

# The Performative Museum

## Designing a Total Experience

*Sarah Holst Kjær*

### Observing

Nearby, we saw a group of white wooden houses. We drove further and at the end of a road, there was Lindesnes Lighthouse, the southernmost place in Norway and a coastal heritage museum. Here, they were very innovative with coastal food culture – although the products didn't have labels in English. The location itself was a selling point – it felt special to be here at this extreme point. Although the wind was cold and there was lack of information, this place felt like a hidden attraction.

This ethnographic observation and diary extract from our research team includes the language of museum development:<sup>1</sup> innovative lighthouse staff and the location as a selling point. It has a vocabulary of bodily sensations and feelings: nice food, special feeling about the place and a cold wind. It is also a touristic description: white wooden houses, the lighthouse at an extreme point and a hidden attraction.

The description, written in 2014, reflects a larger societal trend, namely that Scandinavian local heritage museums situated in regional settings deal with globalisation when they receive visitors from many national and cultural backgrounds. From a visitor perspective museum, materiality and landscape are met with diverse underlying assumptions which affect the relationship between certain bodies and particular places. At this windswept, coastal museum, not only neighbours from Denmark,

Sweden, Germany and the UK came. Visitors as far away as from China were also beginning turn up.

Like most Scandinavian museums, the Lindesnes Lighthouse's officially defined target group was school children. In addition, sailors used the museum as a navigation point. As a result of the changing market conditions in the traditional culture industry (see Hjemdahl and Frykman, Chapter 10 in this volume), the museum did not take it for granted that it would be possible to be publicly subsidised in the future. The museum hence wanted to understand and possibly expand into new markets. Taking the point of departure in ethnographic observations, qualitative interviews and questionnaires, the scope of this chapter is to discuss how the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum communicated the experience setting of the coastal landscape, its materiality and artefacts, by mainly taking for granted that the museum's own espoused values of the coastal landscape would be understood and approached in predictable ways by two visitor groups of Northern European pensioners and Chinese young adults. The tourists in both groups were well educated and middle class, but coming from a Northern European and Asian context.

Taking the view that cultural background affects people's basic underlying assumptions when interpreting a museum landscape, this chapter will discuss various phenomenological perspectives on the relationship between body and place. It may be usual that museums develop by analysing and understanding visitors' cultural backgrounds. Through investigation it becomes clear how easy or difficult, familiar or strange, a particular experience setting can appear to people who are not 'in the know'. Museums will try to adapt their communications and marketing through a language and translation approach. But opening up to a body and place perspective reveals how a particular cultural body is experiencing a setting through more or less 'obvious' cultural objects in uncharacteristic ways. In this example a dramatic coastline landscape and a traditional red and white coloured lighthouse were experienced through many unpredictable cultural objects: the taste of biscuits, souvenir toys reminding of grandchildren, the smell of thermos flask coffee, and even the feel of paperware was to associate to the quality of the coastal lighthouse experience.

Using experience economy concepts identifying the performative museum through marketing concepts, 'storytelling', affinity and a 'total experience' perspective (Skot-Hansen 2008), I focus on how museum

visitors from these two cultural backgrounds assimilated the material and emotional stories which the staff more or less explicitly applied to the lighthouse and its harsh coastal setting.

It is assumed that most impressions are interpreted through personal experience and cultural background (see Jansen, Chapter 3 in this volume). In this case, the less instructive the two tourists groups found the museum materiality to be, the more likely they were to bring into play their own preferences in leisure habits, social rituals and consumer desires. Scandinavian museums often rely on visitors already having 'curriculum knowledge' or in-depth familiarity with what is on display. This chapter discusses what happens when a limited amount of information is available to certain groups of museum visitors and how they relate – or would like to relate – to the coastal landscape through their cultural background and with their bodily preferences. In order to analyse the relationship between certain bodies and a particular coastal materiality, I interpret utterances and sensory impressions given by Northern European pensioners and Chinese young adults during their visit to the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum (see Pink 2009: 12, 17).

### Lighthouse materiality

Lindesnes Lighthouse dates back to 1656 and is thought to have been the first of its kind in Norway. Located on the dramatic coastline of southern Norway, it became a national heritage site in 2000 and started functioning as a museum as well as an active maritime navigation point. On a national scale, Lindesnes Lighthouse is amongst the ten most visited attractions in Norway.

