

Very permanent exhibitions – comparative analysis of permanent exhibitions in Croatian museums

Tea Rihtar Jurić and Dunja Vranešević

Abstract

Permanent exhibitions as the most complex form of communication in museum presentation, are traditionally considered the crown of museum work, which present the collected knowledge about the heritage and collections in the museum to a diverse audience. By their nature, they are long-lasting, occupy the largest area, and a small percentage of the material is regularly on display. Starting from these assumptions, the Museum Documentation Centre conducted a survey of permanent exhibitions in Croatian museums in 2022 in order to obtain a comparative analysis of their features from statistical data, as well as to warn about weaknesses, especially in museums damaged by earthquakes in 2020 which are planning new exhibitions after renovations. The designed questionnaire was filled out by 121 museums (73%) for 146 locations and the research was expanded with an additional analysis of data from the Register of Museums, Galleries and Collections in the Republic of Croatia, which is maintained at the Museum Documentation Center. Although this is prescribed by the legislative framework, the results showed that a third of the examined museums do not have a permanent exhibition, which is mainly caused by a lack of spatial conditions and renovations. A third of the exhibits are over twenty years old, with only up to ten percent of the holdings on display in almost half of them, and the objects rotate very rarely or never. Some form of evaluation with visitors was only done for a fifth of the permanent installations, usually after the opening to the public, when the implementation of major changes is less likely. A chronic lack of adaptations to special groups of users – visitors with disabilities, children and tourists – was also noticed. All this shows that hard work and persistent improvements that respect the needs and experiences of different groups of visitors are necessary for permanent exhibitions.

Permanent exhibition

Branko Franceschi

Abstract

Although “permanent exhibitions” have historically served well in establishing the status of museums as elite cultural institutions that own funds and shape knowledge about reference areas of human activity and culture – each “permanent exhibition” is essentially just one of many possible interpretations of a museum's fund, expressed through an exhibition as a medium and dependent on the subjective, even scientifically based, perception of its author, usually the director according to our cultural system. The doctrine of “permanent exhibition” was confronted with the example of practice we carry out in the National Museum of Modern Art, by introducing a potential change in the approach of conceiving the exhibition of a museum collection, opting for a concept that functions at all times as a system open to the results of permanent work on the museum collection. Such a change in the methodology of conceiving exhibitions, with the possibility of interdisciplinary contextualisation of the work of art, is more important than the acceptance and formal use of interactive media possibilities as the ultimate means of involving the audience in a dialogue with the exhibition. The realisation of the ideal open display of the museum collection as an activator of the audience's mental space, instead of the current role as a distributor of passive acquisition of content and values, primarily assumes a dynamic curatorial collective inclined to perceive the museum collection as a complete system, and not as a conglomerate of partial individual museum collections.

Approach to the conceptual design of the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek

Željka Miklošević and Denis Detling

Abstract

The paper provides an insight into certain aspects of the process of creating the museological concept of the Museum of Slavonia, while highlighting the importance of a reciprocal approach to creating the concept, which implies basing decisions on the views and approaches of the profession

while including the opinions and interests of the audience. Since the approach of reciprocity was chosen when conceptualising the Museum's displays, the text presents two basic perspectives, those of museum experts and users, while respecting the Institution's mission. Based on the museum's materials and the perspective of the profession on the narrative that is to be shaped, the first step was to shape the basic idea or the integral message of the exhibition, which influenced the selection of individual objects and the formation of themes. The number and variety of materials, uneven representation according to topics, and the provenance and significance of the materials were some of the key challenges of conceptualisation in the context of the institutional perspective. In order to get the users' perspective, research was conducted with current and potential users. Marketing research was aimed at obtaining data on the frequency of visits to the Museum of Slavonia among Osijek residents, especially the younger population, as well as their perception of the Museum. The preliminary evaluation was carried out after the expert team determined the umbrella idea or the integral message of the permanent exhibition, i.e., what they wanted to present and communicate through the exhibition exactly, and its goal was to gain insight into ideas, attitudes towards the basic idea, themes of the exhibition proposal, and to identify the needs of the respondents and how they could be satisfied. The paper concludes that when designing a permanent exhibition, just like any exhibition, research and discussion about the types of content and ways of communication that will achieve the desired effect on the visitor are crucial, which implies interdisciplinary and team work with all stakeholders in the process and in all phases – from concept to realisation.

Gallery Design: Inspire, Engage, Preserve, Connect, Transform

Peta Motture

Abstract

One of the challenges faced by today's museums and galleries in presenting great works of art, with all the associations carried in their imagery – religious, cultural, historical – is to make them accessible and inspiring to a diverse audience. These challenges were tackled in the redevelopment of the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries at the Victoria and Albert Museum. More than seven years in the making, these galleries explore the art, design and culture of Europe between AD 300

and 1600, through the Museum's world-class collections. The £31.9 million project involved a vast range of people from both within and outside the Museum. At the heart of the project lay the collections themselves, together with our audiences that were central to the project. Visitors were consulted directly through a series of quantitative and qualitative evaluations, including a series of focus groups so that the galleries could be designed to present the Museum's holdings in an exciting, meaningful and accessible way.

