

# EXHIBITING EMOTIONS

## A Critical Analysis of *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*



MUSKUL4590 - MASTERS THESIS IN MUSEOLOGY AND CULTURAL  
HERITAGE STUDIES 30 ECTS

Meriem Boulaziz

Museology and Cultural Heritage Studies

Department of Cultural Studies and Oriental Languages

The University of Oslo

SPRING 2022



# EXHIBITING EMOTIONS

## A Critical Analysis of *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*



*Funerary Loculus Reliefs. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz*

# Abstract

The role of emotions in a museum context became apparent to me when I worked on an exhibition project with fellow museology students at The Museum of Cultural History. We wanted to utilise emotions as an experience within the exhibit we created. Since then, the fascination of the role of emotions in museum as been a present curiosity. This newfound thematic interest in the field of museology combined with a long passion for Classical archaeology is what sparked the first ideas for a Master's Thesis and led to the decision of using Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt as a case study.

One of the focal points of museum practice these past decades has been to emphasise the importance of communication between museums and its visitors. From this an avid interest in the participatory role of museum visitors and museum's educational function has been a priority. Yet, the function of emotions in museums is something that appears to have gone unnoticed for a long time. Since the mid-2000s more attention has been paid to the role of emotions in the museum, yet I would argue that it still an area within museology that is much less explored than others.

I therefore wanted to use this thesis to examine how the exhibit Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt explores emotions. The study of this exhibit reviews how objects, text and exhibition design are utilised to create an emotional environment, in which museum visitors can engage in a meaningful, emotional, and sensory way with the objects that are exhibited. The theoretical perspectives I have decided to utilise are those of Sandra Dudley (2012), Sheila Watson (2015) and Helen J. Chatterjee (2008). These theoretical perspectives provide me with the tools to discuss the different ways that the exhibit explores the theme of emotions. In order to concretize the case study, I have narrowed the overall exhibit down to four different case studies, representing the four emotions which are disseminated and explored in the exhibition room. These four case studies take the form of a close look at one object entity from each emotion and an in-depth analysis of how each of these object entities explores emotions in a broader theoretical perspective.

# Acknowledgements

These past two years of studying the Masters in Museology and Cultural Heritage studies have been really challenging, exciting and so educational. During the process of writing this thesis, I was unsure at times of whether I would manage to complete it in time, yet here I am with the finished product.

I want to sincerely thank my supervisor Brita Brenna for her excellent guidance which gave me new perceptions and guided me in the right direction. I am so grateful for all the constructive comments I have received during these past months. I also want to thank my leader at The Museum of Cultural History, Olav Hamran, and all of my colleagues at Collecting Norden for their words of encouragement and for allowing me to spend time on my master's thesis during work hours.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Museology and Cultural Heritage programme and to my fellow students. Even though we had to endure a closed university and Zoom-lectures for the better part of these past two years, it has still been a blast.

Lastly, I want to give a special thanks to my partner Bo, who spent hours upon hours discussing all of my ideas and who wholeheartedly supported me throughout this process. I would have never been able to finish without his constant faith in me. In addition, to my darling son Ludwig, my sister Louisa and my best friend Hanna I just want to say thank you.

Oslo, May 2022

Meriem Boulaziz

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Research question and the structure of the thesis .....	2
	<b>1.1.1 Structure.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.2	Emotions – a quick explanation .....	3
<b>2</b>	<b>THEORY AND METHOD .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Emotions in the Museum .....	4
	<b>2.1.1 Exhibited emotions .....</b>	<b>6</b>
	<b>2.1.2 Object and emotion .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>2.1.3 Touch in the museum .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.2	Method .....	10
	<b>2.2.1 Observation as method for data collecting.....</b>	<b>11</b>
	<b>2.2.2 The function of photos, notes and film recording.....</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>2.2.3 Choosing the case studies .....</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b>2.2.4 Reflection on my own background.....</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>2.2.5 Limitations to the method .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>THE EXHIBIT .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1	Welcome to the Feast.....	16
3.2	<i>Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt .....</i>	<i>18</i>
	<b>3.2.1 Exhibition style .....</b>	<b>20</b>
	<b>3.2.2 Presenting the objects.....</b>	<b>21</b>
	<b>3.2.3 Design, colour, and light.....</b>	<b>23</b>
	<b>3.2.4 Subject, message and text .....</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>3.2.5 The ancient literary sources.....</b>	<b>26</b>
	<b>3.2.6 Text as an emotional object .....</b>	<b>27</b>
	<b>3.2.7 Summary .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>FOUR OBJECTS – FOUR EMOTIONS.....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1	Funerary Relief in <i>Sorrow and Loss</i> .....	29
	<b>4.1.1 Explaining Sorrow and Loss.....</b>	<b>30</b>
4.2	Greek Vases in <i>Love and Joy</i> .....	32
	<b>4.2.1 Greek vases and a world filled with love and joy .....</b>	<b>33</b>
4.3	The Fragmented Foot in <i>Fear and Reverence</i> .....	35

<b>4.3.1</b>	<b>A fragmented view of fear and reverence .....</b>	<b>36</b>
4.4	Egyptian Mummy Coffin in <i>Hope</i> .....	38
<b>4.4.1</b>	<b>Hopeful in death.....</b>	<b>38</b>
4.5	Summary .....	39
<b>5</b>	<b>ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>41</b>
5.1	In what ways does Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt explore emotions?.....	41
<b>5.1.1</b>	<b>The matter of the display cases .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1.2</b>	<b>Displaying the mummy .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>5.1.3</b>	<b>Touching the objects.....</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>5.1.4</b>	<b>A brief review of intention .....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>5.1.5</b>	<b>Summary .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>56</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>58</b>
	<b>WEBSITES .....</b>	<b>62</b>

# 1 Introduction

*Some of us were already undertaking research on emotions and archaeological material, and were engaged in discussions that we shared with the others. As we sat there, around the table we agreed that the main question was probably that of identifying the difference between universal and culturally specific emotions. But is there also a common ground? There is no simple answer, but the realm of emotions may offer a way in*  
(Marina Prusac-Lindhagen 2020: 23)

In the Spring of 2021, I produced an exhibit at the Museum of Cultural History in collaboration with my fellow students at The University of Oslo. We were instructed to create an exhibit based on the term *cultural appropriation*. My group solved this task by exploring cultural appropriation and children. We gathered toys, books, movies, boardgames, costumes and anything else that could have had a place in someone's childhood from the 1940s up until the 2010s and designed a children's room, where we placed all these objects in green bookshelves, in the style of Cabinets of Curiosities. We wanted to use all of these objects as a way to illustrate how from a very early age children are subjected to different forms of cultural appropriation (Bang-Steinsvik et. al 2021: 7-8).

The purpose was to engage visitors emotionally and by creating an exhibit entrenched in nostalgia, I believe this was achieved. We did not want to impart blame, because children are not responsible for the things they are subjected to. We wanted to ask questions relating to the exposure of negative cultural appropriation at an early stage in life and how that influences children's perceptions of other peoples' cultures (Bang-Steinsvik et. al 2021: 4, 6-7). And one remedy we used to achieve this was through emotions. Due to the fact that the exhibit never opened to the public because of restrictions related to Covid-19, we were never able to explore properly the effect this exhibit had on potential museum visitors. How potential museum visitors would have responded is also no longer possible to find out, as the exhibit was taken down only a week after it was finished. It did, however, spark an interest in what the role of emotions has in museums. The exhibit *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* already dealt with this theme both direct and indirect. Adding this with my background and passion for Classical archaeology, it became a clear choice to explore the exhibit further and examine the role of emotions in the museum.



## **1.1 Research question and the structure of the thesis**

*Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt* is an exhibit that explores the emotional expressions of the Classical world and ancient Egypt through the material culture left behind from them. The exhibit divides these emotional expressions into four different categories and all objects are placed within one of these categories. The research question for this thesis is ***how does the exhibit Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt explore the theme of emotions?*** By conducting a critical exhibition analysis and utilising the methodological framework accounted for in chapter 2, I will use the research question to examine how the exhibit communicates research on emotions in the Classical World and ancient Egypt, and how it facilitates for the visitors to have meaningful, emotional engagements in the exhibition space. The aim is to understand the role of emotions in the museum space. The research question is, however, very broad and therefore I found it necessary to narrow down the exhibit to four different case studies. These four different case studies each represent one of the emotional categories in the exhibit. In the analysis, the different case studies may appear to be separate, because they will discuss very different approaches to the exploration of emotions in the exhibit. However, following the analysis there is a discussion which gathers together all the case studies and ensures that they fall under the research question outlined above.

### **1.1.1 Structure**

The next chapter, chapter 2, explains the main theoretical perspectives and methodology utilised in the examination and analysis of the exhibition. The central theme of the theoretical perspectives is *emotions in the museums*, which is discussed in great detail by Sandra Dudley (2012, 2019) and Sheila Watson (2015). Both bring different ideas on how museums can create emotional experiences in exhibitions. In addition, I will also present a variety of theoretical viewpoints that focus on touch in the museum. The premise of these viewpoints come from the work of Helen J. Chatterjee (2008). The second part of chapter 2 describes the method for data collection and the methodological framework utilised when going through the exhibition room. This subchapter includes reflections on the methods I used for data collection and why I believed they were important for the thesis. Chapter 3 is a walkthrough of the exhibit in its entirety. This chapter is a full description of the different elements such as design, exhibition style, object presentation and text, where the aim is to provide a holistic picture of the exhibit in its entirety. The methodological framework outlined in chapter 2 is used for the work done in chapter 3.

In chapter 4 I break down the exhibit into the four different case studies that each represent one of the emotional categories presented in the exhibition room. The four case studies are a collection of Greek vases displayed together, a fragmented foot, a funerary relief and one of the mummy coffins. The aim is to examine them from the emotional context in which they are displayed. In chapter 5 I will utilise these same case studies and place them into a broader discussion on how the exhibit explores emotions. The different themes explored in chapter 5 are how the objects themselves communicate emotions, how interaction between object and museum visitor can create meaningful and emotional experiences and the emotional aspect of displaying human remains. The final chapter consist of a summary on the work and some concluding remarks on what this thesis has achieved and the process of getting there.

It is not the aim of this thesis to answer the question of whether or not museum visitors respond emotionally to this exhibit. How museum visitors respond to what they are exposed to in an exhibit can vary from day to day, their background, physical and mental health and their reason for being there (Watson 2015: 284; Dudley 2012: 5). I would argue that the interesting part of working with this exhibit is by investigating the way it explores emotions, both through its communicative role, but also through the way museum visitors can interact with the exhibit.

## **1.2 Emotions – a quick explanation**

*Over the past decades emotions has become a central topic of debate in numerous disciplines, including anthropology, geography, sociology and cognitive sciences* (Harris and Sørensen 2010: 146).

When doing research for this thesis I noted that the term *emotions* was defined and used in many different ways in the different theoretical fields that I wanted to utilise. For instance, Sheila Watson utilises concepts from Panksepp and Biven (2012) in an attempt to understand the term *emotions*. It is suggested that “fear (anxiety), rage (anger), panic/grief (sadness), care (nurturance), seeking (expectancy), lust (sexual excitement), and play (social joy) are systems that ‘generate intense emotional feelings’ and are a part of an ancient mammalian inheritance which impact on all our lives” (Watson 2015: 283-284; Panksepp and Biven 2012: 2). Arguably, emotional feelings play a massive role in our actions – what are we doing and why do we do it – and our emotional reactions are controlled and determined from our cultural

backgrounds (Watson 2015: 284-285). Another way of examining the term *emotions* is through affect and Marzia Varutti discusses emotions as something which is encompassed by affect. Meaning that, in a museum context, an emotional response affects the way an object is understood. Neither emotions, nor affect is something that can be planned for due to its individual nature (Varutti 2022: 131-132).

When discussing the connection between emotions and touch, Hugo Critchley states that “emotions arise from the demands of meeting inner bodily needs – for example in hunger or thirst – and the skin is not left out of these emotional processes” (Critchley 2008: 61). Sandra Dudley on the other hand appears not to discuss the term emotions in any of the articles but implies that emotional responses when object-interaction occur between museum visitors and objects occur when museums facilitate for this (Dudley 2012: 8). Nevertheless, there is an understanding that “emotional experiences play a significant role in what visitors take home from their visits to museums (Message and Witcomb 2015: xlviii). It is not my aim to define the term emotions but provide a glimpse into how some of the theoretical perspectives I will utilise in this thesis discusses and relates to the term.

## **2 Theory and Method**

This chapter takes on the different theoretical perspectives that I will utilise in this thesis. Some of these theoretical perspectives were partly introduced in the former subchapter. Here I will deep dive into three main perspectives that discuss emotions in the museum in different ways. The aim with this chapter is to first provide an outline of what these perspectives are, which is then followed by an explanation and reflection on the methodology applied in my work with the exhibit.

### **2.1 Emotions in the Museum**

Emotions in the museum has been a neglected part of museum theory (Watson 2015: 286). Since the 1980s attention has been paid to how museums can communicate their message more effectively. Much emphasis has also been placed on how museum visitors can engage more directly with exhibits that goes beyond mere observation. Instead, a lot of attention was directed towards the educational purposes of museum exhibitions (Hooper-Greenhill 2005). It was argued that “curators, designers academics, and museum education staff have spent

considerable time attending to the aesthetics of both the object and the display but little to the emotions beyond the aesthetic experience which the galleries engender” (Watson 2015: 286).

Emotions in the museum have been part of museum theory for about 15 years. Sheila Watson (2015), Sandra Dudley (2019, 2012), Helen J. Chatterjee (2008) and Marzia Varutti (2022) are some of the contributors to the exploration of emotions in the museum and have, in different ways, attempted to map out a theoretical framework in the field. Other museum academics such as Andrea Witcomb (2015), James Clifford (1998), Kylie Message (2015), Laurajane Smith (2015) have also contributed to the field. Watson explores emotions in the history museum by explaining how museums use different museological methods to evoke an emotional reaction in museum visitors. Her viewpoint is that emotions function as a tool for conveying a narrative or a concept. The examples used in her article illustrate how some exhibits create certain emotional environments that trigger specific emotional reactions in the visitors. In her article, she provides a deconstruction of the different tools used in museological dissemination and the role emotions can play in the engagement of museum visitors (Watson 2015: 290-295).

