As Aristotle already remarked, the sense of touch tends to evade any clear definition. Is touch a sense organ in its own right or does it rather operate as a general function that makes sensation in itself possible? Likewise, if all perception occurs through a medium that differs the sensing body from the sensed, how can one account for this interspace in tactile sensation if the distance between that which touches and that which is touched is barely discernible? Even if they primarily belong to a philosophical discourse, these and similar questions concerning the nature of touch are just as relevant in other contexts, especially those where the prosaicness of touch is circumscribed by specific rules and norms and enacted in particular spaces.

The aim of this workshop is to approach the sense of touch via a series of hands-on investigations and discussions that will take place within the context of art and museum practices. By focusing on touch, the workshop draws attention to features that are often overlooked in the fabric of art exhibits and museum displays. More particularly, the workshop will unfurl the experience and knowledge that comes with touch and the things that we touch. These are experiences that span from intimate relationships, over the skills of diverse crafts and the knowledge of specific materials to pedagogical methods and artistic positions that entail the actual touching of objects. The question is, among others, what kind of knowledge do we speak about when we speak about touch? What kind of remembrance is invoked? Is it conceptual, can it be conceptualized, or does it rather stand in opposition to concepts and visuality? Likewise, what difference does the actual touching of artworks and museum objects make?
Program

Medical Museion, Thursday April 10, Bredgade 62, Copenhagen

• 13.00 – 13.20 / Welcome speech, Thomas Söderqvist, Director, Medical Museion
  Short intro, Jan Eric Olsén, Associate professor, Medical Museion
• 13.25 – 14.10 / Short roundtable presentation of participants
• 14.15 – 15.00 / Teresa Nielsen, Vejen Art Museum, DK
  Access for one group – to the appreciation for many.
• 15.00 – 15.20 / Jan Eric Olsén, Medical Museion, Copenhagen, Extracts from the blindhistorical collection.
• 15.20 – 15.45 / Coffee
• 15.45 – 16.30 / Lucy Lyons, London based artist, Touch but don’t touch: touching by proxy.
• 16.30 – 17.15 / Ane Pilegaard Sorensen, Medical Museion, Copenhagen, Between Bodies – Exhibiting medical materialities.
• 17.15 – 17.45 / Erik Hippe, Copenhagen based physician, Demonstration of medical palpation.

Royal Academy of Arts, Sculpture Dept, Friday April 11, Heibergsgade 9, Copenhagen

• 9.30 – 10.00 / Coffee and croissants.
• 10.00 – 10.30 / Mikkel Bogh, Rector, The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. School of Visual Art, Intimacy, materiality, gesture.
• 11.30 – 12.00 / Albin Werle, Royal Academy of Art, Copenhagen, Dream Archaeology-project.
• 12.00 – 13.00 / Lunch
• 13.00 – 13.45 / Toni Hildebrandt, Istituto Svizzero, Rome, Drawing blindfolded: On the Relation of Touching and Memory.
• 13.45 – 14.30 / Anette Stenslund, Medical Museion, Copenhagen, Touching absence: the smell of nothing.
• 14.30 – 15.00 / Coffee
• 15.00 – 15.45 / Jakob Bak, Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design, Haptic Design Materials.
• 15.45 – 16.30 / Laura Liv Weikop, Design Museum, Copenhagen, The Exhibition Lab – from glass cases to touch?
• 16.30 – 17.00 / Sum up

Arranged by: Medical Museion, Jan Eric Olsén, in collaboration with
  Royal Danish Art Academy, Schools of Visual Art, Jan Bäcklund, Henriette Heise, Karen Harsbo
  Collaborative partner Topographies of the Obsolete, Bergen Academy of Art

Abstracts
Teresa Nielsen  *Access for one group – to the appreciation for many*

Teresa Nielsen, since 1994 the director of Vejens Art Museum, will tell about the project of giving access to blind and visually impaired people, which since 2004 was part of the renovation the oldest rooms of the museum.

Stimulated by a good dialogue with a couple of blind visitors to the museum’s exhibition of ceramics by Gutte Eriksen, the project developed on the basis of the museum’s site specific premisses and possibilities.

The solutions have the important moral, that for every effort for the blind and visually impaired (which, after all, is an almost negligible part of the guests), there were elements of appreciation of other groups of visitors as well.

The renovation took place in the 80th anniversary of the museum’s inauguration, July 1 1924. Consequently the museum celebrates its 90th birthday in the summer of 2014. This will be done with a tactile experience -- a participatory project on the Museum Square under the working title PYROMANCY.

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Jan Eric Olsén  *Extracts from the blindhistorical collection*

Touch is an obvious yet at the same time elusive aspect of the objects included in the blindhistorical collection. These objects were meant for touching and often relate to the things they refer to through reduced or enlarged scale. Depending on the museological context in which they are presented we may or may not touch them. As material objects they’re close at hand but as historical objects they indicate the unbridgeable distance to the past.

In a similar manner the objects bear witness of a tension between tangible and intangible spheres, between the concrete handling of objects and their wider cultural implications and between the blind people who touched them on a daily basis and the pedagogical and sense hierarchical regimes, which largely defined their purpose.

