



novo nordisk
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Benefitting people and society

Art Scholarships

2023

art

Scholarships
Fellowships
Investigator grants

2023 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 with up to DKK 31.5 million through PhD Scholarships, Postdoc Fellowships, Investigator Grants, Project Grants and Visiting Professorships.

This abstract booklet presents the Scholarships, Fellowships and Investigator Grants awarded in 2023.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Art History Research



Oliver Wiant Rømer Holme

Master of Arts in Art History
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Project title

Between Solidarity and Powerlessness:
Social Art of the Interwar Period in Denmark

Grant

DKK 2.000.000

Duration

3 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

This project reconsiders the art historical perception of the so-called social art current of the interwar period in Denmark. By framing social art as a revolutionary impulse, the project challenges established art historical narratives of modernism, which has historically favored Surrealism, abstraction, and artists associated with cultural radicalism.

Artistic production of the period emerged during the volatile political climate of the interwar years. Works by social artists such as Aksel Jørgensen, Marlie Brande and Anton Hansen were commonly reproduced and used as illustrations in cultural and political journals during the 1920s and 1930s. Despite their internal disagreements, the editorial boards of Marxist and cultural radical journals were united through their antifascist stance. This resistance was nonetheless disjointed when it came to political and artistic strategy. The project outlines these strategies to analyze how they were manifested in works of social art. Finally, the project addresses the reason why social art has not received larger art historical attention and recognition in Denmark and in Europe in general.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Practice-based Research in Curating

A. E. Brandt

Project title

The Exhibitionary Complex in the Age of
Transparency

Grant

DKK 1.992.660

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Aarhus University and Art Hub Copenhagen

Abstract

Today, whether in politics, economics, technology, health or culture, on a local or global level, demands for transparency are ubiquitous. Many of the demands are made possible by new communication and information technologies, that in turn often are based on ideals of transparency. Only recently has the concept become the subject of systematic scrutiny.

Transparency is imported as an inherent value of the practice of contemporary curating, conceptualized as visibility and participatory access. The question is, whether with the advent of new digital technology and the ubiquity of transparency, this value still has a critical role to play in the making of exhibitions? How is contemporary art reacting towards the ideal? And finally, what possibilities does curating have for taking on other or new directions? My project will encompass both practice-based and analytical methods.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

Practice-based Research in Art



Asker Bryld Staunæs

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Project title

Automatic Uprisings:
Archiving a Techno-Social Sculpture

Grant

DKK 1.971.165

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Aarhus University and Kunsthall Aarhus

Abstract

Automatic Uprisings is an artistic research project between Aarhus University and Kunsthall Aarhus that is both media-based and politically-engaged. It explores new imaginaries for social protest with artificial intelligence (AI) in a way that first become conceivable in this Digital Age. Its practical aim is to document a potential network, *The Synthetic International (SI)*, which depicts a global web of political parties driven by AIs. This offers an antidote to a centenary of doomsday visions on “the robot uprising” by explicating how this already takes place in today’s society. The SI artwork - a “techno-social sculpture” that follows in a tradition of e.g. Joseph Beuys - presents a participatory interface where one can engage with AI propaganda, twisted diagrams, etc. By facilitating digital exhibitions, labs, workshops and scholarly debate, *Automatic Uprisings’* objective is to outline a form of digital citizenship where everyone contributes to determining the role of AI in democracy.

Mads Øvlisen PhD Scholarship

with extraordinary potential

Art History Research



Christina Ntanovasilis

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Project title

AESTHETICS OF POSTHUMAN EVOLUTION:
Tracing the posthuman in constellations of art and
astroculture, 1900-

Grant

DKK 1.997.910

Duration

3 years

Place of research

Aarhus University

Abstract

How does the exploration of celestial worlds influence our own terrestrial world? This PhD project will inquire into the ways visual art has developed in relation to space exploration, starting from technological advances in astronomy in the late 19th century, the space exploration race during the postwar period, and ongoing activities in outer space. The study seeks to better understand the cultural impact of space exploration in art by tracing overlooked cosmological worldviews in modern and contemporary artworks, and by analysing them according to astroculture, a transdisciplinary discourse of astronomy, art history, philosophy of science, psychoanalysis, and cultural theory, including a new lens based on posthumanism and new materialism. The aim of this research is to showcase how the aesthetic exploration of celestial themes in art since 1900 challenges anthropocentric divisions of nature and culture and establishes what could be termed a neo-geocentric worldview.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art History Research