In contrast to this perspective, Sandra Dudley argues that meaningful emotional engagements can happen between museum visitors and objects when grand narratives or contexts are not the central part of the exhibit. She argues that attention should be paid more to the materiality of an object and how museum visitors can engage with them, instead of focusing solely on context and interpretation (Dudley 2019: 421-422). Whilst Watson (2015: 292-293) also point out that objects play a significant role in evoking an emotional reaction in museum visitors, she still emphasises the importance of context. Dudley (2012: 8-12) attempts to map out different ways in which museums could facilitate for meaningful emotional engagements. One of the ways in which visitors can interact with *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* is by touching a few select objects. To be able to touch objects that are around 2500 years old is rare for museum visitors.

Most archaeological objects in museums are made unavailable to people outside of the archaeological and museological field (Merriman 2004: 93). In this exhibit touch is a central part of the way in which some of the objects are disseminated. It would therefore be useful to examine the theoretical field of touch in the museum as well. In this case *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling* (2008) by Helen J. Chatterjee will be used as the

main theoretical perspectives. The methodological chapter will discuss the method for data collection, what the empirical material is, and the methodological framework utilised in the examination of the exhibit. The subchapter also goes into why my academic background matters in this thesis, how I chose my four different case studies and what limitations there are to the methodology.

Former museology student Trine Anette Fostervold has also written a Master's Thesis on *Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt*. In short, her thesis discusses the role and value of touching in a cultural historical museum exhibition (2021: 2). In her thesis she utilises different theoretical perspectives than what I am using in this masters' thesis (Fostervold 2021: 17-22). Since her discussion is mainly on the role of touching and mine is on the exploration of emotions in museum exhibition, it became apparent that there would not be too much overlap between mine and hers work. In the areas where there is an overlap, I have utilised this in a way to explore how and why our perceptions might be different or similar.

### **2.1.1 Exhibited emotions**

In the article "Emotions in the History Museum" (2015) Sheila Watson attempts to deconstruct the way in which emotions have been utilised as a communicative tool in museum exhibits that display historical people and events. The deconstruction is meant to function as a theoretical method for those who research and work with emotions in the museum. Watson outlines this deconstruction in different methodological frameworks, much similar to that of Stephanie Moser (2010). Elements such as design, media, the role of objects, narratives are all different aspects Watson consider as methods for implementing emotions as a tool in exhibitions. These themes are all backed up with different examples from museum exhibits where emotions played a key role in conveying the exhibits' message (Watson 2015: 290-295).

By referencing Jaak Panksepp and Lucy Bivens book *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions* (2012), Watson first outlines a series of emotions that "generate 'intense emotional feelings' and are part of an ancient mammalian inheritance which impact all our lives" (Panksepp and Biven 2012: 2; Watson 2015: 284). She emphasises that humans are influenced by their emotions in many different ways that affect our behaviour. Furthermore, also with reference to Panksepp and Biven, she points out that thinking and feeling are intertwined in a way that makes us think both emotionally and cognitively at the same time, which is not always something we as humans are aware of. Because of this,

our emotional responses are learned, and they can be conditioned by our cultural background (Watson 2015: 284).

However, Watson does not differentiate between feelings and emotions in her article. Watson draws a parallel between history as an academic field and the development of the history museum, where the history museum shadows the concept of academic history being dispassionate, neutral, and detached from emotions. She argues against this point by emphasising that “the selection of objects, narratives, and factual information provided in a museum space is not neutral” (Watson 2015: 288). She uses this parallel to look at why museums are reluctant to embrace an emotional turn in their exhibits. Whilst some attempts were made in creating emotional stimuli through text and design, very little is done to produce exhibits that provokes emotional engagement on a much deeper level. The fear, she argues, was that these exhibits would appear dumbed down and commercialized, a point disproven through interviews with museumgoers (Watson 2015: 289).

As mentioned, Watson uses various examples from museum exhibits to outline different ways emotions can be used as a communicative tool to engage museum visitors. Aspects such as design, the use of media, museum objects and narrative stories can be utilised to create emotional connections in museum exhibitions. The purpose is to illustrate how museums can be identified as an “emotional environment” – a term coined by Chytry (2012: 259). The term is used for spaces where emotions are cultivated and can also be applied to both heritage sites and museums. The argument is that in the context of history museums, the different techniques used to provoke an emotional response in its visitor could lead to a more nuanced comprehension of the past (Watson 2015: 288 - 289). Watson's theoretical perspectives opens for viewing the entire *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt exhibit* as emotional – both through its thematic structure, but also through the visitors experience with it. Deconstructing the exhibit in a similar way that Watson does, creates a framework for looking at how different elements in the exhibit creates a holistic emotional environment. One of the ways in which the concept of an emotional environment will be explored is by examining how the exhibit facilitates for an interaction between museum visitors and the objects on display. In this exploration, Sandra Dudley's theoretical perspectives will be utilised.

### 2.1.2 Object and emotion

The previous subchapter gave a general introduction to how emotions can be utilised as a dissemination tool in museum exhibits. The theoretical framework focused mainly on museums displaying historical events and people. This chapter focus on emotions and object engagement, rather than the combination of context, design, narrative, objects and media as different tools to provoke emotional responses to what is exhibited. Though both subchapters discuss emotions as a means to draw its visitor closer to the museum and its exhibits, the perspectives provided are different from each other. Throughout several articles, Sandra Dudley (2019, 2012) critiques the way in which museums distances its visitors from the objects in its collections. She argues that, for instance, in museum exhibits, objects are displayed in a way that physically distances them from the visitors. Aspects such as display cases, “do not touch”-signs, ropes and picture frames are all elements that maintains a barrier between visitors and the objects on display. The way in which objects were used, touched, or even smelled before they wound up in a museum’s collection are all removed. Thus, any meaningful engagement is also gone (Dudley 2012: 2).

Furthermore, her critique is also directed towards the function of museum objects in exhibits. Her argument is that most objects function as tools to pinpoint important aspects of a grander narrative. They do not speak for themselves or offer a function for themselves. This way, museum visitors also lose an important chance to have any form of powerful or meaningful experience with the displayed objects. The manner in which objects are displayed ensures that most museum visitors only glances half-heartedly at the objects, unengaged, before moving along to the next thing (Dudley 2012: 11). Her solution to this issue is that museums need to rethink the role that objects should have in a museum space. How are they to be used? How can objects ensure that museum visitors have meaningful experiences that touches them on an emotional level? It is argued in some material culture literature that objects are mute until they are, through interpretation and contextualization, given a voice (Hooper-Greenhill 2000:3). Dudley argues against this point by emphasising that objects ‘speak’ to us through a two-way engagement based on “physical, real-time, sensory engagement...” (Dudley 2012: 11). If museums facilitate for it, visitors could have meaningful, emotional engagements with object without knowing anything about them prior to this engagement.

*But what about the value of a powerful response to an object just for itself, rather than only because of how it might enhance learning or appreciation of the wider aspects of an*

*exhibition? The opportunity to be moved to tears, tickled pink, shocked or disgusted by a museum object, or simply to reflect upon it, as a result of sensory and emotional engagement with its physicality before necessarily knowing anything at all about it, is itself a powerful component of what a museum experience can offer – not just as a step on the journey towards cognitive understanding of the story the object helps to tell, but as a potent and sometimes transformative phenomenon in its own right. (Dudley 2012: 2)*

Dudley argues that it is not especially relevant what kind of emotions that are evoked within museum visitors when they engage with objects. It is, however, more important that they have an emotional, meaningful response to what they experience in the exhibit (Dudley 2012: 9-10). The purpose of Dudley's points is to utilise her theoretical concepts in the analysis of *Emotions in Antiquity*, and query how they might illuminate how emotional engagement in museum spaces can be evoked – and why it matters. To continue with the theme of object interaction, the theoretical field of object-handling in museums will be addressed in the next subchapter.

### **2.1.3 Touch in the museum**

Historically, being able to touch objects in the museum was something that was possible in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though this was limited to the elite, the upper classes of Western societies (Candlin 2008: 12-13). Yet, the importance of touching objects in the museums were highlighted by, amongst others, Celia Fiennes, who when visiting the Ashmolean Museum in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was surprised at how lightweight a cane felt and how the feeling of lifting the object went against her expectations of it being very heavy (Candlin 2008: 9-12; Dudley 2012: 2; Spence and Gallace 2008: 25). The ability to touch museum objects disappeared when access to the museum was broadened to include all classes of society in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is argued that this was done to restrict the negative effects of a lot more people touching the objects, which would lead to their deterioration. But also, because it was believed that the touch of people from lower classes in society was considered dirty and that their learning experiences from touching the objects was limited (Candlin 2008: 9, 16). This is also discussed in greater detail in Fostervolds (2021) work.

However, the limitations on object-handling in museums marked a shift in museum dissemination, where only museum personnel were allowed to touch museum objects. This attitude towards touching objects persist to this day, which is why it might be conceived as unusual to



be able to touch these very ancient objects in *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* (Candlin 2008: 17-19). Naturally, it should not go unmentioned that the reason why there are restrictions to people touching museum artifacts is because for the sake of the objects' preservation and safekeeping – a practice Dudley argues that museums should reconsider Dudley (2012: 3). To discuss the powerful experience of being able to touch museum objects and its emotional impact, the book *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling* edited by Helen J. Chatterjee's will be utilised. The book uses a historical perspective on how museums shifted from visitors being able to touch museum objects, to its being limited only to museum personnel (as mentioned in the paragraph above). The book also includes perspectives from neuroscience, which connects touch and its emotional impact. Helen writes:

*This 'emotional touch' is critically important within heritage since it affords strong support for the value of physical interaction with objects, rather than just visual. The scientific evidence also makes clear and strong links between the various senses (vision, touch, smell, hearing, taste), encouraging a multisensory approach to museum access.* (Helen J. Chatterjee 2008: 2)

Furthermore, there will also be a brief discussion about the how the focus on visibility restricts the museum experience for people who are partially or completely visually impaired, and how a new paradigm of object-handling in museums can assist in the removal of such forms of discrimination. Much of this is based upon the article “Making Sense of Touch” by Charles Spence and Alberto Gallace (2008) where they point out the lack of proper research on the effects of object-handling in museums by those who are visually impaired. Although museum legislation in the UK has changed to ensure the consideration and inclusion of those visually impaired in museum experiences, the reality is still that this inclusion is very lacking (Spence and Gallace 2008: 21).

## **2.2 Method**

The methodology used in this thesis is a critical exhibition analysis based upon the different empirical data collected in the exhibition room. In order to structuralize the critical analysis, I will be utilising Stephanie Moser's methodological framework “The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Display and the Creation of Knowledge (2010). This text provides key tools to deconstruct an exhibit in an organized and understandable way. It considers the different factors

necessary to produce an exhibition and what effect these factors will have on how an exhibition is understood by museum visitors (Moser 2010: 23). Moser divides the exhibit into different categories such as “Architecture, Location, Setting” (24), “Design, Colour, Light” (25), “Subject, Message, Text” (26) and a few other categories. In her explanation of how to utilise these different categories, she ends them by providing a few questions you can ask yourself whilst being in the exhibition room. For example, one of the museological aspects in the exhibition which will be discussed in the next chapter is the use of lighting. Here Moser asks the question “What effects do both artificial and natural lighting have on how the objects appear (...)?” (Moser 2010: 26). For the sake of comparison, I will also use Beth Cohen’s work “Displaying Greek and Roman Art in Modern Museums” (2014), because it discusses the different ways Classical archaeological objects are displayed in museums around the world and how the exhibition style has changed over the past 500 years (Cohen 2014: 1).

### **2.2.1 Observation as method for data collecting**

The method for data collection is based upon personal observations in the exhibition. Observation is defined as a bodily experience that involves utilising all senses such as sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. The method involves that the researcher participates in the environment that is going to be observed (Öhlander 1999: 74, 77-78). In the case of this exhibit, I entered the role of a museum visitor and for the sake of clarity only sight and touch were utilised during this fieldwork. I visited the museum on several different occasions, and both observed and interacted with the exhibition. This means that I also sat down where possible and touched the objects that visitors are allowed to touch. Whenever visiting the exhibit, I made sure to explore the room differently each time and the first time I visited was without any systematic way of interacting with the exhibit. However, over the four months I spent visiting the exhibit on different occasions I worked my way through the more systematically.

Meaning that one time I would only walk around the table and observe the objects from a standing perspective. Another time I would pick out specific objects and only focus on them, without paying much attention to the rest of the exhibit. In these instances, I would spend a lot of time on each object just looking at them, from a sitting perspective, touching the objects that I was allowed to touch. In addition, I would walk through the exhibit, starting from the introductory text and walking my way around the table, following along the exhibition texts, and at a later point I would do the opposite: explore the exhibit by walking straight to the

table, without looking at the different texts and illustrations on the wall. I would also make sure to explore the exhibit together with other people, to discuss my own observations together with theirs. These observations were not just floating around in my head, so I collected my observations in the form of notes in a journal.

### **2.2.2 The function of photos, notes and film recording**

A primary resource to use during observation is a notebook and a pen. Usually, the types of notes can be distinguished between methodological, reflective, and empirical (Öhlander 1999: 82). The journal functioned as a way for me to remember my observations whilst being in the exhibition room. During my visits, my notes were empirical and reflective. I wrote down descriptions of everything I observed in the exhibition room and combined those descriptions with my own reflections. Upon returning to the exhibit on different days, I would also note any differences to the room in my book. Was the exhibit open or closed to the public, were there any people there, how did the lighting affected my experience with the exhibit? When I began writing the thesis, the notebook was very useful, because not only had I written down my observations in it, but also any reflection I had upon that observation.

