the museum context, distinguishing between co-operation (when museums support externals to do research) and collaboration (when staff members co-investigate with externals) (Pringle 2020:99). Both forms of co-research can revolve around questions about the museum itself and its collection or focus on thematic concepts and issues not necessarily emerging from the collection. The survey did not offer any data on what forms of collaboration were exercised, an issue that remains for future research. Either way, Pringle says, co-researching in museums brings forth critical questions around complex issues like power and knowledge, and it urges museums to be self-reflective and critical of their relations to their immediate communities and wider society.

Forms of dissemination and staff qualification

When asked about dissemination of research output, a diverse picture emerged. Most participants mentioned the exhibition as a vehicle for research output, followed by websites and catalogues as the most common modes for dissemination. Conferences and symposia, non-peer reviewed publications in the national setting, research reports, annual reports, and other institutional publications such as monographs also appeared as common forms for output. Only one museum had their staff member publish an article in an international peer-reviewed journal while three had publications in peer-reviewed journals in Icelandic. When asked about the education level of their human resources, a vast majority of museum staff had university education, or nearly 80 per cent. A little less than half of staff members had graduate degrees, while only three per cent had a doctoral degree.

Research policy

When asked about whether their museum had a documented policy on research, only 40 per cent of the participants said they had one. When asked to refer to the policy in an accessible format, most referred to their websites, general institutional policies and annual action plans. However, upon closer examination of these sources, it turns out that traces of research policies were hard to find, revealing a general lack of information on research programmes, research topics or examples of research projects. Limited information seems to exist on these projects in the public realm, and further inquiry indicates a scarce articulation on aims, participants, collaborators or plans for output and deliverables in relation to research projects. Moreover, less than half of the participating institutions mention research at all on their websites, and only a few present ongoing or completed research projects on their public platforms.

Research culture

The survey suggests that Icelandic museums recognise their roles as research institutions, with research activity being one of the official requirements each accredited museum is bound to by law. Attitudes towards research emerging from the data are generally positive and value-driven, where participants claim that research is "the sign of a thriving museum", or that "without research the museum would stagnate and would not be able to keep up with professional development". This understanding of research as fundamental to the very existence of museums is further reflected in claims that "research lies at the heart of everything else in the museum" and that "without research the collection would lose its value". These attitudes are in line with international museum discourse, where

research is understood as "the unseen engine of museums. Without a research programme a museum cannot generate the new knowledge that the institution needs to be able to offer its public" (Lord et al. 2013:300).

At the same time, research was commonly reported as a non-priority due to lack of time, funding and infrastructural support. As an example, more than half of the participants claimed they lack sufficient human resources to conduct research. The lack of resources (of all sorts) has serious implications for the development of research in museums, pushing it into an issue of non-priority: "I must admit that research is not among the museum's priorities over the next five years and perhaps longer. There are too many basic activities the museum is not even able to keep up with and, in my opinion, the few employees there are need to focus on those first."

Another theme resulting from the open questions relates to the tension between academic research and museum-based research, where the former is seen as the legitimate form of research. Pringle (2020) has written extensively on this theme, where she articulates the need to deconstruct the idea of the scholar-curator as a withdrawn expert working on the museum's backstage needs. Similar themes emerged in the Icelandic context: "Research in museums entails a viewpoint that is not always in line with academia, whereas museums deal with material reality and not only that part of reality which can be written down." Another respondent reflected on the meaning of research in the museum setting:

> When I look at that phrase 'research in a museum' it appears very 'academic', you picture someone as a doodler in dusty storage spaces […] this, however, is not my own experience of 'research' in the museum. My experience is that most of the knowledge generated in the museum comes through in conversation with a diverse group of people […] I feel that we need to recognise the characteristics of knowledge generation taking place in the museum through the work of museum staff, and we particularly need to be careful not to create an incommensurable gap between academic practice, work on the collection, and exhibitions.

Discussion

Findings from both questionnaires in 2014 and 2020 reveal that Icelandic museums are well aware of their role as research institutions, although they struggle with how to fulfil it. No major differences were seen between the results in 2014 and 2020, indicating that the overall state of museum-based research has remained relatively unchanged since the questionnaire was first sent out in 2014 (no data exists before that time). Icelandic museums seem to experience themselves as research-active institutions, with half of the participants claiming that research takes up a large part of their daily tasks. Similarly, half of them claim to invest up to ten per cent of their annual budget on research. Yet, all respondents describe how the lack of time, funding, human resources and institutional support present major obstacles to their formal research requirements. This contradiction may, in part, lie in the confusion with the concept of research in the museum context. As shown in the findings above, some museums see research as integrated into general museum practice, such as documentation or preservation, while others understand it in terms of textual publications and communication through display. In part, this confusion may also stem from the lack of guidelines on behalf of the public administration, where ambiguous criteria in

relation to formal research requirements only create further ramifications on how to describe and account for this activity.

However, these challenges are in no way specific to the Icelandic museum domain as they are shared by colleagues in the Nordic sector, which also seems to suffer from obscure notions of what it means to conduct research in the museum setting and how to account for it (Fjell *et al.* 2020; Graham 2005; Grinell & Högberg 2020; Petterson 2009; Sørensen 2008; Vilje til forskning 2021). Similarly, Graham (2005) notes that museum practitioners generally share a common enthusiasm for research, but at the same time their institutions are lacking in support, resources and general acknowledgement of research practice. In his mind, museums generally need to make more effort and include more support for their staff in allowing their research activities to be more visible to their colleagues, their superiors and the general public (Graham 2005:288). Similarly, 81 per cent of museums in Norway report having unsatisfactory access to resources related to research, and they identify research as the area in most need of enhancement in the near future (Arts Council Norway, 2019).

The confusion with research

The Museum Council of Iceland, as the body that oversees formal requirements for accreditation and supervises regular monitoring of museums, has of yet not developed any instruments to validate research within museums, nor does it define any requirements for deliverables by museums, either in terms of quantity or quality. This, in turn, confuses the very notion of research in the museum setting, where staff and directors are uncertain when to frame their activity as research or what the consequences would be if they were not to pursue any research at all. Consequently, museums are left with self-assigned criteria on what constitutes research in their daily practice, with no administrative framework to guide them. Gray & McCall (2018:133) explain how the identification of museums as bureaucratic organisational forms enables an understanding of the underlying reasons why particular features of museums function as they do. Mapped onto the Icelandic museum domain, their approach becomes particularly relevant, where the absence of regulatory frameworks, guidelines and support for research generates uncertainty, confusion and, perhaps, an identity crisis when it comes to the research role of museums. So what, then, constitutes research in museums?

The international museum sector uses abstract and open terms to describe research: "In the museum, research consists of the intellectual activities and work aimed at discovery, invention, and the advancement of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out" (Desvallées & Mairesse 2010:73). Drawing on this definition, it becomes understandable how research tends to blend in with other museum activities, such as documentation, preservation or exhibition-making, something that could be said to characterise the idea of research amongst Icelandic museums, judging from study findings above. This notion of research as everything and anything has been addressed as blurring lines between scholarship on the one hand and research on the other (Arrhenius *et al.* 2008; Pringle 2020; Svensson 2008). Here, scholarship is approached as the activity that updates or maintains already existing knowledge, for instance, through searching for data or verifying existing theories. Research, on the other hand, is approached as the activity of creating new knowledge, new interpretations

of existing knowledge or new contexts for known facts. In the Icelandic case, research and scholarship are understood as one and the same thing, as survey findings have clearly revealed.

Pringle's study illustrates how the legacy of the twentieth-century conception of the "scholar curator" shapes the dominant notion of research in museums, where "research becomes identified as something undertaken by selected individuals who are the 'experts', or by academics who might avail themselves of the museum's resources" (Pringle 2020:17). This, in turn, creates ambiguous research identities and insecurities amongst staff, who might see what they do as research but are less certain whether the museum also recognises their work as such. Survey findings from the Icelandic sector become particularly interesting in light of Pringle's study, as they show how Icelandic museums hesitate to profile themselves as research institutions, almost to the point of concealing their research activity rather than promoting it. Whether this is rooted in an underdeveloped museum culture or a lack of prioritisation at the level of individual institutions, the fact remains that Icelandic museums are faced with obscure and contradictory notions of research. The contradiction lies in the public administration clearly naming research as one of the formal requirements for accreditation – yet there are no provisions of what that means.

At the same time, scholarship and research are known as common forms of knowledge-making activities in the museum context. Arrhenius et al. (2008:7) describe scholarship as exploration or inquiry without the production of verified knowledge, while they see research as the production of "knowledge in the sense of verified facts, proven hypotheses and defensible generalizations disseminated by someone whose authority and professionalism can be verified – and, if necessary, challenged". Here, information is not the same as knowledge, neither is reflection the same as analysis. In a similar vein, Svensson (2008:181) distinguishes research from other knowledge-generating activities in museums, where research means "searching for new knowledge by formulating problems on the basis of theory and scientific methods". On the other hand, general knowledge-generating museum activities, such as documentation, collecting and other knowledge-building practices around collections, take place on a daily basis. These activities, in Svensson's mind, can lead to research projects but are not equal to research in the academic sense.

If the Icelandic museum sector would take up Svensson's rather rigid distinction between scholarship and research, there would probably not be much research left. I would rather suggest Pringle's approach, stressing that there are no clear lines of division between the two, as they both feed on each other and generate one another in a perpetual continuum (Pringle 2020:33). She stresses the importance of avoiding a culture of distinction and intimidation in relation to research in museums, where a sense is created of research as a specialised activity only to be conducted by selected individuals (Pringle 2020:17). Instead, she proposes a working definition for museum-based research based on the recognition that museums are different from universities as sites of practice, whether in terms of methodology, forms of output or systems of evaluation. As such, she sees museum-based research as "a creative and reflexive process" involving the formulation of questions (often emerging from practice rather than theory), a structured process of

enquiry, and the generation of new knowledge or new insights that are made public (often in non-discursive forms) (Pringle 2020:34–35). Although emerging from a study on art museums, I believe Pringle's understanding of research is applicable to all museums, notwithstanding their field of specialisation or their national context. It is broad enough to encompass the diverse means there are to do research in museums, while also being descriptive enough to function as a working tool for policymakers, museums directors and individual staff members.

Conclusion

This article has illustrated the state of research among accredited museums in Iceland. It is based on evidence from primary data collected through a two-fold survey conducted first in 2014 and again in 2020, generating quantitative and qualitative data. It is also based on secondary sources, such as legal acts, public policies, institutional policies and reports from the public administration in Iceland. Survey findings reveal how museum-based research in Iceland is characterised by a lack of resources as well as ambiguity and confusion. This confusion seems to permeate many layers of museum practice in the local museum domain, whether at the organisational, conceptual or individual staff level. Consequently, museum-based research among Icelandic museums seems to suffer on multiple levels: it is displaced within institutional planning and public policymaking, funding is insufficient, human resources are sparse and there seem to be no staff development plans in place to encourage research activity amongst staff. Furthermore, lines of division between research and other core activities, particularly documentation and archival work, are blurred, and staff members are unsure when or how to frame their work as research.

Most importantly, the very understanding of the term "research" remains unclear within the public administration. While research activity is defined as one of the formal requirements for accreditation, no criteria or guidelines are provided. Not only does this leave museums with self-assigned criteria on how to describe and account for research, but it also gives them mixed messages on how much to embed research in their annual planning and daily agendas.

At the same time, the survey findings clearly indicate that accredited museums identify as research institutions, claiming that they conduct dynamic and vibrant research within their immediate working environments, even though they are reluctant to share it as such in the public realm. While the study indicates unequivocal enthusiasm and willingness on behalf of museums to engage in research, the overall confusion around it remains a major obstacle. The study reveals an urgent need for further development of a research culture among Icelandic museums at all levels: administrative, institutional, and individual employee level. Museums are in need of tools, guidelines and support to enable them to carve out a space for research among their daily tasks.

Notes

1. The National Museum, established in 1863, operates under the Act on the National Museum no. 140/2011 and the Act on Cultural Heritage no. 80/2012. The National Gallery, established in 1884, operates under the Act on the National Gallery no. 58/1988 and the Act on Visual Art no. 64/2012. The Museum of Natural History, established in 2007 and based on the Icelandic

Association of Natural History established in 1889, operates under the Act on the Museum of Natural History no. 35/2007.

2. Currently there are three national policies pertaining to the museum domain in Iceland: Menningarstefna 2013 [Cultural Policy], Menningararfurinn: Stefna um varðveislu og aðgengi 2021 [Cultural Heritage: Policy on Preservation and Access], and Stefnumörkun um safnastarf 2021 [Museum Policy].
3. The first survey was commissioned by the Museum Council of Iceland in 2014. The second survey was conducted independently by the author in 2020. Both surveys are part of the author's ongoing PhD research in Museum Studies at the University of Iceland.
4. The three central museums were not included in the survey as they do not undergo the formal accreditation process.
5. Detailed results of survey findings, where each question is analysed and compared between years, have been published in Icelandic; see Sigfúsdóttir 2014 and 2021b.

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4.3 Curatorial Research as Boundary Work

The third article engages the *curatorial perspective* of the doctoral project. It is the result of another case study consisting of a year-long curatorial process involving *In Between,* a collective art exhibition I curated for Hafnarborg Museum in 2011. The aim of the study was to explore, from a first-hand experience, the museum as a research institution using curation as a research methodology. The article portrays a critical analysis of the research process and reflects on the relationships between theory and practice, academia and museums, the scientific and the personal. It proposes an approach to curatorial research as 'boundary work', referring to artistic research as a model. Through a systematic analysis of the literature, it identifies three different perspectives on curating as research and contextualises *In Between* within these. The study is an example of how knowledge, as the output of an open-ended, durational and creative research process, can be put into (dis)play through the work of material objects, installations, architecture and other exhibitionary technologies that only museums possess. It also reveals how curating can function as the organisation of a process that allows knowledge to emerge, that is, a form of curating beyond the arrangement of objects in space towards the idea of curating knowledge. The study uses the term 'curator' to refer to a person curating a thematic exhibition rather than caring for the museum collection, as the traditional sense of the word implies.

RESEARCH PRACTICE FORUM

Curatorial Research as Boundary Work

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Abstract Curatorial research is a new field only emerging in the last few years within museological discourse. The notion of curating as research offers useful suggestions on how to escape historically induced binary oppositions between theory and practice, the academic and the artistic. Moreover, curatorial research instigates critical questions on the significance of knowledge production in the context of public museums, particularly the relationship between research, display and museum audience. This article explores different notions of curatorial research as they emerge through current museological discourse. Three models of curatorial research are identified, each conveying a distinct – yet related – understanding of knowledge production through curatorial practice in the museum setting. The article then uses the exhibition In Between as a case to explore these models further. Building on the analysis of the case and the three models, a fourth research model is proposed. The new model is based on the concept of "boundary work", emphasising the multiple epistemological contributions curatorial research entails as it traverses borders between the domains of science and culture, thereby blurring the distinctions between theory and practice, the discursive and the immersive, the systematic and the creative.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of the museum as a mirror representing an encyclopaedic ordering of the world dominated museological discourse up until the end of the 20th century. With the emergence of New Museology in the 1990s, this epistemological understanding of museums was replaced by socio-political and ethical readings of museums that aimed at problematising museums as authoritative forms of representation (Ames, 1992; Bennett, 1995; Clifford, 1988; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992; Karp & Lavine, 1991; Macdonald & Fyfe, 1996; Pearce, 1994; Vergo, 1989). This disciplinary reinvention generated a shift in focus towards public programming and social outreach, leaving limited attention to research as professional practice in museums, usually called "museum-based research" (Pringle, 2020). Consequently, research has become an ambiguous component of museum work, both to museum staff and visitors (Sigfúsdóttir, 2019). This ambiguity has not only led to conflicting perceptions amongst museum staff on what counts as research and what does not, but it has also generated a

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lack of recognition towards museum-based research as "research" (Pringle, 2020, pp. 30–31). At the same time, museology attempts to clarify what research entails in the museum setting by issuing formal definitions and guidelines to the global museum community. In their textbook *Key Concepts in Museology*, Desvallées and Mairesse (2010) define research as "the intellectual activities and work aimed at the discovery, invention, and the advancement of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out". This notion of research is broad enough to accommodate the many types of research that thrive in museums, with collections-based and exhibitionary-oriented modes of research being amongst them. Furthermore, this museological understanding of research aligns with what is typically understood by the term in academia, described in the Frascati Manual as "the creative and systematic work undertaken in order to increase the stock of knowledge – including knowledge of humankind, culture and society – and to devise new applications of available knowledge" (OECD, 2015, p. 44). Furthermore, the ICOM Code of Ethics issues guidelines on research as an activity that "should relate to the museum's mission and objectives and conform to established legal, ethical and academic practices" (ICOM 2017, p. 20).

This article explores curating as a particular form of research in the museum context. It builds on a growing bulk of literature in the field (Bouquet, 2001; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist, 2008; Hansen et al. 2019; Herle, 2013; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; Moser, 2010) and grows out of my personal experience of curating *In Between*, an exhibition held at Hafnarborg Art Museum, Iceland (Sigfúsdóttir, 2011). The article identifies three models of curating as research as they emerge through current museological literature. Such an overview creates a comprehensive understanding of the many ways curating can be seen as research, and enables an analytical reading through its multiple forms, overlaps and differences. Building on this analysis and considering *In Between* as a case through which to explore these different models, the article proposes a fourth model of curatorial research as "boundary work". Boundary work is a concept related to the idea of "boundary objects" originating in the field of museum studies to describe objects that function as mediators between diverging perspectives in interdisciplinary research (Star & Griesemer, 1989). In the context of this article, I use the concept to describe the distinct epistemological qualities of curatorial research as its output oscillates between the domains of science and culture while, at the same time, it manages to bridge them.

THREE MODELS OF CURATORIAL RESEARCH

After decades of minimal attention towards museum-based research within scholarly discourse, the topic is gradually regaining attention. Following Hooper-Greenhill's (1992) seminal work in this domain, museology is increasingly turning its attention to the capacity museums have to carry out and sustain research activity (Anderson, 2005; Appleton, 2007; Cavalli-Björkman & Lindqvist, 2008; Graham, 2005; O'Neill, 2006; Sigfúsdóttir, 2019). Focussing on how museums generate knowledge through their museum-specific qualities and operations, they are described as mediums, methods and sites for knowledge production (Grewcock, 2014; Herle, 2013; Message & Witcomb, 2015; Persohn, 2020; Putnam, 2009; Shelton, 2013; Thomas, 2010; Whitehead, 2009). Most

recently, the focus is directed at the practice of curating *as* research, where the act of curating is understood as a form of research in and of itself (Bjerregaard, 2020a; Hansen et al. 2019; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; O'Neill & Wilson, 2010, 2015; Pringle, 2020). This understanding of curating as a form of research raises challenging questions about the relationship between museums and research, especially between the curatorial process, exhibitionary display and dissemination of research.

This section of the article contains an analysis of the discourse on research through curatorial practice as it appears in contemporary museological literature. It identifies three research models of curatorial research, each embodying diverging, yet overlapping, tendencies towards the notion of curating as research. The first sees exhibitions as an outlet for the dissemination of prior and concluded research, while the second understands exhibitions as an integral part of the research process itself. The third model develops the notion of curating as an event of knowledge.

