

PRESS RELEASE

Focus on Danish History



The Story of Danish Museums

A humble push-button sparked a heated debate in the Danish media in 2018 after Rane Willerslev, then newly appointed director of the National Museum in Copenhagen, aired plans to install a "boredom button" to liven things up. While public interest in the topic was a novelty, the issue had, in fact, been discussed in Denmark for well over a century.

The Story of Danish Museums, by historian Thomas Bloch Ravn, takes readers back in time to the 1909 National Exhibition in Aarhus, not long after the world's first folk and open-air museums were founded. It also explains the long-standing dispute: uninteresting museums with special-interest objects vs museums about, and for, real people. Fleshing out this framework, the book charts the evolution of cultural-history museums in Denmark and explores a prevalent feature of many museums in our small corner of the globe: their focus on the lives and history of ordinary people.

The Story of Danish Museums is the first comprehensive account of Danish cultural-history museums to appear in over 40 years, and it is the first book in the history series Focus on Danish History (100 danmarkshistorier) to appear in a parallel English version.

"A good museum is about 'me', but it's also about bigger issues that go beyond 'me'. A good museum is cool and crisp and packed with facts, but at the same time it's a lovely, fun, inspirational place to be. A place that somehow has just as much to do with our present and our future as it does with our past."
— Thomas Bloch Ravn

THOMAS BLOCH RAVN

is the director of Den Gamle By open-air museum in Aarhus, Denmark.

THE STORY OF DANISH MUSEUMS

Thomas Bloch Ravn

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