



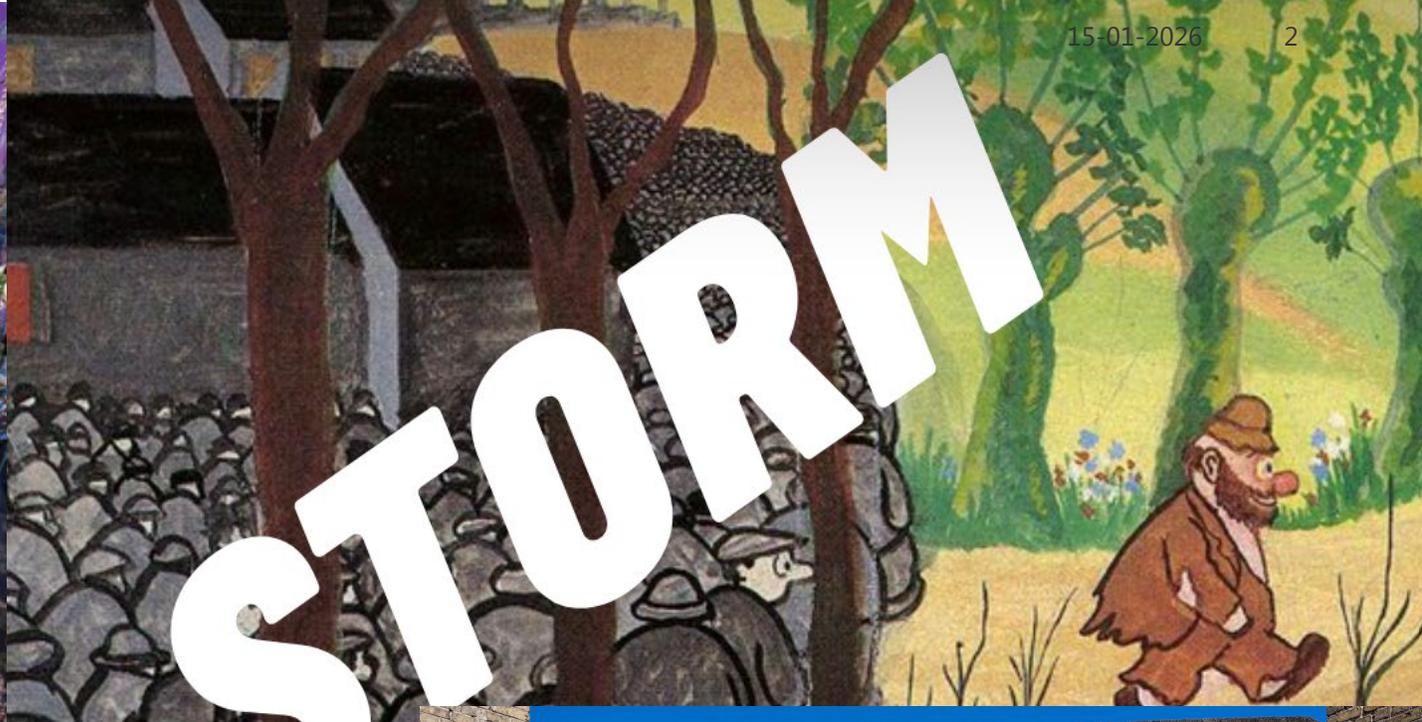
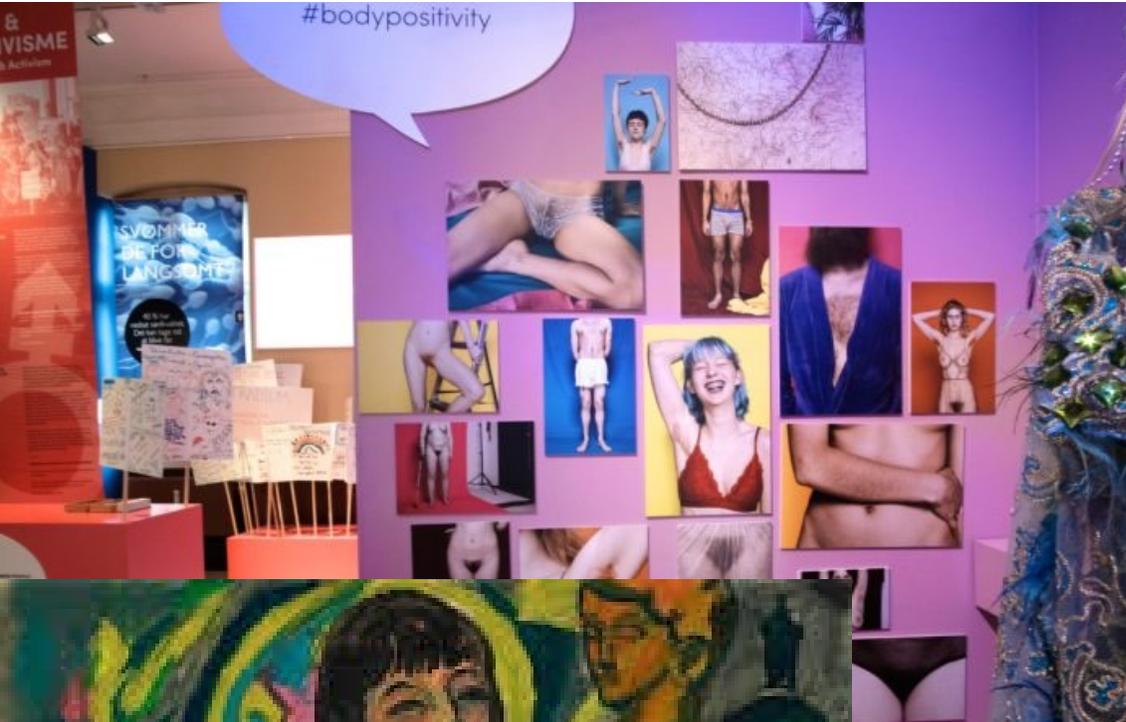
Post-neutrality in Museums:

