Art as Forum
The New Carlsberg Foundation Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen

Thanks to a grant from The New Carlsberg Foundation, University of Copenhagen launches a new research centre dedicated to research into the relationships between art, communality and social communities at large.

Over the next five years, the centre will develop a specific branch of art studies dedicated to the particular mode of existence of art that pertains to its relation to the public sphere, embracing both the public it presupposes and the actual publics it addresses.

In aesthetics and art studies, the experience of art has mostly been conceptualised as an individual matter, where everyone nurtures his or her particular impression and sensation of a given artwork. But it is also a defining feature of art in the modern period, that the encounter with artworks places the beholder in a particular community of others that share this encounter. In this sense, art—in all its forms and shapes—constitute the premises of a communal experience: a forum of interested subjects that respond to the public address of the artwork.

The research centre will launch an array of enquiries into this quality of the “forum” as an essential component in understanding art and its social roles and functions, their historical lineages and contemporary forms. We will look at the different social relations and interactions instantiated by particular art-related fora, and we will gauge the significance for democratic citizenship that the arts challenge our common sensuous and mental attitudes to the world around us.

By focusing on art and communality, the centre ambitions to provide an important supplement to traditional art studies and eventually also enhance our tools to analyse individual artworks, to understand their histories and to measure the significance of aesthetic experience. Broadening the conceptual and interpretive approaches to art, we furthermore hope to be able to give a more comprehensive description of the societal value of art.

The centre will accommodate Danish and international researchers at all levels, from doctoral students to senior researchers, and from a wide range of disciplines, ranging from all the traditional disciplines of art studies to anthropology, sociology, economics and philosophy. The research will be conducted in close dialogue and collaboration with museums, theatres, art schools, libraries and other organisations and stakeholders with an interest in the life of the arts amidst the life of society.

For more information about the centre and the planned activities, please contact the centre director, professor Frederik Tygstrup, University of Copenhagen, frederik@hum.ku.dk.