Lise Hindsberg
Art Historian, PhD

Project title

Seeing with Eyes and Ears: The Synergy between Image and Song in Illuminated Choral Manuscripts, c. 1450-1550

Grant

DKK 1.500.000

Duration

2 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

Concurrently with the technological developments within the fields of artificial intelligence and virtual reality that are now in the possession and administration of mankind, the question of authenticity has become increasingly important. It is a question that seems to have occupied the human mind at all times, but whereas today it is the new technologies that give cause to debate, it was often art that previously challenged the boundaries between original and copy, true and false. This research project deals with illuminated choral manuscripts between 1450-1550, and it will help us understand the audio-visual medium's historical role in the attitude of mankind towards the creation and experience of presence. The research project investigates the relationship in form and content between image, musical notation, and text, and which function and effect this multisensorial interplay had for the experience of vividness in the Renaissance. The research project will contribute to our understanding of the role of the image and the importance of seeing (with both eyes and ears) within the Christian liturgy.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art History Research



Niels Henriksen
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Project title

Vandalism Against Chronology: Asger Jorn's 'Archaeology' in Theory and Practice

Grant

DKK 1.499.724

Duration

2 years

Place of research

The National Gallery of Denmark

Abstract

Beginning in 1947 and continuing throughout his career, the Danish artist Asger Jorn (1914–1973) created a dozen illustrated books on prehistoric and medieval art. Only six of the books were published in Jorn's lifetime. Yet through his work on the books, Jorn developed a series of methods that he used in his drawings, paintings, and prints as well. He described these methods as "archaeological."

Entitled "Vandalism Against Chronology: Asger Jorn's 'Archaeology' in Theory and Practice," my postdoc examines the overlapping and interweaving of creative, analytical, formal, and intellectual procedures in Jorn's practice across media. Connecting Jorn's art with a complex and multilayered historiography of art theory as it evolved at the intersection of art history, archaeology, anthropology, and sociology, the project pivots on the importance of the renegotiation of the relationship between theory and practice in the art and philosophy of the post-World War Two period for the formulation of radical new critiques of history, ideology, and technology; some of which are still relevant today.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Practice-based Research



Lea Porsager

Artist & Dr.

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(Foto: Petra Kleis)

Project title

OUTRAGEOUS INTIMACY [spooky touch at a distance]

Grant

DKK 1.422.487

Duration

2 years

Place of research

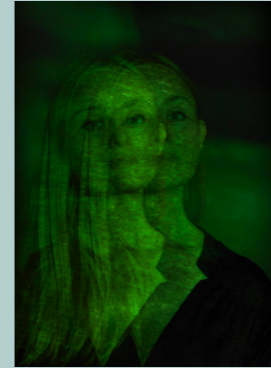
The Royal Danish Art Academy of Fine Arts

Abstract

Mass extinctions, insurrections, climate change, etc.—the current state of the world puts energy at the center of discourse, divulging deep political and economic agendas and entanglements. The postdoc project OUTRAGEOUS INTIMACY [spooky touch at a distance] aspires to address the urgent need to re-form energy. It calls for the conceptual properties of the historical readymade to be applied to the field of earthwork. It proposes that seemingly extinct sites can be approached as dormant, erogenous zones, calling for touch—processes of sensitization—to unleash their latent, anarchic vibrancy. OUTRAGEOUS INTIMACY is fuelled by two, basal desires: 1) The longing to address cosmic energy, scientific phenomena, political erosion and matters of extinction in affirmative and libidinous ways, and 2) The yearning for intimate bonds of e/motion and fleshy entanglements in troubling times. The project unfolds in a collaboration with Arts at CERN — the arts program at CERN (European Laboratory for Particle Physics in Geneva).