Cultural Communication Between Expertise, Activism, and Public Value

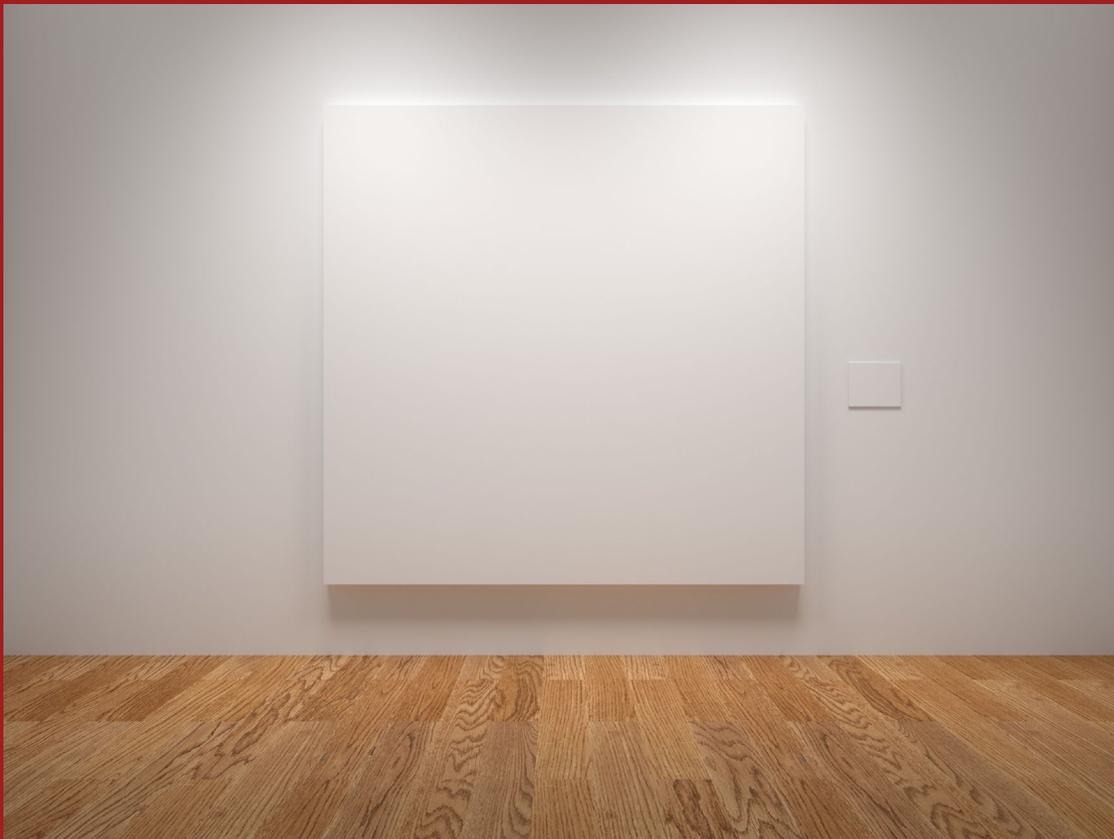
Nanna Kann-Rasmussen,
 Sektionen for ABM (GLAM) Københavns
 Universitet 20 November 2025