In addition to the notebook, I also took photos of the exhibit. When documenting a room through photography it is suitable to start with an overview photo and then focus on the details of the room (Gradén and Kaijser 1999: 112). These photos were useful reference points to my work because it helped me remember exactly what was in the display room when I was writing my analysis of the exhibit. The photos were also useful because during the time I was working with the exhibit, parts of it had changed and some objects were, probably permanently, removed from it. Luckily, I had photographed that part of the exhibit, and was able to examine it with and without the changes. This also provided me with the opportunity to reflect on why these objects were removed from the exhibit.

Lastly, I also filmed a walk-through of the exhibit. This was done so that I did not have to go back to the exhibit every time there was need for a review of the display. In addition, both the photos and notebook would probably have some details left out of the exhibit. While filming was not perfect, at least every detail of the exhibition room was captured on camera. The filming took place when the museum was closed, as I did not want to risk having other people in the different shots. I filmed in both one long shot of the entire exhibit and several shorter shorts. Both the photos and film were taken with the camera on my iPhone XS.

### **2.2.3 Choosing the case studies**

Because of the broad research question that this thesis discusses, it became necessary to narrow down the exhibit to different case studies. The case study of this exhibit is a selection of four object entities, each representing one of the emotional categories in the exhibition. These are a selection of Greek vases displayed together, a fragmented foot, a funerary loculus relief and a mummy coffin. In order to do an analysis of the exhibit, I made the choice of limiting it to four different object entities. I decided that the objects used for the different case studies all had to represent different emotions. Furthermore, all of them had to have different ways of being interacted with and observed.

Meaning that I did not want to only focus on the objects one could touch, such as Fostervold (2021) does, nor did I want to focus on only one object type or one way of representation, such as only the objects in display cases. Instead, I wanted the objects to be as different as possible. I chose the Greek vases both because I really enjoy working with this type of object, but also because of their complex emotional expressions in the exhibit. The fragmented foot was chosen because it is an object museum visitors can touch. When it comes to the mummy coffin, I chose that one because it is the only object in the exhibit displaying human remains and the funerary loculus relief was chosen because of its motif of a woman and child and because it was one object not behind a display case that museum visitors were not allowed to touch.

It was by sheer coincidence that most of the chosen objects are representations of women. All though this thesis does not discuss gender representations, it should still be noted that with the Greek and Roman objects, these representations were usually considered a male perception of women. In the Classical world, as far as we know, men were responsible for creating the artwork in which women are represented in. Any ideologies communicated from these objects are most likely representations of how men perceived women in the Classical world. However, since gender representation is not a part of this thesis, this will not be discussed further. For closer reading on how gender is represented in Classical archaeological material see the works of Fantham et. al (1994), Tropper (2012) and Cameron and Kuhrt (1994).

#### **2.2.4 Reflection on my own background**

My perception this exhibit is influenced both by my background in Classical archaeology and as a museologist. For example, because I specialized in Greek vase paintings, I am aware of the fact that I am able to analyse motifs on the vases displayed in *Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt* in greater detail than some people who do not have the same background as me. Because of this, my observations and way of seeing this exhibit could be very different from how other people might see it. This became much clearer to me when I read through Foster-volds (2021) text and was given a very good idea of how different our perceptions of the exhibit were. Because of this, I have explicitly commented on the places in my analysis where my perceptions are also affected by my background in Classical archaeology. By examining an exhibit that displays archaeological material also emphasised the suspense that can occur between archaeology and museology. An example of this could be the way I approach the exhibited objects, where I would focus only on what the objects themselves represent in an archaeological context. The challenge became to view these objects in a museological context – what do these objects represent in the exhibit? This meant that I had to move my focal points from aspects such as imagery, illustrations and representation, to object placement, how the objects relate to each other and how they communicate the theme of the exhibit.

#### **2.2.5 Limitations to the method**

I deliberately decided upon not using interview as a method – neither with the curator Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, nor the designers Snøhetta or any of the visitors. The premise of this decision was to not let their intentions with the exhibit colour my own views of what is being seen in the exhibition room. Furthermore, since the exhibit opened two years ago and its production began probably even longer ago, details concerning the process of making the exhibit would probably not be well remembered and might even be changed. Therefore, I decided to instead present the book first for any information concerning the process and ideas behind the production of the exhibit and look at Snøhettas own information on their website for any details concerning their own perspective on the exhibit. This approach to the exhibit is very different from Fostervold who interviewed key personnel who worked on the exhibit such as Prusac-Lindhagen and one of the designers from Snøhetta. She also included other participants in the exploration of the exhibit (Fostervold 2021: 11-13).

The intention behind the exhibit is explained in close enough details and I only wanted to utilise the information available to museum visitors. Naturally, had I decided upon doing

thorough interviews, the structure of the thesis would have changed, and even, perhaps, the research questions as well (see Fostervold 2021). However, as stressed earlier, my focal point is to review what is achieved in the exhibition room. I only want to look at the aspects that museum visitors have access to, as the purpose of the discussion is to examine how it fits into the role of emotions in the museum.

I have also decided not to focus on emotions in the context of exhibitions with themes concerning minorities and indigenous people. In short, this is where emotions are also used as tool, but to gain sympathy, understanding and calls for action due to the political, societal, and economical injustices minorities and indigenous peoples have suffered throughout history. Though this is an extremely important take on how emotions can be applied in museum contexts, this is not the discussion for this particular thesis. I would not be able to do the discussion justice, by adding it in as a subchapter within this thesis. As mentioned, both Witcomb (2015), Clifford (1998) and Smith (2015) discusses this theme.

### 3 The Exhibit

This chapter is a review of the exhibit in its entirety. The work is the result of the empirical data gathered from the observations, notes, photos and films from the exhibition room. The chapter begins with a general introduction of the exhibit, the museum it is displayed at and some of the people who produced it. The following chapters will be divided into sections such as “exhibition style”, “presenting the objects”, “design, colour and light”, “subject, message and text”, “the ancient literary sources” and a summary. The aim of this chapter is to provide a holistic picture of the exhibit in its entirety. It is also the aim to review questions such as: How are the different artifacts displayed? In what ways can museum visitors approach them? Can people touch them, is there much or little text accompanying each object and the exhibit as a whole? How does the exhibit engage with the visitors and how can the visitors engage with the exhibit? This chapter will describe the exhibit in its entirety, using Stephanie Moser’s “The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Display and the Creation of Knowledge” (2010) as a methodological framework for ‘walking’ through the exhibit.

#### 3.1 Welcome to the Feast



Figure 1 Overview of Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt from entrance. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

*Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* is displayed at The Museum of Cultural History. The museum was finished in 1904 and is built in the Art Nouveau style (Kyllingstad & Rørvik 2011: 390, 398). The Museum of Cultural History is located in the city centre of Oslo and is comprised of The Historical Museum located at Tullinløkka and The Museum of The Viking Age at Bygdøy (which will open in 2026). It is also a part of The University of Oslo and engages in university research and disseminates research-based knowledge. Furthermore, the museum has Norway's largest collection of ethnographic and historical objects, which dates from the Stone Age to modern times. In addition to manage and produce exhibits based on these collections, the museum also conducts several archaeological excavations in the south-east of Norway (The Museum of Cultural History A; The Museum of Cultural History B). The art nouveau style is present in the exhibition room that displays *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*. The exhibit is designed by renowned architectural firm Snøhetta, who are also responsible for the exhibit *VÍKINGR* located on the same floor as *Emotions* (The Museum of Cultural History C; Snøhetta). The curator behind the exhibit is Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, manager for the Classical and ancient Egyptian collections at the museum and the exhibit opened in 2020.

The exhibit is based on new research on the Classical and Ancient Egypt collections at the Museum of Cultural History and is a dissemination of the research results (Glørstad 2020: 21; Prusac-Lindhagen 2020; 22-23). When working on finding new perspectives on this collection, it was done with the purpose of exploring the question of identifying the differences between universal and culturally specific emotions. The chapter "Table talk" states "In archaeology, context is key – and in some ways our obsession with context can obscure and accentuate the vast distance between humans of the past and today. They need to be reinterpreted to be understood" (Prusac-Lindhagen 2020: 23). It appears that one of the ambitions of the research project was to discover new perspectives on these ancient objects that was grounded in an emotional context. According to Harris and Sørensen (2010: 145) research on emotions in the archaeological field remains a mostly untouched area, with many archaeologists being reluctant to focus on this theme because "it is not recoverable from the archaeological material because it is inherently 'subjective' or even 'speculative'. In some ways, the research and resulting exhibit can therefore be interpreted as innovative due to its focus on the objects emotional contexts.



The exhibit has also a rare style of displaying material culture from the Classical world and ancient Egypt. Museums with a Classical collection often exhibits them thematically, focusing on themes related to “heroes and myths”, “women and children/domestic scenes”, “athletics and competition” and so on. They are organized according to the different scenes depicted on the vases, pediments, and friezes (Cohen 2014: 14-15). Sometimes, these types of objects are also organized according to stylistic developments. This makes sense, as in the academic field, different epochs or periods are marked and defined by, amongst other things, stylistic changes in artistic objects and architecture such as ceramics, statues, sculptures, and temples (See Barringer 2014). Furthermore, some of the collections are so large, that a distinct chronological focus makes sense as a method when museums display as many objects as possible (Cohen 2014: 17). Examples of this is found in the British Museum in London, Nationalmuseum in Copenhagen, the Archaeological Museum in Athens and the Acropolis Museum in Athens (Cohen 2014: 19-20; Eleftheratou 2017: 18).

### **3.2 *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt***

When entering the exhibition room, the visitors get a good overview of what the exhibition space contains. The room is spacious and filled with natural light from large windows. Centred in the room, is a large, dark wooden table, with matching cushioned benches placed around it. On top of the table are 44 separate entities comprising of different objects from the museums Classical and Egyptian collection. The 45<sup>th</sup> entity is placed in a separate display-case at the very opposite end of the room from the entrance. On the left side of the room several different texts, a large map and a timeline decorates the walls. The right side of the room consist of large windows that allows natural lighting to enter the room. The texts introduce the exhibit and contextualize the objects by placing them in four different emotional categories. The four categories are *fear and reverence*, *love and joy*, *sorrow and loss* and *hope*. Each text is also accompanied by an excerpt from an ancient literary source. The wall at the opposite end from the entrance is decorated with a large image of the face of a female sculpture and the title of the exhibit.



Figure 2 Display table with the "Love and Joy" objects. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

Apart from the introductory text on the left side of the entrance, there is not a clear start to the exhibit. It feels natural to walk straight towards the table with the objects, instead of turning left towards the introductory text. If this is the case for museum visitors, then much of the context of the exhibit is lost at first, and visitors would not read about the different emotions until they've been through almost the entire exhibit. However, the experience is not necessarily lessened by looking at the objects *before* reading any of the texts. As mentioned, there are cushioned benches placed around the table where visitors can sit down and look at the objects up-close. The objects on display all vary in object type, material, size, motif, and origin. Some objects represent myths and mythical figures, whilst some represent real people and real-life scenarios. Surrounding the objects on the table are small desktop lamps that can be used to help visitors look at the objects in greater detail. Some of the objects are placed inside display-cases, some are not. Four of the objects are there to be touched by the visitors. As mentioned, there is no right or wrong way to go through the exhibit and it is not necessary to sit down on the benches to see the objects clearly either.

### 3.2.1 Exhibition style

Exhibition style is what Moser (2010: 28-29) defines as “the communicative role assigned to objects in exhibitions”. Meaning, what are the objects communicating through this exhibit? Are the objects being used as props in a narrative, do they represent or explore an idea or a concept? Or are the objects the focus of the exhibit? This is an exhibit that places the objects in the centre. As written in the very beginning of this thesis, one purpose of the exhibit, as explained by Prusac-Lindhagen (2020: 23), is to explore the differences between universal and culturally specific emotions. Thus, the team working on the exhibit would have selected out specific objects to explore this theme. The exhibit is not conveying a narrative, but instead explores how we can comprehend emotions through the material culture from Antiquity and ancient Egypt.



Figure 3 Snippet from the map showing the geographical areas covered in the exhibit. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

To achieve such an exploration, the exhibit uses, as mentioned, an array of different objects that derive from a period between 3000 BC and 500 AD and cover geographical areas that stretches through Greece, Italy, Israel, Syria, Egypt, Cyprus, Turkey and Palestine. Some of the objects have also unknown provenances, such as the statuette of Aphrodite Urania (C41754). The exploration of the theme happens in the interaction between text and objects, objects and objects and visitors and objects. The text enhances the possible emotional representations in the objects, the way the objects are placed in relation to each other plays a significant role in how the exhibit attempts to explore these differences (or similarities) between

universal and culturally determined emotions. This will be discussed in greater lengths in the sub-chapter “Presenting the objects”. Equally important, is how the exhibit explores the theme of emotions through the interaction between its visitor and the displayed objects. How does the exhibit create or facilitate an emotional environment? One way to address this question is to look at the way the objects are presented in the exhibit.

### 3.2.2 Presenting the objects



Figure 4 Three objects inside a display case. Glare from the windows is very visible. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

Most of the objects are placed on the table so that they line up with one of the four different emotions outlined texts on the wall. The exception to this, is the large display case containing the Roman glass vessels, which appear to be up for discussion as to what they could represent. Some of the objects are placed inside display cases and some are not. The way display cases are used in the exhibition affects the way the visitors will see and interact with the objects. Almost all the objects are placed in the centre or middle of the table. However, there are four objects placed much closer to the edge of the table, inviting the viewer to touch them. Some of the objects that visitors are not allowed to touch are also exhibited without a display case. There is no information regarding which objects visitors can and cannot touch, meaning that

there are no signs that tells visitors that some objects can be touched. This is only implied by placing the objects visitors can touch much closer to the edge of the table. Nevertheless, being allowed to touch these very ancient museum objects takes the whole concept of emotions (or feelings) to another level. The effect of touching museum objects will be discussed thoroughly in the subchapter “Touching the objects”.



