



# Strategy for research and development in the National Museum 2021–2025

## Introduction: Function and target groups of the strategy

Research is defined as a separate target area in the National Museum’s general strategy (2020–2025). The research and development strategy expands on the target area and its aim is to help us achieve the objectives set out in the overall strategy.

The strategy opens with an introduction describing the framework for research and development in the National Museum in the strategy period. It expands on matters such as how we work with research and development, our approach to the research mandate, and the background to our focus areas.

The main part of the strategy opens with our ambition for R&D work, and then highlights four main target areas and specific measures designed to strengthen our R&D activity. The target areas are: Organisation and competence-building; Availability and dissemination; External partnerships and funding and Focus areas and prioritisation.

During the strategy period, action plans for R&D work will be drawn up, specifying the work in the target areas. These plans will state each department’s prioritised R&D projects, and will be updated every year. Internally, the strategy forms a common platform for R&D work, and acts as a tool to provide a framework and make prioritisations for the specialists and managers. Externally, it is aimed at parties including:

- members of the public with an interest in the museum’s R&D activity
- specialists and research teams who are potential partners
- potential financial contributors and sponsors

# Framework for research and development in the National Museum

## Research mandate

The National Museum's social mandate involves a responsibility for developing, managing, researching, making available and disseminating Norway's biggest collection of art, architecture and design. Research will play an essential role in fulfilling this mandate. The museum practises free research, mainly within the fields of art history, conservation, dissemination of art and museology.

The research covers all of the institution's arts-based areas of responsibility: visual art, arts and crafts, design and architecture. In this document, when we refer to art, art history, art history research or dissemination of art, this includes all of the arts-based areas above.

Its proximity to society, archive material and not least to the general public are a key characteristic and strength of our R&D work – both in the National Museum and museum sector in general. Much of the research work in the National Museum is integrated in its core activity, and is associated with collection, conservation and development of exhibition concepts or dissemination practices. Preparatory research work will also be performed as part of the museum's ongoing core assignments; this includes cataloguing the collection. However, an important part of the research is organised into projects that are performed within more defined periods and investigate specific hypotheses or problems, which are disseminated along with the results and findings in exhibitions, publications, conferences/seminars, etc. When the designation of research projects is used in this strategy, it is these types of projects to which it is referring, the majority of which also involve external specialists who either contribute or provide input through reference groups.

## *Development work*

In order to address all the elements of the social mandate, development work is underway continuously in many of the museum-related specialist areas. Development work is generally defined as systematic or experimental activity that applies existing knowledge from research or practical experience, and that is aimed at presenting new or improved methods, products or services. We refer here to the OECD's Frascati Manual, with its international guidelines defining and classifying research and development work.

More specifically, in the National Museum's museum-related development work, conservation, digital collection management, photographic documentation, art history cataloguing and new dissemination practices are areas that have a high priority. For example, in conservation, it is vital to ensure that methods of conservation are continuously evaluated and improved, in line with international standards. The continuous renewal and strengthening of documentation and digitalisation work is also an important foundation for knowledge development – and is also stated as a clear expectation of museums in the Ministry of Culture and Equality's 2021 Museums Report.

Continuing to develop target group work and digital dissemination based on updated dissemination practices is in turn part of what will influence development work in art

dissemination.

Naturally, the research will comply with its own criteria concerning factors such as originality, verifiability and relevance, in accordance with international quality requirements regarding research. However, much of the development work is closely tied to and complements the museum's research in a particular field, and in the future we would like to work on strengthening this type of connection between research and development work.

### ***R&D resources: Collection, library and archive***

The responsibility for making the collection available and disseminating it is important both for the general public and for the research teams. The collection is a unique and highly valuable resource for research in art history, conservation and museology. A great deal is being invested in further developing the museum's research library and documentation archive, in order to support the R&D work internally and to provide a service to external researchers and the general public that is both broad and specialised.

### **Focus areas and priorities**

The following section describes the background to the strategy's choice of focus areas and priorities, and indicates the ideological basis for these. While the first three target areas of the strategy present measures on *how* we will strengthen the R&D work at an organisational and structural level, it is in this last target area "Focus areas and priorities" that the core of our motivation for research lies – *why* we want to have more of a focus on research. This expansion of the focus areas is intended to supplement the strategy's specific measures for the target area, in order to illustrate what we would like to contribute to the research teams with whom we are involved and to the general public.