Drawing on a couple of objects from the blindhistorical collection, this presentation addresses some of these issues.

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Lucy Lyons  *Touch but don’t touch: touching by proxy*

This presentation will take the form of a practical workshop that makes use of some of the objects from the blind collection. Together we will explore ideas about looking and knowing, sensing, experiencing and feeling the untouchable through drawing.

This will involve a series of short practical exercises examining a phenomenological approach to sensing objects. They will make use of techniques like blind drawing, drawing from memory, touch drawing and descriptive drawing. After this practical element we will continue the discussion about not touching and touching by proxy.

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Ane Pilegaard Sørensen  *Between bodies: exhibiting medical materialites*

At Medical Museion we are developing a new exhibition on the topic of collecting, preserving and dissecting human body material in medical science. The exhibition will display various human specimens – from skeletons and fetuses to organs and biopsies. Thus, in this particular case the encounter between visitor and exhibition object is an encounter between two bodies: the visitor body and the exhibited, medical body. In my workshop
talk, I will present a line of exploratory design experiments that investigate the material linkage between these two bodies. Based on these experiments, I will point towards the possibility of communicating material – including tactile – aspects of exhibition objects, without actual touch.

Erik Hippe *Touching in medical examination*

Touching or palpation is one of the basic skills doctors are using in physical examination of patients. Palpation is employed on every part of the body accessible to the examining fingers: all external structures and structures accessible through the body orifices.

The tips of the fingers are most sensitive for fine tactile discrimination and the dorsa are most sensitive for temperature registration. The medial palmar parts of the hands are most sensitive for vibrating, for example precordial cardiac thrust, vocal fremitus through the chest wall or crepitus due to a bone fracture.

You always begin palpation with a light touch of your fingertips over the skin surface by which you often detect subtle or mobile masses that are undetected by forceful palpation. Firm pressure is especially useful in the abdomen where it is applied to displace the superficial tissues allowing palpation for deeper masses. In bimanual palpation the tissue is examined between the fingers of the two hands. It is useful in the examination of the breasts, abdomen and pelvic.

At the end of this lecture the audience will get the opportunity to practises their own skills in the art of touching covered masses with different size, shape, consistency and motility.

Michael Renner *Ceramics: Intersection of the Tactile and the Visual*

Gottfried Semper states in “Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts” that artifacts of craft are a result of material quality and functionality. From this point of view, ceramics are understood either as an outcome determined by the material qualities of different plastic materials and their potential to be formed, or they are seen as means to support nutrition and can be organized depending on their specific function.

In opposition to Semper, who was interested to describe the relationship between craft and architecture, the paper attempts to contribute to the understanding of the fascination of ceramics with a reflection upon the process of making, using, appreciating and collecting ceramics. My own amateur ceramic collection will be used to analyze the sensuous experience at the intersection between the tactile and the visual stimuli evoked in the perception of a ceramic object.

Albin Werle *Dream Archaeology-project*

At the moment, a dream is defined as a hallucinatory mental state made up of a mesh of memory images and sensations occurring in the mind of someone sleeping.

The dreamer believes it is awake, reacting on the sensations as if it was happening to the waking body.

Dream/Archaeology was a project where I made myself dream about digging.

By repetition, meditation and exposure to massive amounts of images I tried to program myself to break the
borders constructed by my sleeping mind, to find objects behind the dream walls, hidden in the dream soil.

Awake, backtracking, trying to find the moments where the found objects entered my memory, the process took me on a strange journey in both waking and dreamed space.

Toni Hildebrandt *Drawing blindfolded: On the Relation of Touching and Memory*

Some of the most remarkable drawings of Robert Morris’s *Blind Time Drawings* employ the recognizable imagery of Cézanne’s paintings of Mont Sainte-Victoire, a mountain in southern France, overlooking Aix-en-Provence. The task is here not only a pure exercise in touch, but an intertwining of touch and memory: In *Blind Time IV* Morris summoned up the memory of the first Cézanne he had seen, the landscape of Mont Sainte-Victoire in the Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City, where he was born, where he grew up and first studied drawing at the local Art Institute. In these drawings Morris recalls touching the pages as if he were touching the Cézanne. He thereby underlines also the event of the opening of the eyes to lately see even any blindfolded drawing. I will propose a deconstructive reading of these works and Morris’s eponymous essay, referring to pivotal texts on the relation of touching, memory and drawing by Hélène Cixous, Donald Davidson, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, and Moshe Barasch.

Anette Stenslund *Touching absence: the smell of nothing*

One could be within reach and still feel far apart, or conversely, one could be out of reach and feel extremely close. In this talk I elaborate on different experiences of presence and absence in relation to odor. By laying out a range of ideas on how absence is experienced, the smell of nothing, is not nothing, I suggest. Rather, the possibility exist that one gets touched by nothing, so my proposal.