Figure 5 Roman glass vessels. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, there are 45 different entities on display. 44 are placed on the table, whilst the 45<sup>th</sup> is placed in a separate display case on the floor. These entities consist of a different number of objects. It could be assumed that objects placed under the same number or entity are meant to be viewed together and that in some instances they share a narrative. An example of this is the Greek vases placed under the same display case and the nuances communicated from the way these vases are displayed will be discussed in both chapters 4 and 5. However, it is also likely that some objects are placed inside a display case for protective measures. When it comes to object placement, it appears that the second mummy coffin located at the opposite end from the entrance to the room has been assigned a different role than the other objects on display.

The coffin is in its own display case on the floor, right next to the wall – physically separating it from the rest of the exhibit. The reason for this separation is not completely clear. The mummy coffin is also the only object that contains human remains, which could be a reason for why it is separated from the other objects. However, this will be discussed in greater lengths in the chapter “Displaying the mummy”. As mentioned, the objects are organized according to the emotional context they “fit” together with. This means that the objects are displayed across from their geographical origin, date, object type, practical function, gender representation et cetera. This way of presenting the objects in this manner works as a visualisation of how Prusac-Lindhagen and her team has attempted to explore the question of identifying universal and culturally determined emotions. This particular question is not something that will be discussed in great detail throughout this thesis.

### **3.2.3 Design, colour, and light**

Arguably, the exhibit appears to be designed to mirror a feast from ancient times. This was also stated by Håkon Glørstad (2020: 21) in his introductory text to the exhibit. The exhibit’s catalogue is also filled with euphemisms of the exhibit representing a feast; “the table is set, and visitors are invited to join the table” (Prusac-Lindhagen 2020: 26-27). The long table, with benches around it to encourage museum visitors to sit down and reflect over what is exhibited, and have meaningful conversations, can also be seen as an act of mirroring ancient feasts. The visitors are encouraged to “feast” over the objects that are on display.

When entering the room, the exhibit in its entirety is visible, removing any immediate element of surprise. Initially, the surprise actually happened when I sat down and came close to the objects. The design is simplistic, and no form of digital tools have been utilised in the exhibit. The lack of digital tools or new media is a move away from something which is becoming more common in exhibits. Though, this is not unique to The Museum of Cultural History, which still hosts a few exhibits with no digital tools used. In 2014 Beth Cohen wrote:

*“And there is enormous pressure for art museums to move away from traditional displays conducive to quiet study and aesthetic contemplation by introducing new media, which would draw attention and take space away from exhibited objects.”* (Cohen 2014: 22)

This pressure towards the use of new media or digital media in exhibits appear to derive from the idea that new media can contribute to the democratization of knowledge and make the

exhibits more “exciting” through new possibilities for visitors to interact with the displays (Henning 2006: 302). Emotions in antiquity uses very few external elements, such as new media or other forms of installations. Using very few elements in the design of the exhibit, provides the room with a very minimalist effect. Perhaps in the instance of Emotions, the democratization of the objects happens by making the objects more available by removing display cases and allowing visitors to touch some of the objects?

The use of colour and lighting highlights the simplistic and minimalist style of the exhibit. The room does not feel cluttered or overcrowded. The simplistic style of the exhibit pushes the focus on to the exhibited objects, as there is not anything else to steal away the visitor’s attention. Thus, this exhibit moves away from the more common digital dissemination tools used by museums. The lighting in the room comes from three places. The ceiling lights, windows and the small desktop lamps placed around the table. These small desktop lamps appear to be there to highlight individual objects, all though the effect of this is toned down when sunlight comes through the windows. Also, the placement of some of these lamps blocs parts of some of the objects and the lighting focuses on the table instead of the object (see figure). This oddity is also commented on by Fostervold, who found the effect of it disrupting (Fostervold 2021: 27-28). The colour on the wall is a mute yellow, that almost matches the light colour of the marble and limestone objects. The colour in the room and the lighting works in contrast to the dark furniture placed in the centre of the room. The use of colours and lighting gives the illusion of making the room appear bigger than it is.

### **3.2.4 Subject, message and text**

*Let us live my Lesbia, and let us love...*

*Suns can set and rise again: we when*

*Once our brief light has set must sleep again*

*Through a perpetual night. Give me a*

*Thousand kisses, and then a hundred...*

Catullus 84-54 BC (Display text from *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*)

*“A love poem. A reminder that everything must die. But also, that some things are eternal.*

*Words are easy to understand, but emotions can also be retrieved from things. An image of a*

*god or ruler conveys respect or reverence to those who have power. Funerary art reveals*

*hope of an eternal life. A gift can be given out of love, and a drinking cup can bear witness to*

*the joys of gathering around a table. The table here is set with items that allows us to glimpse emotions from Antiquity and ancient Egypt. Some emotions can be understood across time and space, others are culturally defined. Emotions can be manipulated and controlled. They have overturned regimes and started wars. But it is in the small and everyday things that we come to meet the individual.” (Display text *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*)*



Figure 6 Introductory text - *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz.

The text used to describe the exhibited objects (the meta data) is minimalistic. Each object is only allocated with a number, approximate period, place, and object type. There are five texts on the wall, an introductory text in the form of an ancient poem, as well as a short introduction to the exhibit. The other four texts also have a passage from ancient literary sources as well as a short explanation to what each emotional category is and how some of the objects relate to that category. The texts inform the visitor about the different emotional themes in the exhibit, *fear and reverence*, *love and joy*, and *sorrow and loss*, in the most general way. It is not always clear if the information regards to the Classical world or to ancient Egypt. This generalization pertains to the presentation of the objects as well. For example, there were several different Greek ceramics displayed, yet they are all described as “Greek vases”, with no differentiation between the different styles of the vases or even the motifs. When the texts refer to a specific object on display, it is not obvious which one it is, unless the viewer has prior knowledge of, for instance, motifs painted on Greek vases.



Furthermore, the way the texts are written and the way the objects are displayed shows that narrative and chronology are not central to the exhibit. The exhibit is not designed in the form of a timeline, as objects are displayed across different epochs. Nor is there one or several different stories to follow. Instead, the texts are there to assist the visitors in their exploration of the theme of the exhibit. Arguably, the purpose of using text sparsely is not to overwhelm visitors with too much information and allow them to explore the exhibit on their own terms and make their own interpretations. The design of the exhibit emphasises this idea, particularly with the way visitors are invited to see the objects up-close. Yet, it appears that Prusac-Lindhagen recognizes the importance of some contextualization of the objects. The exhibit is very object oriented, and it is reflected by the style of the texts and illustrations on the wall. Whilst they are easy to read with its dark text against the lightly coloured wall, is not particularly attention grabbing.

### **3.2.5 The ancient literary sources**

There are five different excerpts from primary literary sources used in the exhibit. These texts create a certain poetic atmosphere and fits well into the theme of the exhibit. The written sources provide a small glimpse into the emotional world of Antiquity and ancient Egypt. Using primary literary sources as a tool to comprehend archaeological material is not uncommon in archaeological research. Often, interesting perspectives comes from combining research on primary literary sources and archaeological material (Nevett 2011: 576). It emphasises the message that the exhibit wants to convey out to its visitors; people from the ancient world fell in love, celebrated joyous occasions, they were frightened and so on. These emotions become more explicitly clear when they are spelled out. In that sense, it could be said that the text and objects communicate with each other. Whilst the use of text enhances the experience and contributes to contextualizing the objects, the impression is that they are there to assist the visitors, but the texts are not the focal point – the objects are. This supports the argument mentioned earlier that experiencing the objects without reading the texts first does not diminish the overall experience of the exhibit. The subchapter “Making the objects available” will discuss how some of the subtleties found in the exhibit can only be understood with prior knowledge of Antiquity and Ancient Egypt.

### **3.2.6 Text as an emotional object**

In this section I want to separate the primary literary excerpts from the exhibition texts explaining each emotional category. While the ancient literary texts are emotionally charged and appear to be there as a glimpse into the emotional world of antiquity and ancient Egypt, the exhibition texts appear to be much less anchored in making its visitors feel anything as a stand-alone part of the exhibit. Arguably, the reason for this is because the texts are too general. The texts explain in a very general way how some of the displayed objects fit into the category they are placed into. One comment that Fostervold made when she examined the exhibit was the general nature of the texts and that it was difficult to understand their connection with the objects displayed on the table. More information was needed (Fostervold 2021: 24-26). One exception to this is the text about sorrow and loss is the only one that directly “speaks” to the visitor. It opens with a question that can help them reflect over how people in ancient societies related to death in a world where mortality rates were very high. As I discussed, it works as a tool for museum visitors, both to help them consider their own thoughts around sorrow, but also on how it may have been for people who lived 2000 years ago. The way the texts contribute to contextualize the objects will be discussed in close detail in chapter 4.

### **3.2.7 Summary**

The focal point of this chapter has been to describe the exhibit in its entirety. After walking through the exhibit, the overall characteristics of it is an exhibit that disseminates emotions through a selection of material culture from the Classical world and ancient Egypt. It is an exhibit that places the objects in centre. This is emphasised by the minimalistic use of text and additional display tools. It is also emphasised by centring the objects in the middle of the room. Furthermore, the exhibit invites its visitors to engage directly with the different exhibition elements. Visitors are meant to sit down on the benches around placed around the table, and they are allowed to touch some of the displayed objects. The purpose of this has been to provide an overview of the data that the analysis will be based upon. The next chapter will look closely at some of the objects and the emotions they are categorized into. This will mostly be descriptions of what the objects are and how they are displayed in the room. The analysis on how these objects is used to explore emotions comes in the chapter “Analysis”

## 4 Four objects – Four Emotions

This chapter will look at four different object entities that are placed within the four different emotional categories or contexts in the exhibit. The objects are the funerary relief representing a mother and child, the Greek *lekythoi* (vase), however since these *lekythoi* are so consciously placed together with three other Greek ceramic pieces under the same display case, they will also be discussed together with the *lekythoi*. The last two objects are the fragmented foot and the Egyptian mummy coffin. Dudley argues that it is not possible to plan for strong reactions to objects, and that whether or not they happen, is entirely individual. However, she argues further that it is still the role of museums to facilitate for these possible powerful, even emotional, interactions. And to do so, museums need to place the objects back into the centre of the exhibits (Dudley 2012 B: 12).

Arguably, *Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt* is an exhibit that attempts to place the object back in the centre of the exhibit. As discussed in chapter 3, there are very few display elements that takes the focus away from the objects. The exhibit texts are there as a way to contextualize the objects, but the focal point of the exhibit is the objects, not the other way around. The objects that this chapter will look at represent different methods of display and different variations in how museum visitors can interact with them. Some are behind display cases, whilst others are not, some are free to be touched and one contains human remains and is separated from the other objects. These appear to be deliberate actions that explores the different ways that museum visitors can interact with the objects. What happens when visitors are able to interact one-on-one with each object? Are visitors able to “properly, bodily, emotionally (...) engage with an object rather than look at it half-heartedly prior to, or even after, reading a text panel on the wall or a label in a case?” (Dudley 2012: 11).

One of the focal points of this chapter, is to examine the relationship between the objects and the exhibition texts and see what is communicated through this relationship. Therefore, a complete reproduction the four texts explaining the four emotional categories will be provided, followed by a description of one entity from each emotional context and how they communicate together and what they communicate out to the visitors. This chapter will be the premise from the analysis in chapter 5 where I will discuss how the exhibit facilitates for meaningful and emotional interactions with the displayed objects.

#### 4.1 Funerary Relief in *Sorrow and Loss*

*“Lo, under this marker are placed the bones of Soteris...She had not yet filled up twice three years... The lamentations which the mother ought to have bequeathed to her daughter, the daughter suddenly bequeathed to her mother”* (Gravestone 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, from *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*)



Figure 7 Palmyrene funerary loculus reliefs (C42237 and C42231). Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

*Did the loss of a loved one cause as much pain at a time when high mortality rates were the norm as it does today? Grief is an individual emotion, whereas grave customs are culturally defined. Ancient Egypt and Classical Antiquity were periods that lasted for millennia, and the grave customs differed. The care in which the Egyptians expressed through the way they treated the corpses is noteworthy. For example, simple urns for ashes may appear to point to a preference for anonymity after death, although some were placed in extravagant tombs. Sarcophagi could be decorated with figures that meant to frighten evil spirits and protect the deceased. Gravestones with portraits could emphasize the experience of mourning, but also kept the memory of the deceased*

*alive. The bones of Jews who died in the diaspora were laid in chests, in the hope of a final burial in Israel.*

(From Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt)

#### **4.1.1 Explaining Sorrow and Loss**

The text that accompanies the objects displayed under the category “Sorrow and Loss” emphasises the differences in grave traditions between the ancient Egyptians and peoples of the Classical world. It opens with the question “Did the loss of a loved one cause as much pain at a time when high mortality rates were the norm as it does today?” This question helps the modern viewer consider the thought process of how people in the distant past felt about and dealt with death. Opening with a question also gives the viewer a tool for reflecting over the objects on display. The text continues with explaining, in a very general way, the different rituals pertaining to the treatment of dead bodies. This very general way of describing, for instance, the care that the Egyptians expressed through the treatment of corpses, implies that museum visitors should have prior knowledge about the process of embalming and mummification of dead people, or that this process is illustrated by the displayed mummy.

The displayed objects also illustrate differences in funerary rituals, which were culturally defined, whilst still being representative of individual emotions of grief. Perhaps these objects embody both these individual emotions of grief and culturally defined funerary rituals? Keeping the text short and simple places the emphasis of the exhibit back on the objects. As argued earlier, the point is perhaps not to fill the visitors with too much information, but instead give them a few key tools to view with objects with. When it comes to the funerary relief, in the text it is only referred to as a gravestone portrait, which were expressions of both mourning and a way of keeping the memory of the dead alive. Yet, when looking at the excerpt from the ancient literary source together with the funerary relief, it gives a glimpse into a world where child mortality was part of life – emphasising the emotions of sorrow and loss.