However, it is important to emphasise that the National Museum's research includes a range of voices and perspectives. The focus areas indicate a general direction, but do not constitute absolute guidelines. The research is free in terms of empirical data, theory and method. It is based on the museum's values, which are to be open, unafraid and provide recognition. Among other things, these values should be enshrined in our approach to the writing of past history and museum pedagogy, the greater research community of which we are part, the dissemination of research, and not least members of the public who are involved in R&D projects.

In order to achieve a broad angle of approach to the focus areas, we have an emphasis on collaboration between specialists, with contributions from each of the research fields represented by the museum – and from external researchers and other specialist disciplines.

### ***New knowledge – new representativity***

Bringing new knowledge about the collection is one of the museum's main tasks. The collection includes several important works and artistry on which research still has to be performed. There is also a great need for research to bring new perspectives to the art in the collection and

to complement or challenge previous art history interpretations and the dissemination of these to different audience groups.

We regard it as important for our mandate to contribute to new writing about the history of art, history of architecture, history of design and history of arts and crafts, and for this writing to question the established canon. This involves critical reflections regarding the role of the National Museum as a key player in developing the art canon, and how the collection's practice, exhibition programme and museum pedagogy, both past and present, are rooted in ideology and an understanding of the national aspect.

The museum has a special responsibility for research into art in Norway. However, through various partnerships with external researchers nationally and internationally, we want to activate a range of approaches to art, both in Norway and internationally, with an invitation to dialogue on how we can update or free ourselves from the thinking patterns and practices associated with long traditions in the field. An important professional starting point is to recognise that revising and adding new writing to the canon is a continuously ongoing task. We participate on the basis of our own standpoint and reflect the perspectives of our time, while the future will take a critical view of our blind spots.

Research has a major role to play in the continuing development of the collection, and is performed through a strategic and mainly science-based gathering of knowledge. We work according to a general aim of achieving a greater degree of representativity in terms of gender, social and cultural background and geography. Through research, gathering knowledge and programming, the National Museum aims actively to work to include and highlight players, groups and artistry that have previously been overlooked or left out, and help to counteract Euro-centric and monocultural interpretations of art history and art today. This aim is equally relevant for the research we perform in conjunction with temporary exhibitions involving works loaned by other collections.

### ***Social relevance, diversity and interdisciplinarity***

The National Museum's general vision is to make art accessible to each and everyone, and to reflect the society and era in which we live. We are working on a broad plan to integrate the goal of sustainability into all the relevant plans, strategies and activities. For the field of R&D, it is particularly important to further the UN's sustainable development goal of gender equality and empowerment of women in society. However, our work on equality is part of a broader initiative to promote diversity. Over the next few years, we will be developing our work with research-based exhibitions and publications on female artists, architects and designers. At the same time, we will be following up on the effort to increase the percentage of Sami artists in the collection through research into art from Sápmi and the dissemination of this, which involves a focus on perspectives on decolonisation and ethics debates on inclusion and representation. Through our focus on critical cataloguing, we have started work on establishing an alternative to the traditional cataloguing of the collection, taking into account factors such as a greater breadth of gender and cultural backgrounds. Norm criticism acts as a framework and tool in this development work, which will be continued as part of a broader norm-conscious evaluation of how our own practice can help to create room for diversity.

In the future, we will have more of a focus on research that illustrates the significance of art in a wider social context, through themes such as art and health, children and learning, pedagogy and art dissemination. Our general vision also requires us to work systematically to obtain updated knowledge about the general public's expectations of us and a better understanding of their experiences of the museum's communication of its contents in a range of arenas and channels. For research into dissemination, a key tool will be testing out practice-based methods, involving the general public as a participatory resource. Studies of the general public's use and experience of exhibitions are among the important tools in this context. Our exhibitions are thus not only key arenas for the presentation of research, but in our research into our own practice, will act as study objects in themselves. Practice-led methods are very well incorporated into teaching and art-based research, but so far have been very little applied in the museum field in Norway.