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Practice-based Research



Marie Kølbæk Iversen

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Project title

Futurities of the Commons

Grant

DKK 1.500.000

Duration

2 years

Place of research

The National Gallery of Denmark

Abstract

From its anchoring at SMK Thy, my project, *Fællefuturisme / Futurities of the Commons*, investigates the cultural histories of the traditional Mid-, West- and North Jutlandic commons that were overridden with the consolidation and homogenisation of the Danish nation state, and the rapid cultivation of the heathlands, during the 19th century. I make this proposal to expand general historical awareness of the many different kinds of peoples and cultures traditionally populating the territory known as Denmark. And to explore future potentials for commons-based lifestyles and practices through the imaginative interface of art. According to Silvia Federici, 'the commons' designate the people's relation to land and goods held in common: Taking just enough to survive and leaving the same abundance for the next generations. The question is, whether a reconsideration of the commons now might suggest lines of flight beyond the seeming dead ends of developmentalist nation state logics.

Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship

Art and Natural Sciences



Mads Vedel Heilskov

PhD

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Project title

Natura Artifex: A New Ecological Approach to the Production and Perception of Art in the Middle Ages, 1200-1500 CE

Grant

DKK 1.493.525

Duration

2 years

Place of research

Aarhus University

Abstract

Natura Artifex seeks to investigate the relationship between artists, raw materials and nature in the European Middle Ages, c. 1200-1500 CE. To do so, it will look at natural philosophical texts, art-manuals and recipe-books and works of art which exemplify the natural world through utilizing properties such as shapes, colours, textures and smells of natural materials. This could be tree sap used to make drops of blood or tears, red colouration in stones used to mimic blood, petals of rose used to make prayer beads, clay and rocks used to mimic earth and stones. Via thematic explorations of such exemplifications of the natural world in medieval art production and perception, Natura Artifex aims to highlight that human life, even at its most human mode of expression, namely art production, cannot be separated from the natural world. It will thereby produce a counter narrative to the notion that the modern anthropocentric logic stems from the common Christian past, and put forth evidence that medieval people may have had a more fundamentally ecological frame of thinking than us. The acknowledgment that other, non-anthropocentric, conceptions of the natural world have existed before modernity may be harnessed as a useful mirror for our efforts to solve the current environmental crisis.

Investigator Grant

Art History Research



Kasper Opstrup Frederiksen

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Project title

Twisting the Fabric of Space: On the Art and Politics of the Hidden

Grant

DKK 4.000.000

Duration

4 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

Taking its cue from the interest in magic, folklore, and surrealism in contemporary art and theory worlds, Twisting the Fabric of Space investigates four weird entanglements of art, politics, and esotericism. These analyse the relations between 1) occulture and contemporary art, 2) artistic uses of folklore and locality since the late 1960s, 3) two groups combining elements of art, social and religious movements, and surrealism in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as 4) as part of a postdoc connected to the project, the relations between art, fictions and the real in our present moment, ripe with conspiracy theories and a destabilisation of the truth.

An engagement with an offshoot of the British woodcraft movement runs throughout the project, providing data for an exhibition of contemporary artists engaging with this legacy. Towards the end of the project a conference will be co-organised with University of London. To sum up the project, its findings will be published as a monograph by Strange Attractor Press.

Investigator Grant

Art History Research



Sabine Dahl Nielsen

Art Historian, PhD

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Project title

Transcultural Contact Zones: Negotiating the Role of Art Institutions in Contemporary Societies Characterised by Migration

Grant

DKK 4.000.000

Duration

4 years

Place of research

University of Copenhagen

Abstract

Over time, migration has been one of many factors making Europe a site of social contact and conflicts, and the influx of people have made the European populations ever more globally entangled. This has always been the case, but in later years the issue has been more at the forefront of the political agenda. As a consequence of this development, the rethinking of art institutional practices has recently become an urgent matter of concern within a European context, not least because of the continent's colonial histories.

This project will investigate the specific challenges that European art institutions currently face when they seek to address culturally pluralised publics in today's migration-induced societies. Employing a transcultural perspective that highlights global entanglements between and within cultures, the project aims to answer the following questions: How are art institutions impacted by the various frameworks of geography, economy, size and values in which they operate when dealing with issues of critical diversity? In what concrete ways do art institutions address culturally mixed publics? How are visitors encouraged to participate actively in the institutions' curatorial programs? And lastly, which types of culturally pluralised communities are formed on the basis of these encounters?



