Design Collection Displays Reassessed (Oslo, 28 Oct–1 Nov 25)

National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, Oct 28–Nov 1, 2025
Deadline: Jul 29, 2025

mariangels fondevila, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

The Design Collection Displays Reassessed symposium will discuss collection displays as sites of knowledge exchange and active engagement. From a traditionally linear, encyclopedic display, to today's more narrative approaches, in the last decades, historical and contemporary displays of decorative arts and design have changed dramatically, in response to a variety of forces, including reassessments of institutional priorities, foregrounding of audiences, and the inclusion of different voices. The symposium will interrogate how design objects and interiors are displayed, discussed and interpreted, and for whom. What does curating these kinds of collection displays represent and mean today? And how might this practice look in the future? What new museological approaches are needed?

Design Collection Displays Reassessed: ICOM-Design International Symposium 28 - 30 October 2025 and Post-Symposium 31 October - 1 November

Invitation to submit unpublished proposals:

The new National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo, a merger of four previously independent museums, is a fitting venue for a symposium with this theme. It opened its new, large-scale collection display in 2022, including decorative arts, design, interiors, fashion and studio crafts from the 1100s to the present. This permanent collection reinstallation, the first since 2005, provided an opportunity to re-think the curation of the design and decorative arts display. Some of the questions raised in the curatorial process at the National Museum have inspired and will inform this symposium, including:

•How might we curate critically meaningful displays that communicate the distinctiveness of design objects and which reach beyond heroization of the maker?
•What are the specific challenges of exhibiting historic decorative arts for contemporary audiences, and how might we meet those challenges?
•How do historic and contemporary objects interact in collection displays, if at all?
•Museum collections have traditionally often reinforced hegemonic and dominant histories. How might collection displays instead convey more inclusive and nuanced narratives?
•How might collection displays be more accessible to new and diverse audiences?
•How might we use the collection display to address societal and global issues?
•How might a design object that is interactive – physically and digitally – have its own presence and be successfully displayed within a collection installation?

•How do collection displays change within house museums?
We welcome submissions that touch on any of the questions above, as well as explorations that go beyond these topics. We also invite contributions that look towards possible futures of collection displays.
We look forward to meeting in person to discuss and debate an ever-changing field – a conversation between scholars and practitioners across borders, institutions and disciplines.
An international anthology based on the conference presentations is planned.

Keynote Speakers

•Corinna Gardner, Senior Curator, Design and Digital, Victoria and Albert Museum, London
•Dr Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Curator of Furniture and Woodwork, MAK – Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna
•Marco Magni, founder and chief architect, and Maria Cristina Rizzello, architect and partner, Guicciardini & Magni Architetti, Florence
•Dr Leena Svinhufvud, Leading Researcher, Architecture & Design Museum, Helsinki

For keynote speaker presentations, please see below.
Please submit via email an abstract of 300-400 words for a 20 minute presentation, including a title and a 50-word biography to:
denise.hagstroemer@nasjonalmuseet.no
All selected speakers must be ICOM members at the time of the symposium.
Deadline: 29 July
Proposals will be peer reviewed.
Notification: 5 August
For symposium enquiries, please email:
denise.hagstroemer@nasjonalmuseet.no

Symposium Convener:
Senior Curator, Dr Denise Hagströmer, National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo

Reference:
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