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Benefitting people and society

Art Scholarships
2025

art

Scholarships | Fellowships | Investigator grants

2025 Abstract booklet

Introduction

The Novo Nordisk Foundation has supported research in art and art history for more than 40 years. Initiated in 1979, the area of support is deeply rooted within the foundation.

The Foundation supports research in art history, in practice-based art and curating, and in the interdisciplinary crossroads between art and science.

The objective for supporting this research field is to challenge existing dogmas, inspire new ideas and improve peoples' lives. Through art, individuals and society encounter questions of culture, identity, and community, which are explored and disseminated through research in art and art history. In addition, cross-disciplinary research within art and natural science may help put science matters into new perspectives.

With this area of support, the Foundation aims to significantly contribute to art and art history research in Denmark by providing the most talented researchers with the opportunity to conduct major research projects and pursue a research career within this field.

The Foundation annually supports research in art and art history through PhD Scholarships, Postdoc Fellowships, Investigator Grants, Project Grants and Visiting Scholarships.

This abstract booklet presents the Scholarships, Fellowships and Investigator Grants awarded in 2025.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Art History Research



Anna Kærsgaard Gregersen

Art Historian and Curator

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Project title

Copy-past(e) – The Transhistorical Copy as Resistance in Contemporary Art

Grant

DKK 2.460.393

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek and University of Copenhagen

Photo credit: Ana Cecilia Gonzalez

Abstract

"Could replicas replace restituted objects in museums?" asks artist Hew Locke at the British Museum. Today, copies appear to play a recurring role among several artists from the Global South, engaging in current repatriation debates by replicating ancient objects as acts of resistance. However, a comprehensive study of copying as a contemporary artistic strategy remains absent. The PhD project *Copy-past(e) – The Transhistorical Copy as Resistance in Contemporary Art* explores how artists challenge colonial histories and Western museum practices by copying ancient objects. Through case studies of selected contemporary artistic practices, the project investigates these 'transhistorical copies' as anachronistic prisms that enable artists to "brush history against the grain," as Walter Benjamin put it. The study aims to develop new theoretical frameworks and tools to examine how these artworks contribute to debates on global heritage and the role of Western encyclopaedic museums.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Art History Research



Gustav Johannes Hoder

Publisher and researcher

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Project title

Works of School: Institution as Form

Grant

DKK 2.810.000

Duration

3 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

It is the purpose of art schools to give future artists an education. However, throughout the 20th century, artists have turned this picture upside down, founding art schools and educational institutions that are simultaneously works of art in themselves. Such self-organised art schools both have the status of art objects and the legitimacy of educational institutions. The project investigates historical and contemporary examples of self-organised art schools, and asks what this history holds for the future of art education.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Extraordinary Potential in Practice-based Curatorial Research



Francesca Astesani

Curator

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Project title

Bending the Clouds – A Curatorial Investigation of the intersection between Religious Imagination and Digital Technologies

Grant

DKK 2.791.195

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Den Frie Udstilling and
University of Copenhagen

Abstract

This curatorial research project explores how religious ideas shape our conception of digital technologies. From cloud storage to artificial intelligence, today's digital systems echo religious structures, demanding faith-like trust in invisible processes. As these technologies increasingly dominate our lives and tech corporations expand into politics, understanding these connections becomes essential to challenge how religious underpinnings reinforce digital capitalism's hierarchical powers. Through three curatorial projects—a visual essay, a public program, and an exhibition—the research brings historical and contemporary artworks into dialogue to explore these urgent issues. The project develops through a speculative approach guided by intuition, affinities and non-linear temporalities, proposing a curatorial method that values the ineffable and the unpredictable as a form of resistance to digital capitalism's drive for exactitude and control.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Practice-based Artistic Research



Tinne Zenner

Visual artist

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Project title

Immaterial Extraction: Data Extraction in Kalaallit Nunaat

Grant

DKK 2.810.000

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Art Hub Copenhagen and University of Copenhagen

Photo credit: Christian Brems

Abstract

Tinne Zenner will lead a practice-based PhD in artistic research titled *Immaterial Extraction: Data Extraction in Kalaallit Nunaat* at Art Hub Copenhagen and the University of Copenhagen's Department of Arts and Cultural Studies. The project will explore the continuous processes of mapping and data collection from Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland). In the history of Danish colonial ventures, the mapping of land has played a crucial role in the extraction of natural resources like oil, coal and cryolite from Kalaallit Nunaat.