KØBENHAVNS UNIVERSITET





DISPOSITION



- The concept of neutrality in museums
 - from authority to activism
- Post-neutrality as
 - Business as usual (expertise and diversity)
 - Activism
- Postneutrality as
 - Responsibilization (from New Public Management til New Public Governance)

Themes from articles on museums and neutrality

- The articles on neutrality and museums primarily focus on the museums' outward-facing activities (curatorial work, exhibitions, visitors) — in other words, the museum's *front stage*.
- No articles claim that museums are, or should be, neutral.

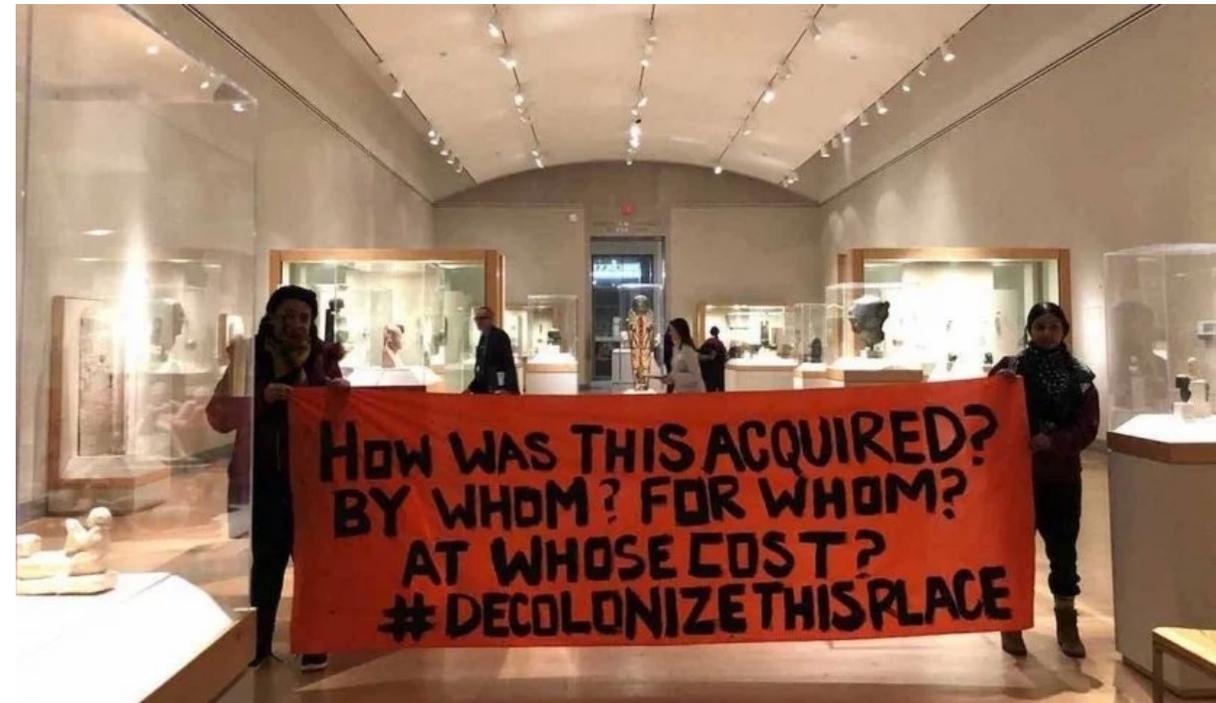
The articles focus on:

Trust:

From "*temples of uncontested facts*" to forums for debate, while still maintaining institutional integrity. A renegotiation of museum authority (multiple voices).