One of the objects displayed as part of the Sorrow and Loss context is the Palmyrene funerary loculus relief with a female bust. The relief depicts a woman carrying a child. She is wearing a dress with a veil. A brooch or a fibula holds the dress together. The veil covers most of her hair, but the front part of her hair is wrapped around a decorated headband or a headpiece. She has pearls around her neck, and she is wearing earrings. Her right hand is holding on to her veil, whilst the left is holding the child. The child is very small, though his face and hair could indicate that he is older than what his size might suggest. He is wearing a robe and grabbing

his mother by the breast. The left hand is much bigger than the right one. He is gazing away from his mother. Behind them, there is writing carved into the limestone. There are no translations of the text in the exhibit. The woman's clothes and jewellery indicate that she was wealthy. Her veil could suggest that she was a respectable wife and perhaps mother. Either the child is representing an actual person, or he is a symbolic representation of motherhood (Krag and Raja 2016: 137, 145). The object is displayed on the table together with three other funerary reliefs under the same emotional context. The woman and child are displayed next to a male funerary relief to her right and a female relief to her left.



*Figure 8 Palmyrene funerary loculus relief. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz*

These are not objects that are supposed to be touched, but there are no signs informing museum visitors of this, making it hard to separate them from the objects that visitors actually are allowed to touch. The funerary reliefs are represented as one entity - meaning that they all have the same display number. The object text informs only of object type, material, and approximate date of the objects. They are all Palmyrene and are dated to around 200-274 AD. When sitting down, the visitor comes face to face with the woman, although eye contact is not possible as her eyes are facing down. Yet, the experience of coming so close to her and her child is striking. Because the relief is not behind a display case, every detail of the object is immediately clear. Her broken nose, the cracked line going across the entire relief, suggesting the object was more severely broken at some point and had to be mended. The longer one sits and observes the object, the more aspects present themselves. One of these aspects is the woman's unnaturally large eyes, with heavy eyelids - giving her a look of permanent sorrow. As mentioned, the funerary relief also has text engraved on it. Whilst there is no translation of the text provided in the exhibit, there is one in the exhibits catalogue (Sande 2020: 230). The translation in the book provides details of who these people were and when they died. Giving the visitors these details probably would have been an effective way of allowing museum visitors to see the people whom the funerary relief represents, it would be a way to humanise

them and give insight to what details were important to remember about the people who had died.

## 4.2 Greek Vases in *Love and Joy*

*“Well, since you say the donkey doesn’t help, suppose you take your turn, and carry him!”*  
(Aristophanes 405 BC) (From *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*)



Figure 9 Greek lekythoi (C41797, C41800, C42714, C42745, C41794)  
Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

*“The donkey, often associated with Dionysos and his entourage, symbolized intoxication, humour, decadent sexuality, and a hope of eternal joyfulness in the hereafter. The participants in the Dionysian rituals were often rendered in Greek vase paintings, including in those that were used as grave gifts and filled with scented oils. Family and friends met for funerary meals as a part of the mourning process, but also out of love for the deceased. Meals were social gatherings. Among the Greeks, parties for males, symposia, could become rather wild, and the wine flowed freely. A large quantity of ancient tableware has survived. Festivals with competitions dedicated to the gods provided a welcome pause from the hardships of everyday life. Winners of athletic games were rewarded with amphorae filled with valuable oil. The participants in drama competitions hoped that the muses of Apollo would grant them divine inspiration. Love was a central theme, but the goddess of Love,*

*Aphrodite, was unpredictable. Her son, Eros, could be deadly serious, but also a reckless tease.” (From Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt)*

#### **4.2.1 Greek vases and a world filled with love and joy**

The first thing to note about the text pertaining to Love and Joy is that Egypt is not mentioned at all. In fact, only ancient Greece appear to be given all of the attention. The way these emotions are presented is very much grounded in events and myths pertaining to pleasure, sexuality, love and joyfulness. Dionysos is the character that brings together the ancient literary text and two of the Greek vases on display, though only noticeable if you know which attributes to look for. Yet, there is also a reference to the funerary rituals where loved ones would come together for meals as part of the funerary process and to display their love for the deceased. This mention of funerary rituals fits together with the white ground lekythos on display, which is commonly used in grave rituals (Garland 1988: 26, 107-108).

Also, as explained in the text, the imagery of Dionysos occurring on grave material highlights the desire to have an afterlife grounded in joy. While the text does emphasise the variety of myths and real-life situations that these emotions can be associated with, it is still assumed that museum visitors have a lot of prior knowledge in order to see the connection between object and text and what they communicate together. There were five lekythoi on display from the Greek archaic period (700-480 BC) (See Boardman 2007). The two placed furthest in the back showed motifs of Dionysos and Dionysian imagery, such as women, grape vines and maenads (Buxton 2016: 69, 81). The lekythos in front to the right displays the myth of Odysseus and his escape from the cyclops Polyphemos, whilst the one on the right depicts two sirens with stretched out wings. Sirens are mythical creatures also found in *The Odyssey* (Buxton 2004: 142). The last one, a white ground lekythos depicts, most likely, a man in an offering position in front of an altar.





*Figure 10 Greek vases before change. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz*



*Figure 12 Greek vases after change. Photo: Meriem Boulaziz*

The two vases in front have been removed, as well as the one depicting Dionysos. They may have been removed due to conservation because they are on loan or because the museum wanted to change this part of the exhibit. As stated earlier, there is mention of both grave rituals, funerary scenarios, and Dionysos' connection with this in Greek society. Yet, it is not

explicitly stated that the vases on display are representations of these imageries. There is also no reference to the imagery found on the two vases in front, which illustrates either that the imagery is not too important to understand or that what is displayed is only for those with prior knowledge of ancient Greek vase paintings and myths. In addition to the lekythoi, there is also a kylix (drinking vessel), what appears to be a small cup and a bowl decorated with fish. As the exhibit text explains, these are the types of objects that were used for the symposia and funeral feasts and fits well with the text describing this part of the exhibit.

Using vases that depicts imagery from *The Odyssey* by Homer fits well with the theme of the exhibit. Because in the myth, sirens, like the ones on the lekythos, were described first as beautiful creatures with lovely singing voices, that were used to lure sailors to their deaths. When Odysseus and his crew comes close to the sirens, they see that they take the shape of the bird-like creatures with the heads of women seen on the vase on display and not as beautiful women. Displaying vases with this type of imagery also shows that the ancient Greeks were vary of the nature of women (Buxton 2016: 142). Yet, unless museum visitors have knowledge about the Odyssey and are able to analyse Greek vase paintings, this could also be an aspect that becomes lost on many visitors. It is not easy to tell whether the imagery on the displayed vases is important or not, because on one hand, in the text, it explains implicitly what is depicted on two of the vases and how it relates to the theme, but with the other two, it is entirely left out. The details of the vase paintings and their role in the exhibit will be discussed further in the chapter “Analysis”.

### **4.3 The Fragmented Foot in *Fear and Reverence***

“*Thy power, O Zeus, what human trespass can limit?*” (Sophocles 441 BC from *Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt*).

*“The Egyptians and peoples of the Classical world feared the capricious gods and those who had power. In the arts, gods and rulers could appear great and superhuman. Yet, being powerful could be dangerous. Victors of battles for thrones often tried to delete the memory of the one who lost. Societies were hierarchical, and priests and officeholders had to be honoured. Children could be privileged assistants, but discipline was hard. Death was at all times an impending danger. Tragedy masks represented in the funerary arts could express grief, but also fear of the encounter with the netherworld, where the spirits of the dead wandered as shadows. Medusa was a much feared being, but a glance from her eyes could scare away danger. The most important protection along the path to the hereafter was the god Hermes. And only a hero could challenge the king*

of the netherworld, Hades. Heracles defeated him, demonstrating that fearlessness can be a virtue.” (From *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*)

#### 4.3.1 A fragmented view of fear and reverence

This text begins with giving a very brief and generalized glimpse into a world filled with gods and people in power that the people of the Classical world and ancient Egyptians feared and revered. It appears that each sentence in the text is a form of reference to each of the displayed objects. The text also talks about ancient Egypt and the Classical world as if they are the same – there is very little distinction between the two, even if the timespan between the ancient Egypt period and the Classical (Greek and Roman) period is around 3000 years.

The object only referred to as “front half of a foot” is displayed in the context *Fear and reverence*. This 1<sup>st</sup> century object is an oversized, white marble foot interpreted to have belonged to either a goddess or an empress and was found in Israel. The interpretation of the foot belonging to someone female comes from the style of the sandal, which was commonly worn by women from the Hellenistic period and can also be seen in Roman Copies of Greek statues (which this marble might be) (Sande 2020: 126). The foot is placed close to the edge of the table, being kept in place by metal hooks. The foot is physically distanced from the other objects, but it is placed so that it coincides with a fragmented statue



Figure 13 Fragmented foot of a Roman statue (C42024). Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

of Herakles, which is located across from the foot (see figure 12). The object is one of a few that museum visitors are allowed to touch. The length of the fragmented foot is measured at 21 cm and provides a glimpse of how enormous some of the statues and sculptures from antiquity may have been.



*Figure 14 Fragmented foot in relation to the fragmentary statue of Herakles (C40833). Photo: Meriem Boulaziz*

In the exhibition room, there is very little information regarding this object. The exhibition text, recounted further up, does not provide any details retaining to the fragmented foot. The text is rather general in its information about the Egyptian and peoples of the Classical worlds' relationship to some of their gods. This lack of detail about the object contributes to its anonymization. However, the point here is probably not to explain who this foot may have belonged to, but instead give museum visitors a really close-up experience with something people of the Classical world may have looked at with reverence. Here the size of the object reveals its original function, though not explicitly said, but implied. As the foot is large in size, it is easy to imagine that the original statue was a colossus. This leaves room for museum visitors to interpret the artefact on their own. Touching the object opens up for a personal, intimate experience with it. This will be discussed in further detail in the chapter "Analysis".

## 4.4 Egyptian Mummy Coffin in Hope

*“Prepare a path for me, that I may enter in peace into the beautiful West... Prepare a way for me, that I may go in and worship Osiris, the Lord of Life” (The Book of the Dead, 1550-50 BC, From Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt)*



Figure 15 Mummy and Coffin (C47710-C47712). Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

*“The Egyptian ‘Book of the Dead’ is a rich source of knowledge about the Egyptian understanding of death and the afterlife. Most Egyptians were buried facing towards the West, on the western side of the Nile, where the sun set. They hoped that the goddess of the West would accept them. Osiris was the god of fertility, death, and resurrection. Together with other Egyptian deities, he would help the dead. The mummies, their coffins, and grave gifts express the hope of an afterlife. The corpse had to be dried before embalmment, and the inner organs were preserved in urns. Sacred animals could also be mummified. The living hoped for divine protection and carried amulets. The moon god Khonsu was associated with healing, much like the Greek god of medicine, Asclepius. Even eyes that were shattered into thousands of pieces could be healed, according to an Egyptian myth. The characteristic Egyptian eye is still often used as symbol of wholeness and health.” (From Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt)*

### 4.4.1 Hopeful in death

The text explaining the emotion hope is the most detailed and specific one. It gives a good explanation of the objects on display and the meaning of the imagery found on the mummy coffins. Even the process on mummification is explained. It focuses mainly on objects from

ancient Egypt but briefly mentions the Greek god of medicine Asclepius and how similar he was to the Egyptian god Khonsu. Again, it is as if the text takes for granted that museums know who these gods were and why they mattered. The exhibition text is an emphasis on how death was not only a situation associated with sorrow and loss, but there was also hope for an afterlife for the deceased. And the careful treatment of the dead was the way into this afterlife.

One of the objects displayed as part of this emotional context is the mummy coffin in the display case on the floor. It is separated from the rest of the objects, and it is the only object with human remains in it. Inside the coffin is the mummy of a woman. The coffin depicts imagery of, amongst others, the god Osiris, who was the god of fertility, death, and resurrection. The mummy inside is wearing a mask, which appears to have belonged to a man. The arms and parts of the upper body is visible. Some of the linen that was wrapped around the woman has been removed (Håbu 2020: 258). As mentioned, the display text contextualizes the emotion hope in a very detailed way, a lot more detailed than the other three texts. One reason could be because most the objects displayed as part of this emotion are ancient Egyptian and the text almost exclusively refers to only the ancient Egyptians, which makes it easier to be detail oriented. The object picked out in this part of the exhibit, will be a part of a bigger discussion concerning the display of human remains in museums. In an exhibit that attempts to both convey emotions of people in the past, as well as facilitate for meaningful, emotional engagement with its exhibited objects, how does this mummy coffin with human remains fit into this aspect?

## **4.5 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the four different texts that are there to give a glimpse into how the objects on display are representative of an emotional world. The reason why all four texts are written out in its entirety, is to provide the reader with the exact same information as the visitors have. In some ways these texts are good reference points in order to contextualize the objects. However, there is a discrepancy in the style of the texts, as some of them, such as fear and reverence, are very general in its information, whilst another, such as hope, is a lot more detailed. The number of details provided in each text appear to depend on what types of objects are displayed in each emotional context. For instance, the objects disseminating the emotion hope are mostly Egyptian, making it easier to provide more details in the text. Lastly, the

general way some of the texts are written could also be because the objects themselves are supposed to be the focal point, not the interpretations of them. This chapter gave a brief presentation of the four object entities which represent the four case studies analysed and discussed in chapter 5. This analysis will take the form of a broader discourse on emotions in museums. The aim of this chapter is to place the case studies into the main research question of this thesis.

## 5 Analysis

This chapter will look at the exhibit from an analytical perspective. The purpose is to comprehend the ways in which *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* explores emotions. I will use a similar theoretical method of deconstructing parts of the exhibit, as outlined by Sheila Watson (2015). Within this deconstruction I will apply the theoretical perspectives accounted for in the chapter “Theory and Method”. The deconstruction of the exhibit will be discussed under the thesis “In what ways does *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* explore emotions?” This question will be discussed and explored within the subchapters called “The matter of the display cases”, “Displaying the mummy”, “Touching the objects” and “A brief review of intention”. Through these different perspectives I will use both personal experiences and observations, together with the theoretical perspectives in an attempt to comprehend what is happening in the exhibition room and what is attempted to be achieved from a dissemination perspective. In this chapter, where there is an overlap in our analysis, I will also utilise some of Fostervolds (2021) perspectives on the exhibit, where mine and hers overlap.