First Model: Curating as Research

As one of the fundamental museum professions, curating is typically seen as the practice through which knowledge is produced in the museum (Anderson, 2005; Lehmann-Brauns et al. 2010; Message & Witcomb, 2015; O'Neill, 2006; Pringle, 2020; Thomas, 2010, 2016). The curator as connoisseur, or expert, has developed into the idea of the scholar-curator, a dominating role in museum research activity, now slowly being expanded by new practices based on community-based curation and co-curation with the audience (Pringle, 2020, pp. 18–19). Additionally, curatorship has increasingly moved out of public museums and galleries to become an independent profession, following the early onset of international art biennales in the 1960s and '70s (Fowle, 2010; Obrist & Bovier, 2008; O'Neill, 2012). Moving from monographic exhibitions, the group exhibition presents a new form of curatorship where the exhibition itself has come to be seen as a medium for storytelling and narrative (O'Neill, 2012, pp. 90–92). In Krysa's approach, the curatorial aim is not only to set up an exhibition, but to engage in a dynamic process of asking questions, developing frameworks for experimentation and dissemination of curatorial thinking in non-propositional forms (Krysa, 2017, p. 67). This understanding of curatorship is especially prominent in the art museum domain while less prevalent among museums of cultural or natural history, where curatorship manifests as a more withdrawn practice.[1]

The idea of curating as research explores the role of non-discursive elements – such as objects, space and the body – in the knowledge-generating process. The museum is seen as a site for research and the exhibition as an embodiment of theory, together forming a complex "locus of theory" (Message & Witcomb, 2015, p. xxxvi). The critique on the exclusive scholar-curator has created a paradigm shift from taking care of collections to what Rogoff calls "curating in the expanding field" (Rogoff, 2013, p. 41). The notion of the expanding field refers to programmes and events that extend beyond the form of the exhibition to publications, conferences and public talks that reach beyond the museum institution itself, while at the same time raising the profile of the museum as a site for research. In the expanding field, knowledge production is problematised and destabilised, where

curating is seen to entail a specific mode of research that may or may not take on the spatial and temporal form of an exhibition. Here, definitions of practices, their borderlines and their institutional frameworks have shifted and blurred, allowing practitioners to participate simultaneously in multiple domains and share multiple knowledge bases (ibid.). Similarly, Nelund understands curatorial research as a practice that extends beyond the exhibition, constituting a process of unfolding practices which are "investigated through various media, sensibilities and practices" (Nelund, 2015, p. 174). Following this development, Sheikh describes two distinct modes of curating: one at the "meta-level", with its aspects of theorising, historicising and politicising the practice, and the other as "the hands-on level of exhibition-making", occupied with installation, funding and publicness (Sheikh, 2019, p. 97). In this new landscape, curating becomes a reflexive investigation into what it means to engage in research activity in a museum context, testing modes of dissemination and experimenting with impact on audience and society. In an earlier work, Sheikh (2015) articulates the importance of reflective practice in allowing for experimentation with various forms of public address. He argues how the curatorial is "that which can research into, and onto, an object of study that does not necessarily stem from artistic production and development per se" (Sheikh, 2015, p. 34).

Second Model: Exhibitions as Research

Exhibitions have been established as fundamental sites of cultural exchanges where meaning is constructed, maintained and deconstructed (Greenberg et al. 1996, p. 2). Every exhibition tells a story, and every exhibition space is always a narrative space (Grois, 2010, p. 47). As such, the exhibition is always entangled in a strategic system of representations made up by a complex set of signifiers, ranging from architecture, wall colourings and lighting to curatorial premises and pedagogical and political stances (Ferguson, 1996, pp. 178–179). With increasing attention to the curatorial and the role of the curator in the context of Foucauldian museology, critical curatorial studies have set the scene for the "educational turn" in the world of curating (O'Neill & Wilson, 2010). Throughout this discourse, however, the relationship between exhibitions and research is vague, where the heavyweight of research is focussed on the process preceding the exhibition rather than the exhibition itself as a form of research output. The currently emerging discourse on museum-based research has involved a more in-depth analysis of exhibitions *as* research. In this model, exhibitions, as analytical tools or philosophical propositions, are seen as a means of engaging in continuous knowledge generation, or as extensions of conceptual and discursive research projects. This attitude signals a paradigm shift that sees exhibitions as platforms for knowledge-in-the-making rather than static forms of dissemination (Bjerregaard, 2020a; Hansen et al. 2019; Herle, 2013; Krysa, 2017; Moreira, 2013; O'Neill & Wilson, 2015). By exposing research through material and visual three-dimensional displays in public institutions, exhibitions have the potential to create what Bjerregaard calls a "research surplus" (Bjerregaard, 2020b, p. 1). Through the making of exhibitions, he states, researchers are liable to learn more about a topic or a subject, accommodating alternative ways of knowing and understanding.

Embedded in the notion of exhibitions as research is the idea of experimentation or research lab (Macdonald & Basu, 2007a). Macdonald and Basu argue for a non-linear and open-ended process

towards the unexpected, approaching the curatorial as an experimental process. They emphasise how experimentalism in the exhibition context is not just a matter of style or novel forms of presentation, but rather "a risky process of assembling people and things with the intention of producing differences that make a difference" (Macdonald & Basu, 2007b, p. 17). However, the attention to open-ended and non-linear research methods is not limited to the museum field, as other disciplines are increasingly experimenting with creative forms of research, especially within the social sciences.[2]

Third Model: The Curatorial as an Event of Knowledge

Whether situating the act of research within curation or the exhibition, both models above provide useful tools for a theorisation of curatorial research in the museum context. Inclusive of both is Martinon and Rogoff's concept of "the curatorial", a continuum of the curatorial research process and its most tangible form, the exhibition (Martinon & Rogoff, 2013). I identify this as the third research model in relation to curatorial research. Here, Martinon and Rogoff understand the curatorial as a critical analysis of the knowledges on which curating builds and as a contextualisation of the knowledges it produces. From their perspective, the curatorial is "an event of knowledge" (ibid., p. ix), an activity that emphasises a shift from simply staging an exhibition to a conscious engagement in critical reflection on everything that takes place on that stage, intentionally and unintentionally. It is a mode of address that facilitates reflection amongst both curators and audience, encouraging "another way of thinking or sensing the world" (ibid., p. x). Martinon further develops the notion of "the curatorial" from a philosophical perspective, where the curatorial pushes curating out of its comfort zone by embodying a "disruptive" practice that, in order to give birth to new knowledge, disrupts received knowledge (Martinon, 2013b, p. 26). In other words, the curatorial is never fixed or definitive but takes off by challenging preconceived orders or unsettling the firmly established. Similarly, in her elaboration of "new realities" of research, Rogoff (2017) explains how research has moved away from stable bodies of knowledge to an arena where knowledge is "negotiated", both in the domains of institutions of higher education as well as cultural institutions, like museums (ibid., p. 62). Her view of contemporary research practices as no longer exclusively occupying the realm of formal learning nor that of pure self-expression, but instead as harnessed in both realms, is particularly relevant in the discourse on curating as research. This new research reality is shared through social communication in the cultural arena and enables a new relation between these two realms of research, the formal and the personal, creating a new habitat for knowledge to be generated and received. Rogoff's idea of hybrid forms of research not only calls for a new vocabulary to talk about research, but also creates an opportunity to articulate new models for the performance, delivery and display of research.

IN BETWEEN: THE EXHIBITION

This section of the article discusses the case of *In Between*, an exhibition I curated at Hafnarborg Art Museum in Iceland. By reflecting on the process in retrospect, critical distance and theoretical understanding become possible, especially as most of the literature I use to contextualise it now was

not yet published at the time of the exhibition. The exhibition was designed as a case study within my ongoing doctoral research in museum studies at the University of Iceland.[3] As such, it crosses borders between the domains of science (university) and culture (museum) and becomes "a moment in a longer impregnation of research", to borrow Bjerregaard's words (2020b, p. 13).

Context

Framed as a curatorial research project, *In Between* was a study into the ways in which knowledge is generated, disseminated and contested within public museums. By framing the exhibition as a research project, I used the curatorial method as a vehicle to explore public museums as research institutions through a collaborative process involving artists and scholars from various disciplines (Sigfúsdóttir, 2011). The process culminated in an exhibition and a series of related events at Hafnarborg Art Museum. The museum became a dynamic platform for discussion and debate on art museums as research institutions, both in the immersive and the discursive sense. The project took inspiration from previous work by artists working in the realm of institutional critique, such as Mark Dion's *Cabinet of Curiosities* (see Sheehy, 2006) and *The Marvelous Museum* (see Macdougall, 2010), Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (see Wilson, 1994), and Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights* (see Fraser, 2005). Theoretical underpinnings were drawn from the fields of museology, epistemology and institutional critique, influencing my curatorial vision and framework as well as fuelling the creative process of the participating artists. A group of sixteen local and international contemporary artists were invited to participate in the project, based on their interest in collecting, taxonomy, institutional critique and the history of science.[4] Through an exploration of the Renaissance as a Foucauldian *episteme*, the group focussed its attention on the emergence of a new paradigm of knowledge production, based on formal, visual and sensorial attributes of objects. In this paradigm, sensual qualities like texture, touch, smell, colour and form became defining factors in the shaping of knowledge as it slowly replaced the receding worldview at the time, predicated on theology, philosophy and rhetoric (Daston & Park, 2001; Greenblatt, 2017; Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). This historical landscape provided a useful setting for our exploration of museums as research institutions, looking into the history of collecting, naming, categorising, archiving, labelling and displaying in the museum context. Furthermore, such a historical examination allowed for a comparison of existing research models in the current science hierarchy, with the natural sciences at the top, followed by the social sciences, the humanities and the arts at the bottom (Borgdorff, 2012, p. 83).

Methodology

Starting as an exhibition proposal in response to an open call by the Hafnarborg Art Museum, *In Between* was selected for development and production after a formal evaluation process by the museum. An important aim was to study what effect it would have on the research process and on myself as a researcher to operate simultaneously as an independent curator and a PhD student, with one foot in the cultural domain of the museum and the other in the academic domain of the

Figure 1. Exhibition participants in one of the workshops.

university. By organising a durational, open-ended and collaborative research process, my intention was to bring together divergent knowledge practices from different cultural and scientific spheres, in an attempt to foster a flow of ideas and cross-pollination between participants. Not only did this assembly of participants and assemblage of ideas influence the individual work of the artists, it also significantly contributed to the development of the curatorial vision and final display as the project unfolded (Figure 1). In this way, the curatorial method functioned as a durational, transformative and speculative activity, a method that is "a way of keeping things in flow, mobile, in between, indeterminate, crossing over and between people, identities and things, encouraging certain ideas to come to the fore in an emergent communicative process" (O'Neill, 2012, p. 89). This vision is in line with Thomas's view of the "museum as method" (Thomas, 2010). Describing the research process as an unpredictable journey, Thomas sees chance, serendipity and unpredictability as characteristic of the curatorial research process. In his mind, museum-based methodology is deeply embedded in what he calls "a happening upon" (Thomas, 2010, p. 7), a process leading to unexpected affinities between objects, or between objects and subjects. This approach to museological methodology manifested itself in *In Between* as the unexpected emphasis on space and architecture, which came to be one of the core elements of the project as it unfolded, as explained below.

As the project's curator and primary researcher, my role was to lay the foundation for the research process ahead and establish the theoretical context, develop themes and topics for exploration, select the participating artists and invite relevant experts to workshops and seminars. As noted by the museum director, the integration of a series of workshops and events into the curatorial process, both before and after the exhibition opened, turned the museum into a site for a dynamic and collective knowledge practice: "In the run-up to the exhibition, the museum has been a site of discussion and reaction to a greater extent than is usual when group exhibitions of this kind are being prepared" (Sigurðardóttir, 2011). *In Between* was an unusual exhibition in terms of the artists' collective engagement and contribution to the project beyond their own individual artworks. This integrated method of regular input from the artists to the curatorial vision created unexpected turns towards the final decision of how the exhibition was installed within the museum space. Throughout the project duration the group met regularly with invited scholars and museum staff in multiple on-site visits, workshops and seminars. The research process was documented through multiple media, such as photography, audio and video recordings, sketches, notes, drawings and diary entries, in addition to written reflections by the artists and interviews with the museum director and staff. The methodology was left open and experimental, and the process was designed to create conditions within the museum setting where knowledge was emergent rather than found, driven by the instigation of further questions rather than providing definitive answers. This emergent nature of the project was integral to the methodology, as knowledge production is about testing and pushing boundaries, which also means testing personal and institutional potential. The aim was to create a platform that would address the meta-level of curating, making visible the research process itself in a reflexive manner, similar to what Macdonald and Basu (2007) advocate for in their idea of exhibitions as experiments (see also Schneider, 2013; Schorch & McCarthy, 2018).

Figure 2. The main gallery was left empty.

Dissemination

Together with museological technologies of display and manipulation of the museum architecture, *In Between* formed a complex "knowledge network" within the museum space (Moser, 2010, p. 30). Aligned with the idea of curating in "the expanding field" (Rogoff, 2013), the project generated a range of outputs. With the exhibition and its artworks at the centre, it included the exhibition catalogue and a series of public events with curatorial talks, artists' talks, an educational programme, and a conference held in collaboration with the Iceland University of the Arts, where invited scholars and artists problematised the notion of knowledge production within the museum space.

Through debating different ideas within the group about the exhibition display, the museum architecture became a fundamental element in creating the atmosphere of the show. Speaking to the ritualistic and auratic qualities of museums (Duncan, 1995; Fisher, 2006), the main gallery was left empty, while the artworks were installed in the museum's back rooms and interior spaces, places usually not accessible to the public. Emptying the gallery space for *In Between* was an affective means of creating this kind of a conceptual disruption, a display technology that played out in the arranged gap, functioning as a rupture between the exhibition as a temporary event and the museum as a permanent institution. Here, the notion of "empty" becomes charged as it implies a signified presence of nothingness, turning into a massive framework for the curatorial concept of the exhibition. This notion of loaded nothingness in the museum has been coined by Bergsdóttir, who sees the interplay of absence and presence of matter in museum displays as hybrid matter that affects the interplay between space, objects and people in the museum context (Bergsdóttir, 2017; Figure 2).

The display also signified how exhibitions, through the work of the curator, are able to involve transmission of affect by staging situations and controlling environmental stimuli that evoke feelings and sensuous responses in the audience (Fisher, 2006, p. 29). These formulations are typically beyond words and distinct from those created by discourse, turning the museum into extra-discursive and experiential zones. In *In Between*, this played out in the arranged gap as an exhibitionary affect. Through the focus on the museum architecture and the physicality of the gallery space, the project directed attention to the relationship between the museum and its public. By creating an atmosphere of a pause, a liminal space between the museum and the surrounding environment was staged by clearing the gallery space. Here, the Foucauldian concept of "effective history" becomes useful, a concept that gradually became central as a theoretical framework for the physical setting of the final exhibition display. For Foucault, effective history is a view of the past that emphasises discontinuity, rupture or displacement (Foucault, 1974, p. 4), perhaps in the same manner that Rogoff (2013) describes the curatorial as a destabilising practice. Similarly, the "empty" gallery space served as a borderland, a semi-neutral territory between the exhibition and the museum, allowing the audience to contemplate the physical act of entering a museum space and what it means to dwell in it. The boundaries between the "empty" space and the exhibition space were demarcated by a black cloth at an entry point and an exit point, inviting the audience to unravel what loomed within. Moreover, this display technology was an attempt to curate a context for an alternative research practice that would dwell within the liminal spaces between theory and practice, science and art, the university and the museum. The project, along with its immersive and discursive products, were generated in the borderland between these realms, still in the making (Figure 3).

CURATORIAL RESEARCH AS BOUNDARY WORK

Growing out of my reflection on making *In Between* and building on the three research models described above, this section will develop a fourth model, based on the concept of "boundary work". Boundary work is a concept I borrow from Star and Griesemer's study on "boundary objects" in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology (Star & Griesemer, 1989). Boundary objects are adaptable to different viewpoints but robust enough at the same time to maintain their core identity as they traverse between domains. An example of a boundary object in Star and Griesemer's study would be a collection item on display in a natural history museum, serving as a carrier through which people from different scientific disciplines or different social worlds are able to come to a common understanding (ibid. 404). Here, I use the concept in the abstract sense to indicate the curatorial, with the exhibition as its main research output, as a vehicle to pass diverging ideas between people, disciplines and domains. This notion of boundary work further relates to Martinon's description of the curatorial as an activity taking place "in the middle, between promise (a coming reflection, contemplation, or action) and redemption (intellectual achievement, aesthetic emotion or political resolution)" (Martinon 2013b, p. 29). In this model, the curatorial intent is to bring together distinctly different research modalities, drawing on Rogoff's idea of "kidnapping knowledges and sensibilities and insights", in a shared space of cultural and social interaction (Rogoff, 2013, p. 48). In this sense, *In Between* was an experiment in engaging disciplines, practices and fields of cultural and knowledge production, while

Figure 3. Entrance to the exhibition.

at the same time attempting to transcend their supposedly invariable appearances and functions. As this attitude seems to be gaining momentum in museum practice as well as museological discourse (see Grewcock, 2014; Nelund, 2015; O'Neill, 2012; Sheikh, 2015), it will be useful to understand it as a fourth research model. Sheikh (2015) describes curating at the meta-level as a reflective practice aimed at the historicisation, theorisation and politicisation of its subject through excavation, re-evaluation and re-enactment of objects, exhibitions and curators (Sheikh, 2015, p. 34).

O'Neill (2012) has named this development "the curatorial turn", a form of curatorial activity beyond exhibition-making in its emphasis on discourse production (O'Neill, 2012, p. 85). Here, the curator's role is to organise activities and events outside the parameters of an individual exhibition as a single narrative, i.e., with discussions, lectures, publications, performances, off-site projects or other related events (ibid., p. 81).

The Added Value of Curating as Research

The notion of boundary work has recently migrated into the field of artistic research, an emerging research field from which *In Between* took inspiration. Artistic research represents a research model where knowledge and understanding emerge through the creative process by negotiating theory and practice, the formal and the personal, the scientific and the aesthetic, placing its output simultaneously in the world of academia and the arts (Borgdorff, 2012; Borgdorff & Schwab, 2014). As an alternative research model, artistic research develops its topics, methods and means of dissemination from within the artistic practice itself, often traversing borders into other disciplines and knowledge practices. Looking at art *as* research draws attention to the tacit, material and sensuous dimensions of knowledge production and dissemination. A core component of artistic research is the researcher's critical reflection on the research process, typically focussing on its affect as it oscillates between making and thinking, doing and writing.[5] I argue that museums and curators would benefit from adopting this model, creating an added value to curatorial research by reflecting critically on the process and contextualising subjects, methodologies and output. This would enhance the epistemological qualities of curatorial research output, as it exists in between the discursive (theory) and the immersive (practice). As such, it would contribute to both domains of science and culture, whose borders have already become porous and interconnected. This approach would go beyond understanding the making of a display as a means to turn established knowledge into something tangible and accessible. Here, curating becomes disruptive in the sense Rogoff (2013) intends it, where practitioners traverse into multiple domains, working simultaneously in several modalities and bringing them together by creating new constellations and connections rather than protecting or conserving prior and established knowledge (Rogoff, 2013, p.48). Knowledge practices of this sort are particularly relevant in cultural institutions as they are not restricted by verifiable and measurable knowledge management used in institutions of higher education. Similarly, Arnold (2016) claims that museums, through their experimental and temporary exhibitions and events, are able to procure an "enhanced epistemological significance" (Arnold, 2016, no page numbers). He sees this potential especially in exhibitions and events that "aim not just at reflecting and disseminating already established knowledge, but

rather at shifting understanding and producing new ideas" (ibid.). Museum practice of this sort would enable different ways of knowing and foster alternative means of knowledge production through the non-textual quality of objects, open for interpretation and open-ended questions (Alpers, 1991; Arnold, 2016; Bjerregaard, 2020b). Again, this ties into Rogoff's (2017) view of "new research realities", where contemporary research practices no longer exclusively occupy the realm of formal learning nor that of pure self-expression, but instead are harnessed in both realms. Here, research is shared through social communication in the cultural arena and enables a new relation between these two realms of research, the scientific and the artistic, creating a new habitat for knowledge to be generated and received. Rogoff's idea of hybrid forms of research not only calls for a new vocabulary to talk about research, but also creates an opportunity to articulate new and alternative models for research practices, of which curatorial research would be one example.

