PhD defence January 12th, 13.30-16.30 at Medical Museion

Bredgade 62, København K

OBJECT ENCOUNTERS

Designing for Material Proximity in Medical Museums

Ane Pilegaard

Museums offer close encounters with material objects. Or, at least, they have the potential to do so. While a predominant tendency has been to engage museum visitors through digital media and immersive experiences that go *beyond* the exhibited objects, museum scholars are beginning to emphasize the rich potential of material, sensory encounters with the objects themselves. Many stress the need for touch in the museum as a way of engaging with the material qualities of objects. However, due to preservation issues, most museum objects cannot be touched, which raises the question: How do we include museum objects in rich multisensory exhibition experiences if these objects must be placed behind protective glass?

Pilegaard’s PhD project has sought to address this question through practice-based design research that investigates ways of engaging with the material presence of museum objects. Through the making of experimental display and vitrine designs, the potential of creating a sense of *material proximity* to objects on display is explored. This is done not by eliminating the separating functions of museum display techniques, but by insisting that if we attend to the spatial and material set-up of exhibition objects, we might enable museum visitors to engage with the materiality of objects *through* space and *across* separating glass surfaces.