### 5.1 In what ways does *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* explore emotions?

*Emotions in Antiquity* uses the theme of emotions as a way to explore and comprehend ancient societies. The exhibit is based upon research on the exhibited collection (Glørstad 2020: 21). The objects on display are placed centred on a large wooden table, where they are displayed across from their geographical provenance, the epoch they belong to, their practical and ritualistic function, artistic style, and object type. The objects are displayed according to which emotion can be associated with them. This exhibit begs the question: are these objects inherently emotional or are they emotional because we see them or interpret them as such? In the subchapter “Emotions in the museum” the term “emotional environment” was briefly mentioned. The term refers to different environments where emotions can be cultivated and was first mentioned by Chytry when discussing the emotional impact that visiting Disney World has (Chytry 2012: 259-265). Sheila Watson argued that the term could also be applied to museums and other cultural heritage institutions. In the context of *Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt*, the term would not refer to a specific emotional atmosphere within the exhibit, but instead it would point to how the exhibit facilitates for a meaningful, emotional experience through the choice of objects and the way they are displayed (Watson 2015: 285). If



we argue that “emotional environment” can be applied to the context described above, then it is possible to say something about how the exhibit opens for the cultivation of emotional experiences.

One way the exhibit cultivates for an emotional experience is through intimacy. The objects in themselves do not disseminate this word necessarily, but the way the exhibition is created is to make the visitorial experience intimate and personal. The manner in which museum visitors are allowed to get up-close to the objects, look at most of them without interruption of display cases or other barriers, being able to touch some of them, I would argue accounts for a very personal and intimate experience. There is a big focus on the one-on-one experience between museum visitors and the displayed object. This intimacy can also be interpreted from the fact that the exhibit appears not to tell its visitors how to *feel* about what they see and what they touch. The emotional experience is entirely individual and very personal, thus becoming more intimate.

However, there are aspects in the exhibition room that counteracts this intimacy. The size of the room, the use of colour and lighting work in contrast with each other. The small size of the room highlights the intimate experience of the exhibition space, yet the light colours and use of lighting works against this. Due to the light colours of the room, it appears larger, and the small desk lamps mentioned in chapter 3 does not have the same function as they could have had with much darker colours and less lighting. Stephanie Moser (2010: 25) writes: “In current museological practice, a key concern is to create spaces that enhance the experience for the visitor and facilitate effective absorption of the exhibition message.” The space, colours and lighting all counteract the purpose of an intimate engagement with the objects. When entering the room, it is possible to see the entire exhibit at once. Because of the bright light and colours, it is possible to study the objects without having to sit down. Perhaps this also leads to museum visitors feeling as if they themselves are on display if they sit down on the benches in a brightly lit room. An even smaller room, with darker colours, darker lighting would have probably enhanced the function of the small desk lamps and perhaps people would feel more inclined to sit down at the table to study the objects further.

Creating an emotional environment is depends therefore on aspects such as colour and lighting. They affect the way the exhibit is perceived and the overall atmosphere in the room. If the overall design of the room counteracts the feeling of intimacy, perhaps it is more prudent

to look at how the displayed objects work as a way to cultivate an emotional environment in the exhibit. To discuss the question of what ways *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* explores emotions, I will utilise the different case studies outlined in chapter four; the Greek vases, the funerary loculus relief, the mummy coffin, and the fragmented foot. All of these object entities are different examples of how emotions are explored in the exhibit, and pertain to both how objects interact with objects, how objects interact with text and how objects interact with museum visitors.

### **5.1.1 The matter of the display cases**

The exhibition could be construed as an emotional environment, by examining how emotions are disseminated through the objects. In chapter 4, I discussed the different Greek vases exhibited in the same display case. The way the objects are placed within the display case, I would argue, is to highlight the emotional complexities associated with these objects. These vases represent different emotions where love, joy, sexual pleasure and even grief are present, though it appears to depend on how they are contextualized. For example, when I first observed these vases, I immediately thought of the symposia. A scenario filled with emotions of joy, pleasure and love (Boardman 2007: 217-218; Osborne 2008: 161). Looking closer at the objects, I then began to think that it resembled a funerary situation, something which is also emphasised in the text.

By observing the object type, like the white-ground lekythos, I could immediately associate it with emotions of grief, an aspect highlighted in the exhibition text “Love and Joy”. Yet, looking at the motif of Dionysos, who is also mentioned in the text, I would also associate it with ecstasy, pleasure, and joy – common attributes connected to Dionysos and the Dionysian cult (Buxton 2004: 69). This is arguably one of the ways the emotional complexities within these objects come to life. One thing that is also unclear, which I discussed briefly in chapter 4, is whether the visitors should focus on the object type, its imagery or both? The different emotions that can be read from the vases is entirely depending on what the visitors decide to focus on. This is also dependable on the amount of prior knowledge that people have on ancient Greece. One of the criticisms that Fostervold comes with is that the exhibit does not provide a sufficient amount of information about the different emotions communicated in the room (Fostervold 2021: 37).

This is something I would agree with, and there are parts of the exhibit, as exemplified in chapter four, that in order to understand the objects' emotional nuances and complexities, prior knowledge about what is on display is necessary. This is also briefly addressed in the subchapter "Displaying the mummy", where I discuss the effect of displaying human remains in museums. Another example in the exhibit, where there are nuances present, which might only be obvious for people with prior knowledge of the Classical world, is the Medusa antefix.

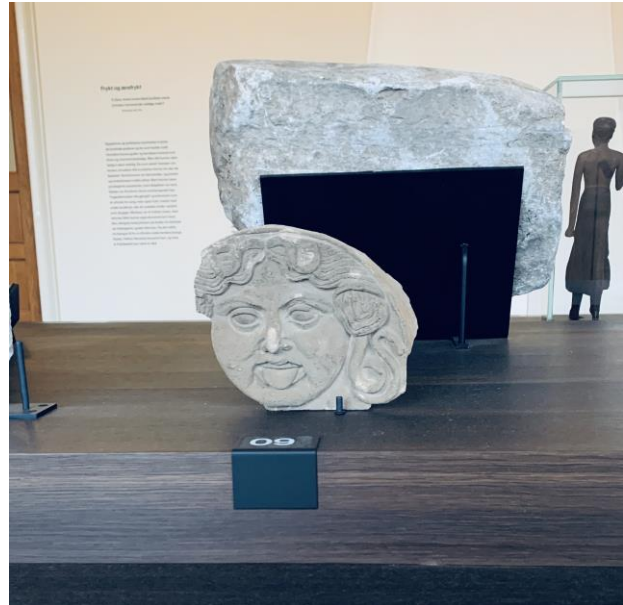


Figure 16 Medusa antefix (C41882). Photo: Meriem Boulaziz

The object aligns with the emotions fear and reverence, so it is clear that this object was something people associated with fear and reverence. However, unless you know the myths associated with Medusa, it is not necessarily clear why people feared this mythological character. Those who do know, would perhaps notice that Medusa's face is placed in a manner which aligns with the visitors face when sitting down, making them come face to face with her. In mythology, looking into Medusa's eyes meant death (Buxton 2004: 104-105). Suddenly, museum visitors engage with an ancient object in a way that people from its contemporary time would not have done. This is an example of the complexity and the importance of object placement in the exhibition room.

Another way in which the display cases are utilised is through their absence. Dudley (2012: 2) argues that the removal of display cases plays a significant role in how museum objects are experienced. Foster-vold also highlights this aspect of the exhibit, where she argues that the lack of a display case emphasises the feeling of closeness and intimacy to the object (Foster-vold 2021: 34). This is also a characteristic I would agree with. When experiencing some of the objects without any physical barriers between us, it feels more intimate. The lack of a display case encourages a close, sensory engagement with the object (Dudley 2012: 2). One of the objects that is displayed without a display case is the loculus funerary relief from Palmyra which was examined in chapter four. When I sat down and looked at the relief, I was at the same eye-height as the woman, though it was not possible to have eye contact with her, as she was looking down. She is partially stylized with a facial expression which can be hard to read,

though I interpreted it as expression of grief and sorrow, yet arguably her facial expression is not neutral as stated by Fostervold (2021: 36).

Fostervold claims that it is the intention of the exhibit to evoke a feeling of empathy for the people behind the objects. She considers different methods that is utilised in the exhibit in order to achieve this and renders these methods as insufficient (Fostervold 2021: 36-38). She describes the busts and funerary reliefs as having neutral expressions, where emotions are hard to read. Whilst I would agree with parts of this statement, I would also argue that there are other ways of observing these objects as emotional, and even having emotional responses to them. An example of this is the funerary loculus relief discussed in chapter 4.

This relief is displayed as part of the sorrow and loss context, and it is described as a funerary relief. Together with the imagery of the mother and child, it would not be difficult to assume that these are representations of either the woman, the child or both who have passed away. This led me to reflect on the horror and sadness of, for instance losing one's child, but also the terrible situation of a child losing its mother. These are all characteristics of the object that are possible to comprehend by only reading the exhibition text and looking at the object. No prior knowledge of Palmyra or loculus reliefs is necessary. This object evoked a feeling of sadness in me, which was amplified by how close I was able to interact with it. Yet, it should be emphasised that my response to this object is not something that everyone will have, the point here is that it is possible to read the objects emotions, even if aspects such as facial expressions are hard to read from it. Although it is not possible to know for sure, one can also imagine that the time and money spent on the relief as well could be expressions of both grief and love.

Even if there is no information about who made this object, displaying it with minimal context could be interpreted as asking the museum visitor "what do you think about what is represented here?" Perhaps the intention in the exhibit is to view the displayed objects, not only as "meaningless, valueless and silent, unless they are placed in a context" (Dudley 2012: 4), but also as something that can "have a voice, a significance, a relevance, a meaning, for visitors without provision of context and interpretation" (Dudley 2012: 5). And whilst I would agree that some parts of the exhibit have nuances and contexts which are probably more obvious to those with a background in, for example, Classical archaeology, such as the Greek vases and

Medusa antefix, it does not mean that other people cannot have meaningful experiences with these objects.

### **5.1.2 Displaying the mummy**

*The display of human remains can evoke attraction and repulsion, both powerful forces which may easily trigger conscious and unconscious reflections which may be disturbing and can evoke – and cross – individual and cultural taboos. (...) one of the roles of the postmodern museum is to provide an emotional and philosophical space in which to explore such ‘taboo’ subjects. (Brooks and Rumsey 2007: 352)*

In a sea of archaeological material, the mummy coffin discussed in chapter 4 is the only part of the exhibit that contains human remains. The theoretical field of emotions in the museum has not thoroughly explored the emotional aspect of displaying human remains. Though emotions have been a part of the debates concerning museums and the acquisition, conservation and displaying of human remains, the different theoretical perspectives on emotions in the museum used in this thesis appear not to address this matter it appears not be a part of the discourse concerning emotions in the museum (See Brooks and Rumsey 2007; Dudley 2012; Watson 2015; Smith 2015; Chatterjee 2008). The emotional toll of displaying mummies can be perceived as complex. Because on one hand, the ancient Egyptians would have probably been completely horrified at the disinterment of their remains (Stienne 2018: 149-150). How do we respect the feelings of ancient Egyptians, especially when the disinterment happened decades ago? If mummies are perceived more as objects, rather than the remains of a human being, does that have an effect on the emotional response museum visitors have when seeing it? How is the mummy’s objectification reflected in the exhibition space?

The process of exhuming, collecting, storing, and displaying human remains could be seen as objectifying. These are all examples of how the body after death is acted upon. The same goes for the process of burial. Joanna Sofaer (2012: 19, 62) states that “...the living body is regarded as a person but as soon as the transition to death is made, the body becomes and object. The body does not bury itself.” If we apply Sofaer’s statement to the mummy, it is reasonably to think of it as an object in a museum context. The funerary and burial process transforms the body into a part of the Egyptians material culture, yet in archaeology, for instance, the body is often treated differently than other finds, such as material culture (Sofaer 2012: 12). The intention is not to answer whether or not the mummy is an object but look at

different aspects of how it is objectified or how it is humanised in the exhibition space and the emotional effect this could have on museum visitors.

Jasmine Day (2014) discusses in part the emotional aspect of looking at a real mummy and places this discussion into a broader context of what kinds of perspectives people today have on mummies and how these have been thoroughly affected by representations in popular culture. She also places the discussion in the context of how people in Western society have been completely separated from deceased people, which again, affect the way museum visitors experience seeing human remains in museums. Then there is the emotional aspect of viewing a dead body – for some people this is okay, for others, it could be a frightening or angering experience. Seeing a real mummy could also be a religious experience for some who are avid Egyptologists. An amusing example of the effect of experiencing Egyptian artefacts comes from Fiona Candlins observation of someone offering a tin of cat food to an Egyptian statue at The British Museum (Giaino 2017). It becomes apparent that displaying Egyptian mummies is both complex and has many layers. How does these considerations affect the mummy on display in *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*?

In an examination of the boundaries between what is considered purity and impurity in the context of dead bodies, anthropologist Mary Douglas discovered that the museum had a purifying effect on how museum visitors viewed a dead body. Behind the display case a body becomes “both sanitised and sanctified. Taboos associated with dead bodies are overcome in this conceptual framework which enables objectification, so the experience of viewing becomes culturally acceptable” (Brooks and Rumsey 2007: 347). It should therefore be taken into consideration what people actually see on display here. The mummy in *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* is placed in a display case which is physically separated from the rest of the exhibited objects. Perhaps the separation of the mummy coffin with the human remains from the other objects, is to emphasise a separation of material culture and the body? The mummy lies inside a decorated coffin covered with hieroglyphs. The body’s torso is visible, with her arms crossed over her chest. Because the linen around her arms has been removed, the bones are also visible. Furthermore, there is a mask placed on her face which archaeologists have concluded does not belong to her (Håbu 2020: 258). This means that no one can see her face. The discolouration of the body, the visible bones, hidden face, and her relationship to the coffin she was buried in all play a role in how people will respond to seeing the

mummy. Yet the mummy is behind the sacred display case, which works as barrier between the living and the dead. It contributes to the mummy's objectification.