CONCLUSION

Research is a core element of professional museum practice, providing the basis for many other activities like collecting, preserving and display. Nevertheless, it remains ambiguous and sometimes unrecognised, both to museum workers as well as to museology itself. For the last three decades or so, scholarly discourse on what is now called museum-based research (Pringle, 2020) has been sporadic and fairly silent within museological literature. It is only recently that scholarly interest in the topic is being regenerated, now with emphasis on curating as research.

This article presents an overview of the notion of curating as research as it appears in current museological literature. Through this literature analysis three research models have been identified, each conveying a distinct, yet related, understanding of knowledge production through curatorial practice. The first model reflects an approach to exhibitions as a vehicle for the dissemination of prior and concluded research, the second understands exhibitions as an integral part of the research process itself, and the third understands the curatorial as an event of knowledge. All three models overlap, sustain each other, and are proposed as tools to identify the various research elements embedded in the curatorial process rather than creating hierarchical distinctions between them. The models provide a comprehensive overview on the specific epistemological qualities curatorial research entails, the most important of which is its ability to cross borders between domains of knowledge practices. This border-crossing activity dissolves the opposition these domains are usually held up to, only to render visible their entanglement and porous lines of division.

In addition to the analysis of the different tendencies in the discourse on curatorial research, the article develops a fourth model based on the notion of boundary work. The concept of boundary work originates in Star and Griesemer's (1989) study on so-called boundary objects within interdisciplinary research: objects that serve as translators between different disciplines to create a common understanding between stakeholders, who will each interpret the objects against the backdrop of their disciplinary tradition and personal experience. The concept has also been used in the field of artistic research to describe how its twofold output, disseminated in cultural institutions on

the one hand and academia on the other, has epistemological value in both domains and serves to dissolve dichotomic attitudes towards theory and practice. It is in this sense that the idea of boundary work is adopted for the context of the fourth research model proposed in this article. By reflecting on the case of *In Between* and the migration of its output through academic and artistic domains, an understanding emerges of the interconnectedness between binary oppositions like theory and practice, science and culture, the discursive and the immersive. The exhibition was designed as a research process to study museums as research institutions in a durational and experimental manner. As the project's curator and primary researcher, I think of it as a platform to study the various ways in which curatorial research takes shape within the museum setting. It was an example of a knowledge practice, to use Rogoff's term, undertaken in the borderland between art and science, oscillating between the contexts of museums and academia. It was the outcome of a year-long experimental and open-ended research process, during which the museum was activated as a site for a critical exploration on museums as knowledge-generating institutions. The exhibition was therefore a site for both enactment and presentation of research, perhaps a form of curating at the meta-level in Sheikh's (2015) sense. END

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NOTES

1. Art historical discourse on curating is abundant, of which most relevant to this article are Martinon 2013a; Obrist and Bovier 2008; O'Neill 2012; O'Neill and Wilson 2015, 2010; O'Neill et al. 2017, 2016; Rand and Kouris 2010; Schubert 2009.
2. Another fruitful field of alternative knowledge practice is found in the cross-fertilisation between artistic practice and anthropology, especially at the level of methodology and dissemination; see, e.g., Dion and Coles 1999; Ethnographic Terminalia Collective 2015a and 2015b; Macdougall 2010; Pink 2009; Sansi 2020; Schneider 2013; Schneider and Wright 2010 and 2006.
3. The aim of my doctoral research, titled *Rethinking Research in Museums*, is to carve out a space for museum-based research, not only as practice in museums but also as a subject within New Museology. The study

explores the ways in which knowledge is generated, contested and disseminated in museums, with a focus on collections-based and curatorial research. Via a multi-perspectival approach, the project identifies various existing research models, managerial challenges and divergent understandings of the concept of research amongst museum staff and museum scholars. The study addresses research questions such as "How is knowledge is generated in museums and by whom?", "What form does that knowledge take?" and "What are its epistemological characteristics?"

4. Participating artists were artist duo Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson, Daníel Björnsson, Gretar Reynisson, Haraldur Jónsson, Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir, artist duo Hugsteypan, Ingirafn Steinarsson, Jeannette Castioni, Magnús Árnason, Olga Bergmann, Ólöf Nordal, and artist collective Skyr Lee Bob. The project was organised in collaboration with the Iceland University of the Arts with participating scholars from the fields of cultural studies, philosophy, anthropology, museology and folkloristics: Dr. Guðbjörg R. Jóhannesdóttir, Sigrún Alba Sigurðardóttir, Dr. Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson, and Dr. Valdimar Tr. Hafstein, in addition to the curator, Ólöf G. Sigfúsdóttir.
5. For further reading on artistic research, I suggest Ambrožič and Vettese 2013; Borgdorff 2012; Borgdorff and Schwab 2014; Dombois et al 2012; Gehm 2007; Kaila et al 2017; Kaila and Schlager 2012; Macleod and Holdridge 2006; Michelkevičius 2018; Schwab 2013.

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4.4 Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration

The fourth and last article takes again a wide-angled view to explore the *epistemological perspective* of museum-based research. It describes the multitude of research types accommodated by museums and advocates for a pluralistic and inclusive approach when it comes to this core museum activity. It also discusses the two main challenges museums encounter in the face of research: organisational on the one hand and conceptual on the other. Through a literature analysis, the article studies the many ways of conducting research in museums and maps them out in a five-fold typology: 'the scholar-curator model', 'the practice-based research model', 'the laboratory model', 'the co-researching with communities model' and 'the museological research model'. The typology is meant to stimulate an acknowledgement of the disparate forms of research hosted by museums, with an emphasis on the rich methodologies and forms of output museums foster. It is also an encouragement to museums, policymakers and funding bodies to move beyond the conventional academic notion of research and to acknowledge alternative types of knowledge production, particularly those that are unique to museums. To this end, the article articulates the museum-specificity and the distinct epistemological characteristics of research conducted within the museum setting, without squeezing it into a single format.

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Museum-based research: a typological exploration

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ABSTRACT

The term 'research' has multiple meanings in the museum context, ranging from a self-reflective practice integrated into any daily task to a highly specialised scientific activity. At the same time, conventional academic standards and scholarly publications are prioritised over practice-based research methods and museological forms of dissemination. This leads to an inherent hierarchy and a culture of exclusion when it comes to research practice within museums. In this article, I argue how the conceptual confusion around research creates major obstacles to this key function in museums, perhaps even more so than administrative challenges such as the lack of time and funding. To offer some clarification to a chaotic field, I present a five-fold typology of research models typically hosted by museums. Rather than presenting a fixed definition of how to do research in museums, the aim is to encourage a non-hierarchical and pluralistic approach to museum-based research.

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Introduction

Contemporary discourse on museum-based research reflects a sense of perpetual deficiency and scarcity of resources. In fact, most museums encounter multiple and complex challenges when seeking to fulfil their roles as research institutions. These may include organisational and administrative obstacles, such as the lack of time, funding, human resources or institutional support. In spite of these challenges, museums prove to be dynamic sites for research, with their museum-specific methodologies and technologies for the production and dissemination of knowledge (Bjerregaard 2020; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Pringle 2020). However, as much as time, funding and resources are real and acute problems, museums are perhaps impeded even more by conceptual ambiguities, terminological confusion and methodological limitations when it comes to research.

As I will argue in this article, conceptual confusion around research as professional practice in museums creates serious obstacles to a thriving museum research culture, both at the level of methodology and dissemination. By conceptual confusion, I refer to obscure notions of what counts as research within the global museum sector. While some museums understand research in the strictest of academic terms—typically collection-based research disseminated in peer-reviewed publications—others will see it as an

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open-ended, practice-based and experimental process, characterised by self-reflectivity and interaction with visitors (Bjerregaard 2020; Herle 2013; Huseby and Treimo 2018; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Pringle 2020). These extreme opposites often lead to conflicting attitudes and confusion amongst staff as to what counts as research within their daily practice and how to account for it (Pringle 2020; Author 2022 [forthcoming]).

By foregrounding conceptual challenges, I do not dismiss the complex practical issues that arise when planning for research. They are certainly real and concrete and have been described in museological literature (Anderson 2005; Graham 2005; Lord, Lord, and Martin 2012; Reid and Naylor 2005). However, as the meaning of the concept of research has been articulated to a far lesser extent, I will concentrate on exploring the rich variety of research models existing in museums. Following the work of museum scholars like Bjerregaard (2020a), Cavalli-Björkman and Lindqvist (2008), Lehmann-Brauns, Sichau, and Trischler (2010) and Pringle (2020), the article offers a platform for discussion towards a more inclusive attitude towards research within museums by deploying a multivocal and non-hierarchical approach. Through the five-fold typology suggested below, my aim is to explore the plurality of museum-based research rather than suggesting an exhaustive account of how research is done in museums. But first, let us briefly examine the organisational and conceptual challenges museums are faced with when seeking to fulfil their roles as research institutions.

Organisational obstacles

Planning for research is a challenge for many museums worldwide. The field of museum-based research is, to a large extent, characterised by ambiguity, uncertainty and insecurity.[1] Typically, museum professionals, whether they are curators, educators, conservators or archivists, find it difficult to find the time and funding to conduct research (Lord, Lord, and Martin 2012). Across the English-speaking museum world, organisational and administrative challenges are generally stated as the most common obstacles when it comes to research capacity, where research is portrayed as the least prioritised among daily tasks in the museum (Anderson 2005; Brandon and Wilson 2005; Graham 2005; Reid and Naylor 2005). Similarly, recent Nordic discourse echoes the same issues, where the lack of time and funding, weak infrastructural support and unclear expectations towards staff present significant obstacles to the development of research culture in museums (Fjell, Ryymin, and Ågotnes 2020; Petterson 2009; Author 2022 [forthcoming]; Sørensen 2008). As an example, 81% of museums in Norway report having unsatisfactory access to resources related to research, identifying research as the area most in need of enhancement in the near future (Arts Council Norway 2019, 32).

This problematic status of museum-based research is explained by a perpetual lack of human and financial resources, which, in turn, is seen as a consequence of an increased orientation towards public outreach, community service and neoliberal funding models (Appleton 2007; Poulot 2013; Weil 1999). Haxthausen goes as far as expressing the futility of research in the art museum domain, where 'the unrelenting quest for money and audiences [makes] serious, critical scholarship an impossibility' (2003, xi). However, organisational and administrative challenges are not entirely to blame for the current research landscape in museums. As I will argue, the confusion derives, in large part, from a rather narrow understanding of knowledge production among museums: academic

standards are prioritised over other and more to the periphery and, at worst, discredited as 'real' research.

Conceptual obstacles

While the foundational links between museums and knowledge production have clearly been established (Bennett 1995; Conn 1998; Hooper-Greenhill 1992; Whitehead 2009), the definition of research varies greatly between museums in their regional, national and international settings. Compared with other key museum functions, such as collecting, documenting, preserving, educating and displaying, the concept of research is strikingly ambiguous. One museum might identify research as the study of its collection, while another sees the act of documentation as research, and yet another will understand the exhibition itself as a form of research. Pringle (2020a) has shown how the uncertainty around what counts as research leads to insecurities amongst staff, who themselves might frame their work as research but remain unsure whether their institutions recognise their endeavours as such.

Most likely, museums (and their authorities) will account for their research in the form of peer-reviewed articles or other forms of scholarly publications, as the academic model requires. The tendency to adopt academic standards can, in part, be explained by looking at the historical relationship between museums and universities. The two types of institutions developed in parallel from the seventeenth century onwards, and it was only in the early twentieth century that universities took over the role of knowledge production, leaving communication and education as the main role of museums (Boylan 1999). In addition, ICOM's guidelines on research by museum personnel is to 'conform to established legal, ethical and academic practices' (2017, 20). However, academic standards were developed to meet the needs of universities, their ranking systems and funding schemes. The rigid evaluation criteria and quality frameworks developed for research activity in academia are perhaps not so easily transferrable to other domains, especially that of museums, whose main goal is to remain socially and culturally relevant. The conventional academic evaluation system makes less room for experimental methodologies and alternative research models, where discursive forms of output (such as journal publications) are prioritised over immersive forms of output (such as exhibitions).[2] Museums, on the other hand, generally operate in relatively open and flexible research environments (depending on their national legal framework, of course), where, instead of bibliometric point systems, quality is usually measured through criteria such as exhibitions, public programming, visitor numbers and social relevance.

Contemporary museological literature is not particularly generous when it comes to discourse on research activity, let alone definitions. Desvallées and Mairesse's description may be the closest thing to a definition, which they articulate in rather abstract and open terms: 'In the museum, research consists of the intellectual activities and work aimed at discovery, invention, and the advancement of new knowledge connected with the museum collections, or the activities it carries out' (2010, 73).[3] Despite their flexible definition, museums seem to favour conventional academic and scientific standards, whether at the level of production or dissemination of knowledge (Pringle 2020; Bjerregaard 2020; Cannizzo 2001). Consequently, research is generally identified as an expert activity undertaken by select individuals who will channel their output through textual

platforms. This, in turn, leaves less room for alternative forms of research that reflect a view towards a more open, experimental and inclusive notion of research based in the curatorial process, educational programmes, public outreach and working with the audience (Bjerregaard 2020; Engen 2021; Macdonald and Basu 2007; O'Neill and Wilson 2015; Pringle 2020).

Now that I have described some of the many obstacles museums are presented with when faced with research activity, let us look at the rich variety of research forms they accommodate on a daily basis. Throughout the article, I use the term 'museum-based research' as an umbrella to refer to any type of research taking place in museums, whether undertaken in its physical or virtual space, performed by in-house staff or external partners, conducted individually or collectively, and whatever the title of the staff member doing the research.

A typology of museum-based research

Firmly rooted in European expansionism and the Enlightenment's scientific revolution, museums have historical affinities to a wide range of academic disciplines, from natural history and art history to anthropology, archaeology, geology and medicine (Messer-Davidow, Shumway, and Sylvan 1993; Hooper-Greenhill 1992). As such, museums host an extreme variety of methodologies that are usually predicated on disciplinary academic knowledge and training applied to the study of objects in the collection (Cameron 2012; Thomas 2016). Apart from collection-based or thematic research, museums also conduct important research on pedagogy and education, social media, and health and wellness, in addition to audience research and the systemic collection of demographic data on their visitors.

Drawing on this vast variety of knowledge production, this section of the article attempts to create an overview of the 'remarkably disparate nature of research in museums', to borrow a phrase from Anderson (2008, 11). Through a five-fold typological exploration, my aim is to highlight the richness and plurality of research in museums rather than suggesting an exhaustive account of how research is done there. Hence, the five categories are demarcated by broad lines, each including an analysis of main characteristics: the scholar-curator model, the practice-based research model, the scientific laboratory model, the citizen science model, and the museological research model. These should be read in relation to one another as the five models usually overlap and, in most cases, support each other.

The scholar-curator model

The figure of the 'scholar-curator' emerged in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when wealthy collectors and scholars began to hire paid labour to assist with the care and maintenance of their collections (Boylan 2011). In the scholar-curator model, the museum operates as a site for advanced collection-based research, typically with epistemic affinities to traditional academic research (Rito 2020). Here, the museum lends itself as a platform for research on its primary resources, either by in-house staff or external partners (Fink 2006; King and Marstine 2006). This model is characterised by research undertaken by experts with extensive academic training in a particular discipline, usually

according to procedures and methods adopted from the university sector. It is often externally funded and typically results in the production of scholarly text with a heavily theoretical basis, sometimes also resulting in an exhibition.

Although generating an extensive knowledge base across disciplines, the emphasis on academic standards in this model creates unfortunate tensions when it comes to the role of museums as socially relevant institutions. Not to dismiss other skill sets held by museum professionals, Roche et al. (2021) have pointed out how research disseminated in peer-reviewed journals does not readily comply with the vision of community engagement and information accessible to the public. They argue how academic writing is not necessarily the skill set required of museum professionals, who, apart from their area of expertise, are typically more equipped with other forms of communication skills, such as the production of exhibition catalogues, monographs, and web and social media content as well as verbal skills. Their view further supports Pringle's (2020) vision of the scholar-curator model creating internal hierarchies and a culture of exclusion, where only some forms of research are seen as legitimate.

The practice-based research model

Although closely related, the practice-based research model is more open and flexible than the scholar-curator model described above. Practice-based research in museums is closely integrated and embedded in the daily tasks of museum professionals, whether they are curators, educators, preservers or anything else. It is a form of research where an original investigation takes place *through* practice, where theory and practice equally inform the knowledge-generating process in a heuristic and reflexive manner. In this model, reflection *in* and *on* action takes place continually through the research process, where the researcher engages with problems and questions as they emerge through the process (Schön 1983). In the museum context, the output of such research is not limited to discursive forms or peer-reviewed publications (although it often is), but can be embedded in material, physical or spatio-temporal forms, such as the exhibition itself. Pringle has contributed significantly to articulating this form of research, which she coins as 'the Practitioner Researcher model' (2020, 65). Rather than seeing research as an autonomous and individual action separate from other professional practices in the museum, she emphasises research as an integral part of the museum profession. She understands it as rooted in reflexive and creative processes that are predicated on three key elements: a) the importance of questions, often emerging from practice; b) a structured process of enquiry, often taking place in a cyclical form where investigation and learning feeds back into the practice; and c) the generation of new knowledge or new insights that are shared publicly (ibid., 34–35). Pringle's understanding of research is not unlike what is understood by the term in academia. However, where universities and museums diverge in this regard is primarily on the question of output and the possible forms it can take. In the case of museums, knowledge coming out of the research process is manifested through the very same practice that generates it, such as exhibitions (through the curatorial process) or other forms of public programming (such as educational programs, conferences and public events). Universities, on the other hand, typically prioritise one dominant form of output, the written one.

Fitting into the practice-based research model is the current emphasis on the exhibition as a form of research in itself (Bjerregaard 2020; Herle 2013; Macdonald and Basu 2007; Rito and Balaskas 2020; Author 2021; Rogoff 2013; Sheikh 2015). Here, the exhibition is understood as an analytical tool or a philosophical proposition through which to engage in knowledge generation that continues through the lifespan of the exhibition. In this context, the research is not limited to the curatorial process leading up to installation (as is usually the case in the scholar-curator model) but is an ongoing process within the exhibition space itself, often involving the participation of visitors. This can be accomplished through various means, such as observing and reflecting on what takes place within the exhibition space during its lifetime (Bjerregaard 2020; Treimo 2020) or by approaching public programming and extended events as part of the investigative process (Martinon and Rogoff 2013; Rito 2020). Consequently, exhibitions are seen as platforms of knowledge-in-the-making rather than final forms of research results.

The laboratory model

The laboratory model refers to empirical and scientific research taking place within the museum premises. Museums operating in the natural sciences as well as museums of science and technology typically belong to this category. Furthermore, conservation work in all types of museums often falls into this category as well. The laboratory model involves experimental and theoretical work carried out through scientific methodologies and using advanced technological equipment. Specimens from the collection are studied in a controlled environment, similar to the kind of research that takes place in natural science departments in universities (Shuarez and Tsutsui 2004). Output from this form of research is primarily disseminated in peer-reviewed scientific journals or other discursive forms, such as scientific conferences. Commonly, this type of research is conducted in collaboration with external scientists or in the form of internships, where a museum and a university co-supervise a doctoral student or co-employ a research scientist (Graham and Jomphe 2010). Akin to what takes place within the scholar-curator model, the scientist often conducts their research in isolation from other activities in the museum, such as exhibition-making, educational programming or other social outreach.

