

Post-Museum Research Group

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Description of the research programme of the research group

The post-museum was a concept coined at the turn of the millennium (Hooper-Greenhill) to indicate an open-ended movement away from the 19th Century and Modernist guises of the museum. Yet, developments of the past 15 years seem to indicate that the rise of novel museum or archival concepts in the wake of post- movements have stalled. As cultural sites, the post-museum (such as the Experience Music Project in Seattle) appears to have stabilized itself as a (tourist) *destination*, a place where visitors are exposed to *services*, where they undergo educational and entertaining *experiences*, where dynamic *interaction* outplays artefact contemplation – or deep consideration, where technology and mediation create a sense of *participation*, a place where collection quality is *equally* important as shopping and catering quality. All this while, the museum and collections (McPherson 2015) seem to have become every more remote under the weight of similar transformations. The post-museum's attempt to turn away from authority and pedagogy toward visitor experience are mediated by concepts of choice, selection, social interaction, pleasure, democracy, co-creativity and sharing. The eventful dynamism of this model, however, is devious. As a site, the post-museum/archive tends to restrict the performative aspects of its model to a narrow set of symbolic values and (creative-industrial) value chains. For example, in the post-museum, experience is an experience of a narrative kind, realised as display – spatialised, predominantly visual, repetitive in structure, controlled in its effect, policed by institutional policy, reflective of outside cultural and political agendas. This *experience* is justified via a form of special pleading for the museum qua museum, as ‘a forum for varied forms of experience, difficult to measure’. In the post-archive, the experience remains a connoisseurial experience – also predominantly visual, repetitive in structure, controlled in its effect, policed by institutional policy, reflective of outside cultural and political agendas. The research group aims at:

- actively researching museum collection performances and performative collections.
- to work with organisations and institutions that are actively developing the post-museum.
- to promote and disseminate the work of the group through a series of projects, discussions, readings, and presentations.

Societal Relevance

Two considerations seem important in this research group. First, the reified concept of experience that supports the educational bias of the post-museum is increasingly challenged by more open forms of interaction in which material, aural, temporal, singular, and digital elements are central. Whereas in the post-museum/archive, sound and music were often used to support narrative, now we find more subtle uses thereof in exhibition spaces that incorporate aspects of literature or film (e.g., Micropia). Beyond the stalled concept of the post-museum/archive new horizons seem to open that call for a further exploration of the area in-between performance and museum practice (De Grote Kunstshow, which brings art of objects to the theatre stage, suggesting one direction this is currently taking), and diverse forms and sites of mediation. Second, in the world of performing arts a movement in the opposite direction seems to be taking place. Mediated by (social) digital technologies, performances in music or in dance, are inscribed in a logic of archiving, retention, reproduction, and re-performance to a unprecedented degree. This happens both on-stage (e.g., in the works of composer Stefan Prins) and off-stage where traces of performances mix with memories, artefacts, to create new, co-creative re-performances. Questions that were once pertinent to the post-museum/archive seem to become relevant for the performing arts: What is it to experience something? How to make sense of retained, selected, re-performed versions of (live) performances? How to create a "collection" of performances. How to curate such a collection? What does curation, in fact, mean in these co-productive spaces? And when the archive of performances grows and comes to haunt live performances as their shadow, what will be the future of the archive of performances?

Envisaged results

Journal articles & book chapters, 4 PhD dissertations, workshops, seminars and public lectures.

Work plan and time schedule

2018 – 2022