Furthermore, the lack of information about this person emphasises the objectification of her. Apart from the way she is placed in the exhibit, she is treated exactly the same as everything else in the room. The information type about her is the same as the information about the objects. There is not anything in the exhibit that attempts to humanise her, such as giving her a name, which is common in other museums like The British Museum (Brooks and Rumsey 2007: 346). It appears that she, like the objects, is there to illustrate how the ancient Egyptians felt about death and the afterlife. Yet, according to research on ancient Egyptian burial rituals, mummies were not meant to be exhumed and seen by other people. There are examples from the mummies contemporary time of them being disinterred to protect them from looting, but that is not entirely relevant to this discussion (Day 2014: 34). The point here, is that what museum visitors can see is something that was not meant to be seen by anybody.

The production team of the exhibit could have chosen not to display this person, or they could have made efforts to conceal the body. Instead, they made the conscious choice of displaying something that was not meant to be seen by anyone. The lack of consideration and reflection for someone's emotions in this context, even if they are 3000 years old, strikes me as puzzling considering that the entire exhibit is about the emotions of people in the past. In addition, there are also no tools provided to help museum visitors themselves reflect over the display of a human being, nor does the exhibit provide any reflections on what it means to display a body. The use of display case, the conscious choice of displaying someone who was not meant to be on display, the lack of any further details about the person, such as a name, and the lack of reflection over what it means to display a body in a museum emphasises the idea that this mummy is more object than human in this context.

### **5.1.3 Touching the objects**

One of the most surprising aspects of this exhibit was the fact that museum visitors are allowed to touch a small number of objects. Fostervolds thesis (2021) examined the role of touch in the museum, and since we utilise the same case study of the fragmented foot (Fostervold 2021: 29, 32), I will refer to her work in the cases where our viewpoints overlap. In chapters 3 and 4, it was mentioned that the objects visitors are allowed to touch are placed

close to the edge of the table. The object placement functions as an indirect way of inviting the visitors to touch them. Yet, there are no signs in the exhibit that explicitly tells visitors they are allowed to touch anything in the room. The reason why it was surprising is because touching museum objects, is a rare thing unless you are an archaeologist, conservationist, or another form of museum employee. Helen J. Chatterjee writes:

*The impact for museums has been profound with access to collections almost entirely based on visual provision (exhibitions, displays, etc.). Historically, the tactile experience has been preserved for the privileged few (in the case of nineteenth-century museums), and even today physical access to collections is often treated as a special activity rather than a right (Chatterjee 2008: 2)*

This establishes that, generally, the act of touching museum objects is usually reserved for a few authorized people in museums (Chatterjee 2008: 2). Yet, in this instance, the exhibit welcomes its visitors to touch these ancient artifacts. What does it mean to be able to touch museum objects and how, in turn, are the objects affected by being touched? I will limit this analysis to the fragment of a large marble foot discussed in chapter 4. As established, the physical access of objects is usually reserved for those employed by museums, and for visitors the access to objects is usually barred by display cases or “do not touch signs”. Yet being able to touch, tap or even scratch objects is something that can happen instinctively in visitors (Candlin 2017: 263; Dudley 2019: 420). Thus, being able to touch a few of the exhibited objects felt like an unusual privilege.

Personally, when I sat down to examine and explore this object, I felt very happy and in awe. The smooth surface of the marble felt wonderful against my hand. Having had an avid interest in Classical archaeology and being able to touch such an object was a highlight to me. Feeling the smooth surface on top of the foot, which is crudely cut off from the missing big toe, where the surface becomes more rugged was such an interesting and thought-provoking experience. It made me reflect on what the object might have gone through over the past 2000 years. When was it broken? Who broke it? Touching the object also worked as a way to reflect over the size of the statue to which the foot belonged and, on the person(s) who created it. How long did it take? How many people were involved? What did she look like? The object felt real and my experience with it personal and intimate. Dudley explained her experience of touching an object as also being “touched too (...) that two-way interaction allows me an



intimacy with the material thing I hold - an intimacy I cannot feel if I only gaze at the thing (Dudley 2019: 420). As stated in chapter 4, the fragmented foot is said to have belonged to either a goddess or an empress. Yet, just looking at the foot made her feel completely anonymous. Since most of the initial artifact is missing, we can only imagine what she may have looked like and who she was.

This is probably why touching the fragment can be such an effective experiential tool. All though we do not know who this statue represented; we are still able to make a connection through the object's physicality - the smooth, marble surface, the roughness of where the object was broken. Touching the object is "a powerful way of forming a relationship" (Giaino 2017) between person who touches it and the person who made it and the person it represented. It can help us form a connection with the past (Candlin 2017: 263). In an interview with a museum visitor at the British Museum, Fiona Candlin observed the visitors desire to connect with and understand the person who created a sarcophagus, "touch was used in an attempt to reconcile the then and now" (Candlin 2017: 258). Yet there are also limitations to this experience. Sandra Dudley places a big emphasis on what it means to feel an object, and within this emphasis also lies the weight of the object (Dudley 2012: 2). It is not possible to lift any of the objects that the visitors can touch, removing the experience of feeling weight of the objects. Not being able to lift the object also makes it impossible for visitors to touch the entire object. The underside, for instance, is also removed from the visitor's experience. The objects are kept in place by metal hooks and is done so probably for protective measures, to ensure that nobody attempts to steal any of the displayed objects. Though it is completely understandable that the safety of each object must be ensured, it is still important to point out the limitations in visitor experience that this protection ensures.

Touching the fragmented foot also made me reflect over the changes the object as experienced over the past 2000 years. So, when discussing touch in the museum and object-handling, it should not be done so without mentioning how it can affect the objects themselves. Varutti (2022: 139) asks "What literally does it feel like to be touched by inquisitive human hands (many of them, covered by plastic) or not touched at all?" Although we cannot know what it would feel like for an object to be touched, we can perhaps observe the effects this has on the objects. This effect, arguably, could change the object so that it is not the same today as it was tomorrow. The continued decay of the object through air, light, temperature, and bacteria that comes from being in a display room and the physical changes that comes from being

touched will affect the objects materiality. (Varutti 2022: 139). It might be useful to consider that the exhibit wants its visitor to also contemplate over what happens to marble when it is continually touched by people. Because the physical alteration of the object's materiality ensures that the object we touch today, will be a completely different one tomorrow. This fragmented foot is not the same object as it was when it was first made.

Lastly, another important aspect of this form of object dissemination is what it does to people with visual impairments. Though this is not the discussion for this thesis, it should still be stated the primarily visual focus in museum spaces is something that does exclude a whole group of people from having proper, meaningful experiences in museums, primarily those who are visually impaired (Spence and Gallace 2008: 21-22). Using The Museum of Cultural History as an example, there is almost nothing in their current exhibitions that is adapted to those who are visually impaired. On the museums website there is currently no information on any special tours or other accommodations created specifically for those who are visually impaired (The Museum of Cultural History D).

Perhaps *Emotions in Antiquity* represents a change in attitude and might lead the way to a more inclusive museum experience? Even if only a small part of the exhibit is arranged for people to touch the objects, it arguably still represents a change in attitude towards object-handling in museums, especially also with archaeological material. In the museums annual plan from 2022-2024 there is a plan to ensure a "higher degree of universal design" in the museum, though it is not specified what this entails (Museum of Cultural History 2021D). The former Norwegian Government in their White Paper (St. Meld 23) states that it is a democratic right for everybody to be able to participate in cultural experiences, and that more research is needed to secure that people with impaired functioning are included in future plans for museum experiences (Ministry of Culture and Equality 2021: 58-59). However, as mentioned, this discussion needs further research and it is not the aim of this thesis to conduct such research, both due to lack of space and time. Yet, perhaps the methods for object interaction used in *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* could be highlighted in future research, as it could be argued to be an attempt of a more inclusive form of dissemination.

#### **5.1.4 A brief review of intention**

These past subchapters have examined the different ways in which *Emotions in Antiquity* explores emotions through different museological tools and the effect this exploration might have on museum visitors. However, what appears to be the exhibit's intent should also be discussed. What are the visitors supposed to experience, what is the ambition with this exhibit? As mentioned in the chapter "Limitations to the methodology" I intentionally decided not to interview anyone who has worked on this exhibit because I only wanted to use the same information that is available to museum visitors. Also, I did not want to review whether or not Marinias and Snøhettas intentions with the exhibit were actually achieved. Instead, I wanted to look at what the intention could be based upon the available material in the exhibition space and through the catalogue/book written for the exhibit (which is available for visitors to purchase).

When it comes to intention, Fostervold draws the conclusion that a central goal of the exhibit was to create a scenario where people can experience the same emotions as the people represented through these objects, where empathy plays a significant role (Fostervold 2021: 36). I would instead argue that the exhibit is an attempt to communicate the emotions of the past and how people related to it through the material culture and the use of text, whilst simultaneously opening for museum visitors to have individual, meaningful and perhaps emotional experiences with the objects. And that these emotional experiences happen independent of the objects' own emotional contexts. The exhibit attempts to disseminate these objects as emotional, yet the emotional effect the objects will have on its visitor, if any, would not necessarily be the same as they had in antiquity. First, these objects were not created for museum display, their original function and context has been removed, and they have been provided with new meanings and functions within the museum. Second, most of these objects probably do not look the same as they did when they were first created. Many of them are broken, where only fragments survive. The way the production team of this exhibit has attempted to recontextualize the objects is to find new perspectives to view them from (Prusac-Lindhagen 2020: 24-25). Watson argues that creating emotional environments in museums with the goal of having museum visitors feel the same way as people in the past did is not possible. This is because "we cannot enter the emotional mindset of another person (...) for we do not have their backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes (Watson 2015: 290).

Both Varutti (2022: 137) and Dudley (2012: 6) emphasise the effect of not having any prior information regarding the objects that captivated them in the exhibits they discuss. Having read the information before viewing the object, would, in their opinion, have made their encounters with the objects less affective and emotional. The minimal amount of context provided in the exhibit, combined with how close you are able to view the objects could be a way to see the exhibit as more than just a way to experience emotions from the past, but that it is also a way to bring these objects into the present and create new contexts based upon the individual experiences of museum visitors. These perspectives are inherently emotional, where both the emotions of antiquity and ancient Egypt and modern museum visitors appear to be the focal point. That does not mean that they overlap or are supposed to be the same. Instead, we should view these objects as both representations of emotions from the past and attempt to look at new meanings that can be construed from the modern viewers perspective. These new meanings occur independent from their original meaning or interpretations. In addition, it is not possible to predict the responses museum visitors will have for the objects. It might happen for some people, for others it might not. Also, the responses to the objects will be different because people come from different backgrounds (Dudley 2019: 418; Hooper-Greenhill 2005: 4; Watson 2015: 292), “there is no guarantee that the intended meaning will be achieved” (Hooper-Greenhill 2005: 4). This is exemplified with the different experiences I and Fostervold (2021) has had with the exhibit.

This begs the question of how museums should intentionally facilitate for emotional responses in their exhibits? If we assume that museum visitors generally go to museums with an emotional pretext – either excitement, boredom, curiosity, even fear or anxiety and that exhibits either enhance these emotions or change them, then perhaps it is valuable to discuss the idea of intentionality in a broader context. If we also accept Message and Witcombs (2015: xlviii) statement “that emotional experiences play a significant role in what visitors take home from their visit to museums”, then perhaps it is important that museums consider the role emotions and utilise this in an intentional manner. It is not always a given what emotional responses a museum visitor will have in the exhibit, and as discussed earlier, it is difficult for museums to plan for this. This is exemplified in Laurajane Smith’s article about the responses to the commemoration of the 2007 bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave traded in museums. Through interviews with different museum visitors, she mapped out the different responses they had to the exhibits, and that their emotional response different entirely depending on the visitor’s background (Smith 2015: 466-469). Other exhibits on the other hand, used

narrative, for instance, to evoke specific emotions in museum visitors. An example of this was an exhibit about the Homeland War in the Croatian History Museum in Zagreb, Croatia. Different display aspects such as text, images and testimonies were utilised in order to evoke pity, sympathy and in museum visitors (Watson 2015: 288). In this example, intent appeared to play a much bigger part in its utilisation of emotions. The point is that museum visitor's responses will in some way be emotional, and so I would argue that museums need to take this into consideration when planning out new exhibitions.

Where does Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt fit into here? The exhibit is unusual because it is an exhibit about emotions, yet it does not utilise strong methodological measures to evoke any specific emotions in the visitors. There are also no tools to help visitors reflect on what they feel about getting so close to objects that are usually off-limits to them. And yet, as discussed throughout the text, the exhibit is still arranged in a way to allow people to have meaningful engagements with the exhibited objects, they just need to understand that they are allowed to approach them. The close-up engagement with the objects does not necessarily mean that the intention is to reproduce the emotional expressions in the museum visitors.

I would argue that the significance of the exhibit does not lie in the actual emotions that are evoked in museum visitors, but rather that they have a meaningful experience with the exhibit in and of itself. As Dudley argues that museums cannot account for every museum visitor having a meaningful and emotional response to exhibited objects every single time, but that it will always depend on their background, physical and mental states (Dudley 2019: 423-424). Based on the premise of what is in the exhibition room, and not what Prusac-Lindhagen or anyone else has stated about the intention, I would disagree with Fostervold's interpretation of the intention of the exhibition to make people feel the same way as the people represented in the exhibited objects (Fostervold 2021: 36). It might be an attempt to draw these ancient objects into the present, make them relatable to a modern viewer, but with the premise that any emotional response they have with the objects are valid, individual, and not predetermined. (Dudley 2012: 7).

### **5.1.5 Summary**

This chapter has analysed parts of the exhibit through the theoretical perspectives outlined in chapter 2. The purpose of the chapter has been to review and examine how Emotions in

Antiquity explores emotions in the museum space. By utilising the four object entities outlined in chapter 4, I discovered that the exhibit explores emotions in a number of different ways. Different methods of display, different object types and their contextualization has played a role in exploring and disseminating emotions of Antiquity and Ancient Egypt. Furthermore, these examples also gave insight into the different ways in which museum visitors are able to interact with the objects and how these interactions are influenced by the way the objects are exhibited, the type of object and how visitors' responses can vary depending on their own background, interests, mental and physical state. There is no right or wrong way to experience the exhibit or to interpret the objects.