Besides its traditional obligations, such as collecting, documenting and communicating research, the museum also became part of an ambitious Norwegian cultural policy. In a national white paper on museum responsibilities from 2002 the museum was expected to 'surprise and challenge emotionally and intellectually'.<sup>2</sup> Although this can be interpreted in many ways, it was mainly understood by heritage museums as a way to deal with being a 'boring' or 'old-fashioned' museum.

In order to meet policy requests, several approaches originating from the experience economy were tested. 'Experience economy' can be defined as the practice of using aesthetics and consumption in order to commodify cultural expressions and settings. Experience economy

is thus a consumer-orientated way of staging and performing cultural expressions with the purpose of making a profit. In order to become successful from a commercial perspective, the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum interpreted the policy demands of being 'emotionally challenging' by creating strong place brand and setting up a souvenir shop with local and high-quality products. The museum even opened a fish restaurant and transformed one of the buildings into an apartment hotel. By being consumer-orientated, the museum stopped being boring at the same time as it became a corporate entity. Hence the museum tried to meet new public expectations that a cultural institution should maximise profit through commodities and consumption (Aronsson 2007: 16; Skot-Hansen 2008: 73, 82).

Still, the everyday routines suggested that the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum was mostly occupied with dealing with how materiality could associate to the lighthouse itself. It was difficult transforming the many layers of historical events, instruments, objects and remnants of earlier lighthouses, military bunkers from wartime and inscriptions from kings who arrived at the lighthouse, being both faithful to the storyline of the museum while at the same time being consumer-oriented. Matching the landscape with different entertainment interests of pensioners and young adults should not only create the right emotional response, these matches would also change the museum's materiality. Prioritising things, foregrounding one thing while backgrounding another, would create consequences in the experience setting of the museum.

The museum's staff had nonetheless transformed the lighthouse's technical equipment and work-related apparatus into tourism-oriented experiences. As the lighthouse was part of a seascape, the surrounding views were spectacular, especially from the very top of the lighthouse. The museum had focused on service consumption such as events, exhibitions, festivals and live concerts. The restaurant and souvenir shop sold locally produced seaweed products – beer, bread, salt and crackers – with a clear brand reference to the museum and to the ocean below where you could see the fresh seaweed before it was collected. In addition, the museum had engaged in digital storytelling using new technology. A cinema has been created for both education and entertainment. Since the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum had begun narrating romantic feelings in relation to the dramatic weather at the coastal landscape, honeymoon tourism had been on the rise. It was possible to have a wedding ceremony held

out on the cliff and the old lighthouse keeper's cottage which was turned into the apartment hotel mainly served couples who had food delivered from the restaurant or nearby caterers. A champagne dinner served at the top of the lighthouse could even be arranged.<sup>3</sup> When the museum staff and other visitors had gone home for the day, the landscape and the weather, often extreme wind, sun, rain or snow, offered a solitary experience. Being one of the most well-known tourism establishments inside and outside Norway, the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum was an year-round attraction which did not suffer from any off-season problems. On the contrary, the staff would point out that the museum's coastal location was the most impressive when summer was over. Then, autumn and winter weather conditions had a pronounced effect on the bodily sensing (Kjær 2011b).

### The visitors

In 2008 and 2013 I conducted interviews and participant observations with groups of Northern European pensioners and Chinese young adults at the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum. The two groups presented a new global reality, in that the European population is ageing and has more leisure time while the Chinese population is becoming wealthier and is therefore more eager to travel to faraway places such as Norway.

In the wake of the empirical investigations it became clear that the studies had a lot to say about the local–global tourism situation of a national heritage museum. The visitors often involved previous experiences of completely different museums and amusement parks. These comparisons were quite unpredictable to the museum staff, but shed light on how local ways of communicating were perceived as rather cryptic and esoteric by the experienced visitors (Meethan 2001).

The two groups were not asked identical questions. Nevertheless, their experiences and views helped the museum to (re)invent the landscape by suggesting new experiential service products related to the visitors' own preferences as leisure consumers. The practices, desires and opinions of the Northern European pensioners were identified in a qualitative questionnaire survey that resulted in 78 responses. In the questionnaire the pensioners had an opportunity to discuss topics such as their general impression of the experience landscape and how the museum could be developed further in relation to service consumption. Their responses

were then followed up by intermittent ethnographic observations. In this context, the questionnaire responses were examined in relation to how the museum could become even more attractive, providing for the visitors' needs and demands (Kjær 2011b).

