Museums of the World
Towards a New Understanding of a Historical Institution

March 3rd and 4th 2015
MODERNA MUSEET, SKEPPSHOLMEN
ENGELSBERG MANOR, VÄSTMANLAND

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ARRANGED BY
AXEL AND MARGARET AX:SON JOHNSON FOUNDATION
Throughout its history, the museum has always had a profound impact on human knowledge, identity and politics. As an institution it has shaped our view of the world and been crucial in spreading everything from humanism and tolerance to nationalism and other political agendas. Today, its influential position remains but meets new demands in a changing world.

We are now at a point in history when museum responsibilities have dramatically expanded. Beyond the traditional concept of displaying and safeguarding a collection, the museum is now expected to arrange social activities, seminars and workshops, and also to constantly engage in new media to distribute itself. The number and variation of museums has never been greater, and today the institution is a natural phenomenon in all parts of the world. However, these modern conditions create new challenges for the museum, and articulate even more than before the importance of the museum as an influence on the human mind, a powerful vehicle of knowledge and history.

How then can this role be described, understood and discussed? What lessons can be learned from the historical development of the idea the museum as enhancer of cultural meaning and orientation, and how does it affect the institution in today’s rapidly changing world, more and more globalized and interconnected? What potential and responsibilities lies upon the institution with its increasing field of interest? Does the museum make us into better human beings, more human human beings, and teach us how to live good lives? Is it a space where we all have a chance to encounter something fundamentally existential, something sublime? Or are they simply moribund treasure houses? Perhaps the museum is just a palliative for memory, and ultimately, a vain attempt at escaping death?

The seminar gathers researchers, experts, professionals and journalists for two days in Sweden in order to create a dynamic discussion about the fundamental idea of the museum and its historical developments and importance as well as to further the understanding of its influences upon knowledge production, culture and values. This international meeting is a part of the Ax:son Johnson Foundation’s ongoing effort to further the dissemination of scholarly knowledge.
**Programme**

**Tuesday, March 3rd**

**An Exchange of Ideas**

18:00 A conversation with Director Bruce J. Altshuler, New York University, Director Beatrix Ruf, Stedelijk Museum and Adjunct Curator Jasper Sharp, Kunsthistorisches Museum. The panel discussion will be led by Director Daniel Birnbaum, Moderna Museet.

19:00 Drinks and Dinner at Restaurant Hjerta, Skeppsholmen

**Wednesday, March 4th**

09:00 Departure by bus from Hotel Skeppsholmen

09:30 Departure by bus from Jakobsbergsgatan 2

12:00 Arrival and Lunch at Engelsberg Manor

13:00 Welcome by Kurt Almqvist, President, Axel and Margaret Ax:son Johnson Foundation

13:05 Introduction by moderator Jasper Sharp

**The History of an Idea**

*The museum as producer of knowledge, memory and ideology in the public realm*

13:10 Bruce J. Altshuler Collections, Audience, and Enlightenment

13:30 Anna Bergqvist Value and Perspective in the Museum: A Philosophical Approach to Museums Narrative

13:50 Roy MacLeod The ‘Museum Idea’ and the Pacific: Reflections on the Transmission of an Idea, an Institution, and an Ideology

14:10 Bettina Habsburg-Lothringen Museums in Transition: A Closer Look at the German-Speaking Countries

14:30 Discussion

14:50 Coffee and Tea
# Programme

**Wednesday, March 4th**

**Representative Examples from the 18th Century Until Today**

*Historical cases as part of the larger picture*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15:20</td>
<td>Tim Knox</td>
<td>Private Elysium into Public Spectacle: How Successfully do Private Collections Become Public Museums?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:40</td>
<td>Heather Ewing</td>
<td>The Smithsonian Institution: Defining a National Museum System for the United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>Mario Schulze</td>
<td>A Short History of the Thing on Display 1960-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:20</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:40</td>
<td>Coffee and Tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**With Historical Consciousness Towards a New Understanding**

*Problems, innovation and reanalysis for the future*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17:10</td>
<td>Naman P. Ahuja</td>
<td>The Museum as Defender of Religious Pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:30</td>
<td>Patricia Falguières</td>
<td>Future Perfect Tense: On Museum's Temporality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:50</td>
<td>Daniel Birnbaum</td>
<td>The Idea of the Open Museum - Beyond a Monolithic Notion of Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:10</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:30</td>
<td>Jasper Sharp</td>
<td>Closing Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:45</td>
<td>Drinks and Dinner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LECTURERS

Professor Naman P. Ahuja
Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Dr. Bettina Habsburg-Lothringen
Universalmuseum Joanneum, Austria

Director Bruce J. Altshuler
New York University, USA

Museum Director Tim Knox
The Fitzwilliam Museum, UK

Dr. Anna Bergqvist
Manchester Metropolitan University, UK

Professor Roy MacLeod
University of Sydney, Australia

Museum Director Daniel Birnbaum
Moderna Museet, Sweden

Museum Director Beatrix Ruf
Stedelijk Museum, The Netherlands

Executive Director Heather Ewing
Center for Italian Modern Art, and Research Associate, Smithsonian Institution, USA

PhD-Student Mario Schulze
University of Zurich, Switzerland

Professor Patricia Falguières
École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, France

Adjunct Curator Jasper Sharp
Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, Austria

REFERENCE GROUP

Bruce J. Altshuler Director, Program in Museum Studies, New York University, New York, USA

Daniel Birnbaum Museum Director, Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden

Patricia Falguières Professor, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France

Paul Holdengräber Director, New York Public Library Live, New York, USA

Tim Knox Museum Director, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, UK

Hans Ulrich Obrist Co-Director, Serpentine Gallery, London, UK