In recent years, science museums are increasingly seeking to promote their research by moving their laboratories (the designated space where research takes place) into the gallery space (Meyer 2011; Rössig and Jahn 2019). Here, an effort is made to reveal research as an activity that is integrated into the overall museum work by placing open workspaces and laboratories within the exhibition space itself. This development speaks to the aim of making collections visible by opening up research activities in the museum, sometimes putting the researchers themselves on display for visitors. Such a reflexive practice creates an unusual level of transparency while, at the same time, prompting ethical questions in relation to the 'objectification' of staff (Meyer 2011).

The model of co-researching with communities

Co-researching with communities in museums takes many shapes, depending on the type of museum, its national or regional context and its general mission. One form of co-

researching with communities is what has been called citizen science. Citizen science is a rapidly expanding field where an integrated model of public knowledge production and engagement with science is exercised. It includes the active participation of the public and amateur-expert communities in research and innovation projects, typically on a voluntary basis (Hecker et al. 2019). Museums have proven to be particularly pertinent as platforms for this type of research, perhaps even more so than universities, because of their readiness to reach out to communities (Sforzi et al. 2019). Citizen science is particularly evident among museums operating within the realm of natural history and science. Here, the public is invited to contribute to the understanding of complex issues like climate change and biodiversity by submitting documented observations or collected examples that often lead to considerable enhancement of data and information (Spear, Pauly, and Kaiser 2017).

Another form of community-based co-research in the museum context engages individuals in a process of shared knowledge production. Here, Bounia's (2014, 1) point about the need to promote a more 'contemporary' idea of museum-based research, which is 'multi-faceted, complex, open to the participation of many different interested parties, such as different professionals and communities of knowledge,' becomes particularly relevant. Moving beyond the crowd-sourcing of data (as part of citizen science), the public's role, in this case, is to contribute directly to the contextualisation and interpretation of data—usually objects in the collection. In this model, museums offer themselves as platforms for the sharing and exchange of personal and collective knowledge existing in communities (Silverman 2015a; Krmpotich and Peers 2011). In this way, community members are invited to contribute to the existing bulk of knowledge in the museum through their lived experiences, embodied memories, insights and oral narratives. However, in this attempt to re-evaluate Western-centric narratives through the activity of co-research, museum- and community-based knowledge often diverge. Karp and Kratz (2015) have shown how a new understanding and new interpretation become possible through a careful process of negotiation and sharing between museums and communities. Yet, many museums are reluctant to reframe their epistemological authority or give up their power to determine the meaning of objects.

As such, this type is the most delicate and complex form of research in museums, often drawing on knowledge and experience within minority groups, whether embedded in colonial history, race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or disability. However, these knowledges are increasingly seen as important and meaningful input into the research process, particularly with growing awareness of the need to decolonise the very concept (and practice) of research itself, as so soundly articulated by Smith (1999). On this note, Simon (2010) has pointed out how participatory processes, particularly within museums dealing with cultural and colonial history, are often designed and defined by museums rather than the partners they team up with. Consequently, the process of co-researching with communities is at high risk of being instrumentalised, where the public's participation becomes coercive rather than based on agency and self-determination. Perhaps Silverman's notion of the 'epistemological patina' of museum objects can become useful in this context (2015b, 3). In his view, museum objects embody multiple layers of meaning, which gives them the ability to become vehicles for sharing of different understandings, viewpoints and knowledges. In turn, this creates an opportunity for translations of different types of knowledges that exist

in and between museums and their communities. As such, the model of co-researching with communities speaks particularly to museums' efforts to become more inclusive, accessible and socially relevant.

The museological research model

Museological research refers to an inquiry into museums as public institutions, the history of their establishment and the development of their current form. Systematic data collection on visitors through surveys and questionnaires are a fundamental part of knowledge production in museums, typically situated within public communication and marketing departments. As forms of museological research, visitor research of this sort contributes significantly to the general demographical knowledge and understanding of museums and their visitors, which, in turn, informs policy development at the authoritative level as well as decision-making at the institutional level.

Museological research has developed in direct relationship to the development of museology as a university discipline, where the research is typically conducted by museum scholars affiliated with universities (Lorente 2012). As a relatively recent university discipline, museology has had a significant impact on professional museum practice, not least in terms of professionalisation and continuing education for staff, but also with regard to a heightened awareness and critical approach to the socio-cultural role of museums. With the advent of 'new museology' in the early 1990s, the previous focus on the practicalities and technicalities of museum operations was replaced by a scholarly interest in the socio-political role of museums, their ethical responsibilities and a critical reflection on how museums can claim relevance in relation to their communities (Anderson 2012; Macdonald and Fyfe 1996; Marstine 2006). Within the Nordic museum domain, current discourse has directed the spotlight at the parallel development of museology as a scholarly discipline and museological research, emphasising how the establishment of museum studies has not only increased the professionalisation of museum practice, but has also led to various museum reforms, organisational changes and increased collaboration between museums and universities (Brenna 2018; Nørskov 2018; Silvén 2018; Vilkuna 2018; Whitehead and Hafsteinsson 2018). This development shows how museological research is not only conducted by scholars under the auspices of universities, but also by museum staff, similar to the practitioner-researcher model described above. Consequently, museological research can be said to have affected a self-reflective, analytical and critical approach by museums and their staff to their own learning processes and development as public institutions (Grewcock 2014).

Conclusion

In this article, I have described museums as research institutions together with the many obstacles they face while fulfilling that role. In the discussion of organisational and conceptual challenges as a backdrop for the confusion over museum-based research, I have foregrounded the latter. As much as time, funding and human resources are real and acute problems when it comes to research activity, I believe museums are even more impeded by conceptual ambiguities, terminological confusion and methodological limitations. Consequently, the problem with museum-based research can be explained, to a

large extent, with reference to a conservative and limiting attitude towards knowledge production. This attitude is characterised by the upholding of academic standards that are rooted in scientific methodologies and textual forms of output as they are practiced within universities rather than museological practice. At the same time, museums foster a great variety of research models, many of them unique to museums. However, the dominant inclination towards conventional academic standards only generates limiting conceptions of what could be understood as research in museums and leads to internal hierarchies of exclusion amongst staff.

In an attempt to open up the notion of research in the museum context, I have developed an overview of existing research models as they are practiced in museums. My intention is to show the rich variety of research activity in museums in a non-hierarchical and pluralistic manner and, hopefully, to contribute to a diversified understanding of what research can look like in museums and how it can be done. The overview is structured as a five-fold typology. It draws on broad lines and abstract framing as each category is to be understood as overlapping and in relation to the others. Each category reflects different knowledge practices as they unfold through various research processes, methodologies and forms of output. I have named these the scholar-curator model, the practice-based research model, the laboratory model, the model of co-researching with communities, and the museological research model. I do not expect these to be the only forms of research undertaken in museums, but I do hope them to be understood as an attempt to create a framework around the many ways there are for museums to generate and disseminate knowledge.

Notes

1. Exceptions to this generalisation are, e.g., (in no particular order and unevenly distributed across the globe), the Natural History Museum (UK), the Field Museum (US), the Tate Modern (UK), the Humboldt Forum (DE), the AfricaMuseum (BE), the Rijksmuseum (NL), Museo del Prado (ES), Museo Galileo (IT), Glyptoteket (DK), the National Museum of Norway (NO), the Vasa Museum (SE), the Kyoto National Museum (JP), the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (MX), Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (NZ), the Museum of Black Civilizations (SN) and the National Museum in New Delhi (IN). Furthermore, university museums are generally research intensive, such as the Pitt Rivers Museum at the University of Oxford (UK), the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (CA), the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo (NO), the Museum of Zoology at the University of São Paulo (BR) and the Chau Chak Wing Museum at the University of Sydney (AU).
2. This has been changing during the last two to three decades, especially with the introduction of artistic research within the higher arts education system. In artistic research, knowledge is generated through creative practice and disseminated in the form of an artwork (often accompanied by critical reflection and contextualisation in the form of a text). Other alternative forms of research have entered academia in the last few years, such as embodied critical thinking (a branch of philosophy) and reflective practice and sensory methodologies (particularly within anthropology and ethnography). These research forms build on feminist, postcolonial and post-human theories, and have contributed significantly to the expansion of the idea of research and science as rooted in Western culture.
3. I have discussed elsewhere the synergies between this museum-based definition of research and the official definition of research and development as recognised by academia (Author 2020).

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5 Conclusion

This study has brought research as a museum activity to the centre of attention – an unarticulated topic within contemporary museum theory and an underdeveloped within museum practice. Its objective is to explore how museums and museum practitioners make sense of research within their own settings, and to identify ways to support and sustain this fundamental component of museum work. Drawing on literature across disciplines, the study feeds on theoretical discourse from museology, curatorial studies, artistic research and, to some extent, anthropology. It encompasses a wide approach by speaking to all types of public museums within the general framework of the international museum domain. To further deepen the subject, the project involves two case studies within the local setting of Iceland.

Central to the study is the concept of 'research' as it appears within and migrates between the two domains of academia and museums, with emphasis on the latter. It demonstrates that the term 'research' has multiple meanings in the museum context, ranging from a self-reflective practice integrated into any daily task to a highly specialised scientific activity. At the same time, conventional academic standards and scholarly publications are prioritised over practice-based research methods and museological forms of dissemination. My goal has been to gain a better understanding of how research takes place in museums, to explore the vast range of methodologies and forms of output, and to reveal how it relates to other activities carried out in the workplace, particularly display and public programming. My motive was also to understand how my own discipline frames research within contemporary museological discourse, both as a theoretical concept and as a professional activity. This broad approach to the meaning of research runs throughout the study and is reflected in its research questions:

- How does museology articulate the role of research in museums?
- How do Icelandic museum practitioners understand the concept of research within their immediate working environments?
- What kind of knowledge does curating generate?
- And what types of research do museums accommodate, and how can their epistemological traits be described?

Throughout this work, I advocate for a pluralistic approach that accommodates both conventional academic research as well as alternative forms of research. I have identified the numerous challenges most museums encounter when seeking to fulfil their role as research institutions. I have also suggested ways to engage with some of these challenges, in particular the importance of claiming a space for alternative research practices that are, after all, the hallmark of museum-based research. I have highlighted the outstanding potential museums

have as platforms for knowledge production by drawing attention to the unique epistemological characteristics of museum-based research, especially when compared to conventional academic research frameworks. To the best of my knowledge, this kind of approach has not been done within museological discourse in such a broad and encompassing manner as this work reflects. I argue that by upholding a strict academic understanding of the concept of research, museums are only putting unnecessary constraints on their research instead of expanding it to include the rich variety of research forms fostered by museums. As evidence, I offer a case study on curating as research (Article III: "Curatorial Research as Boundary Work"), a case study on museum-based research in Iceland (Article II: "The State of Research among Icelandic Museums"), and a mapping of the extremely rich variety of methodologies and forms of output practiced in museums (Article IV: "Museum-Based Research: A Typological Exploration").

5.1 The Four Perspectives

Findings from the **museological perspective** reveal a striking ambiguity of the concept of research as it emerges within museological discourse. It also shows how underarticulated the topic of museum-based research remains within contemporary museology. In addition to identifying blind spots in the literature, this part of the study contributes to the field by describing museum-based research with an emphasis on its epistemological impact on two worlds: museums (culture) and academia (science). This is what I indicate as the 'double agency' of museum-based research, a phrase I borrow from the discourse on artistic research. Furthermore, I see this ability to oscillate between domains as a way to escape the dominant notion that research and public programming are mutually exclusive, as identified in this part of the study.

Findings from the **institutional perspective** confirm many of the challenges reported by museums on the issue of research. This part of the study is based on empirical data from a twofold survey among accredited museums in Iceland. Other public data, such as legal acts, public policies, institutional information and public data from the Museum Council of Iceland, also underpin this part of the study. The survey reveals the many challenges related to museum-based research in the Icelandic context, whether organisational (manpower, time, funding, etc.) or conceptual (how to define research). By contextualising the findings within the Nordic museum discourse, I show how the problem with research is not limited to Icelandic museums. However, what seems to be particularly the case in the Icelandic context is the lack of guidelines and criteria on behalf of the public administration while, at the same time, research remains a formal requirement for accreditation. In sum, the study shows how research as a professional museum activity remains undefined and unregulated, and how this seems to be sustained

at the institutional level. Nevertheless, the survey respondents showed intense enthusiasm for research and willingness to enhance this part of their work environment.

The **curatorial perspective** takes as a case study a first-hand experience of conducting research within the museum setting. It shows how new knowledge and understanding can be generated through an open-ended and experimental research process based on curatorial methodologies, where exhibitionary technologies and architecture play a defining factor in the both the production and dissemination of knowledge. By reflecting on the case of *In Between* and the migration of its output through academic and artistic domains, I began to understand the interconnectedness between binary oppositions like theory and practice, science and culture, the discursive and the immersive. The exhibition was designed as a research process to study museums as research institutions in a durational and experimental manner. As the project's curator and primary researcher, I thought of it as a platform to study the various ways in which curatorial research takes shape within the museum setting. It was an example of research undertaken in the borderland between art and science, oscillating between the contexts of museums and academia. The final exhibition and accompanying events were the outcome of a year-long experimental and open-ended research process wherein the museum was activated as a site for a critical exploration on museums as knowledge-generating institutions. The exhibition, and the museum that housed it, was therefore a site for both enactment and presentation of research. Here, I made use of the concept of 'boundary objects' as coined by Star and Griesemer (1989) in their study on objects that serve as translators across disciplines. The concept has also been used in the field of artistic research to describe how its twofold output, disseminated in cultural institutions on the one hand and academia on the other, has epistemological value in both domains and serves to dissolve dichotomic attitudes towards theory and practice.

The **epistemological perspective** is meant to step back from the close-up view of the last two perspectives and take a vast look at research in museums. This last perspective is also the most defining for the study as a whole, where a multitude of methodologies and forms of output that are unique to museums are mapped under the umbrella term of museum-based research. My intention was to create an overview of the rich variety of museum-based research in a non-hierarchical and pluralistic manner, a contribution to a diversified understanding of what research means in the museum context. The overview is structured as a five-fold typology and draws on broad lines and abstract framing, as the categories – the scholar-curator model, the practice-based research model, the laboratory model, the model of co-researching with communities, and the museological research model – are to be seen as fluid and overlapping. Each

category reflects different knowledge practices as they unfold through various research processes, methodologies and forms of output. I do not expect these to be the only forms of research undertaken in museums, but I do hope them to be understood as an attempt to create a framework around the many ways there are for museums to generate and disseminate knowledge. In continuation of the proposed typology, I argue that museums are excellent platforms for an expanded notion of research that moves beyond the conventional academic understanding. This expanded notion is constituted upon the unique epistemological traits that characterise museum-based research, including experimental, collaborative and processual research processes that unfold through material, embodied and sensuous methodologies, and that are disseminated through fragmented, non-conclusive and open-ended output. At the same time, I avoid squeezing museum-based research into a single definition, as I recognise the dynamic and fluid (and sometimes, fuzzy) nature of research.

5.2 Future Directions

This study takes on a broad, and sometimes abstract, approach to museum-based research. In its current shape, it is more analytical and theoretical in character than practical, with its overviews, listings and mappings of what I see as the research potential of museums. As such, it opens up more questions than those it seeks to answer, particularly in relation to the practical aspects of research activity in museums. One such question relates to how museum-based research can be evaluated and with what tools. Another question, and perhaps a more complex one, pertains to how criticality can be inserted into the framework of museum-based research, particularly research not disseminated through conventional academic channels. Therefore, the next step for the present study would be to develop tools and guidelines that can be applied within the museum workplace. Tentatively, these could be discursive tools that would help practitioners identify the research elements of their work, or guidelines on how to disseminate their research in other forms than academic journal publications. Another step is the development of a language that would better articulate the unique ways museums contribute to knowledge among other fields of research in the global arena. Such a future project would foresee a process of implementation and further data collection on research activity in a collaborative, bottom-up and practice-based manner. This process would need the participation of various museum sector stakeholders: museum practitioners, museum directors, policymakers and public authorities. I believe that only by articulating the distinct epistemic qualities of the museum research process, including its methods and means of dissemination, will the possibility arise to carve out a space for research, not only within museology but also as a practice in museums. By doing so, its relations to other core components of museum activity will emerge. Identifying the role of the

material, the temporal, the spatial and the sensuous in museum-based research will perhaps cater to O'Neill's vision for an epistemology of museums that would "integrate all the forms of knowledge which museums acquire, produce, deploy and disseminate" (2006, p. 99). And only by understanding these qualities are we better equipped with tools to debate the very content and validity of that knowledge.

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Appendix I: List of Survey Questions

The following shows the list of questions presented in the two surveys conducted for this doctoral research. The two surveys contained the same set of questions, with only the referenced time periods varying between years. The 2014 survey enquired about research activity between 2010 and 2013, and the 2020 survey referred to research activity between 2017 and 2020.

Type of museum

- Cultural history museum
- Natural history museum
- Art museum
- Hybrid

Ownership

- Owned by municipality
- Self-governing institution
- Owned by the state

Operational cost on a yearly basis

- 10 million ISK or less
- 10-30 million ISK
- 30-50 million ISK
- 50-70 million ISK
- 70 million ISK or more

Number of full-time positions

- 1 or less
- 2-5
- 6-9
- 10 or more

Does the museum have an official research policy?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please indicate where it is available

[text box for typing]

How extensive would you say the scope of research was in your museum, compared to other core activities?

- Very much
- Rather much
- Average
- Rather little
- Very little
- None

What is the level of education among your staff (you can choose from more than one option)?

- Postgraduate / doctoral degree
- Graduate / master's degree
- Undergraduate / bachelor's degree
- Diploma
- High school diploma

Do you consider your museum to have enough human resources to conduct research?

- Yes
- No

Describe the relationship between research and your collection

- The research is generally on the collection
- The research is generally on subjects not directly related to the collection
- The research is generally on the collection as well subjects not directly related to it
- The museum does not conduct research

What was the total number of research projects conducted by the museum in the period 2010-2013/2017-2020?

- None
- 1-5
- 6-9
- 10 or more

In what form was the research output disseminated?

- Annual report
- Research report
- Self-publishing
- Publication by an external publisher
- Non peer-reviewed article in the local setting
- Non peer-reviewed article in the international setting
- Peer-reviewed article in an Icelandic journal
- Peer-reviewed article in an international journal
- Exhibition
- Catalogue
- Webpage
- In a conference/symposium organised by the museum
- In a conference/symposium organised by an external party
- Other [text box for typing]

Describe the division of research labour at your museum during 2010-2013/2017-2020

- Museum staff conducted the research in general
- External party conducted the research in general
- A combination of internal staff and externals conducted the research

Please indicate the researchers' role

- Curator
- Craftsperson
- Artist
- Scholar/scientist
- Expert
- Other [text box for typing]

Did the museum collaborate formally with an external partner on research in 2010-2013/2017-2020?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate with whom

- A museum
- A cultural institution, other than a museum
- A university
- An educational institution, other than university
- A research institution

- A municipality
- An independent individual
- Other [text box for typing]

Do you consider collaboration with other institutions to be enhancing for research at your museum?

- Yes
- No

Did your museum apply for competitive research grants during 2010-2013/2017-2020?