Sixteen Chinese visitors were approached and interviewed at the museum in 2013. How they moved around in the landscape, looked for information, took pictures, took in the views and used the place was observed. The Chinese visitors were invited to freely elaborate on their experiences, their access to the lighthouse and information about it. These brief *in situ* interviews led to a clearer understanding of how they understood this particular museum, its coastal sensations and museum activities (Kjær 2014).

The museum staff knew very little about the lifestyles of Northern European pensioners and Chinese young adults. Demands from the national cultural policy proved quite superficial. How far should the museum go in meeting the needs of particular consumer groups? Did approaching visitors in a 'service-encounter manner' and adapting to particular cultural backgrounds also mean compromising the experience setting itself (Mossberg 2007: 84)?

### The performative museum

Nowadays museums are expected to offer entertainment and education and to be performative, i.e. act as a 'museum theatre' by using dramatic techniques of staging and performing to convey emotions and personal attachment to visitors. Emotional attachment to the museum is a concept that more and more has been borrowed from traditional businesses and the commercial experience industry, e.g. the theme park or amusement park (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000: 58). In order to address its visitors the museum needs to know something about their cultural background: the specific habits, needs and rituals. The museum materiality and experience landscape should be arranged in such a way that the visitor feels 'absorbed' and 'transformed'. The imperative is that 'positive emotions', 'feelings of fun' and the use of 'imagination' are ways to perform an intense visitor experience. The overall intention is thus to stimulate all the senses, and meaningful intensity makes the consumer more willing to spend money (Lorenzen 2015: 72; Bosjwijk et al. 2007).

Already in 1995, the English marketing-researcher Fiona McLean (1995: 601) wrote that 'over the past 20 years the environment in which the museums have been operating has changed radically. Museums have not come through unscathed. Increasingly they are being forced or encouraged to generate their own income and to respond to the demands of the public. Although some museums may not consciously recognize it as such, they are being expected to develop a marketing orientation.' The Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum management and staff had embraced the marketing orientation which created the affective trends in Norwegian cultural policy. Making the traditional heritage museum 'surprising' and 'challenging' was ultimately a goal-orientated strategy aiming at getting more people interested in going to the museum in order to obtain an acceptable return on its public subsidy. Although schoolchildren – the quickly distracted consumers – were probably the policy's main target group, the museum wanted to test what surprise and challenge meant to the greater spending power of Northern European pensioners and Chinese young adults.

In order to avoid the possible clichéd description of museums as 'cold marble mausoleums that house miles of relicts that soon give way to yawns and tired feet' (Kotler & Levy 1969: 11) the Lindesnes Lighthouse had in many ways begun to perceive itself more like a experiential service organisation, shouldering the role of performer, event-maker and storyteller. Influenced by marketing theories and the experience economy, communicating with visitors in challenging ways meant 'targeting' and dramatizing the immediate experience of objects and materiality in order to affect the visitors' emotions and intellects. It also means using the museum's experience landscape in intentional ways by creating opportunities for service consumption. In very concrete ways, the museum's materiality – artefacts and sceneries – became the main tools to engage the visitors. Examples of this were how the museum used souvenirs and Internet access in order to affect visitors. Guests would consume more by feeling connected through materiality: being able to 'get in touch' through commodities and communication with their fellow visitors and even with family members back home. Designing photo-opportunities at certain chosen locations, being able to hang out at the cafe, or 'liking' the museum on its social media pages, were also norms of how the performative museum was consumer-oriented. In the eyes of management and staff, the museum could and should be a place where

theatrical elements – staging, scripting, acting – enhanced the sensory experience by means of producing relationality and emotionality (Skot-Hansen 2008: 83, 130–131).

On an experiential and sensory level, the Internet has created a general awareness of ‘the total experience’. The museum visitors increasingly expect to sense and feel in multimodal ways, e.g. through movement, touch, smell, sound, visuals, moving pictures and texts, all of which can be perceived as a single yet complex experience (Kjær 2011a). Activities – weddings, guided tours, climbing the cliffs – accumulated intensity. The haptic, bodily feelings, moving, tasting, listening and smelling the lighthouse landscape was a way the museum designed totality: a multi-modal experience that was meant to compete with or even perform more intensely than imaginations or the cyber world.