Jakob Bak *Haptic Design Materials*

Over the past three years CIID has conducted classes and workshops in design of systems for real-time digital synthesis of sound and haptic response. In response to current trends in Interaction Design education focusing on visual feedback and touchscreen interactions, the classes were developed to provide foundations for design students to leverage the potential of non-visual modes of interaction and provide them with tools and skills to develop complex multimodal, embodied experiences. The workshops points towards the need for new Haptic Design Materials, as building blocks for prototyping new services and experiences, leveraging decades of research in the haptic domain and bringing it into the design studio.

Laura Liv Weikop *The Exhibition Lab: from glass cases to touch*
How does museum exhibition design relate to the visitor's engagement in and experience of the exhibition? This presentation describes some of the thoughts and preliminary results behind the experimental exhibition project “The Exhibition Lab” (Designmuseum Danmark, 04.10.13-02.03.14)

“The Exhibition Lab - 3 Perspectives on Everyday Design” was a recent exhibition, which in an attempt to mediate and experiment with the complexity and nature of exhibition practices explored the relation between exhibition design and strategy and the visitors’ experiences and engagement.

In a few words, “The Exhibition Lab” was one exhibition divided into three minor exhibitions displaying exactly the same 25 objects. But in three different ways designed and staged by using aesthetic, didactic and affective mediation principles and strategies corresponding to almost stereotypical representations of exhibitions. So what were the results? This presentation gives an introduction to the exhibition experiment and the preliminary findings.

Speakers

Teresa Nielsen studied art history at the University of Copenhagen, 1995. Since 1994 she has been head of the Vejen Art Museum. Numerous art exhibitions have been made, and the collections have doubled since 1994. The museum’s focus is on Danish symbolist art – and especially on the artist Niels Hansen Jacobsen (1861-1941), his sculptures and sculptural ceramics. Henceforth the museum regularly shows work of present dag artists working in these fields. Artists are also asked to take part in the museum’s activity program. An art school has been a part of the museum since 2006 with approx. 80-90 pupils a week. The old museum build from 1924 has been gradually refurbished (1997-2004) and recently/still in progress the garden/park surrounding the museum has been altered thanks to two large grants. The museum’s space is now also out of doors with sculptures on display and lots of good space for art school activities and guest to hang out and have fun. Guest’s will now be meeting artworks the minute they reach out to open the gate – the four new gates for the museum’s
garden have been modelled by present day Danish sculptors: Bjørn Nørgaard, Eva Steen Christensen, Erik Heide and Marianne Jørgensen. Touching the tactile – and artwork put to use!

Jan Eric Olsén is a historian who has been involved in research projects and exhibition making at Medical Museion, University of Copenhagen, since 2005. Focused on the visual culture of medicine, his current research deals with the history of blindness and the challenge that tangible objects pose to historiography.

Lucy Lyons is an artist and lecturer in drawing research and painting at City & Guilds of London Art School and an associate lecturer on MA Art and Science at UAL. She is currently artist in residence at Barts Pathology Museum QMUL where she is coordinating a Share Academy project, Drawing Parallels, a partnership between University College London, University of the Arts London and the London Museums Group, and is funded by Arts Council England.

Ane Pilegaard Sørensen is PhD Candidate at Medical Museion and exhibition designer. Research interests: Exhibition media, spatial and material strategies in exhibition design and how visual and tactile sensory modes might supplement each other in the perception of exhibition displays.


Michael Renner experienced the digital revolution first-hand when he went to work for Apple Computer Inc. and The Understanding Business in California, just after completing his diploma as Graphic Designer at the Basel School of Design. Since 1990, he has his own design Studio in Basel with corporate and cultural clients. He started teaching in 1990 in the Visual Communication Institute at the Basel School of Design (HGK FHNW) with an emphasis on the Design Process and Design Research. In 1999 he was named Chairman of the Institute. His approach to develop research activities in the field of design is based on the aim to further develop existing competencies of image creation. With this approach of gaining knowledge through the creation of images, the design process becomes the central research theme and a methodology at the same time. The interest in the design process and its potential of cultural innovation connects Renner’s research interest with the reflection upon ceramic artifacts.

Albin Werle is Art student at the Royal Academy of Arts, Copenhagen. He is interested in the production, collection and direction of texts, voices and objects that activates the imagination and evolves in the mind of others, flickering between fictional and non-fictional presence.

Toni Hildebrandt studied Art History, Musicology, Philosophy and Romance Literature at the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, the Liszt School of Music Weimar, the Sapienza University of Rome and the Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies in Naples. From March 2010 to September 2013, Hildebrandt has been a Research Fellow at the National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) Iconic Criticism “eikones”. He is a member of “What Images Do”, a Research Network established in 2012 in collaboration between NCCR Iconic Criticism “eikones”, the Delft University of Technology, Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. For the academic year 2013/14 Hildebrandt was nominated a Resident Fellow (Post-Doc) at the Istituto Svizzero in Rome.

http://studioroma.istitutosvizzero.it/en/toni-hildebrandt/

Anette Stenslund, PhD Student, Medical Museion, University of Copenhagen
Research interests: phenomenology, ambience, aesthetics, scent, exhibition making.

Jakob Bak is Research Manager at Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design. His Research Interests are Design, Haptics and Sound.

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Research interests: exhibition strategy and mediation, exhibition design, museum visitor experiences.