Preface

Growth is usually understood in terms of progress where things grow linearly due to causal development. But growth can also be connection, connecting to other humans, to nature, to the environment around us, to pasts, and to uncertain futures. In this sense, growth is messy. It emerges as connections that come about through mutual touches that form multiple intricate connections. Touch requires vulnerability: the readiness to reach out with an exposed softness to which others can connect.

Ever since museums turned towards their communities and the public, most of them have strived to become platforms where relationships can be formed through mutual dialogues which tie people, issues, temporalities, and museum materialities to one another. For decades, bodies of research have critically examined these relationships as significant matters, accounting for the ways in which museums can promote touch by carving out corners for democratic kinship in a world that has long been riddled with human disconnect. Each of the articles in this issue grapples with museums and touch: Here, museums are studied as sites where people, pasts, nature and culture touch to negotiate memories of trauma and change; as sites where relationships affect practices; as participants in the development of inter-institutional relationships; and as sites where heritage encourages generational connections through literal movements.

We begin with the article “Disaster, traces of displacement, and mizuaoi seeds. Conversations surrounding A Future for Memory: Art and Life After the Great Japan Earthquake”. Here, Rossella Ragazzi examines how museum exhibitions and artistic interventions can provide a platform for healing and the negotiation of human/landscape memories in a changing world. In the paper, she draws from the exhibition A Future for Memory: Art and Life after the Great Japan Earthquake at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC to elucidate how thoughtful collaborations between artists, museums, curators, and communities can foster discussions based on honesty, vulnerability – and growth.

The article “Udstillingsdrevet indsamling af møbler på Trapholt; gevinst, konsekvens og muligheder” draws from a study at Trapholt Museum of Modern Art and Design in Kolding, Denmark, and how the museum’s emphasis on visitor connections has shaped the museum’s collection practices. The author, Rosita Satell, discusses the implications of the museum’s focus outward and on their relationships with their visitors which has brought about significant opportunities but also issues which need to be negotiated moving forward.

Kamma Overgaard Hansen, and Lærke Maria Andersen Funder’s article “Communities of Practice within the hybrid cultural institution. Developing new
professional identities through LAM convergence” grapples with different kinds of connections brought about through the merger of libraries, archives, and museums into hybrid institutions. Whereas such mergers have mostly revolved around streamlining the outer layers of LAM hybrids, the authors focus beyond theoretical perspectives and policies and draw attention to the inner workings of institutions as they go through the process of hybridization. The authors reflect on how collaborations between institutions and hybrid working environments can affect employees and their professional development, and highlight how the facilitation of connections and willingness to form ties across fields is imperative to such processes.

In her article “Can you relate to a dance from the past? Why teenagers love to dance in museums”, Tone Erlien Myrvold examines how museums can be sites of connection across generations through curated dance programmes. Dance, as immaterial cultural heritage, plays a pivotal role here and encourages physical participation which evokes new perspectives, but also togetherness and enjoyment.

These articles bring about diverse perspectives on relationships and connections. They are followed by Anne Birkeland's project description “Hva er klima og klimaendringer? Metode for å undersøke ungdoms forståelse av og forhold til begrepene”, which discusses the Climate House at the Natural History Museum in Oslo’s exhibitions and installations on climate and climate change and how the museum’s study of youth’s relationships to the subject matter influenced their development. This issue closes with Mattias Bäckström’s review on Robert Thavenius’ publication Nationalmuseum som konsekrerande institution 1890–1920.