While traditional mining leaves visible traces on the surface of the earth, this project will focus on the less tangible extraction of geological data, examining its connections to colonial history, media technologies, and current geopolitics. Using analogue film as both a visual medium and a physical material, the project will share its findings through lectures, screenings, seminars, a written dissemination and an exhibition of film installations and cinematic works.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Practice-based Artistic Research



Julie Lænkholm

Artist

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Project title

Care-activistic earth and textile weaving for Strandatindur mountain by Skaftfell Art Center Iceland in collaboration with Niels Bohr Institute

Grant

DKK 2.800.045

Duration

3 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

This practice-based PhD-project combines artistic and climate physical perspectives on the current climate and biodiversity crisis and is carried out as a collaboration between Faculty of Humanities at KU, Skaftfell Art Center and Niels Bohr Institute. The purpose of the project is to explore how collective artistic processes can contribute to social and climatic changes. The center of the research is the production of an earth weaving and a large textile to be wrapped around Strandatindur mountain. Earth weaving as a practice earlier developed and coined by me consists of three layers: An underground element with plant-dyed wool that preserves water for the plantation, a topographical layer reflecting the out-of-sight wool pattern, and a curated plantation with colours and structure forming an organic image best captured from above. The textile work is produced specifically for Strandatindur mountain which has been exceptionally prone to landslides due to climate changes, and the material for the textile work is the kind used to curb the damages for the near-by town Seyðisfjörður. The textile will be made in collaboration with the inhabitants of the town using historically feminine methods of care and maintenance in the weaving process. Through the co-creation, a space for sharing and healing climate trauma is built.

The project will form connections between my artistic practice and its central aim to archive and revive vulnerable, experience-based knowledge practices, crafts, and endangered plants on one side and on the other, a core concept in climate physics, *positive tipping points*, which revolves around the ways in which people with shared goals and intentions can create positive climate changes.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art History Research



PhD, Sarah Samira El-Taki

Visual Culture Researcher

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Project title

The 1980s. Today? Diasporic ruptures in politics and photography

Grant

DKK 2.006.591

Duration

2 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Photo credit: Emre Gonlugur

Abstract

The significance of the 1980s in shaping the UK art scene cannot be overstated; it was a defining era that witnessed the emergence of solidarity among Britain's minority groups and gave rise to the political and artistic framework encapsulated by the term "Black." However, a critical gap remains in understanding how the 1980s have become an institutionally recognised archive for political and artistic reflection. This understudied anachronistic relationship will offer crucial insights into our contemporary moment. This project revisits the 1980s—a period marked by violent race riots, the rise of right-wing populism, and radical artistic movements—to explore the current political and artistic reckoning in the UK. In addition, *The 1980s. Today?* seeks to juxtapose the artistic and political reflections of the 1980s with those of the present, aiming to uncover more nuanced implications for our contemporary moment.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art History Research



PhD, Kathrine Bolt Rasmussen

Art historian & curator

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Project title

Rehearsing the Future: Learning from
Commoning-oriented Art Experiments

Grant

DKK 2.020.000

Duration

2 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

In recent years a number of art institutions have attempted to engage in radical reforms reshaping themselves and the way they engage with their public. A significant number of these reforms have taken place under the rubric of 'commoning'. As a verb commoning is as an active, equality-oriented practice of sharing resources and creating infrastructures that can facilitate a different use of existing institutions. Through commoning strategies and curatorial decentering these art institutions seek to identify a different way of being and working together that explores alternatives to the asymmetrical power relations of society. This postdoc research project will take place as a series of curatorial commoning experiments in the self-organised art space Astrid Noack's Atelier (ANA) in Copenhagen. The postdoc will, firstly, analyse the discourse around commoning in a longer (art) historical trajectory, and, secondly, investigate what 'we' can learn from the many attempts to practise 'the commons'.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Practice-based Artistic Research



Carla Zaccagnini

Professor

Project title

Prehistoric Present -- Palaeolithic Painting under Contemporary Practices

Grant

DKK 2.012.850

Duration

2 years

Place of research

The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts

Abstract

Palaeolithic cave paintings have always been studied as relicts from ancient societies. Societies we can learn about through the marks they have left, but that allegedly we would have little to learn from. This research proposes to see these paintings as living, relevant creations, that can also teach us about the societies we are and could be.

From an embodied experience of artistic practice, the project will explore these paintings for what they can mean in the present. Involving visual arts, performance, and music, this study will highlight the all-encompassing characteristics of these ancient art forms.

