



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

# **FEMINIST DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING DESIGN MUSEUMS**

## **Towards More Just Futures**

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### **Akademisk avhandling**

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Feminist Design Strategies for Transforming Design Museums Towards More Just Futures.

**Abstract**

Modern design has played a role in creating the current world, including injustices and current crisis. And the design discipline still contributes to the reproduction of what bell hooks calls white supremacist imperialist capitalist patriarchy. There is an urgency to transform mainstream design, so that it can become able to not only stay with past and present trouble, but also to contribute to developing more just futures. Spaces that can facilitate and support such work are needed. Presently, design museums come closest to serving this kind of role. However, they are not yet capable of contributing to redesigning design, since they often tend to preserve the problematic status quo rather than enable change. Therefore, these established design museums must be transformed. This thesis investigates potential and limitations of existing design museums, envisions alternative spaces, and develops feminist design strategies for initiating transformational processes in design museums towards more just futures. The approach taken includes looking to the example of community archives as well as combining concepts and methods from feminist research, design research and onto-cartography in ways that leverage their synergies to enable a sense-making of design museums' involvement with systems of oppression, as well as a development of alternative visions and strategies for intervening and transforming. Community archives make accessible alternative histories, and therefore enable alternative ways of dealing with the present and of envisioning more just futures. They also continuously develop creative ways of resisting and initiating transformational processes. Through this framing, the research question developed is: Which feminist design strategies could support initiating transformational processes in design museums aiming towards more just futures? This research question was addressed through a feminist design methodology that combines feminist and design research. Specific methods used include inventories, museum visits, workshops, consulting secondary literature, illustrations, and visual analysis. The research project resulted in an investigation of established design museums, the formulation of characteristics of alternative design museums which are envisioned as metabolic design museums, and the development of feminist design strategies for initiating transformational processes in design museums. This thesis contributes to design research ways in which the role of design and its established institutions in reproducing white supremacist capitalist patriarchy can be understood and analysed. Furthermore, it makes a methodological contribution to both feminist research and design research by combining these two fields, in parts with the help of onto-cartography, to leverage their synergies. Finally, this thesis contributes to activism in the field of design by scaffolding ways in which design could be transformed so that it becomes more able to unfold its potential to contribute towards the development of more just futures.

**Keywords**

Strategies, transformation, design museums, community archives, activism, justice, metabolic, para-museum, care, design research, feminist research, onto-cartography

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