- Yes
- No

Please indicate to what kind of funds/programmes

- No grant was received
- Archaeological heritage Fund
- Architectural heritage Fund
- Design Fund
- Visual Arts Fund
- The Icelandic Research Fund
- The Museum Fund
- The Music Fund
- Regional cultural funds
- Regional development funds
- Other funds from ministries
- Nordic funds
- European funds
- Other [text box for typing]

How much of your annual budget is spent on research on average?

- Less than 1%
- 1-5%
- 5-10%
- More than 10%

Do you think museums in Iceland receive adequate support (financial and professional) to fulfil their research requirements?

- Very much
- Rather much
- Average
- Rather little
- Very little

What kind of support do you think your museum needs in order to fulfil its research requirements?

[Text box for typing]

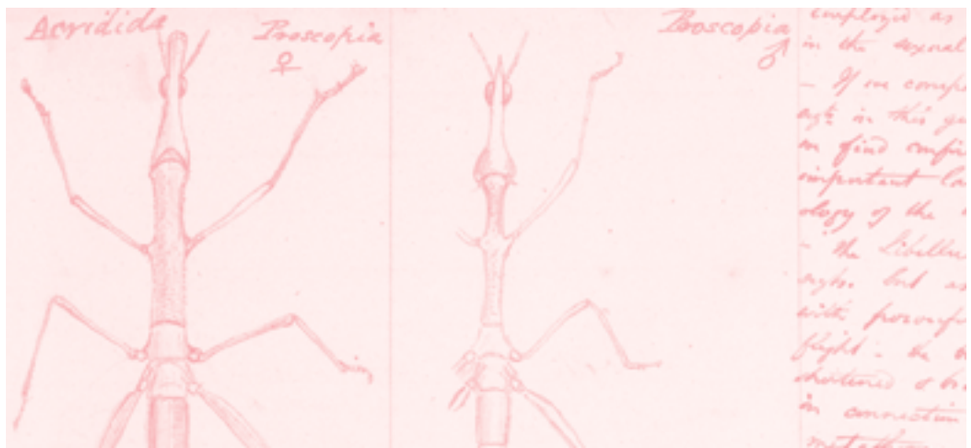
Describe shortly your general approach to museum-based research: how it relates to other core operations, how it is disseminated etc.

[Text box for typing]

Appendix II: List of Accredited Museums in 2020

Borgarsögusafn Reykjavíkur / Reykjavík City Museum
Byggðasafn Árnesinga / Árnessýsla Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Borgarfjarðar / Borgarfjörður Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Dalamanna / Dalir Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Garðskaga / Garðskagi Maritime Heritage Museum
Byggðasafn Hafnarfjarðar / Hafnarfjörður Museum
Byggðasafn Húnvetninga og Strandamanna / Húnaþing and Strandir Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Reykjanesbæjar / Reykjanesbær Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Skagfirðinga / Skagafjörður Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Snæfellinga og Hnappdæla / Snæfellsnes Regional Museum
Byggðasafn Vestfjarða / Vestfirðir Regional Museum
Byggðasafnið Görðum, Akranesi / Garðar Regional Museum
Byggðasafnið Hvoll, Dalvík / Hvoll Regional Museum
Byggðasafnið í Skógum / Skógar Regional Museum
Flugsafn Íslands / Icelandic Aviation Museum
Gerðarsafn – Listasafn Kópavogs / Kópavogur Art Museum
Gljúfrasteinn – hús skáldsins / Gljúfrasteinn – Laxenss Museum
Grasagarður Reykjavíkur / Reykjavík Botanic Garden
Hafnarborg / Hafnarborg – the Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art
Heimilisiðnaðarsafnið / Textile Museum
Hvalasafnið á Húsavík / Húsavík Whale Museum
Hönnunarsafn Íslands / Museum of Design and Applied Art
Iðnaðarsafnið á Akureyri / Akureyri Industry Museum
Kvikmyndasafn Íslands / Icelandic Film Museum
Landbúnaðarsafn Íslands / Icelandic Agricultural Museum
Listasafn ASÍ / ASÍ Art Museum
Listasafn Árnesinga / LÁ Art Museum
Listasafn Háskóla Íslands / The University of Iceland Art Museum
Listasafn Reykjanesbæjar / Reykjanes Art Museum
Listasafn Reykjavíkur / Reykjavík Art Museum
Listasafnið á Akureyri / Akureyri Art Museum
Menningarmiðstöð Hornafjarðar / Hornafjörður Cultural Center
Menningarmiðstöð Þingeyinga / Þingeyinga District Cultural Center
Minjasafn Austurlands / East Iceland Regional Museum
Minjasafn Egils Ólafssonar að Hnjóti / Hnjótur Regional Museum
Minjasafnið Bustarfelli / Bustarfell Regional Museum
Minjasafnið á Akureyri / Akureyri Museum
Náttúrufræðistofa Kópavogs / Natural History Museum of Kópavogur
Nýlistasafnið / The Living Art Museum
Safnasafnið / The Icelandic Folk and Outsider Art Museum
Sagnheimar – Byggðasafn / Sagnheimar Folk Museum
Sauðfjársetrið á Ströndum / Strandir Sheep Farming Museum
Síldarminjasafn Íslands / The Herring Era Museum
Sjóminjasafn Austurlands / East Iceland Maritime Museum
Tækniminjasafn Austurlands / Technical Museum of East Iceland
Veiðisafnið / Hunting and Wildlife Museum

Í bili
In Between



Tvö síðastliðin haust hafa verið settar upp þematengdar samsýningar íslenskra listamanna í Hafnarborg, menningar- og listamiðstöð Hafnarfjarðar. Sýningarstjórar völdu verk eftir listamenn í fremstu röð og unnu útfrá hugmyndum sem voru ofarlega á baugi. Sýningarnar vöktu athygli og sönnuðu enn einu sinni að myndlist er áhrifarík uppspretta hugmynda og getur veitt ferskum andblæ inn í íslenska samfélagsumræðu. Til að opna safnavettvanginn fyrir nýjum straumum og skapa tækifæri fyrir stækkandi hóp fólks sem vill og getur tekist á við sýningarstjórnarleg verkefni var tekin sú ákvörðun að bjóða sýningarstjórum að senda inn tillögur að sýningu haustið 2011.

Listráð Hafnarborgar valdi tillögu Ólafar Gerðar Sigfúsdóttur úr nokkrum fjölda góðra tillagna og hefur hún unnið að undirbúningi sýningarinnar frá ársbyrjun ásamt listamönnunum sem hún valdi til samstarfs. Flest verkanna eru ný og öll endurspegla þau fjölbreytt viðfangsefni en eiga sameiginlegt að tengjast með einhverjum hætti söfnum og vera farvegur nýrra hugmynda í gegnum hluti og upplifun fremur en texta. Sýningarstjórinn og listamennirnir hafa komist að niðurstöðu um nýtingu safnrýmisins sem á ákveðinn hátt ögrar stofnuninni og gestum hennar. Hefðbundið sýningarrými Hafnarborgar er nýtt sem biðsalur eða umbreytingarými þar sem sýningargesturinn upplifir sjálfan sig í óvæntu samhengi. Þá verður rof þegar hulunni er svipt af sýningunni þar sem verk listamannanna skapa heim sem byggður er á mergð hluta og hugmynda sem oft eru framandi en settar fram á þann hátt að vísar til upphafs allra safna, sem er *furðustofan* eða *wunderkammer.*

Listamönnunum og sýningarstjóranum eru færðar þakkir fyrir þann kraft og metnað sem þau hafa sett í verkefnið, og fræðimönnunum sem unnu með þeim er ekki síður þakkað sitt framlag. Í aðdraganda sýningarinnar hefur safnið verið vettvangur umræðu og sköpunar í ríkari mæli en vant er þegar samsýningar af þessu tagi eru í undirbúningi. Nú er komið að gestum Hafnarborgar að taka þátt í þeirri umræðu og sköpun.

Ólöf K. Sigurðardóttir
forstöðumaður Hafnarborgar

The past two autumns have seen themed group exhibitions of Icelandic artists installed in Hafnarborg, the Hafnarfjörður Centre of Culture and Fine Art. Curators chose work by leading artists and worked with ideas which were high on the agenda each time. The exhibitions received attention and proved yet again that visual art is an influential source of ideas which can channel fresh winds into Icelandic social discourse. To open the museum platform up to fresh ideas and create new opportunities for a growing group of people who can and want to tackle curatorial projects, the decision was made to extend an open invitation to curators to submit a proposal for an exhibition for the autumn of 2011.

The Hafnarborg Art Council chose the proposal of Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir from several good submissions and she has worked on the preparation of the exhibition from the beginning of the year with the artists she chose for collaboration. Most of the work presented is new and reflects diverse subjects tied together by an approach related to museological methodologies, presenting new ideas through objects and experience rather than text. The curator and the artists have decided to use the museum space in an interesting way, challenging the institution and its guests. The traditional Hafnarborg exhibition space is turned into a waiting room or a transitional space where the exhibition guest experiences himself in an unexpected context. Then dissolution occurs when the veil is pulled off the exhibition where the artists´ work creates a world built on a myriad of objects and ideas, often exotic but presented in such a way as to refer to the origins of all museums, *the curiosity cabinet* or *wunderkammer.*

We thank the artists and the curator for the energy and ambition they have ploughed into the project and also thank the academics who collaborated in the prelude to the exhibition for their contribution. In the run-up to the exhibition, the museum has been a site of discussion and creation to a greater extent than is usual when group exhibitions of this kind are being prepared. Now it is the turn of the guests of Hafnarborg to participate in that discussion and creation.

Ólöf K. Sigurðardóttir, Director
Hafnarborg Centre of Culture and Fine Art

Í bili

Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir

Hræ af óþekktu dýri, útskorið spjót villimanns, grískir fornmunir, tvíhöfða snákur, kló af goðsögulegum griffon, jaðigrænn eðalsteinn. Hlutir sem aðalsmaður á sextándu öld raðar í skáp og marka upphaf skipulegrar söfnunar á Vesturlöndum. Tímabilið er endurreisn og heimsmynd Evrópubúa við það að gjörbyltast, heimurinn að opnast upp á gátt. Siglingar yfir úthöf verða mögulegar, ólík menningarsamfélög snertast í fyrsta sinn og vöruskipti mynda flókin net þvert á heimsálfur. Furðuverur, fágæti og dýrgripir eru dregin upp úr kofforti og valdahlutföll heimshlut-

anna riðlast á dramatískan hátt: andstæðuparið *við og hinir* markar óafmáanleg spor í mannkynssöguna.

Í þessu ástandi ryður sér til rúms nýtt þekkingarkerfi og á í stöðugum átökum við hið gamla. Á milli kerfanna tveggja myndast bil þar sem skapast möguleiki til að hugsa út fyrir ramma hugsunarinnar sjálfrar. Trúarlegar kennisetningar og mælskulist hörfa undan ágangi áþreifanlegra hluta, og til verður nýtt kerfi þar sem áferð, formgerð, litbrigði og lykt skapa þekkinguna um heiminn.

Í munasafni endurreisnarinnar er heimurinn allur samankominn í sérsmíðuðum skáp sem er samsettur úr ótal hólfum, skúffum og skúmaskotum. Síðar eru innréttuð gluggalaus rými, svokallaðar furðustofur, *wunderkammer*, sem líkjast mest innviðum skáps í stækkaðri mynd. Greifar, barónar og lærdómsmenn leggja í leiðangur til fjarlægra heimshluta og snúa til baka með heiminn í farteskinu. Steinum og skeljum er raðað í hillur og ofan í skúffur, sýnishorn dýraríkisins böðuð í formalíni, plöntur þurrkaðar og pressaðar. Sérhverjum hlut er haganlega komið fyrir í skipulagi heimsmyndarinnar og aristókratinn hefur fullkomið vald yfir safni sínu. Listamenn umbreyta fyrirbærum í sjónrænt form, hárnákvæm myndverk sem nú eru ein merkilegasta heimildin um upphaf náttúruvísindanna. Lærðir menn gefa innfluttum furðuverum latnesk nöfn, afkóða formgerð þeirra og frjóvgunarhætti, gefa þeim sess í nýju flokkunarkerfi í hraðri mótun.

Löngu síðar urðu furðustofurnar að opinberum söfnum sem einhverstaðar á leiðinni aðgreindust í náttúrugripasöfn, þjóðminjasöfn og listasöfn.

Tímabil upplýsingar tók við af endurreisninni, flokkar riðluðust og fjölfaldaðar alfræðiorðabækur hólfuðu heiminn niður enn á ný. Með módernismanum urðu markalínurnar óyggjandi en síðan tók póstmódernisminn til við að afmá þær, glundroði skapaðist í fræðaheiminum og enn á ný varð heimsmyndin úrelt. Þannig kennir sagan okkur svo rausnarlega að samtenging og sundurleitni fyrirbæra eru ekki náttúrulögmál heldur háð tilteknum frumöflum tilverunnar, hvort sem þau eru menningarleg, félagsleg, pólitísk eða vísindaleg. Þessi öfl tengjast innbyrðis og vinna ýmist á móti eða með hvort öðru í stöðugu umbreytingarferli, þar sem merking, gildi og sannleikur eru í sífellu skilgreind og endurskilgreind. Drifkrafturinn hefur hinsvegar alltaf verið sá sami, forvitni og þrá eftir hinu undraverða.

In Between

Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir

Carcass of an unknown animal, carved spear of a savage, Greco-Roman antiquities, a two-headed snake, a claw from a mythical griffin, a precious stone as green as jade; objects that a sixteenth century nobleman arranges into a cabinet and marks the dawn of systematic collecting in the Western world. It is the Renaissance and the world-view of Europeans is about to be revolutionised; the world is about to open wide. Navigation across oceans becomes possible, different cultures touch for the first time and networks of commodity exchange spread across continents. Exotic creatures, rarities and treasures are pulled out of a trunk and power relations are dramatically changed; the binary opposition *us and them* takes its place in history for good.

Under these circumstances a new system of knowledge is forged, in constant conflict with its precursor. A gap emerges between the two systems where the possibility to think outside the frame of thought itself is created. Religious doctrines and rhetoric recede from the aggression of tangible objects, a system where texture, structure, shade of colour and smell creates the knowledge of the world.

In the Renaissance collection the world is gathered in its entirety into a single cabinet, a so-called *curiosity cabinet*, consisting of innumerable compartments, drawers and niches. Later, windowless rooms are fitted which most resemble the interior of a gigantic cabinet. Noblemen, princes and scholars set out on expeditions to distant shores and return with the world in their luggage. Stones and shells are arranged onto shelves and into drawers, specimens from the animal kingdom are bathed in formaldehyde, plants are dried and pressed. Each and every object is carefully arranged in the organisation of the world-view and the aristocrat has perfect control over his collection. Artists transform natural phenomena into visual forms, subtle works of fine art, which later became one of the most important documentation on the birth of natural science. Scholars give Latin names to imported creatures, decode their inner structure and procreation and provide them with a place in a new classification system, which is forming rapidly.

Much later, curiosity cabinets became public museums, which somewhere along the way were separated into museums of natural history, national museums and art museums.

As the Enlightenment took over from the Renaissance, categories shifted and mass-printed encyclopaedias compartmentalised the world again. After Modernism's order and categorical distinction, Postmodernism blurred boundaries

and erased division lines – yet again the world-view became obsolete. Hence, history generously teaches us that association and distinction is not a law of nature but dependent upon certain elements, be they cultural, social, political or scientific. These elements are interlinked and either work against or with each other in an incessant process of transformation where meaning, value and truth are perpetually defined and redefined. The driving force, however, has always been the same; curiosity and the desire for the wondrous.

Undrun er ástand sem brýst fram þegar skilninginn þrýtur, maður stendur á gati. Augun þrýstast út í augntóftirnar, öndin höktir í hálsinum, hálsinn teygir sig fram úr restinni af gagnteknum líkamanum. Undrun er svarið við hinu óþekkta, hún er tilfinningalegt og vitsmunalegt uppnám sem orsakast af róttækum mismun hins þekkta og hins óþekkta. Hún á heima í hárfínu bili á mörkum skilnings og fáfræði, í hinu hrífandi skilnings-

leysi sem særir fram löngunina að fella í flokka. Undrun beinist að hinu ótrúlega um leið og hún krefst þess að maður trúi því, heimtar athygli um leið og hún grefur undan því sem maður alltaf hélt. Ef til vill er undrunin hverfulust allra kennda.

Undrun hefur verið viðfangsefni heimspekinnar óralengi. Í fornöld rökræddu heimspekingar um muninn á skynsamlegri undrun og undrun sem ógn við skynsemi, áhyggjufullir yfir því að í undrunarvímu kæmist hvorki að rökhugsun né siðferði. Aðrir ræða um undrun í sama vetfangi og hrylling, gróteska undrun sem kollvarpar erfðafræðilegum lögmálum lífríkisins eða rýfur félagsleg tabú. Í öllu falli myndar undrun spennu milli afneitunar og hömlulausrar hrifningar og kippir þannig undan manni fótunum, maður svífur í lausu lofti – í einskonar limbói í ástandi algleymis.

Wonder is a state that erupts at the lack of understanding, when one is at a complete loss. Eyes wide open, breath stuck in the throat, neck stretching beyond the spellbound body. Wonder is the response to the unknown; it is emotional and intellectual turmoil caused by the radical difference of the known and the unknown. It belongs in that subtle space on the boundaries of understanding and ignorance, in the enchanting incomprehension, which conjures up the desire to classify. Wonder is directed at the unbelievable while demanding that you believe it. It claims attention at the same time as it undermines that which one always believed. Perhaps wonder is the most ephemeral of all sentiments.

Wonder has been the subject of philosophy through the ages. In ancient times, philosophers discussed the difference between rational wonder and wonder as a threat to reason and worried that neither reasoning nor morality could enter the euphoria of wonder. Others discuss wonder in relation to horror; grotesque wonder which subverts the genetic laws of the natural world or breaks social taboos. Either way, wonder creates suspension between denial and uninhibited infatuation, sweeping one off one's feet. A person hit by wonder floats in mid air – in some sort of limbo in a state of ecstasy.

Franski fræðimaðurinn Foucault lýsti söfnum með hugtakinu *heterótópía*; safnið er þá staður þar sem tíminn hrannast upp í óendanlegar hrúgur, myndar eina risavaxna skjalageymslu sem hefur það hlutverk að varðveita öll tímabil, allan vitnisburð um heiminn á einum stað um leið og það sjálft neitar ágangi tímans. Það má

einnig líkja söfnum við limbó, þau eru á vissan hátt óræðir staðir, eins konar hringiða sem maður sogast inn í og missir um leið sjónar á útgönguleiðinni.

Í bili liggur limbóið í tómum sýningarsal sem afmarkar rými sýningarinnar og myndar hugskot milli hennar og safnsins sjálfs. Á mærum þessara tveggja rýma er haft, þunn himna, sem skilur þau að og gefur kost á afhjúpun þess sem fyrir innan er. Á leiðinni að sýningunni undirgengst safngesturinn einskonar manndómsvígslu í tómum sýningarsalnum, hann er staddur í limbói sem ruglar hann í rýminu, hann gæti misst átta eitt augnablik. Þegar inn fyrir er komið er hann innvígður og athafnir hans og líkami öðlast allt annað gildi en fyrir utan.

The French scholar Foucault describes museums as *heterotopias*; a place where time accumulates into endless piles forming one enormous archive with the role of conserving all periods, all testimony about the world in one place at the same time as it denies the erosion of time itself. Museums are also liminal places, or even a limbo. They are in a way ambiguous places, a sort of vortex into which one is drawn, loosing sight of the exit.