Activism:

- Climate action
- Social justice



KEY FINDINGS ACROSS DOMAINS

- **Few** articles on **libraries** argue for neutrality. **No** articles on **archives** or **museums** argue that they are nor should be neutral.
- Neutrality is largely depicted as a **harmful myth** with a few exceptions. Across the three domains **social justice and activism** are responses to this myth
- Across all three domains, social justice and activism are linked to specific causes and practices. These include **racial justice, decolonization, climate change, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems.**
- They also involve practical concerns such as **access to collections, representation in exhibitions and catalogs, and the inclusion of multiple voices in decision-making processes.**

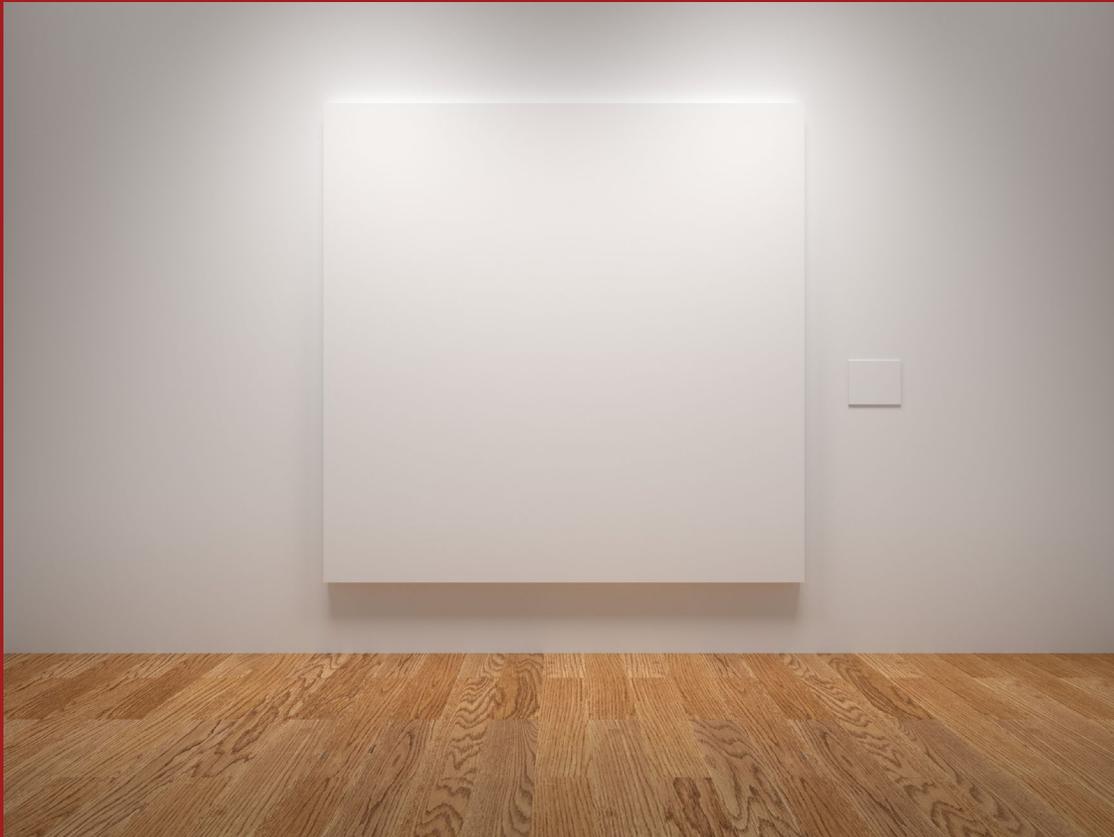


MEANWHILE ...