The development of methods will therefore be a key part of future research work, with processes and results being shared with the museum sector. We will also make more use of the curation of exhibitions as a research method towards new knowledge. This is a current methodological approach in museum research, and part of what it involves is examining research questions or hypotheses in the exhibition itself.

More generally, promoting both methodological innovation and interdisciplinarity will play a major role in achieving the goal of contributing to specialist development within all the research fields represented by the museum. It will also strengthen the work of obtaining new knowledge about the collection and helping to add new writing about art history. The National Museum's composition of specialities is unique in a Norwegian context. We represent a depth and breadth of fields that is found in no other equivalent institution, and we will work proactively to make use of this through our interdisciplinary partnerships. Part of what we want to do is strengthen the synergy effects between art history and specialist conservation research through more joint projects. For example, the conservation research that is most closely connected to technical art history provides valuable new insight into the artists' techniques and working methods, and complements art history investigations. Collaboration spanning conservation and art history also tends to be a prerequisite of attribution research, which in turn can correct earlier incorrect or limited attributions and give recognition to artists who were not known to have created or contributed to work.

At the same time, material-based conservation research, which is based on the actual material rather than the work or artistry, is fundamental if we are to build up knowledge about matters such as newer materials in contemporary art and breakdown processes. Research into materials and conservation methods will continue to be important, since it is vital if we are to develop preservation strategies for works in the collection – and thereby also fulfil our social mandate. We have the biggest museum-related specialist conservation team in the country, and a unique range of material groups in the collection. The very high quality premises and equipment in the new National Museum also provide completely new opportunities for R&D work in conservation.

## The strategy's target areas and measures

### Ambition

We provide new perspectives on art that stimulate critical thinking and boost diversity.

### Target areas

The museum has been in the process of moving for an extended period, with the opening of the new National Museum at Vestbanen scheduled for June 2022. The strategy is therefore aiming to scale up measures in the various target areas between now and 2024 and 2025, when it is expected that the museum will be able to operate more or less as normal – also in terms of R&D activity. Measures that are not tied to a specific year will be implemented by 2025, or refer to regular procedures or guidelines that are applicable throughout the strategy period.

### *Organisation and competence-building*

#### Description of target

We shall increase research activity, expand research competence, continue to develop the research community and strengthen synergy effects between our fields of research.

#### Action

##### We will achieve this by:

##### *Competence enhancement*

- developing an internal provision for competence-building measures (such as research seminars, courses in methods, academic writing courses or seminars relating to publication, dissemination, copyright and research ethics), in order to ensure that we further strengthen the broad and solid research competence in the organisation.
- consciously recruiting people with doctoral degrees or other documented research experience in fields that complement the competence in the organisation.
- facilitating career development for researchers through individual action plans for research, dissemination of results and competence-building.

## *Organisation*

- holding six-monthly seminars with presentations and discussions of ongoing R&D projects, in order to promote dialogue and experience-sharing internally, stimulate interdisciplinarity and ensure progress (from 2022).
- facilitating a good internal culture through less formal specialist networks, proofreading colleagues' work, etc.
- encouraging collaboration between different specialisations in all new research and development projects, where this is relevant.
- designing action plans for research and development (one-year duration) that highlight prioritised projects and measures, and help us to work proactively (from 2022).
- introducing a fixed procedure for decision-making and implementation of all research projects (in 2021).
- setting up reference groups for all approved research-based exhibition projects, in order to obtain input and enter into dialogue with external researchers and teams with the relevant competence.
- facilitating to ensure that staff have the resources and time to prepare and initiate research and development activities, in accordance with the museum's applicable strategies and plans.

## ***Availability and dissemination***

### **Description of target**

Our goal is to be a leader in research dissemination in all our specialist fields, and to reach a wide audience – nationally and internationally. We shall have a strong focus on sharing our research resources – the collection, archive and library – with the research community and general public.

### **Action**

#### **We will achieve this by:**

- holding an annual national or international conference, ideally in partnership with other research institutions.
- annually presenting our R&D activity nationally or internationally in at least six conference contributions, at conferences that are highly regarded in our fields (from 2023).