In *In Between* the limbo lies in the empty gallery room which demarcates the space of the exhibition, creating a niche between the exhibition itself and the museum. The boundaries of these two spaces is separated by a sheer membrane which invites the unveiling of what lies within. On his way to the exhibition space, the museum guest undergoes a rite of passage in the empty gallery. He is standing in an ambivalent space which confuses him and makes him momentarily loose his sense of direction. Once inside, he is initiated and his actions and body take on quite a different meaning to that outside.

Veigamikill þáttur við undirbúning sýningarinnar var að skapa vettvang til samræðu um tilurð safna, tengsl muna og þekkingarsköpunar, um uppgötvanir og undraverð fyrirbæri. Listamönnum sýningarinnar var boðið á reglulega fundi þar sem hugmyndir að sýningarrammanum voru mótaðar og endurmótaðar. Samræður spunnust í margar misvísandi áttir sem að lokum hrópuðu á þann stað sem sýningin hefur nú hreiðrað um sig. Staðsetningin hefur sterk tengsl við furðustofur endurreisnarinnar, rýmið blasir ekki við gestum en ber með sér yfirbragð leyndarmáls sem bíður afhjúpunar. Auk listamannanna var fólki úr fræðasamfélaginu boðið til samræðu, og kveikti í erindum sínum fjölmargar hugmyndir til frekari þróunar. Guðbjörg Jóhannesdóttir ræddi

um undrun af sjónarhóli heimspekinnar, Sigrún Sigurðardóttir veitti innsýn í rannsóknir Foucaults á þekkingunni um manninn, Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson ræddi um tengsl safna, söfnunar og dauðans, og Valdimar Tr. Hafstein ræddi um furðustofur sautjándu aldar og tengsl þeirra við þekkingu, virðingu og vald.

An important part of this project's preparation was to create a platform for discussion on the creation of museums, the relationship of objects and knowledge production, about discoveries and wondrous things. The artists were regularly invited to meetings where ideas for the exhibition framework were developed collaboratively. Discussions spun into various directions which finally called for the place where the exhibition has now nested itself. The location bears strong relation to the Renaissance curiosity cabinets. The space is not immediately evident to guests but has the air of a secret awaiting unveiling. In addition to the artists, individuals from the academic community were invited and in their lectures kindled many ideas for further development. Guðbjörg Jóhannesdóttir discussed the idea of wonder from the viewpoint of philosophy, Sigrún Sigurðardóttir provided insight into Foucault's archeological research of human thought, Sigurjón Baldur Hafsteinsson discussed the relationship between museums, collecting and death and Valdimar Tr. Hafstein discussed Ole Worm's seventeenth century curiosity cabinet in Copenhagen and its relationship to knowledge, respect and power.

Segja má að *Í bili* sé einskonar tilraun til að endurvekja samband töfra og safnmuna, hina viðteknu hugmyndafræði á tímum endurreisnarinnar. Verkin dansa limbó milli efnislegra fyrirbæra og hins óáþreifanlega galdurs sem felst í þeim sem listaverkum. Sýningin sjálf er þó ekki niðurstaða vinnuferlisins, heldur er hún aðeins einn liður í lengri leit. Rétt eins og verk listamannanna er sýningin tillaga að túlkun, opin í báða enda og skilur eftir rými til hugleiðingar um fyrirbærið safn og þá vitneskju um heiminn sem það setur fram. Um leið og listamennirnir leggja fram einstök verk í mismunandi miðlum er sýningin sjálf miðill til að hugleiða tengsl hins huglæga og hins hlutlæga.

Uppstoppuð gæs, stóll, hauskúpa af risavöxnu sjávardýri, lífrænt vélmenni, steingerð fóstur, sígarettur á títuprjóni. Þetta eru dæmi um verk sextán listamanna í furðustofu Hafnarborgar og mynda sjálfstætt safn innan safnsins. Flestir listamannanna hafa gert ný verk fyrir sýninguna, svo sem teikningar, skúlptúra, klippiverk eða hljóðverk. Verkin eru fjölbreytt og fjalla um ólík viðfangsefni: Vísindi, goðsögur, tungumál, þekkingarsköpun. Öll eiga þau sameiginlegt að dveljast á óræðum stað, einhverstaðar í bilinu milli staðreyndar og ljóðrænnar táknmyndar.

In Between is an attempt to resurrect the relationship between magic and objects, in homage to Renaissance epistemology. The pieces on display dance in limbo between material things and the intangible magic entailed in them as works of art. The exhibition itself, however, is not a conclusion of the work process but merely one part of a longer quest. Like the work of the artists, the exhibition is a suggestion for an interpretation, open at both ends. It is meant to leave space for reflection on what kind of a phenomenon museums are and what kind of knowledge about the world they strive to present. As the artists present individual pieces in various media, the exhibition itself is also a medium to address these issues and inquire about the relationship between the subjective and the objective.

Stuffed goose, chair, scull of a giant oceanic creature, bio-robot, calcified fetuses, cigarettes in a case. These are examples of the work of the sixteen artists in Hafnarborg's curiosity cabinet which form an independent collection of objects within the museum. Most of the artists have created new pieces for the exhibition and these are presented in drawings, found objects, collage, sculptures or sound art. The pieces are diverse and address different subjects such as science, myth, language and knowledge production. However, they commonly dwell in an uncertain place, somewhere in the liminal space between facts and poetic fantasy.

Íslenskir fuglar **Bryndísar Snæbjörnsdóttur & Marks Wilson** kalla á vangaveltur um flöktandi markalínur flokkunarkerfa, um innlimun og óboðna gesti, um samband manns og dýra. Verkið spyr gagnrýninna spurninga um tregðu mannsins til breytinga, hvers vegna hið nýja virðist ávallt ógna honum um leið og hann þráir innrás hins framandi. Verkið hefur sterkar tilvísanir til þjóðernishyggju og tekst á við aðkallandi spurningar um þjóðfélagsþróun, um goðsögnina um hina hreinu þjóð og stöðnuð mengi samfélagsins. Bryndís & Mark tefla fram uppstoppuðum fuglum úr íslenskri náttúru gegn myndverki af hitabeltisfuglum sem á undanförnum árum hafa verið fluttir inn á íslensk heimili sem gæludýr. Verkið daðrar við flöktandi skilgreiningar á fortíð, nútíð og framtíð, hinu staðbundna gagnvart hinu hnattræna, náttúru gagnvart menningu, á hinu meðtekna gagnvart hinu forboðna.

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Marks Wilson's *Icelandic Birds* invite reflection on the oscillating boundaries of classification systems, about inclusion and uninvited guests, on human-animal relationships. The piece poses critical questions about man's reluctance to change, why the new always seems to pose a threat while, at the same time, he desires the exotic. The piece has strong references to nationalism and addresses difficult questions on the development of society, about the myth of pure nations. Snæbjörnsdóttir & Wilson juxtapose stuffed birds from Icelandic nature against a poster of exotic tropical birds, which in recent years have been imported into Icelandic homes as pets. The work flirts with oscillating definitions of past, present and future, the local against the global, nature against culture, the accepted against the taboo.

Verk **Daníels Björnssonar** snerta á hugmyndum okkar um listheiminn, um goðsögnina sem býr til listamanninn og listaverkið sem býr til goðsögnina. Daníel vísar til tímamótaverks Josephs Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs* frá árinu 1965, sem samanstendur af stól, ljósmynd af stóli og uppstækkaðri orðabókarskilgreiningu stóls. Þannig renna saman í eitt hugmyndin og raungerving hennar með því að vísa til tengslanna milli tungumáls, myndgervingar og tilvísunar. Verkið *Helgigripur* fjallar um goðsögulegan trillukarl í Reykjavík sem sagan segir að stundi spíritisma og fær til sín gesti í einskonar samtalsmeðferð. Í öðru verki, sem einnig ber titilinn *Helgigripur*, sýnir listamaðurinn ljósmynd af kvittun fyrir hækjum, ljósmynd af fótbrotnum manni með hækju, og gifs af fæti hans. Verkin tvö eru einskonar gagnrýnin hugleiðing listamannsins um eðli myndlistar og tilurð listaverka, og velta upp hugmyndum um list sem eftirmynd frummynda, um hið sýnilega og hið ósýnilega.

The work of **Daníel Björnsson** touches on our ideas about the art world, about the myth that creates the artist and the work of art that creates the myth. The artist refers to the conceptual work of Joseph Kosuth, *One and Three Chairs* from 1965, which consists of a chair, a photograph of a chair and an enlarged dictionary definition of a chair. Thus, the idea and its manifestation merge into one by addressing the relationship between

language, semiotics and referent. *Relic* is about a mythical person, an old sailor in Reykjavik who is strongly dedicated spiritualism and treats people in his home – or so the story goes. In another piece, also titled *Relic*, the artist presents a photographed receipt for a pair of crutches, a photograph of a man with a broken leg and a crutch, and a cast of his leg. The two works are the artist's critical reflection on the nature of objects of art in relation to artefacts, and muses on ideas of art as a copy of originals, about the visible and the invisible.

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Gretar Reynisson skráir daglegar athafnir sínar og umritar í myndrænt form. Hann safnar sjálfum sér. Innan skýrt afmarkaðra tímamarka finnur hann söfnuninni umgjörð í hinum ólíkustu hlutum sem bera vitni um tilvist hans í tímanum. Hér sýnir hann verk sem varð til á tímabilinu frá 1. janúar til 31. desember árið 2000 og inniheldur 365 sígarettur í tólf glerkössum, einum fyrir hvern mánuð. Sígaretturnar eru færðar í safn listamannsins eftir tilteknum reglum og bera vitni um kerfisbundna athöfn hvern einasta dag þessa tímabils í lífi hans. Sígarettunum er vandlega komið fyrir í glerkössum sem vísa til sýningarkassa náttúrugripasafns, og þær eru þræddar upp á títuprjóna sem stungið er í botn kassans. Uppröðunin ber með sér sterkar tilvísanir í vísindaleg vinnubrögð náttúrufræðinga sem skrá, flokka og setja fram þekkinguna um lífheiminn, en hér er hinsvegar um persónulegt líf listamannsins að ræða. Verkið er húmorslegt og glottir framan í vísindin og framsetningu þekkingar, myndar fagurfræðilegt rými milli hins huglæga og hins hlutlæga, ber vitni um horfinn tíma en skilur eftir sig eftirbragð daglegra nautna.

Gretar Reynisson documents his daily actions and transforms them into the visual; he collects himself. Within a clearly defined time frame, he finds a framework for collecting in the most unlikely things which are testimony to his life and his existence in time. Here, he presents a piece created in the period from 1 January to 31 December 2000 and contains 365 cigarettes in twelve glass cases, one for each month. The cigarettes are transferred to the collection of the artist in strict adherence to specific rules and are testament to a systematic action every day during this particular period of his life. The cigarettes are carefully arranged in glass cases, pinned and placed at the bottom of the case. The arrangement contains strong references to the scientific methods of naturalists who record, classify and present facts of the natural world. The work is humorous and laughs in the face of science and the presentation of knowledge, creates an aesthetic space between the subjective and the objective, a testament to times passed leaving an aftertaste of daily pleasures.

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Verk **Haralds Jónssonar** er þríþætt og ber yfirskriftina *Millibil*. Speglar í glugga bogasalarins vekja upp sterk hugrenningartengsl við flísalögð gólf salarkynna sem hýstu furðustofur fyrri alda. Verkið býður þannig áhugaverðan aðgang að sýningunni. Speglarnir mynda köflótt munstur þar sem þeim er raðað inn og út á víxl í rúður gluggganna, og minna á að innveggur safnsins var einu sinni útveggur eldri byggingar. Í verkinu skynjar áhorfandinn opnun og lokun á víxl, inni og úti, hið kunnuglega og hið framandi. Umsnúinn speglaveggurinn liggur í bilinu milli hins hefðbundna sýningarsalar og sýningarinnar sjálfrar. Hann býr þannig til spennu á mörkunum, er bæði innlimandi og útilokandi um leið og hann brýtur upp sjálfsmynd þess sem speglar sig í honum. Á sama hátt kallast speglarnir á við orðin sem berast úr hljóðverki listamannsins þar sem raddir bera fram orð á íslensku með sterkum hreim, hreim sem liggur eins og þunn himna yfir orðunum.

Haraldur Jónsson's *Millibil* is situated in the window of an arched room evoking the tiled floors of Renaissance curiosity cabinets, forming a welcoming entry to the exhibition. The mirrors form a chequered pattern as they are placed alternately onto the glass of the windows and serve as a reminder that the internal wall of the museum was once the outer wall of an older building. The work alternately refers to opening and closing, inside and outside, the familiar and the unknown. The inverted wall of mirrors lies in the space between Hafnarborg's traditional exhibition gallery and this exhibition. It thus creates tension on the boundaries, is both incorporating and excluding at the same time as it fractures the image of he who reflects himself in it. In the same way, the mirrors echo the words coming from the artist's audio work where voices pronounce broken words in Icelandic with a strong foreign accent, an accent which lies like a sheer membrane over the words themselves.

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Fundnir smáhlutir **Hildigunnar Birgisdóttur** mynda tilbúin kerfi eftir eigin innri lógík sem hún mátar við önnur þekkt kerfi. Hildigunnur tekur einskonar skuggamyndir af hlutunum og fjarlægir efnisleika þeirra með því að kalla fram efnahvörf á hitaðan posarúllupappír. Þannig yfirfærir hún þrívítt kerfi yfir á tvívíðan flöt sem hefur í sér einungis ógreinilegan óm af fyrirmyndinni, óræðar vísbendingar eða verksummerki. Hverjum hlut í safni sínu gefur hún heiti og skráir niður í innkaupalista sem hún verslar eftir í stórmarkaði. Verslunarleiðangurinn skilur eftir sig önnur verksummerki sem birtast á kassakvittun kaupandans, enn öðrum lista sem á lítið skylt við smáhlutina í safni hennar eða skuggamyndirnar á posarúllunni. Í hverju kerfi felst tilvísun til hinna þriggja en þó farast þau á mis, milli þeirra myndast bil þar sem verkið sjálft á heima.

Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir's meticulous found objects form ready-made systems by their own inner logic which she fits against other known systems which, however, have little in common. The artist creates shadow images of the objects and thereby removes their materiality by producing a chemical reaction onto heated paper rolls. She transfers a three-dimensional system of objects to a two-dimensional surface which merely indistinctly echoes the original; uncertain indications or traces. She gives each object in her collection a name and records these onto a shopping list which she shops from in a supermarket. The shopping trip leaves another trace in the form of a till receipt of the purchases, yet another list which has little relationship to the small objects in her collection or the shadowy images on the paper roll. All four systems carry references to each other but miss one another; a space is formed between them in which the work itself lingers.

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Listmannatvíeykið **Hugsteypan** (Ingunn Fjóla Ingþórsdóttir og Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir) vinnur verk á grundvelli talnaspeki sem byggist á þeirri forsendu að til sé ósýnilegt kerfi sem stýrir örlögum einstaklinga og samsetningu alheimsins. Út frá nafni og fæðingarstund er með einfaldri samlagningu hægt að reikna út persónuleika hvers einstaklings, kosti hans og galla, ævi og örlög. Hugsteypan beitir kerfinu frjálslega í eigin þágu með því að kortleggja listamenn sýningarinnar (svo jaðrar við njósnir), reiknar út gildi þeirra og túlkar þau á fagurfræðilegan hátt. Þannig hefur hún búið til míkrókosmos úr eindum verkefnisins sjálfs með því að kom böndum yfir þátttakendurna og öðlast yfir þeim ákveðið vald. Rétt eins og furðustofur endurreisnarinnar voru smækkuð ímynd alheimsins er míkrókosmos Hugsteypunnar huglæg túlkun listamannanna á eigin safni: *Essentia Í bili*. Verkið leitar á áhugaverðan hátt á mörk vísindalegra rannsóknaraðferða og fagurfræðilegrar túlkunar, liggur í bilinu sem mótsögnin milli stærðfræðilegra staðreynda og örlagatrúar myndar.

The artist duo **Hugsteypan** (Ingunn Fjóla Ingþórsdóttir and Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir) produce a piece based on numerology which builds on the premise of an invisible system that controls the destinies of individuals and the composition of the universe. From a name and time of birth, it is possible to calculate personality, attributes and faults, life and fate of each individual, on the basis of simple sums. Hugsteypan freely takes the system into its service by mapping the artists in the exhibition (bordering on espionage), calculating the values and interpreting them aesthetically. They have created a micro-cosmos from the units of the project itself by tying the participants in and thereby gaining a degree of power over them. Just as the Renaissance curiosity cabinets were a reduced image of the universe, the micro-cosmos of Hugsteypan is a subjective interpretation of their own collection, *Essentia In Between*. The piece seeks the boundaries of scientific research methods and aesthetic interpretation in an interesting way; resides in the space of contradiction between mathematical facts and fatalism.

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Bæði verk **Ingirafns Steinarssonar** fjalla um þær víddir sem liggja utan við meðvitundina, vitundarstig þar sem rökhugsunin hrekkur undan þrýstingi undirmeðvitundarinnar og gefur sig henni á vald. Í verkinu *Melt enþíogen* hefur hann eimað þvag úr einstaklingi sem neytt hefur

ofskynjunarsveppa, *Psilocybe semilanceata*, svo eftir standa einangruð efnasambönd. Á botni glerflösku sitja hárfínir kristallar sem bera vitni um tiltekið ferðalag, um limbóið milli meðvitaðrar reynslu og ofurnæmrar skynjunar sem áhrif efnisins hrinda af stað. Á svipaðan hátt vísar verkið *Tungumálseimur (taugaboð og tunga)* til annarra vitundarstiga, en í því hefur sýningarstjórinn sjálf verið dáleidd að beiðni listamannsins. Í dáleiðslunni er gerð tilraun til að rifja upp einstök orð sem hún á að hafa fundið upp í frumbernsku með því að endurskapa millibilsástand barns sem er að þroska með sér málvitund en er enn of ungt til að hafa vald yfir tungumáli. Barnið finnur sjálft upp á orðum til að tákna þarfir sínar og umhverfi, ef til vill í vanmætti sínum gagnvart tjáningarleysinu. Verkið fjallar á gagnrýninn hátt um tungumálið (í ræðu og riti) sem hið eina sanna verkfæri mannsins til þekkingarsköpunar og merkingarbærra athafna.

Ingirafn Steinarsson's works are about the dimensions that lie outside consciousness, a level of awareness where reason recoils from the pressure of the sub-conscious and gives itself to it completely. In *Digested Entheogen*, the artist has distilled urine from a person who has consumed hallucinogenic mushrooms, *Psilocybe semilanceata*, and all that remains are isolated chemical compounds. Sitting at the bottom of a glass bottle are fine crystals - a tangible testimony of a journey, a limbo between conscious experience and psychedelic perception. Similarly, the piece *Language Vapor (neural signal and tongue)* refers to other levels of consciousness, where the exhibition curator has been hypnotised at the request of the artist. During the hypnosis an attempt is made to make her remember single words from her infancy by recreating the intermediary state of a child that is on the verge of developing linguistic skills but is still too young. The infant invents words to signify its basic needs and environment, perhaps in its helplessness against the lack of expression. The work emphasises the use of language (written and spoken) as man's ruling tool for the production of knowledge and meaningful actions.