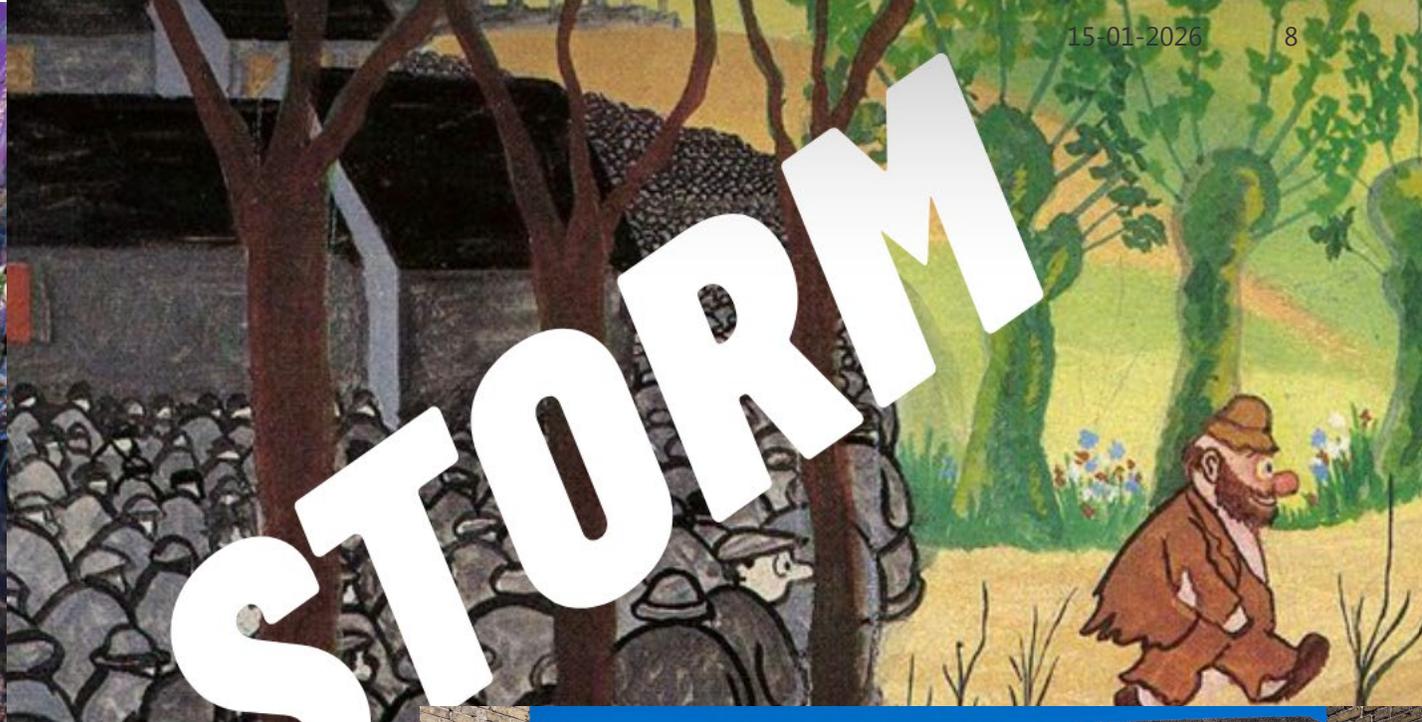
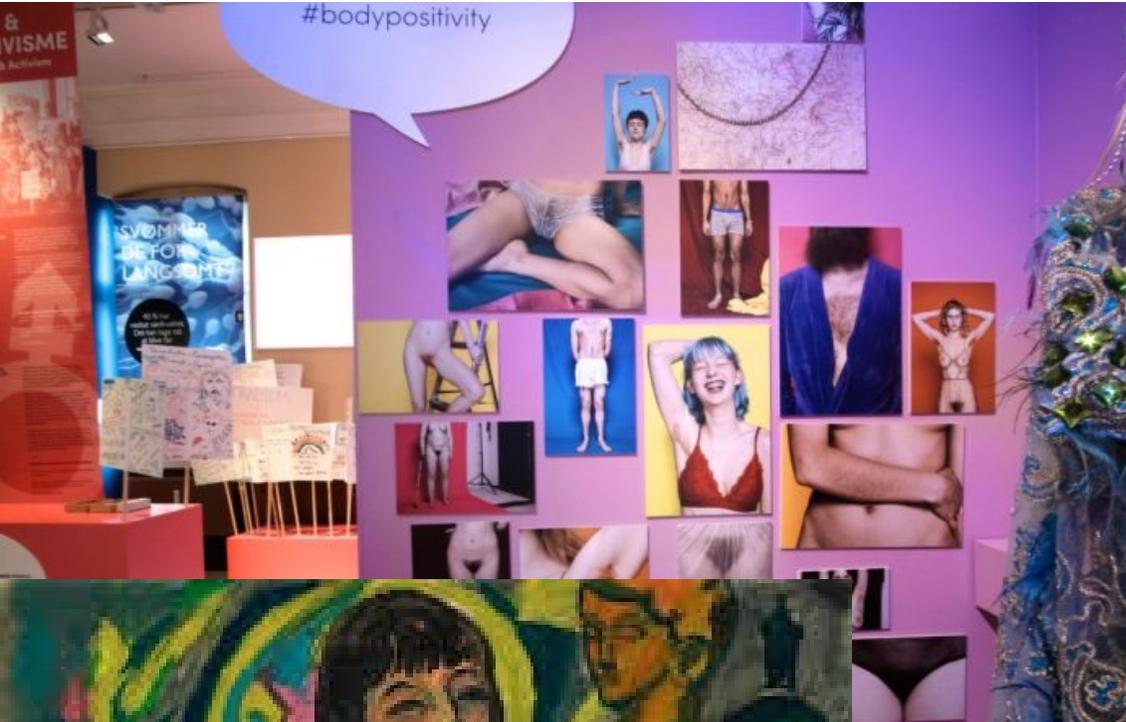
- In the current **US** context, the question of neutrality in LAMs has become re-actualized in a somewhat unexpected way
- US federal LAMs are now, according to a presidential decree, *to focus on patriotism and ensure the preservation of core American values.*
- The decree criticizes the museums' focus on racism, sexism, and oppression, and emphasizes the need to restore "truth and reason" to American history
- Also a small study from 2024 on **European** Museums show that among 153 respondents 58,3 % reported a perception that they were subjected to political pressure.



