

History of Museums in Europe

Museums collect and exhibit knowledge and hence tell us of how society perceives itself and the world around at a given time. Museums are thus per se transnational spaces while at the same time representing national self-images and interests. Moreover, the history of museums, in particular from the 19th century onwards and up to today, reflects the democratisation processes Europe underwent since the French Revolution and helps us also to understand ongoing processes of nationalism and globalization.

There is a variety of museums students could write about: science museums, history museums, technical museums etc. A particular focus could be on artist museums, and more specifically author museums. These biographical museums are a phenomenon of the 19th century and are still very popular today. Their history and exhibitions illustrate the various uses of the past through material and immaterial memories such as the authors' personal belongings and imaginings of his or her life. Moreover, while these museums are embedded in local, regional and national narratives, they also address an international audience: Literature, art and music are transnational phenomena and are perceived as such.

- Students may investigate the history of a specific museum or the use of history in exhibitions.

In the context of artist museums, possible questions include, but are not limited to:

- How and why have (certain) artists been turned into cultural heritage (and national heroes) in the shaping of a museum?
- How have artists and their work been represented in exhibitions and information material, and what does this say about society's perspective of history?

Students who wish to focus on author museums will be part of the international research project TRAUM – Transforming Author Museums (for more information see <https://traum.hisf.no/>).