

Feeling Museums. Collecting, guarding, and evoking emotions through heritage

Deadline: Aug 31, 2025

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Museums are one of the most visible heritage institutions. They not only transmit knowledge but also construct understanding about the different ways of living and conceiving the world. Both knowledge and understanding are attached, transformed, and created in connection with values and emotions. In this vein, feelings, emotions, and affective practices are essential features of museums. They also have the potential to enhance processing and managing difficult emotions and experiences: to create understanding towards the experiences of others, and to create a platform for sharing both empathy and learning. All this has become even more important in a time in which polarization and questioning of democratic values have become more visible features in many societies. Museums are situated between different emotions and feelings, but via the interplay of collections, professionals, partners, and audiences, museums can also be understood as feeling entities. This all affects how inclusion and exclusion are experienced in museums.

We invite abstracts for book chapters that discuss the role of emotions in the different stages of museal work, including e.g., collecting, caring, exhibiting, and co-curating. We are interested in topics that discuss the ways emotions are (knowingly) recognized, acknowledged, and evoked, or distanced, denied, and ignored in museums. We aim for an international edited volume dealing broadly with the above-mentioned topics in different national and thematic contexts, both in everyday practices and more sensitive or exceptional occasions. Your book chapter may touch upon one of the suggested topics – however, the list is not comprehensive:

Collecting:

- How are emotions present in collection work and documentation in museums?
- Are emotions consciously documented, or are they bypassed as trivial or irrelevant?

Guarding:

- How do museums guard different emotions aroused by heritage?
- What kind of emotions do collections rouse in their caretakers?
- How are the different emotions cared for democratically, considering all parties involved?
- How do museums care for their communities?

Evoking:

- How consciously do museums consider emotions when planning and designing an exhibition or an event?
- How can emotions be curated?
- By what means can the experienced emotions be grasped?

- What skills or competences are needed for facilitating emotions evoked in museum audiences?

Please send your article proposal to Inkeri Hakamies (inkeri.hakamies@helsinki.fi) by 31st August 2025. Your proposal should include:

- An initial title
- An abstract (max. 300 words), which indicates clearly the research question and/or objective of the article
- 3–5 keywords
- Five most relevant bibliographical sources

The manuscripts will be peer-reviewed and published by an international academic publisher. The anthology is part of the project Touching Collections at the University of Helsinki and is edited by Inkeri Hakamies, Ulrike Müller, Pia Olsson, Johanna Pohtinen, and Anna Rauhala. The initial schedule is as follows:

- End of call for abstracts: 31st August 2025
- Editor decisions by 30th September 2025
- Article manuscripts ready by 31st January 2026
- Peer-review process: February-June 2026
- Revised manuscripts ready by 31st August 2026
- Published volume by the beginning of 2027

Reference:

CFP: Feeling Museums. Collecting, guarding, and evoking emotions through heritage. In: ArtHist.net, May 23, 2025 (accessed Apr 5, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/49320>>.