

### Facts about the field of study

- Ordrupgaard belongs to a select group of early collection museums of modernist art in Europe and the USA
- It was founded in 1918 and donated to the state in 1951
- Ordrupgaard is the only museum in Denmark besides Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek with a collection of impressionist painting
- The founder, Wilhelm Hansen, was involved in a series of massive purchases of French impressionism in Paris during WWI

### About Rasmus Kjærboe

Rasmus Kjærboe is an art historian and museologist and the Vice President of the Danish Association of Art Historians. His PhD dissertation is a collaboration between Aarhus University and Ordrupgaard with funding from the New Carlsberg Foundation.

### Time and place for the defence

Thursday 30 June 2016 at 1 pm to 4 pm  
Ordrupgaard Museum, Ordrupgaard, Vilvordevej 110, Charlottenlund

### Contact

Rasmus Kjærboe  
Mail: rkj@arthistory.dk  
Tel.: +45 30208464

Forsidefoto: Adam Mørk

Aarhus University  
School of Communication and Culture  
Langelandsgade 139  
Jens Chr. Skous Vej 2 og 4 (bygning 1485 og 1481)  
8000 Aarhus C

# DEFENCE

# COLLECTING THE MODERN ORDRUPGAARD AND THE COLLECTION MUSEUMS OF MODERNIST ART

PhD Dissertation by Rasmus Kjærboe



AARHUS UNIVERSITET

# COLLECTING THE MODERN ORDRUPGAARD AND THE COLLECTION MUSEUMS OF MODERNIST ART

**The dissertation asks “how to explain Ordrupgaard?” – an important private collection of French impressionist art opened to the public in Copenhagen in 1918. Answers are sought in an innovative comparison to other collections in Europe and the USA that deliberately challenged existing museum institutions. Through a detailed, methodologically informed study, the dissertation identifies the similar traits of a group of private and provisional collection museums of modernist art and interprets them as both performative and discursive promoters of modernist art and as networks that bring very diverse things and people together.**

## **Ordrupgaard was an important intervention into the Danish art scene**

The private art collection sought to influence both the public and the conception of art when it opened in 1918. By presenting modernist art in a comfortable, domestic interior in a large garden, it was seen as a stimulating alternative to the museums of the day. Its aim and impact can be reconstructed through close study of the still existing buildings and gardens, contemporary press reviews and old photographs.

## **Private collection museums of modernist art had similar aims and methods**

Before WWII, a similar, select group of modernist art collections open to the public could be

found in Europe and the USA. They all presented a human scale architecture and a focus on the pleasurable experience of modern art with little focus on traditional art history. They were all founded on new and progressive beliefs in art’s ability to transform visitors and society through intimate comfort and the teaching of new ways to approach the world.

## **The study of art collections requires a focus on display and networks**

The dissertation criticizes traditional collection studies for too much biography and a lack of interest in how the collection was used and communicated. Instead, modernist art collections are best understood as experiences and exhibitions meant for an audience. Art collections do not simply emanate from the will of one person but should be understood as the result of many networks of things and people that come together.

## **The collection museums present an early stage in the institutionalisation of modernist art**

Ordrupgaard and the other collection museums have since had to evolve in the face of new challenges and demands. Once they were early proponents of a new type of museum for modernist art. Now they have given up on radical ideas of transforming society and individuals. Instead, they have almost all become postmodern museums with rotating exhibitions and diverse activities as typified by the later, also private, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

## **Important contributions to the study of art, museums and collections**

The main contributions of the thesis are three-fold: first, it defines a specific group of private collections of modernist art, all of which aimed to make public interventions; second, it provides the first comparative study of Ordrupgaard, opening new sources and deploying innovative methodology in the analysis; and, third, it challenges traditional analysis by explaining the collection as performative and as embedded in and producing various networks of people, things and processes.

## **Perspectives**

The study of the collection museums of modernist art throws light on a specific and important period in the development of museums and the reception of, especially French, modernist art. It allows us to think about the future of Ordrupgaard and the other museums founded on private collections, and what makes them unique.