### A total experience

The museum visit is part of general culture-tourism practice. As noted by architectural historians Gunilla Jivén and Peter Larkham (2003: 69), tourism involves ‘the most deliberate search for sense-related place experiences’. Leisure consumers interact with and perform a range of practices, such as eating, gazing, walking and resting, in order to activate and enrich their senses. A phenomenological perspective on culture tourism can be starting to focus on that ‘something’ which the camera is unable to capture (*ibid.*). Investigating a lighthouse landscape will then not be about observing tourists’ common habitual practice of taking popular snapshots of the magnificent view. It will not be about how the best panorama pictures can(not) capture the essence of being there. Instead, the total and absorbed experience can be about viewing the place from all angles, turning your head, moving around, feeling the wind in your face and perhaps having difficulty breathing in the sudden gusts of wind. When time is limited and space is compressed, certain ‘must-sees’ and activities, such as getting to the top of the lighthouse, having your attention directed to certain scenes and being affected inter-subjectively by other visitors, make deep sensory impressions. According to the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s definition of how the body ‘perceives’ place it is always about connecting to a particular moment in time through the authentication of the senses, affects and emotions (*cf.* Sjørølev 2015: 159). For that reason, a phenomenological perspective can



be used to understand how a particular cultural body experiences a place through e.g. 'feeling heritage with one's hands' or even sensing a place through souvenirs, lunchboxes or the survival kit of the journey (Kjær 2011a: 23). By arranging bodily presence in a material context, museum curators are now aiming at organising 'the essence' of the display: the 'sixth sense' or the synthesis of the five senses coming together into a transforming into existential, educational, self-improving experiences of totality (O'Dell 2006). Consumer goods and services are becoming tools for the body to connect to the place.

This 'total experience' is captured in the idea of the multisensory, working through bodily practices such as orientating oneself, moving, walking, climbing or being still, and as in the case analysed here, being absorbed in the totality of the coastal environment. However, such bodily practices depend on the cultural background: needs, habits and tacit underlying assumptions (Bosjwijk, Thijssen and Peelen 2007).

### Pensioners and young adults

How did a coastal museum in Norway attune to Chinese young adults or Northern European pensioners? In practice, visitors often do and think unplanned things and are not easily governed. In this respect the pensioners were perhaps more 'easily managed' than the Chinese, because their cultural background, curriculum knowledge and previous experiences more predictably formed a correspondence between their bodies and the Lindesnes Lighthouse landscape. As almost no information was translated into a language they could follow, the Chinese found it difficult to grasp the instructive ambitions of the museum.

The focus of the Northern European pensioners was on absorbing the natural forces of the landscape. They defined the coastline as 'idyllic', 'lovely', *'schön'* and 'wonderful' and enjoyed the 'peace and quiet', 'contemplation' and 'purity and freshness' of the place. They were equipped with thermos flasks and sandwiches and dressed in brightly coloured Goretex anoraks. They leaned into the wind and said 'the stormy weather is great', or that it is 'nice to feel the wind'. They 'loved' the maritime cultural history of the museum and back in their cottages – either in the museum area or at the nearby holiday resorts. They read novels, guide books and glossy magazine features about Scandinavian lighthouse holidays. They even read historic travel descriptions such as the English

philosopher Mary Wollenstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796/2008). The pensioners often travelled in pairs and were unaccompanied by children. They could be on a romantic holiday with their partner or travelling with a friend. They wanted to take souvenirs home and 'highly appreciated' the locally produced wooden toy lighthouse for their grandchildren (Kjær 2011b).

The Chinese visitors were equally interested in and impressed by the coastal landscape, although they were more interested in the coast-related health products. They were 'overwhelmed' by the natural environment, which the pensioners took for granted and felt very comfortable in and secure with.

The young adults were not at all familiar with the rough, cold and windswept landscape. They were freezing and not wearing the appropriate outdoor clothing. Norway in general was a considerable contrast to their everyday life in urban, service-orientated, but also heavily polluted cities which they felt affected their health and wellbeing (Potter and Lloyd-Evans 1998: 199). The freshness of nature was very 'impressive' to them. They travelled in small and larger groups. Many lived, studied and worked in Scandinavia and had sometimes invited their elderly relatives and parents for a holiday. More often than not they were experienced travellers and compared Norway to other Western and Scandinavian destinations. They orientated themselves through their smartphones and various social media pages, searching for other travellers' recommendations. They listened to experiences, rumours and hearsay on Trip Advisor, Qyer, Weibo and Facebook, or looked up information about transportation, places of interest, food and accommodation on search engines such as Google or Baidu (Kjær 2014). In contrast to the pensioners, they depended on access to the Internet but often planned the entire trip from home, preparing their experiences in the smallest detail to make sure they did not waste precious time by not being able to find accommodation, transport, information and shopping possibilities.