- having at least one research-based exhibition a year (from 2023).
- annually publishing at least seven articles in international publications (journals, anthologies, catalogues, etc.), in order to clearly demonstrate our research initiatives outside Norway (from 2023).
- increasing the annual publication of peer-reviewed articles by 75% – preferably in open channels, while also maintaining the number of published non-fiction and popular science academic articles (by 2024).
- actively combining different types of arenas for research dissemination (such as podcasts, social media, interviews, popular science texts, talks, public discussions, feature articles and other forms of participation in the social debate) in order to increase the availability of research and reach new audience groups.
- facilitating to ensure that every member of staff has the resources and time to publish scientific articles and engage in research dissemination, in accordance with the museum’s applicable strategies and plans.
- developing the availability of the collection, and presenting it as a unique research resource for external researchers.
- continuously improving the quality of our research library, and ensuring the best possible access to the library, document archive and study rooms.

### ***External collaboration and funding***

#### **Description of target**

We shall be a key partner in national and international research projects of a high professional quality, and regularly initiate new R&D partnerships that present art in Norway internationally.

#### **Action**

##### **We will achieve this by:**

- working proactively on the continuing development of our R&D partnerships with museums, the university college sector and other research communities in Norway and beyond.
- initiating at least three new R&D partnerships with international parties in order to promote art in Norway internationally (by 2024).
- collaborating with leading experts, nationally and internationally.
- actively participating in established specialist networks in all our research



fields, and being a driver of knowledge-sharing in R&D.

- taking the initiative to build new networks that support selected areas in the R&D work, internally and in other research communities (by 2024).
- developing plans for how we will work strategically and for the long term in order to procure external funding for new R&D projects, for example through advertised grants and the purchase of release time.
- initiating new research that is relevant for the National Museum's collection and dissemination practices, by advertising at least four PhD grants (in partnership with selected universities) and smaller projects for guest researchers.

### **Transparency and independence**

The National Museum complies with the research ethics principal concerning transparency of funding, cf. our code of conduct. In all partnerships with external parties, the independence of the research shall be guaranteed. Every researcher is required to be free in their work, with no interference in the choice of method, results or means of dissemination.

### ***Focus areas and priorities***

#### **Description of target**

We shall be a visible driver of innovation and professional development in the history of art, history of architecture, history of design and history of arts and crafts, collection management, dissemination of art and museum-related practices. At the same time, an important target is to create a closer connection between initiatives in collection, R&D and dissemination.

#### **Action**

#### **We will achieve this by:**

##### *Social relevance and representativity*

- working systematically to draw attention to players, groups and artistry that has previously been overlooked or left out of art history, and starting at least four research projects on works and artistry on which there is little or no research.

- developing at least one research project annually that contributes to new writing about the history of art, history of architecture, history of design and history of arts and crafts, and/or that questions the established canon.
- initiating at least three research projects on art, architecture and/or design from Sápmi and disseminating these, while also providing a basis for strategic acquisitions and knowledge enhancement concerning preservation methods and materials.
- continuing to develop our work with research-based exhibitions and publications on female artists, architects and designers, by starting at least four new research projects.
- initiating at least one new research project on art and health that highlights the significance of art in society, and that is developed in partnership with researchers from other specialities.
- inviting participation in new research into queer art and visual culture based on norm-critical perspectives and a broad approach to queer culture, and which is published in a special issue of *Kunst og Kultur* in conjunction with the Year of Queer Culture 2022.

#### *Development of methods*

- proactively exploring new methods and theories in art dissemination that involve the general public as a participatory resource, and performing practice-led research into the public's experience and use of our exhibitions through at least one project per year (from 2024).
- prioritising development work in dissemination that helps to strengthen internal competence in work with target groups and digital dissemination, based on up-to-date dissemination practices.
- continuing to focus on material-based conservation research, which is essential to developing preservation strategies for the collection and is of great relevance to other museums.
- having a continuing focus on development work in conservation, in which we evaluate and improve preservation methods, in line with international standards.
- initiating development work in collection management, the purpose of which is to identify and introduce more sustainable arrangements for packaging, storing and transporting art.

*Uniformity of practice*

- ensuring conformity between the R&D action plans, exhibition programme and the new collection strategy developed during the strategy period.
- following up on important purchases for the collection with new research on those works and artistries, which we communicate in exhibitions and publications.

Translation: Totaltekst AS