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Í verkinu *Framtíðin er úrelt* fjallar **Jeannette Castioni** um beitingu tungumálsins og tengsl þess við átökin um vald yfir þekkingunni, mælskulistina. Hún kannar í gegnum myndbandsverk sín djúpstæða formgerð tungumálsins og gefur í skyn takmarkaða möguleika þess til tjáningar. Listamaðurinn hefur fengið mismunandi einstaklinga til að tjá sig um ólík fyrirbæri, eins og tiltekna landfræðilega staði eða persónulegar minningar úr horfinni fortíð. Samtölin eru ýmist óformleg eða eftir skrifuðu handriti. Verkið beinir sjónum að stöðu mannsins í kerfi sem stýrist af fyrirframgefnum reglum samfélagsins þar sem mælskulistin, beiting tungumálsins, skipar heiðurssess. Það vekur spurningar um tengsl sögulegrar þekkingar og persónulegrar reynslu, þar sem sameiginlegt minni nútíðarinnar varpar ljósi á orðræðuna um fortíðina.

In her work *The Future is Obsolete*, **Jeannette Castioni** works with the use of language and its relationship with the struggle for power over knowledge; rhetoric. Through her video work, she investigates the underlying structures of language by alluding to its limited possibilities for expression. The artist has organized conversations among various individuals where they express themselves about different issues, such as specific geographical places or personal memories from the past. The dialogues may be informal and improvised or according to a written script. The work addresses our position in a system of predefined rules where rhetoric occupies a superior place. It evokes questions about the relationship between historical knowledge and personal experience where common memory throws a light on the discourse of the past.

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Verk **Magnúsar Árnasonar** vekja spurningar um tengsl vísindalegrar þekkingar og skáldskapar, um stefnumót staðreynda og goðsagna. *Gripur nr. 88 – úr náttúrugripasafni Magnúsar Árnasonar* liggur í óræðu bili milli hins raunverulega og hins óraunverulega og greiðir götu nýs óuppgötvaðs sannleika. Hauskúpu af hval hefur verið komið fyrir inn í rökkvuðum sýningarkassa og vísar þannig til fagurfræði náttúruminja um leið og verkið myndar andrúmsloft leyndardóms og villandi sjónhverfinga. Í verkinu *Djúpsjá* vinnur listamaðurinn með myndskeið úr hafrannsóknarleiðangri, sem ögrar á sama hátt viðtekinni goðsögn um vísindalegar framfarir og klæðir hlutlæg rannsóknargögn í búning listaverks. Í verkunum er vísindasagan þannig orðin að viðfangsefni listamannsins sem spyr áleitinna spurninga um þekkingarfræðina sem vísindin byggja grundvöll sinn á.

Magnús Árnason's work evokes questions about the relationship between scientific knowledge and fiction; about the meeting of fact and myth. *Specimen nr. 88 – from Magnús Árnasons's natural history collection* creates an uncertain space between the real and the unreal and at the same time opens a way for the discovery of new truths. A scull of a whale has been placed in a dimly lit exhibition case, referring to the aesthetics of natural relics whilst creating an atmosphere of mystery and illusion. The work *Depthscope*, where the artist works with visual data from a marine research expedition, similarly challenges accepted ideas about the progress myth of science and dresses objective research data up as a work of art. In both pieces, the history of science has become the artist's subject of inquiry asking questions about the epistemology of scientific knowledge.

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Verk **Olgu Bergmann** eru bastarðar sem virðast vera afrakstur lífeðlisfræðilegrar tilraunar, einskonar sambræðingur vísinda og fantasíu. *Hybrid* samanstendur af nokkrum postulínsskúlptúrum auk korts af skordýrum sem listamaðurinn hefur átt við. Lífverur Olgu eru ótrúverðugar en eiga sér engu að síður stoð í raunverulegum fyrirbærum og eiga uppruna sinn að rekja til kímera (lífverur með erfðaefni tveggja eða fleiri óskyldra lífvera) eða lífrænna vélmenna (fjarstýrðar lífverur sem stjórnað er í gegnum ígrædda tölvukubba í njósnaskyni eða öðru hagsmunaskyni). Verkið er hnyttið en fjallar um leið á alvarlegan og gagnrýninn hátt um siðferði vísinda, um tæknileg inngrip mannsins í heilög náttúrulögmál sem geta af sér nýjustu eintökin af furðuverum tilverunnar. Verkið ýtir við hugmyndum okkar um lífheiminn og óhugnanlega tilburði mannsins til að vinna sigur á honum.

Olga Bergmann's work references the bastards of science and fantasy which would seem to be the result of a biophysiological experiment. *Hybrid* consists of porcelain sculptures and a map of insects. Despite the implausibility of Olga's organisms, the hybrids nonetheless have references to real phenomena and originate in chymeras; organisms with genetic material of two or more unrelated organisms, or bio-robots; remote controlled organisms, which are controlled through transplanted computer chips for the purposes of espionage or other reasons of vested interest. The piece is witty but at the same time deals seriously and critically with the ethics of science, about man's technical interventions into holy laws of nature which beget the newest members of the world's wunderkammer. The work pushes our understanding of the natural world and man's morbid gestures to conquer it.

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Steinbörn **Ólafar Nordal** bera vott um bilið milli lífs og dauða, milli lifandi fósturs og kalkaðs sýnishorns um ófyrirsjáanlega duttlunga náttúrunnar. Steinbörnin vekja óhugnanlegar tilfinningar en eru um leið dálítið krúttleg, setja áhorfandann ef til vill örskotsstund úr skorðum meðan hann gerir upp við sig hvorri tilfinningunni hann gefur sig á vald. Reglulega birtast fréttir í fjölmiðlum af nútímaskrímslum, vansköpuðum börnum sem verða að viðundrum vegna eiturefnaiðnaðar og stríðsrekstrar mannsins. *Lusus naturae* er röð myndverka sem vísa til þessara skrímsla og vekja viðbrögð gróteskrar undrunar. Um leið minna þau á teiknimyndafígúrur, einskonar skrípamyndir sem lesa má úr ákveðinn söguþráð þar sem hárfínn húmorinn er ekki langt undan. Latneska heitið vísar ekki eingöngu til vanskapninga eða skrípa, fordæmdra saklausra vera sem dæmdar eru til eilífrar limbóvistar í óræðu rými, heldur var það einnig haft um dynti náttúrunnar, eins konar skrýtlur úr hennar ranni. Verkið vísar til goðsagna um hræðileg frávik lífríksins sem þrífast í hverju samfélagi, um leið og þau minna á raunverulega tilvist þeirra.

Ólöf Nordal's *Stone Child* is testimony to the space between life and death, between living fetus and calcified sample of the unforeseeable whims of nature. Her stone children evoke morbid sentiments but are also a bit cuddly, confusing the viewer while he makes up his mind which feeling to give in to. Today, news of modern monsters are broadcasted regularly, images of deformed children that become freaks because of man's toxic industry or war strategies. *Lusus Naturae* is a series of visual images which refer to these mon-

sters and evoke the reaction of grotesque wonder. At the same time, they are reminescent of cartoon figures; comical images in which a narrative may be read and subtle humour is never far away. The Latin name refers not only to a medical category for the deformed; condemned innocent beings convicted to an eternal stay in limbo without hope of escape, but also to its former use referring to jokes of nature. The piece refers to myths of morbid deviations that exist in every society while reminding us of their real existence.

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Verk **Skyr Lee Bob** (Ernu Ómarsdóttur, Guðna Gunnarssonar og Lievens Dousselaere), *Töff stöff*, er sérstaklega unnið inn í tilkomumikinn bóka- og skjalaskáp í fundarherbergi Hafnarborgar. Innan úr hillum og upp úr skúffum berast óljós hljóð sem vekja athygli áhorfandans og laða hann að sér. Skyr Lee Bob fjallar um táknkerfi félagslegrar hegðunar með því að brjóta grundvallarreglur mannlegra samskipta og valda þannig glundroða og jafnvel óðagoti. Í þessu rofi endurskapa listamennirnir glundroðann og taka stjórnina, útsetja veruleikann að eigin vild í hljóðheimi. Segja má að verkið sé einskonar ljóðrænt prakkarastrik. Það er stríðið og potar um leið óþægilega í áheyrandann. Það setur hann út af sporinu og dregur fram mörkin milli hins eðlilega og hins óeðlilega, milli viðeigandi mannasiða og óþægilegrar ókurteisi. Verkið opnar ferðalag inn í undraheim þar sem áður óþekktar furðuverur og viðeigandi samskiptavenjur líta dagsins ljós og öðlast merkingu.

Skyr Lee Bob's (Erna Ómarsdóttir, Guðni Gunnarsson and Lieven Dousselaere) piece, *Töff Stöff*, is an installation made into a grandiose cabinet in ome of Hafnarborg's meeting room. Obscure sounds carry from shelves and drawers to capture the attention of the viewer and attract him. Skyr Lee Bob addresses the underlying structures of social behaviour by breaking the fundamental principles of human interaction causing chaos or panic. In this breach, the artists recreate the chaos and seize control; arrange reality at their own will in a sound world. It may be said that the piece is a lyrical prank; it teases and prods the listener uncomfortably. This derails him and draws out the boundaries between the normal and the abnormal, between good manners and uncomfortable impoliteness. The piece opens up a journey into a world of wonders where hitherto unknown strange creatures see the light of day and gain meaning.

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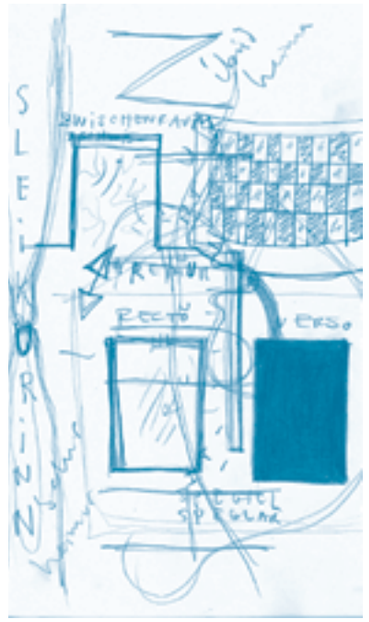
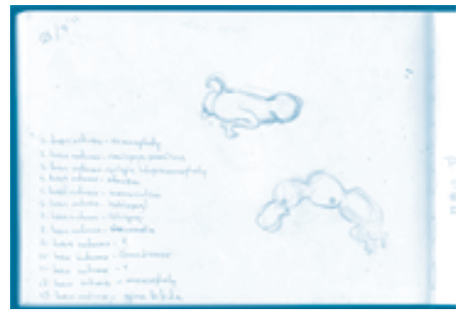
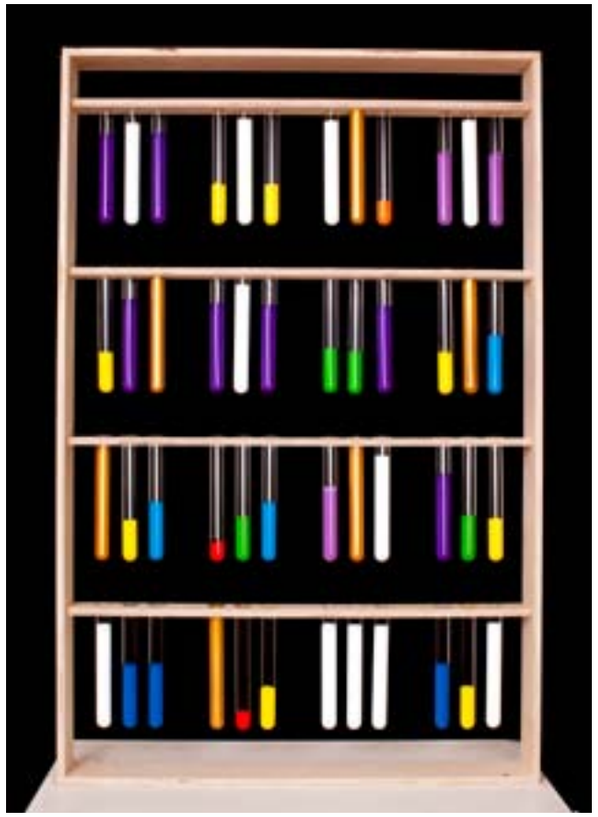
Samankomin mynda verk listamannanna sjálfstæða heild sem þó er ekki einsleit heldur fela þau í sér ólíkar merkingar sem jafnvel rekast á og skapa togstreitu. Flest fjalla þau á einn eða annan hátt um tilhneigingu mannsins til að temja hugmyndina um heiminn um leið og þau þenja út viðteknar skilgreiningar sem, í bili, eru við lýði.

Together, the works of the artists create an independent and heterogenous whole, where single works might collide and create tension with each other. However, all the artists address the human tendency to tame the idea of the world at the same time as they expand accepted definitions of the world's various phenomena which, for now, reign supreme.







Hugsteypan, *Essentia Í bili* / *Essentia In Between,* 2011.

Ingirafn Steinarsson, *Melt enþíogen* / *Digested Entheogen,* 2011.

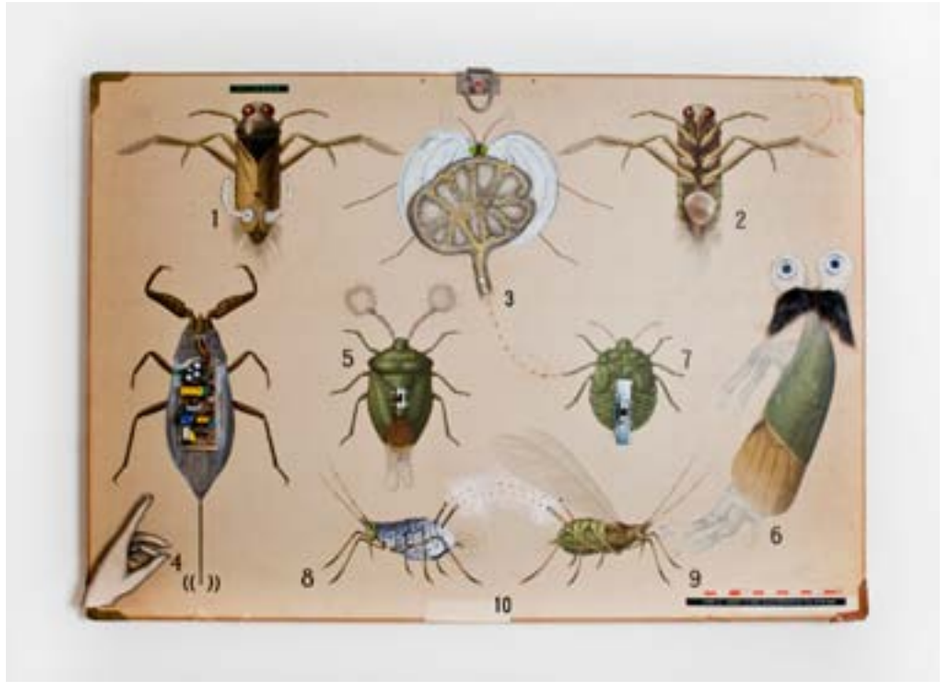
Magnús Árnason, *Gripur nr. 88 – úr náttúrugripasafni Magnúsar Árnasonar* / *Specimen nr. 88 – from Magnús Árnason's natural history collection,* 2011.

Haraldur Jónsson, *Millibil* / *Millibil,* 2011.

Ólöf Nordal, *Lusus naturae* / *Lusus naturae,* 2011.

Daníel Björnsson, *Helgigripur* / *Relic,* 2011.

Gretar Reynisson, *365 sígarettur, ein á dag, 1/1 – 31/12 2000* / *365 cigarettes, one per day, 1/1 – 31/12 2000,* 2000.



Olga Bergmann, *Hybrid* / *Hybrid,* 2011

Skyr Lee Bob, *Töff Stöff* / *Töff Stöff,* 2011.

Jeannette Castioni, *The Future is Obsolete* / *The Future is Obsolete,* 2011.

Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir, *Án titils* / *Untitled,* 2011.

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson, *Íslenskir fuglar* / *Icelandic Birds,* 2008.

Listamannateymið **Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir & Mark Wilson** vinnur að félags- og rannsóknartengdri listsköpun og fæst við málefni sem snerta sögu, menningu og umhverfi í tengslum við menn og dýr. Bryndís (1955) útskrifaðist með MFA-gráðu frá Glasgow School of Art 1995 og lauk doktorsgráðu í rannsóknartengdri myndlist frá Valand School of Art í Gautaborg árið 2009. Mark (1954) stundaði nám í University of Sunderland og lýkur doktorsgráðu við University of Lancaster 2012. Verk þeirra hafa verið sýnd víða á alþjóðlegum vettvangi, en auk þess eru þau virkir þátttakendur í faglegri umræðu um myndlist og dýrafræði. Sýningin *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* hefur farið um Evrópu frá 2006 og *Uncertainty in the City* var sýnt í Lancaster 2010. Verk þeirra *five loaves – 2 fish* verður sýnt á Gautaborgartvíæringnum 2011, og *between you and me* verður sýnt í Vancouver á Interactive Futures '11: Animal Influence.
www.snaebjornsdottirwilson.com
www.radioanimal.org

The art practice of collaborative artist team **Snæbjörnsdóttir/Wilson** is research-based and socially-engaged, exploring issues of history, culture and environment in relation to both humans and non-human animals. Snæbjörnsdóttir (1955) graduated with an MFA from Glasgow School of Art in 1995 and completed a practice-based PhD from Valand School of Art in Gothenburg in 2009. Wilson (1954) studied at University of Sunderland and will complete a PhD by published work at University of Lancaster in 2012. Their artworks have been exhibited internationally and they have delivered papers at key conferences in animal studies worldwide. Their art project *nanoq: flat out and bluesome* has been touring Europe since 2006 and *Uncertainty in the City* was exhibited in Lancaster 2010. Their work *five loaves – 2 fish* is part of the Gothenburg Biennial 2011 and their work *between you and me* is to be exhibited in Vancouver at Interactive Futures '11: Animal Influence.
www.snaebjornsdottirwilson.com
www.radioanimal.org

Daníel Björnsson (1974) fæst við eðli myndlistar sem uppsprettu þekkingar og vinnur gjarnan með eftirmyndir og eftirsjá. Myndheimur hans dansar oft á mörkum hins sýnilega og hins ósýnilega og er unninn á kyrrlátan hátt. Daníel útskrifaðist frá Listaháskóla Íslands árið 2002 og hefur síðan tekið þátt í fjölda samsýninga og haldið einkasýningar, m.a. í D-sal Listasafns Reykjavíkur, Gallerí Kling & Bang og Torstrasse 111 í Berlín. Hann hefur látið að sér kveða við sýningarstjórn hér á landi og stýrt fjölmörgum samvinnuverkefnum, svo sem *Sirkus* á Frieze 2008 og *Dionysiac* í Centre Pompidou 2005.

Daníel Björnsson (1974) explores the nature of art as a resource of knowledge, working on the borderline of what can be visualized and what can't in a subtle way. He graduated from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2002 and has since taken part in several group exhibitions and had solo exhibitions at e.g. the D-project at the Reykjavik Art Museum, Gallery Kling & Bang and Torstrasse 111 in Berlin. Björnsson is also active as a curator, in addition to collaborating in various art projects, such as *Sirkus* at Frieze Projects, London 2008 and *Dionysiac* at Centre Pompidou 2005.

Gretar Reynisson (1957) fæst við söfnun og nákvæma skrásetningu á hversdagslegum og venjubundnum atburðum. Hann lauk námi úr nýlistadeild Myndlista- og handíðaskóla Íslands 1978 og var við framhaldsnám í Amsterdam 1978–1979. Hann hefur síðan haldið um tuttugu einkasýningar og tekið þátt í fjölda samsýninga, meðal annars í Listasafni Íslands, Listasafni Reykjavíkur og Gallerí i8. Gretar á verk í eigu safna, svo sem Listasafns Íslands, Listasafns Reykjavíkur, Nýlistasafnsins, og Listasafns Háskóla Íslands. Gretar hóf feril sem leikmyndahöfundur árið 1980 og hefur gert um sextíu leikmyndir, meðal annars fyrir Þjóðleikhúsið, Leikfélag Reykjavíkur, Alþýðuleikhúsið og Riksteatern í Svíþjóð.