Through the examination of these objects based upon the information in the exhibition room, it appears as if the intention of this exhibit is to disseminate the emotions of Antiquity and ancient Egypt, whilst simultaneously giving the museum visitor a space that facilitates for a personal and intimate engagement. There is an intent on creating a connection with the past, which is emphasised by the objects that museum visitors are allowed to touch. Whilst I would argue that the intention of the exhibit is not to replicate the emotions disseminated in the exhibit within the museum visitor (make them feel the same feelings), there is still room for evoking a feeling of empathy, as exemplified with the funerary loculus relief discussed in the subchapter "Why the display cases matter". The examination also reveals a lack of reflection on behalf of the production team, which is evident when looking at the treatment of the displayed mummy. Emotions in Antiquity and ancient Egypt uses a range of different tools to explore emotions. Initially, this exhibit attempts to connect museum visitors with ancient societies by facilitate for a personal, intimate experience with the objects. It is expected of the visitors to slow down, sit on the benches, and spend time looking (and touching) these objects.

## 6 Conclusion

Emotions in the museum appeared to me a complex theme which was hard to place into something that was tangible. The different theoretical perspectives I used in this thesis all had different ways of approaching the theme of emotions in the museum. Yet, these different perspectives ended up being really useful tools to which I could apply the different case studies I analysed and discussed throughout chapters 4 and 5. *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* is an example of how emotions can be utilised to explore different phenomena from ancient societies through their material culture. It is an exhibit that uses a rare perspective on archaeological material, that differs from the standard practices of other museums where material culture is usually displayed in categories such as “women and children”, “gods and heroes”, “men and politics”, as was discussed in chapter 3. Instead, this exhibit took what can be considered a modest collection of antique objects and found new interpretations for it and a new way for museum visitors to experience it.

While I had some trouble grasping the intention of the exhibit when I entered the room, as the element of surprise does not happen until you actually sit down on the bench, the more I worked with the exhibit, my understanding of its intentions also became clear. By examining the different objects outlined in chapter 4 and their different display styles, I discovered that the intention of the exhibit is not entirely clear when only looking at what is in the exhibition room. There is a need to sit down and observe the objects up-close. In the areas of the analysis where I utilised Fostervolds (2021) thesis, it became clearer how different responses to the exhibit can be and that it depended on our individual backgrounds. For instance, going back to the Greek vases discussed in detail in chapter 4 and 5. These vases were displayed in way that revealed that both motif and object type played a role in how they were supposed to be interpreted or understood, and that in order to understand the complex nuances in the emotions communicated from the objects, prior knowledge of Classical archaeology was necessary.

The exhibit is also an example of the communicative role of objects in museums, that goes beyond the way it is contextualized. Making the objects available by removing some of the display cases and allowing the museum visitors to touch some of the object, opened up for a meaningful experience with the objects that happens regardless of context or prior knowledge of the objects. Yet, working with this exhibit also revealed what I would say was my biggest surprise, which was the treatment of the mummy inside the coffin. It is very early on in the

exhibit established that this is an exhibit that displays and communicates the emotions of ancient societies and displays the objects in a way to create meaningful bonds between these ancient artifacts and the people who visit the exhibit. Yet, there is little consideration paid to the emotional aspect of viewing a dead body. Very little consideration is also paid to the fact that the exhibit displays a person who probably would have been horrified and distraught at the prospect of their remains ending up in a room for people to gaze at. This aspect was very puzzling to me considering that the exhibit is all about the emotions of people from ancient Egypt. Perhaps more information with enough context of the emotional side of this display would allow museum visitors to reflect over what they see and perhaps also redeem the museum from the inconsideration paid to the mummy.

What can we learn from what has been discussed by examining how *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt* explores emotions? Museum visitors engaging emotionally with an exhibit is not an innovative concept, because it will happen either way. The question is how should museums utilise the emotional aspect of museum visiting? 21 years ago, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill stated that “the biggest challenge facing the museums at the present time is the reconceptualization of the museum/audience relationship (2005: 1). Even if Hooper-Greenhill used this statement in context of museum pedagogy and how museums need to engage with its visitors in a more substantial and meaningful way, it could be argued that this statement is relevant in the context of emotions in the museum.

Because if emotions in museums are supposed to be an important aspect of how exhibitions are produced, perhaps museums should reconceptualize its relationship with its audience. Perhaps there is a need to take active measures when creating exhibits that focus on how emotions play a role in visitors experiences and what the exhibits communicate out to their visitors. Both Watson (2015) and Dudley (2012) represent different perspectives on how museums can create exhibits where the emotional experiences in museum visitors plays a big role. Yet both argue that exhibits are emotional environments, a space where people go to “feel” (Dudley 2012: 2; Smith 2015: 459; Watson 2015: 285). Perhaps it is valuable, then, to reconsider how we think about museums? That the museum space is not just a platform for research, dissemination, experiences, learning and the conservation of cultural heritage. It is also a space where emotions are explored, experienced, and cultivated. The museum is an emotional environment.



## Bibliography

- Bang-Steinsvik, Ane Kristin, Meriem Boulaziz, Frida Elise Lyngstadaas and Endre Opheim. 2021. "Virkelighet eller forestilling – når kulturarv blir underholdning." Examination paper, The University of Oslo.
- Barringer, Judith M. 2014. *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boardman, John. 2007. *The History of Greek Vases*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Brooks, Mary M. and Claire Rumsey. 2007. "Who Knows the Fate of His Bones? Rethinking the Body on Display: Object, Art or Human Remains?" In *Museum Revolutions. How Museums Change and are Changed*, edited by Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson, pp. 343-354. New York: Routledge.
- Buxton, Richard. 2016. *The Complete World of Greek Mythology*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Cameron, Averil and Amélie Kuhrt. 1994. *Images of Women in Antiquity*. London: Routledge.
- Candlin, Fiona. 2008. "Museums, Modernity and the Class Politics of Touching Objects." In *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, edited by Helen J. Chatterjee, pp. 9-20. New York: Routledge.
- Candlin, Fiona. 2017. "Rehabilitating Unauthorized Touch or Why Museum Visitors Touch the Exhibits." *The Senses and Society* 12 (3), pp. 251-266.
- Chatterjee, Helen J. 2008. "Introduction." In *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, edited by Helen J. Chatterjee, pp. 1-5. New York: Routledge.
- Chytry, Josef. 2012. "Walt Disney and the Creation of Emotional Environments: Interpreting Walt Disney's Oeuvre from the Disney Studios to Disneyland, CalArts and the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow (EPCOT)." *Rethinking History* 16 (1): pp. 259-278.

- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Cohen, Beth. 2014. "Displaying Greek and Roman Art in Modern Museums". In *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Art and Architecture*, edited by Clemente Marconi, pp. 1-29. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Critchley, Hugo. 2008. "Emotional Touch: A Neuroscientific Overview." In *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, edited by Helen J. Chatterjee, pp. 61-71. New York: Routledge.
- Day, Jasmine. 2014. "'Thinking makes it so': Reflecting on the Ethics of Displaying Egyptian Mummies." *Papers on Anthropology* 23 (1): pp. 29-44.
- Dudley, Sandra H. 2012. "Encountering a Chinese Horse. Engaging with the Thingness of Things. In *Museum Objects. Experiencing the Properties of Things*, edited by Sandra H. Dudley, pp. 1-15. London: Routledge.
- Dudley, Sandra. 2019. "Materiality Matters: Experiencing the Displayed Object." In *A Museum Studies Approach to Heritage*, edited by Sheila Watson, Amy Jane Barnes and Katy Bunning, pp. 418-428. London: Routledge.
- Fantham, Elaine, Helene Peet Fooley, Natalie Boymel Kampen, Sarah B. Pomery and H.A. Shapiro. 1994. *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fostervold, Trine Anette. 2021. «Å føle fortiden. En museologisk analyse av berøringens rolle i museet.» Master's Thesis, The University of Oslo
- Garland, Robert. 1988. *The Greek Way of Death*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Glørstad, Håkon. 2020." Foreword". In *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*, edited by Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, pp. 21. Oslo: The Museum of Cultural History, The University of Oslo.
- Gradén, Lizette and Lars Kaijser. 1991. "Att fotografera och videofilma." In *Etnologisk feltärbete*, edited by Lars Kaijser and Magnus Öhlander, pp. 109 – 126. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Harris, J.T. Oliver and Tim Flohr Sørensen. 2010. "Rethinking Emotion and Material Culture." *Archaeological Dialogues* 17 (2): pp. 145-163.

Henning, Michelle. 2006. "New Media." In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald, pp. 302-318. Oxford: Blackwell.

Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen. 2005. *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Håbu, Anne Karin. 2020. "Coffin Ensemble – Mummy", in *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*, edited by Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, p. 258. Oslo: Museum of Cultural History, The University of Oslo.

Krag, Signe and Rubina Raja. 2016. "Representations of Women and Children in Palmyrene Funerary *Loculus* Reliefs, *Loculus Stelae* and Wall Paintings" *Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie* 16: pp. 134-178.

Kultur- og likestillingsdepartementet. «Musea i samfunnet — Tillit, ting og tid». St. Meld. 23 (2020-2021). Oslo: Kultur- og likestillingsdepartementet: 2021. <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-23-20202021/id2840027/>

Kyllingstad, Jon R. and Thor Inge Rørвик. 2011. *1870-1911: Vitenskapenes universitet*. Bind 2 av *Universitetet i Oslo*. Oslo: Unipub.

Merriman, Nick. 2004. "Involving the Public in Museum Archaeology." In *Public Archaeology*, edited by Nick Merriman, pp. 85-108. New York: Routledge.

Message, Kylie and Andrea Witcomb. 2015. "Introduction: Museum Theory. An Expanded Field." In *The International Handbook of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, edited by Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message, pp. xxxvi-lxiii. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell

Moser, Stephanie. 2010. "The Devil is in the Detail: Museum Displays and the Creation of Knowledge." *Museum Anthropology* 33 (1): pp. 22-32.

Nevett, Lisa C. 2011. "Towards a Female Topography of the Ancient Greek City: Case Studies from Late Archaic and Early Classical Athens (c. 520-400 BCE)". In *Gender & History* 23 (3), pp- 576-596.

Osborne, Robin. 2008. *The World of Athens. An Introduction to Classical Athenian Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Panksepp, Jaak and Lucy Biven. 2012. *The Archaeology of Mind: Neuroevolutionary Origins of Human Emotions*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Prusac-Lindhagen, Marina. 2020. "Table Talk". In *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*, edited by Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, pp. 23-27. Oslo: Museum of Cultural History, The University of Oslo.

Sande, Siri. 2020. "Front Half of a Foot." In *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*, edited by Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, pp 126-127. Oslo: Museum of Cultural History, The University of Oslo.

Sande, Siri. 2020. "Palmyrene Loculus Relief With a Female Bust." In *Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt*, edited by Marina Prusac-Lindhagen, pp 230-231. Oslo: Museum of Cultural History, The University of Oslo.

Smith, Laurajane. 2015. "Theorizing Museum and Heritage Visiting." In *The International Handbook of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, edited by Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message, pp. 459-479. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Sofaer, Joanna R. 2012. *The Body as Material Culture. A Theoretical Osteoarchaeology*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uio.no/10.1017/CBO9780511816666>

Spence, Charles and Alberto Gallace. 2008. "Making Sense of Touch". In *Touch in Museums. Policy and Practice in Object Handling*, edited by Helen J. Chatterjee, pp. 21-40. New York: Routledge.

Stienne, Angela. 2018. "Rethinking Human Remains in Museums." *Museum Worlds* 6 (1): pp. 148-151.

Tropper, Kathryn. 2012. "Approaches to Reading Attic Vases". In *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*, edited by Sharon L. James and Sheila Dillon, pp. 141-152. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Varutti, Marzia. 2022. "Affective Encounters in Museums." In *Heritage Ecologies*, edited by Torgeir Rinke Bangstad and Þóra Pétursdóttir, pp. 129-144. London: Routledge.

Watson, Sheila. 2015. "Emotions in the History Museum." In *The International Handbook of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, edited by Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message, pp. 283-301. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Witcomb, Andrea. 2015. "Towards a Pedagogy of Feeling." In *The International Handbook of Museum Studies: Museum Theory*, edited by Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message, pp. 321-344. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Öhlander, Magnus. 1999. "Deltagande observation." In *Etnologisk fältarbete*, edited by Lars Kaijser and Magnus Öhlander, pp. 73-88. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

## Websites

Gaiimo, Cara. 2017. "Why Can't People Stop Touching Museum Exhibits?" Atlas Obscura. [https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/museum-touch-exhibit-objects-multisensory.amp?fbclid=IwAR0Or10cUE0LeACDsj\\_S3PIXsLM7yherXxASpsZNSl-JqsZhqirie26qyWU](https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/museum-touch-exhibit-objects-multisensory.amp?fbclid=IwAR0Or10cUE0LeACDsj_S3PIXsLM7yherXxASpsZNSl-JqsZhqirie26qyWU)

The Museum of Cultural History A. Date unknown. "About the Museum of Cultural History." <https://www.khm.uio.no/english/about/index.html>  
Read 21.05.2022

The Museum of Cultural History B. Date unknown. "Cultural Heritage Management." <https://www.khm.uio.no/english/about/cultural-heritage-management/index.html>  
Read 21.05.2022

The Museum of Cultural History C. Date unknown. "Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt." <https://www.khm.uio.no/english/visit-us/historical-museum/exhibitions/emotions/index.html>  
Read 12.12.2021

The Museum of Cultural History D. Date unknown. "Kulturhistorisk museum – et museum som er tydelig til stede." <https://www.khm.uio.no/om/visjon-og-verdier/khm-strategi-2030.pdf>  
Read 12.05.2022

Snøhetta. Date unknown. “Emotions in Antiquity and Ancient Egypt Exhibition.” <https://snøhetta.com/projects/502-emotions-in-antiquity-and-ancient-egypt-exhibition>

Read 06.01.2022