Like the pensioners, the Chinese young adults liked to read about travel and some chose the novel *Norwegian Wood* by the Japanese author Haruki Murakami (1987). Although the travel literature preferences of the pensioners and the Chinese only partly or metaphorically touched on the exact travel destination, their choice of reading indicates ways of transferring literary meaning, sense-making and underlying assumptions

to an outlandish geography. By approaching the two cultural groups and their entertainment habits it became clear that onto an 'under-communited' or 'self-evident' natural heritage museum all kinds of signifying practices could be projected. For a short moment, the micro-movement of eyes connected a situated body with the idea of an entire country while at the same time transporting the traveller in time and space.

### Ritualising social relationships

The performative museum has been called an 'emotional factory' (Skot-Hansen 2008: 82). It mimics theme parks and amusement parks in the sense that it wants to provide for the needs of visitors. This means that materiality and service are often constructed so that they aim at facilitating for visitors 'working on' and 'improving' their social and emotional relationships. Global theme park corporations such as Disney for example train their service staff using a service principle which they call 'emotional contagion'. This means that staff are understood to have an emphatic function and are taught to evoke trust and confidence through the performance of friendliness. This performance is supposed to be need-fulfilling and is meant to 'rub off' on the visitor experience in a positive way (Voss and Zomerdijs 2007: 110). The Norwegian ethnologist Kirsti Mathiesen Hjemdahl (2003: 44) has also studied theme parks in relation to families and defines this leisure landscape as a place which allows 'modern reconciliation rituals' to happen. Museum visitors in general (Meethan 2001), the pensioners and young adults in this study included, also expected emotionalisation from the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum: there should be a support of togetherness and an avoidance of unpleasant social friction. Certain rituals and performances, including giving the visitor a chance to remember the family back home by purchasing gifts, sending postcards or uploading snapshots on social media, were expected. The consumption management of emotions is of course not the same as how it felt for a visitor to long for a grandchild in the souvenir shop. It is not the same as how a visitor, uploading a snapshot on Facebook, would jump when the digital sound from the 'thumbs-up' responses started to tick in. Museum materiality was an actor in relationship bonds. In the landscape, there was always a *we* of some sort.

The Chinese young adult visitors liked to send postcards to their families back in China. In the eyes of the Western traveller this may

seem like a nostalgic practice, but sharing their visit with family back home was a very important documentation of their being there. They preferred long-lasting memory tokens – something to put in their scrapbook, like a ticket, a postcard, a stamp or a brochure. It is said, that Chinese invented paper and due to this cultural history they have a particular liking for it (Westerby 2013). The Chinese visitors touched paper in the museum's souvenir shop. They talked about it, felt the thickness and the structure, and valued the quality of the different paper items on display. Handwritten messages on postcards authenticated the visit – they *were* actually *here*. At the same time, the postcard sending met the expected ways of sustaining social relations with people back home. The Chinese visitors documented their presence at the lighthouse in autobiographical ways. They collected memory-tokens. In order to have something special to look forward to, some would send postcards to themselves. Others would unite with both postcards and family. On leaving the museum they explained that eventually they would use the paper items acquired here in order to transport themselves back to the museum (Kjær 2014).

From a museum staff perspective, this particular liking could not have been perceived beforehand or understood without knowing the underlying assumption of the actual haptic practice of the Chinese. Sensing and touching the paper's materiality connected to the lighthouse feeling.

### Body and place

The visitors' emotional interrelatedness was considered by the museum when designing the restaurant, café, hotel apartment, sun lounge areas, playgrounds and outdoor recreational areas. The aim of the place organisation was to fulfil the visitor's exact need. The goal was to try to create a flow between comfort zones, pleasure and learning geographies, making visitors to stay longer, consume more, move them in the right directions, avoiding others, create quiet areas at certain times while surprising them at others.