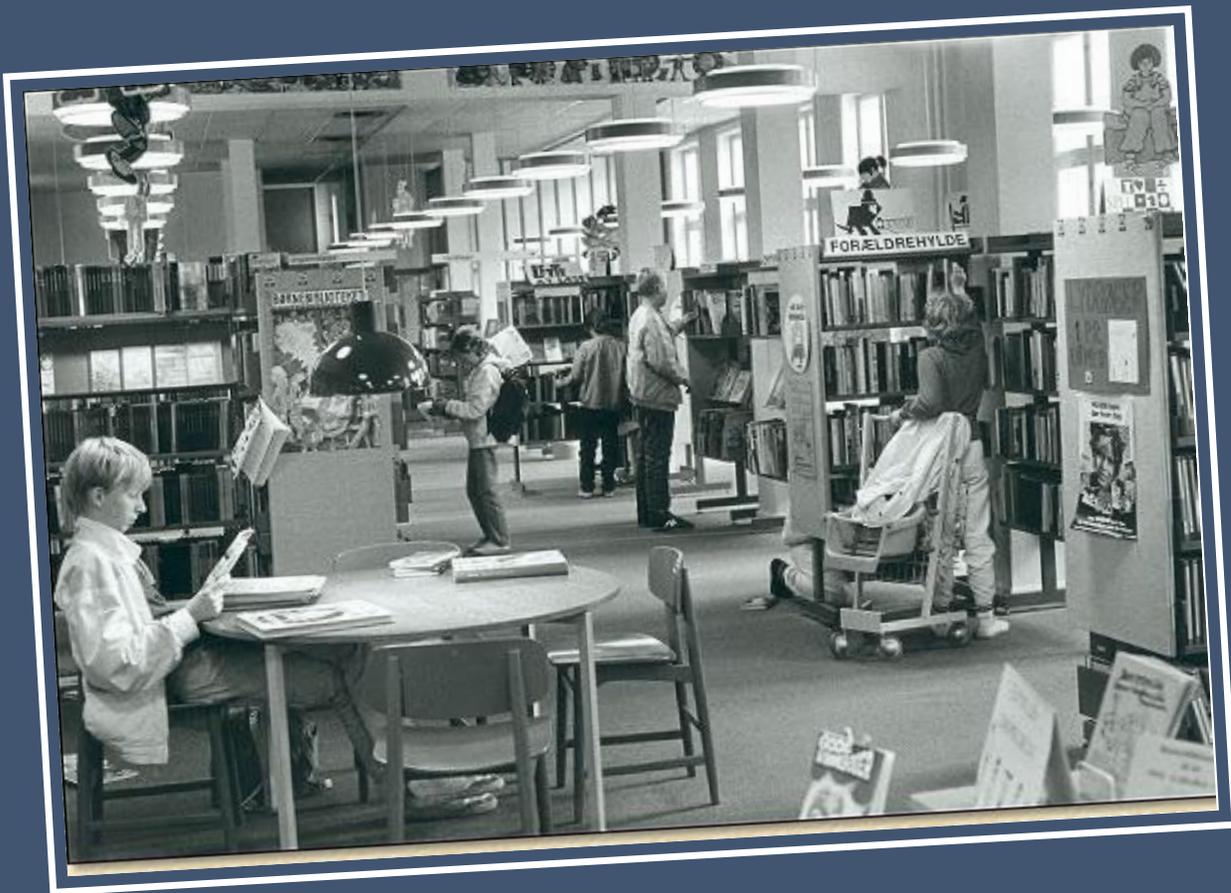
DISPOSITION



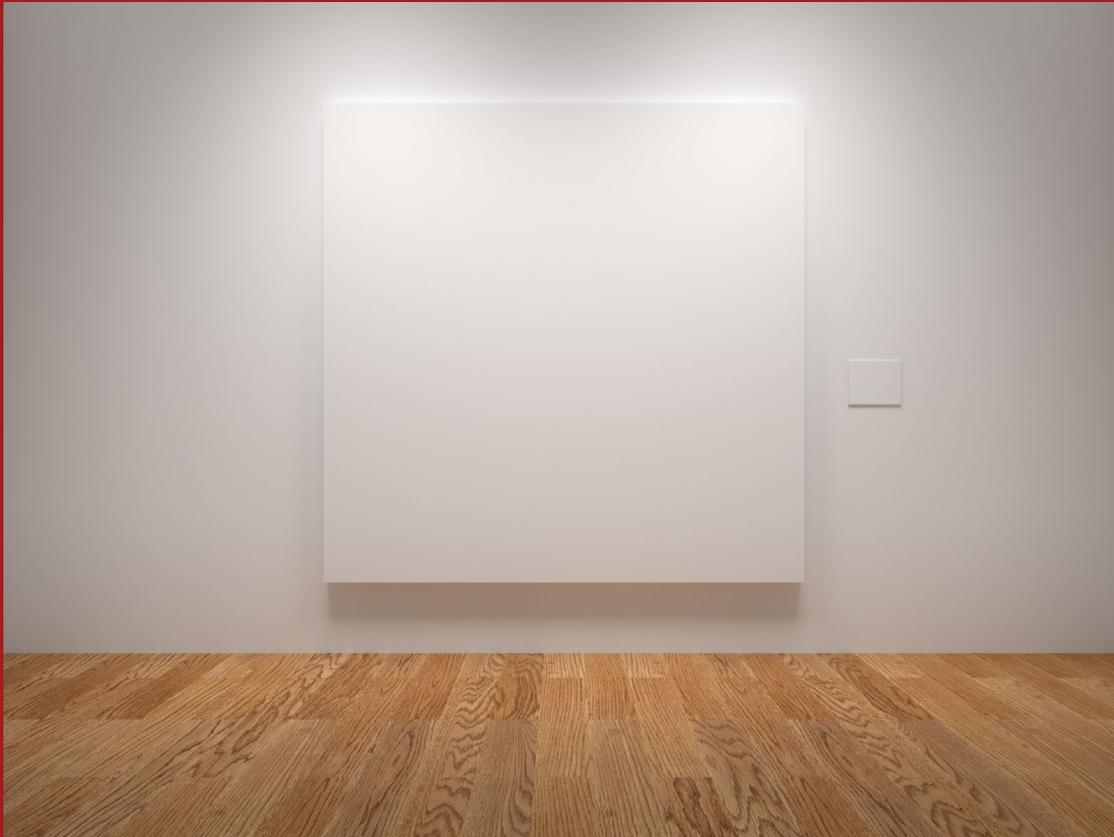
- The concept of neutrality in museums
 - from authority to activism
- Post-neutrality as
 - Business as usual (expertise and diversity)
 - Activism
- Postneutrality as
 - Responsibilization (from New Public Management til New Public Governance)



POST-NEUTRALITY (IN DENMARK) I



DISPOSITION



- The concept of neutrality in museums
 - from authority to activism
- Post-neutrality as
 - Business as usual (expertise and diversity)
 - Activism
- Postneutrality as
 - Responsibilization (from New Public Management til New Public Governance)