Departing from the experience of encountering these paintings in the context where they were produced, this research aims at understanding what is the core of artistic intension, which bridges these primordial expressions with the art we make today. Understanding the intensions behind these paintings can enlighten our current relation to art and its function in society.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Practice-based Artistic Research



PhD, Nanna Debois Buhl

Visual artist

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Project title

Glitching the Pattern: The Poetics of Weaving and Computation

Grant

DKK 2.020.000

Duration

2 years

Place of research

Statens Museum for Kunst

Photo credit: Marina Cavazza/CERN

Abstract

Technological tools—from computers to AI—play increasingly significant roles in our lives. Yet, as users we often lack the ability to understand how they function. In this postdoc project, I aim to explore historical, theoretical, and material connections between programming and weaving. I will transform traditional weaving techniques through algorithmic systems, and use weaving as outset for algorithmic art, thus connecting the analog and the digital in ways that not only offer new perspectives on art historical material but also propose new understanding of contemporary digital realms.

The project will be housed by the National Gallery of Denmark (SMK) and involve collaborations with Arts at CERN and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). With an outset in works by Anna Thommesen and Ragna Braase from SMK's collection I will explore weaving as a kind of programming, a tool for dissent, disruption of categories, and (gender)political reflection.

The project's purpose is twofold: To use technology artistically and subversively to create artworks that ignite new understandings of art-craft-technology connections and analog-digital entanglements, and to propose a new art historical framework for artistic use of weaving and programming. Through artistic experimentation and critical reflection, the project thus connects craft and technology, algorithms and weaving patterns, bodies and machines, authorized and under-recognized subjects, local and global strata, past and future.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art Theory and Natural Science



PhD, Aslak Aamot Helm

Researcher and Curator

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Project title

Alluvial: Biodiversity and Aesthetics

Grant

DKK 2.019.722

Duration

2 years

Place of research

Aarhus University

Abstract

Alluvial: Biodiversity & Aesthetics explores the growing intersections of biodiversity science and contemporary art. As environmental transformations accelerate, biodiversity science has become central to interpreting adaptation, migration, and extinction. Technological advances deepen our understanding of these dynamics but pose challenges in analysing vast data landscapes. From this scientific frontier, *Alluvial* investigates how artists use methods and data from biodiversity science, framed by the aesthetic and ecological turns in media theory. It examines how artists and scientists offer complementary insights into our relationship with biodiversity.

Through interdisciplinary workshops and public programming at the Natural History Museum of Denmark, Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, and Serpentine Galleries in London, *Alluvial* opens its research to institutions and the public. It will result in peer-reviewed articles, a book with MIT Press featuring commissioned contributions, and aims to lay the groundwork for a Center for Biodiversity and Aesthetics across its partners.

Investigator Grant



PhD, Tonje Haugland Sørensen

Art Historian

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Project title

Norwegian Wood: Extractive landscapes, art and visual culture in Denmark and Norway 1730-1860

Grant

DKK 4.150.000

Duration

4 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

Forests and trees are recurring topics in both Danish and Norwegian Romantic paintings with works like P.C. Skovgaard's *Parti fra Iselingen Skov* (1861) or Thomas Fearnley's *Labrofossen ved Kongsberg* (1837) often being read as symbols of national identity and romantic sentiment. Yet a closer look at the number of debarked and uniformly cut logs throughout Fearnley's *Labrofossen* raises questions. What are these man-made logs doing in painting that is usually described as wild nature? The art historical research project Norwegian Wood approaches the logs as indicative of an overlooked aspect of Danish and Norwegian forest paintings: the connection to lumber extraction. By examining various media, the project will be the first scholarly inquiry into the intersection of art, resource extraction, and forestry in Denmark and Norway from 1730-1860 and offer new ecocritical interpretations of art and visual culture in this period.

Investigator Grant



PhD, Laura Katrine Skinnebach

Associate Professor of Art History

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Project title

Ludic Middle Ages: Games, Play, Animation

Grant

DKK 4.150.000

Duration

4 years

Place of research

Aarhus University

Abstract

Ludic Middle Ages: Games, Play, Animation (LUMA) is an art historical project that examines the various forms and cultural meanings of play and playthings in the European Middle Ages, particularly from the 12th to the 15th centuries. LUMA takes a new and innovative approach to medieval art by studying the artistic objects and practices as the animating focal point of play in both children's games, in religious play, in science, and in popular performances such as the juggler's display of wondrous skills or carnivalesque excesses at the medieval marked square. Furthermore, the material creation of these playthings – or *playgents* as we dub them – is examined as a ludic practice. LUMA also investigates the radical change of play and playthings in the Reformation period, and what influence this had on the history of art. Here, the ludic objects and forms of practice have traditionally been overlooked or excluded, but LUMA tries to reinscribe them and give them the place they deserve in a wider art historical context.