Around 2000 many lighthouse establishments in Scandinavia turned to the romantic market. The Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum had advertised the coastal landscape as a romantic getaway. Honeymooning with seafood dinners, overnight stays and champagne was a popular product. Those pensioners wanting a second blissful moment were receptive. On

weekend trips to the lighthouse the loving couple could 'find silence in the ocean void' and be 'swept in a haze of romance'. In a lifestyle magazine given to me by the pensioners, the reporter wrote:

Inside we have lit candles. Outside the lighthouse casts its light. No TV disturbs us. We watch the beautiful sunset and talk all night. We enjoy the sound of the waves and our hiking-trips to the peaks. Actually, it would have been great, if we had got stuck by a hurricane and by some extreme weather conditions. (*Tara*, November 2008, 193–194)

The romantic experience was preconditioned by marketing and storytelling in different kinds of media. This type of experience says something about how a museum only to a certain extent can manage and market a place. The visitors will sometimes 'micromanage' the experience to perfection. Through the practice of lighting a candle, the moment of glancing, the actual decision to turn off the TV, intensify what the coastal landscape already dramatizes. A material association between body, place and symbolism was established. Being physically moved by the storm, wind and waves was also described. In late modern romantic consumption, being touched and changed at a profound level (O'Dell 1999: 264) was possible in the littoral landscape.

In the history of popular culture the immediate relation between the romantic body and a coastal landscape has long been defined as passion. In the scenic dramas from twentieth-century Hollywood, several romantic films were shot in the dramatic scenery of the Niagara Falls. These images eventually led to the place becoming a mainstream honeymoon destination. Here, the transforming power of a wedding was supported by the equally sublime and intense landscape (Löfgren 1999: 30).

During fieldwork some of the pensioners introduced me to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796/2008). By exposing herself to the rough Scandinavian countries, her idea was to create a genre of existential travel writing. Wollstonecraft explored the sublime scenery on the eastern and southern coastline of Norway and writes about how the transformative effect of this 'wild', 'dark' and 'shadowed' coastal landscape produced her 'tender melancholy' (ibid. 33). Using the expedition, she set out to 'close the grave' of her youth. In other words, she went on a Grand Tour to

grow and become powerful, and did this by exposing herself to a highly unapproachable and demanding landscape. In her diary she wrote:

Nature is the nurse of sentiment, the true source of taste; yet what a misery, as well as rapture, is produced by a quick perception of the beautiful and sublime when it is exercised in observing animated nature, when every beauteous feeling and emotion excites responsive sympathy, and the harmonised soul sinks into melancholy or rises in ecstasy. ... I cannot, without a thrill of delight, recollect views I have seen, which are not to be forgotten, nor looks I have felt in every nerve, which I shall never more meet. The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth. (Ibid. 36, 41)

The pensioners' entertainment readings added meaning to their time spent at the Lindesnes. The same can be said for the Chinese young adults equipped with their travel literature. Their preferences in literature show how the two groups acted in meaning-seeking ways. Using literary expressions, what happened at the museum was that the two groups created an atmosphere which intensified – or maybe even completed – their experience. Approaching the museum landscape in multimodal ways, using different types of media, objects and sensory approaches in order to engage with the surroundings, the coastal landscape only became complete when the visitors connected their certain bodies with particular approaches to the place (Sjørølev 2015: 163; cf. Prahallad and Ramaswamy 2004).

### Landscape likings

The museum could narrate, display and organise artefacts and connect them to the museum's own espoused values. But to a certain degree the museum could not anticipate how new visitors would engage with or perceive the displayed materiality. The pensioners and young adults were two different visitor groups. Still, what they had in common was a strong liking for the natural heritage landscape.

The concept of affinity can help to investigate how engagement, affects and emotions, sometimes are felt strongly because of connection and recognition. Affinity can be defined as 'something' which makes people and things suited for each other. It points to a feeling of closeness because of

similar qualities, ideas, or interests. Museums can try to 'become friends' with visitors by connecting their storyline, brand or experience product with the visitor, who immediately should recognise it as something shared (Laidler-Kylander and Stenzel 2013: 9, 12, 15). Affinity hence can refer to a communication strategy for achieving an intersubjective relation where objects, feelings and rhetoric of felt similarity serve to 'eliminate unproductive clues' in the experience (Bosjwijk, Thijssen and Peelen 2007: 23). The goal of something shared is to direct the visitor's perception of the landscape to a meaningful, personalised, matter.