POST-NEUTRALITY (IN DENMARK) II



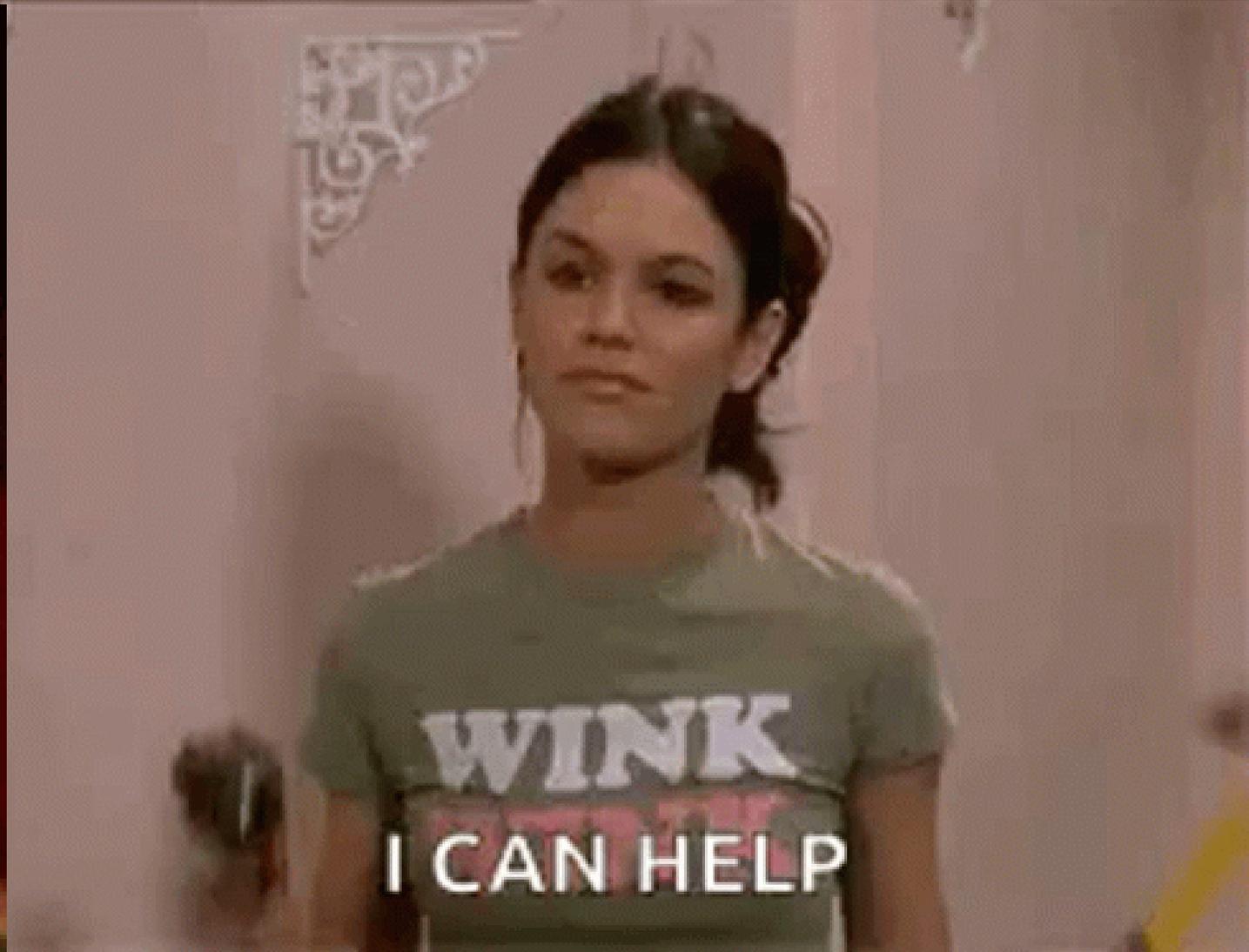


New Public Governance changes the museum

- Projects, partnerships and new collaborations
- Innovative solutions to society's problems
- Relevance and bottom-up instrumentalization



Fra innocence to responsabilization





Summing up:

- Research shows that museums do not perceive themselves as neutral
- Museums actively address societal challenges and co-create solutions.
- Post-neutrality captures this shift: active participation means museums cannot remain neutral.
- Engagement brings opportunities - and vulnerabilities - as responsibility and values become central.