Gretar Reynisson (1957) creates his own methods of collecting where he meticulously documents every day events and routine actions. He graduated from The Icelandic College of Art and Craft in 1978 and studied in Amsterdam in 1978-9. His work has been shown in around twenty solo exhibitions and various collectives, e.g. at the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavík Art Museum, and Gallery i8. His works are presented in public collections, e.g. the National Gallery of Iceland, Reykjavik Art Museum, the Living Art Museum, and the University of Iceland Art Collection. Since 1980 he has worked in theatre as a set designer, where he has created over sixty stage sets, e.g. at The National Theatre of Iceland, The Reykjavik City Theatre, The People's Theatre and the Riksteatern in Sweden.

Haraldur Jónsson (1961) fæst í verkum sínum við tungumálið, tilfinningar, skynjun og líkamann og tengslin þar á milli. Hann stundaði nám við Myndlista- og handíðaskóla Íslands 1984–1987, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf 1987–1990 og Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques í París 1991–1992. Hann hefur um árabil verði virkur í íslensku listalífi og á að baki langan feril einka- og samsýninga. Verk hans eru í eigu safna og safnara á alþjóðavísu. Haraldur notar ýmsa miðla í listsköpun sinni, m.a. teikningar, ljósmyndir, skúlptúr, innsetningar, gjörninga og uppákomur en auk þess hefur hann skrifað bækur, kvikmyndahandrit og útvarpsleikrit.
www.this.is/comet

Haraldur Jónsson (1961) explores issues of language, perception, emotion, sensation and the body, as well as the interrelations there between. He studied at the Icelandic College of Art and Crafts 1984-1987, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf 1987-1990 and the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques in Paris 1991-1992. His work ranges from drawings, photographs, sculpture and installations to performances and happenings as well as writing. Jónsson has exhibited his work in a number of group and solo exhibitions in Iceland and internationally. His work is represented in public and private collections in Iceland and abroad.
www.this.is/comet

Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir (1980) gerir verk sem byggjast oft á leikjum og leikirnir á reglum sem aftur byggjast á kerfum. Hún nýtir hversdagslega hluti til vangaveltna um hringrásir og heimskerfi sem lúta lögmálum og formfræði leikja og spila. Hildigunnur útskrifaðist frá Listaháskóla Íslands 2003 og hefur haldið einkasýningar og tekið þátt í samsýningum, m.a. í Listasafni ASÍ, Náttúrufræðistofu Kópavogs, Safnasafninu og Nýlistasafninu. Þá stýrði hún Grasrótarsýningu Nýlistasafnsins 2005 og var framkvæmdastjóri Skaftfells árið 2006. Hún er einn af stofnendum Útúrdúrs, bókaverslunar og útgáfu.

Hildigunnur Birgisdóttir (1980) experiments with games that are based on rules that, again, are based on systems. Her works often explore complex systems through simple or naïve interfaces. Birgisdóttir graduated from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2003 and her work has been exhibited in collectives and private exhibitions, e.g. at Living Art Museum in Reykjavík, ASÍ Art Museum, Natural History Museum of Kópavogur and Safnasafn. She was the curator of Grassroots at the Living Art Museum in 2005 and the director of Skaftfell Centre for Visual Art in 2006. She is also a founding member of Útúrdúr artist book store and press.

Hugsteypan er samstarfsverkefni listamannanna Ingunnar Fjólu Ingþórsdóttur (1976) og Þórdísar Jóhannesdóttur (1979). Verk þeirra eru margþættar innsetningar og fjalla um mörk vísindalegra rannsókna og listrænnar túlkunar. Verkin bera keim af rannsóknarferli þar sem þættir eins og listasaga, sjónmenning, framsetning og túlkun verka eru settir undir smásjá. Ingunn og Þórdís útskrifuðust báðar úr Listaháskóla Íslands árið 2007 og hafa tekið þátt í sýningum undir nafni Hugsteypunnar frá árinu 2008, m.a. í Listasafni Árnesinga og Kling & Bang, auk þess sem þær hafa tekið að sér sýningarstjórn. *www.hugsteypan.com*

Hugsteypan is an artist collaborative that explores the boundaries between scientific research and artistic expression through installations. Their work resembles research processes, focusing on art history, visual culture, representation and the interpretation of art. Ingunn Fjóla Ingþórsdóttir (1976) and Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir (1979) both graduated from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2007 and have collaborated as Hugsteypan since 2008. In addition to their art practice they have taken on several curatorial tasks.
www.hugsteypan.com

Ingirafn Steinarsson (1973) dregur fram í verkum sínum líkindi með virkni hluta, náttúru og mannlegri hegðun og býr til verk á kerfisbundinn hátt, oft með tilvísunum í vísindaleg vinnubrögð. Hann lauk námi frá Myndlista- og handíðaskóla Íslands árið 1999 og stundaði framhaldsnám við Listaháskólann í Vín áður en hann hlaut MFA-gráðu frá Listaháskólanum í Malmö árið 2006. Ingirafn hefur haldið nokkrar einkasýningar, svo sem í D-sal Listasafns Reykjavíkur, Gallerí Kling & Bang og Suðsuðvestur, og tekið þátt í samsýningum hér heima, í Svíþjóð og Belgíu. *www.this.is/ingirafn*

Ingirafn Steinarsson (1973) focuses on similarities between the function of objects, nature and human behavior and creates work in a systematic way, often with reference to scientific methods. He graduated from the Icelandic College of Art and Craft in 1999 and attended graduate studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and the Malmö Art Academy, where he finished his MFA in 2006. His work has been in private exhibitions, e.g. the D-project at the Reykjavík Art Museum, Galley Kling & Bang and Suðsuðvestur, and in group exhibitions in Iceland, Sweden and Belgium.
www.this.is/ingirafn

Jeannette Castioni (1968) rannsakar í verkum sínum viðfangsefni sem tengjast menningar- og samfélagslegum spurningum og efasemdum. Hún þenur hefðbundin mörk, þar sem nám hennar og bakgrunnur hafa mikil áhrif og nýtast henni sem verkfæri við að skoða og dýpka viðfangsefnin. Jeannette lauk BA-námi við Listaháskóla Íslands árið 2006, en áður hafði hún stundað nám í forvörslu í Flórens á Ítalíu 1990–1993 og listnám við Accademia di belle Arti í Bologna 1998–2002. Jeannette hefur m.a. sýnt verk sín í D-sal Listasafns Reykjavíkur og Suðsuðvestur, og hefur tekið þátt í ýmsum samsýningum bæði hér á landi og erlendis. *www.jeann.net*

Jeannette Castioni (1968) covers in her work many pathways often related to cultural and social doubts and questions. Her classical background as restorer has affected her attitude, enabling her to deepen her arguments. Castioni graduated with a BA-degree from the Iceland Academy of the Arts in 2006. Previously she studied at the school of Conservation and Restoration in Florence, Italy 1990-1993 and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna 1999-2002. She has exhibited her work in e.g. Reykjavík Art Museum D-project and Suðsuðvestur, and has participated in group exhibitions in Iceland and abroad. *www.jeann.net*

Magnús Árnason (1977) leikur í verkum sínum með mörk raunveruleikans og hins óraunverulega, sannleika og skáldskapar, og hann beinir sjónum sérstaklega að náttúrunni og náttúruvísindum. Magnús lauk magistergráðu frá Akademie der Bildenden Künste í Vínarborg árið 2003, en áður stundaði hann nám við Iðnskólann í Hafnarfirði og tónlistarnám við FÍH, Reykjavík. Hann hefur haldið fjölda einkasýninga hérlendis sem erlendis, t.d. í Listasafni Reykjavíkur-Ásmundarsafni, Náttúrufræðistofu Kópavogs, Locustprojects í Miami og Gallerí Kling & Bang, Reykjavík. Af samsýningum má nefna Nowy Teatr í Varsjá, LISTE 08-The Young Art Fair í Basel og Pakkhús postulanna í Listasafni Reykjavíkur-Hafnarhúsi.
www.magnusarnason.com

Magnús Árnason (1977) creates works that stand on a vague line between the real and unreal, fiction and facts, as well as focusing on nature and natural history. He graduated from Akademie der Bildenden Künste in 2003, Vienna. Previously he studied both at I.M.U. School of Music, Reykjavik and the Technical College in Hafnarfjordur. Árnason's work has been exhibited widely, e.g. at the Reykjavik Art Museum-Asmunarsafn, Natural History Museum of Kopavogur, Locustprojects in Miami and Gallery Kling & Bang, Reykjavik. Selected group exhibitions are Nowy Teatr in Warsaw, LISTE 08-The Young Art Fair in Basel, and at the Reykjavik Art Museum.
www.magnusarnason.com

Olga Bergmann (1967) fjallar í verkum sínum um náttúruvísindi, genaverkfræði og möguleika raunvísindanna. Auk þess veltir hún upp gagnrýnum spurningum um hlutverk safna sem þekkingarskapandi vettvangs. Olga lauk námi við Myndlista- og handíðaskóla Íslands árið 1991 og MFA-námi frá CCA í Oakland í Kaliforníu árið 1995. Olga hefur haldið fjölda einkasýninga og tekið þátt í samsýningum bæði heima og erlendis, meðal annars í Frakklandi, Þýskalandi, Finnlandi, Írlandi og Belgíu. Verk eftir hana eru í eigu opinberra safna og einkasafnara. *www.this.is/olga*

Olga Bergmann (1967) addresses in her work issues related to natural sciences such as genetic engineering and cloning. In addition, she critically examines the role of the contemporary museum. Bergmann graduated from The Icelandic College of Art and Crafts in 1991 and gained an MFA-degree from CCA in Oakland, California in 1995. Bergmann has exhibited extensively both in Iceland and abroad mostly in France, Germany, Finland, Ireland and Belgium. Her works are a part of public and private collections.
www.this.is/olga

Ólöf Nordal (1961) leitast í verkum sínum við að kanna og rannsaka byggingarefni goðsagna með því að leita uppi það sem fellur utan hins hefðbundna og verður þannig uppspretta sagna og trúar. Verk Ólafar varpa iðulega ljósi á málefni líðandi stundar um leið og þau vísa bæði fram og aftur í tíma. Ólöf stundaði nám við Myndlista- og handíðaskóla Íslands og lauk MFA-gráðu frá Cranbrook Academy of Art og annarri MFA-gráðu frá höggmyndadeild Yale-háskóla í Bandaríkjunum. Hún á að baki fjölda samsýninga og einkasýninga austan hafs og vestan og verk eftir hana hafa verið sett upp á opinberum vettvangi, svo sem Geirfugl (1997) í Skerjafirðinum í Reykjavík. Verk Ólafar eru í eigu opinberra safna og einkasafnara innanlands og utan.
www.olofnordal.com

Ólöf Nordal (1961) investigates through her work the structures of myth, searching for what gets left behind the traditional and thus becomes a source for myth and religion. Her works always point to contemporary issues while they, at the same time, reference both the future and the past. Nordal did her undergraduate degree at the Icelandic College of Art and Craft and graduated with an MFA-degree from Cranbrook Academy of Art, Michigan and another MFA-degree from the department of sculpture at Yale University. Nordal´s work has been extensively exhibited both in group shows and solo exhibitions in Europe and USA. In addition, various public art works by her

are in Iceland, i.e. Great Auk (1997). Her works are presented in public and private collections in Iceland and abroad. *www.olofnordal.com*

Skyr Lee Bob (2007) er íslensk-belgískt listamannateymi sem fæst við dans, myndlist og tónlist. Hópurinn hefur einbeitt sér að því að rýna í mannasiði og samband vísinda, náttúru, skáldskapar og staðreynda. Erna Ómarsdóttir (1972), Guðni Gunnarsson (1793) og Lieven Dousselaere (1977) hafa unnið saman frá árinu 2003 í hljómsveitinni og leikhúsgrúppunni Poni, sem hefur komið fram víða um Evrópu, m.a. í Pompidou-safninu í París. Skyr Lee Bob hóf sýningarferli á Listahátíð 2008 með verkefninu *Panic/Control*. Hópurinn hefur m.a. sýnt í Skaftfelli á Seyðisfirði, Listasafni Íslands, Drodesera-hátíðinni í Dro á Ítalíu, Nordwind Festival í Berlín og á Borealis-hátíðinni í Caen á síðasta ári.

Skyr Lee Bob (2007) is an Icelandic/Belgian artist collaborative whose practice intersects with dance, visual art and music. The group's interests evolve around etiquette and the relationship between science, nature, fantasy and fact. Erna Ómarsdóttir (1972), Guðni Gunnarsson (1973), and Lieven Dousselaere (1977), have worked together since 2003 as part of Poni band and theatre group performing extensively around Europe, e.g. in Pompidou in Paris. Skyr Lee Bob started its carrier at the Reykjavik Art Festival in 2008 with the work *Panic/Control*. They have shown their work in Skaftfell Art Centre, National Gallery of Iceland, Drodesera Festival in Dro, Italy, Nordwind Festival in Berlin and the Borealis Festival in Caen.

●

Vettvangur fyrir sýningarstjórn
Haustið 2010 var ýtt úr vör nýju verkefni á vegum Hafnarborgar þar sem sýningarstjórar fá tækifæri til að senda inn tillögur um áhugaverðar sýningar. Þetta er í fyrsta sinn sem íslenskt safn opnar á þennan hátt dyr sínar fyrir sýningarstjórum en slík vinnubrögð eru vel þekkt á alþjóðavettvangi. Sýningarstjórum var gefinn kostur á að senda inn hugmyndir um haustsýningu í Hafnarborg 2011 og óskað eftir tillögum um samsýningum. Sérstaklega var hugað að því að veita tækifæri sýningarstjórum með stuttan feril að baki. Alls bárust sextán tillögur sem flestar uppfylltu þau skilyrði sem sett voru. Listráð Hafnarborgar valdi fjórar framúrskarandi tillögur til frekari úrvinnslu. Tillaga Ólafar Gerðar Sigfúsdóttur varð síðan fyrir valinu. Í tillögu hennar koma fram hugmyndir um myndlist sem rannsóknaraðferð, og vinnu listamannsins sem rannsóknarvinnu, og skyldi leiða saman ýmsar fagstéttir við undirbúning sýningarinnar. Tillagan þótti hugmyndalega sterk og líklegt að með henni skapaðist áhugaverður vettvangur í Hafnarborg bæði á sjálfum sýningartímanum og í aðdraganda sýningarinnar.

Ólöf Gerður er mannfræðingur með BA-próf frá Háskóla Íslands og MA-próf frá Chicago-háskóla. Áhugasvið hennar hverfast um söfnun, listir og minjagripi, hún hefur stundað vettvangsrannsóknir í Nígeríu, á Ítalíu og Íslandi. Frá 2004 hefur hún verið virkur félagi í ReykjavíkurAkademíunni og um tíma var hún varaformaður hennar. Undanfarið hefur hún fetað sig inn á svið sýningarstjórnunar þar sem hún starfar á mörkum mannfræði, efnismenningar og lista. Frá árinu 2007 hefur hún starfað sem forstöðumaður rannsóknarþjónustu Listaháskóla Íslands, þar sem hún vinnur að uppbyggingu listrannsókna.

A Platform for Curating
In the autumn of 2010, a new project was introduced by Hafnarborg which is intended to provide an opportunity for curators to present new and interesting proposals for exhibitions. This is the first time an Icelandic museum opens its doors to curators in this way although such practice is well established internationally. Curators were granted an opportunity to submit proposals for an autumn exhibition at Hafnarborg in 2011 and proposals for group exhibitions were called for. The museum especially looked to curators with as of yet short careers. In total sixteen proposals were received which most met the conditions set. Hafnarborg Art Council then chose four outstanding proposals for further review. Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir's proposal was then chosen. In her proposal, ideas emerge of visual art as a research method and she furthermore examines the work of the artist as research work while the preparation process of the exhibition also brought together people in different professional fields. The proposal was considered conceptually strong and likely to create an interesting setting in Hafnarborg, both with the exhibition itself and its preparation.

Ólöf Gerður is trained as an anthropologist with a BA from the University of Iceland and an MA from the University of Chicago. Her main interests evolve around the collecting, souvenir, and the arts, and she has conducted fieldwork in Nigeria, Italy and Iceland. She has been a fellow at the Reykjavik Academy since 2004 and vice-president in 2006. Recently she has entered the field of fine art curatorship where she works on the cross roads of anthropology, material culture and art. In 2007 she became director of the Research Service Center at Iceland Academy of the Arts, where she currently works towards establishing artistic research.

Í bili
In Between
Hafnarborg
26. ágúst – 23. október
2011

Sýningarstjóri Curator:
Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir
Texti Text: Sýningarstjóri og fleiri curator and other
Þýðing Translation: Sigrún Harðardóttir og fleiri and other
Yfirlestur Proofreading: Mörður Árnason
Hönnun Design:
Vinnustofa Atla Hilmarssonar
Prentun Print: Prentmet
Útgefandi Published by:
Hafnarborg, 2011

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Hafnarborg
Menningar- og listamiðstöð Hafnarfjarðar
The Hafnarfjördur Centre of Culture and Fine Art

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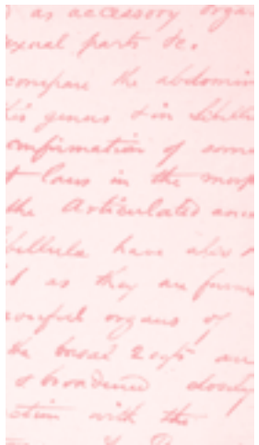

Í bili
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Hafnarborg
26. ágúst – 23. október 2011

Dagskrá

Sýningarstjóraspjall
Sunnudag 28. ágúst kl. 15
Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir annast leiðsögn um sýninguna

Listamannaspjall
Sunnudag 11. september kl. 15
Hugsteypan – Ingunn Fjóla Ingþórsdóttir og Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir

Listamannaspjall
Fimmtudag 15. september kl. 20
Ingirafn Steinarsson og Daníel Björnsson

Fjölskylduleiðsögn og smiðja fyrir börn
Sunnudag 25. september kl. 14

Listamannaspjall
Sunnudag 2. október kl. 15
Ólöf Nordal og Olga Bergmann

Málþing
Laugardag 15. október kl. 13:00
Lykilfyrirlesari: Sarat Maharaj, sýningarstjóri og prófessor við Gautaborgarháskóla
Umsjón: Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir, sýningarstjóri

Listamannsspjall
Fimmtudag 20. október kl. 20
Jeannette Castioni

Nánar um dagskrá á heimasíðu safnsins
www.hafnarborg.is

Program

Curator's Talk
Sunday, August 28 at 3 pm
Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir leads a tour of the exhibition.

Artists' Talk
Sunday, September 11 at 3 pm
Hugsteypan - Ingunn Fjóla Ingþórsdóttir and Þórdís Jóhannesdóttir.

Artists' Talk
Thursday, September 15 at 3 pm
Ingirafn Steinarsson and Daníel Björnsson

Family Tour and Workshop
Sunday, September 25 at 2 pm

Artists' Talk
Sunday, October 2 at 3 pm
Ólöf Nordal og Olga Bergmann

Symposium
Saturday, October 15 at 1 pm
Keynote speaker: Sarat Maharaj, curator and professor at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden
Moderator: Ólöf Gerður Sigfúsdóttir, curator

Artist's Talk
Thursday, October 20 at 8 pm
Jeannette Castioni

See further information on the museum's website
www.hafnarborg.is

Hafnarborg