Being aware that 'blue sky is rare in China' (Kjær 2014), the young adults were highly connected to the museum's coastal-based food products: seaweed, plants, herbs and smoked salmon. Such health-promoting products seemed important both as a high-quality restaurant meal and as gifts to be shipped home. Products from the sea symbolised the Chinese visitors' cultural assumptions of a pristine, pure and clean Norway (Ooi 2014; Westerby 2013). Thus, improving one's health by a sojourn in the coastal landscape and buying gifts and souvenirs reflecting the pure, local and 'raw' were meaningful – and affinity-based – things to be shared amongst friends and family. Healthy food products aligned with the Chinese imagination, while the pensioners' assumptions were about romancing in the isolation offered at the lighthouse. To both the pensioners and the young adults, the lighthouse landscape itself was considered attractive because it was presenting a cherished idea about the untouched nature (Olsen 2007: 44). This can be defined a place-aesthetic which may originate in the widespread discourse on natural heritage: the coastal landscape is considered authentic as long as it appears non-pre-arranged and non-commercialised (Jivén and Larkham 2003; Kjær 2011a).

Still, the Chinese visitors did not move as unrestricted as the Northern European pensioners. One Chinese exclaimed 'places in Norway aren't planned like visitor attractions'. Others would ask for 'more comfort' when exposed to the cold and stormy climate. They wanted opportunities to 'enjoy the sunshine in the restaurant'; 'sit [in furniture with blankets] on a big grass lawn', 'see the sea view', 'have a barbeque' and have access to 'entertainment equipment for children'. One Chinese female biologist said that 'it is so boring here', while a male engineer wanted more knowledge: 'I really want to know more about culture. But the Norwegians cannot be very proud of their heritage, because nowhere am I able to read about it on the web – neither in English, nor Mandarin'. However, he soon lapsed

into personal discomfort: 'In general, the museums are never open, and it is impossible to find out which bus will take you there'. Several other Chinese visitors defined the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum as 'cold and primitive' and wondered 'who would ever want to visit here'?

The German geographer Wolfgang Georg Arlt (2006: 198) argues that the leisure consumption of the Chinese urban middle classes – like the visitors at the lighthouse museum – are more dominated by visual symbolism more than bodily sensing. Being used to commercial commodities, the Chinese consumers display 'no limits to consumption'. In this investigation, the Chinese explained that at home they were used to spending all day at one attraction and doing all kinds of activities. This made them ask for more comprehensive information, access to barbeque dinners and some sort of children's playground (Kjær 2014).

## Conclusion

In a global order, the local performative museum can accrue location and scenery as important assets that need to be shaped, packaged and organised as consumer products or as the intake of an entire themed – romantic, dramatic or health-improving – environment. In the main it is all about an emphasis on the body and its senses, and affective responses to the landscape.

The pensioners focused on low-key luxuries, such as being able to buy more gifts for their grandchildren and eating candlelit seafood dinners. They dreamt about spending nights at the lighthouse establishment itself. They also wanted to be out in the open landscape enjoying the view from their sun loungers whilst covered in warm blankets and drinking takeaway coffee and eating sweets while talking (mostly about the grandchildren) and reading newspapers and novels. To the pensioners, the Lindesnes Lighthouse Museum appeared a place with territories to be explored through easily choreographed-with-the-wind bodily movements. Through hunches and sensing, they engaged with the winds, smells and sounds.

Sensing was of course relevant for the Chinese visitors, but in a different way. Their expectations of what was on offer at the lighthouse were a matter of the bodily experience of health.

The two groups had different expectations about what sensations a day at a coastal museum should provide. Both visitor groups expected



the museum to facilitate experience, service and commodity consumption. However, although Northern European pensioners appreciated the norms of an ‘untouched’ heritage landscape and were able to interpret these espoused values in the museum materiality, Chinese young adults were bored, cold and not used to disclosing meanings in an under-communicated, unbranded and under-designed landscape.

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## Notes

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- 2 The Norwegian national white paper quoted is Stortingsmelding nr. 48, 2002–2003, p. 178 (quoted in Pabst 2011: 30).
- 3 See [www.lindesnesfy.no/files/FYRET2014\\_engelsk\\_24s.pdf](http://www.lindesnesfy.no/files/FYRET2014_engelsk_24s.pdf) [accessed 16 April 2015].

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