Behind the scenes and challenges of the new permanent exhibition

Mihaela Kulej

Abstract

Thinking about the concept of the new permanent exhibition of the City Museum of Virovitica was fundamentally limited by several factors: the museum is located in a cultural monument of zero category – the Pejačević castle; the castle is all the “material” about the Pejačević family that the City Museum of Virovitica owns; the museum is of the native type, which imposed the idea of a classic chronological arrangement of museum materials according to museum collections. However, after several targeted workshops with fellow citizens of different ages and lifestyles, during which we discussed and clarified the idea of the identity of Virovitica and the people of Virovitica, we got the theme of a new permanent exhibition – wood. Wood imposed itself as the overarching theme of the exhibition due to the eternal connection between man and wood in these areas. Upon further reflection, we decided on an interdisciplinary approach to defining the scenario of the permanent exhibition. Such an approach is full of challenges, but somehow we managed to overcome all personal focus on our own materials, started “thinking outside the box” in order to create a scenario/narrative of a permanent exhibition that will, under the title *Wooden Age*, show the local heritage and materials of all our collections (cultural, historical, archaeological, ethnological and artistic) to be socially relevant and, at the same time, universal, recognisable and contemporary.

History of the 20th century in the National Museum in Prague

Jana Fottová and Marek Junek

Abstract

The National Museum of the Czech Republic opened its permanent exhibition in 2021, dedicated to the history of the 20th century, for the first time after 30 years. The history of the 20th century, as visitors can see today, was not born easily. It is dedicated to the period from 1914 to 2004, and shows the transformations of public space as a place where the often conflicting efforts of high politics and personal freedom collide, showing their mutual connection and conditioning at the same time, the state's effort to regulate, control and monitor public space and private sphere. Individual parts of the exhibition (public, semi-private, private and political space) are not isolated, but interconnected, and the visitor can freely pass through them and compose their own picture of the history of the 20th and early 21st centuries according to their interests.

Museum of Yugoslavia: From Permanent to Non-Permanent exhibition

Marija Vasiljević, Marija Đorgović and Aleksandra Momčilović Jovanović

Abstract

There have been two approaches in composing a permanent exhibition of the Museum of Yugoslavia. They are rather antagonistically positioned in relation to one another. The first one was introduced in 2012 with the exhibition *Yugoslavia: From the Beginning to the End*. It had a chronologically based, didactically oriented narrative. Minding the Museum's name and the expectations of the visitors, it tended to answer delicate historical matters choosing to interpret ten most important events or phenomena from the history of the country. One of the biggest challenges in creating this display was that there were very few artifacts to document the chosen events. The actual problem here was that the Museum of Yugoslavia had been established in 1996 out of two abolished institutions: The Museum of Revolution of Nations and Nationalities of Yugoslavia and The Josip Broz Tito Memorial Centre. As such, its collections did not reflect, nor justify the newly given name, let alone the exhibit which should tell the story *from the beginning to the end*. This is why a new method of composing a permanent exhibition promoted the Museum's collection as an

authentic and relevant resource which needs to be revalorised and reinterpreted. Introduced in 2015, it tended to impose questions about Yugoslav heritage in an open research of the existing Museum fund installing a sort of internal archaeology. It has made a shift towards exploring already musealised collections during Yugoslavia. This approach rose from the presumption that these collections tell authentic stories that were never told from a contemporary perspective. It strived towards self-reflection and transparency in the internal identity dilemmas which burden Museum of Yugoslavia since it was established. This approach had three projected phases: *The Storeroom opens*, *The Museum Laboratory* and *Yugoslavia in 100 objects*. After many difficulties in implementing this methodology, we are currently in the *Laboratory* phase whose maintenance has led us to many ongoing challenges.

Croatian History Museum – from a new spatial solution to the final realisation of the permanent exhibition

Matea Brstilo Rešetar and Andreja Smetko

Abstract

After the Zagreb earthquake in 2020, the Croatian History Museum finally got the chance to realise its first permanent exhibition. The museological program and preliminary concept derive from a new spatial solution according to which the Museum remains in the baroque palace Vojković-Oršić-Kulmer-Rauch, where it has been operating since 1959, but also expands to a new building, the nearby palace of the Hydrometeorological Institute. The preparatory work leading to the implementation project of the design of the new permanent exhibition takes place in specific circumstances – in parallel with the limited constructive renovation of both palaces as a basis for further, complete renovation of the Museum. The second challenge is the fact that the conceptually new set-up is being considered in two locations. The Vojković-Oršić-Kulmer-Rauch Palace is planned to be filled with museum collections, conceptually following the spatial and functional characteristics of noble residential architecture, while in the Palace of the Hydrometeorological Institute, a permanent display of Croatian history from the early Middle Ages to the present day will be presented in chronological and thematic units. earlier periods. Aware that the exhibition

cannot be “all-knowing” and “all-showing”, we will try to offer visitors answers to the question – *why is Croatia the way it is today.*

Building the Gallery of Polish Design at the National Museum in Warsaw: The Curatorial Perspective

Kaja Muszyńska

Abstract

The article concerns the Gallery of Polish Design at the National Museum in Warsaw, Poland. The Gallery was opened in 2017 and was the first permanent display of 20th- and 21st-century Polish design. It amasses over 600 pieces of Polish furniture, textiles, glassware, ceramics, metalwork, jewellery, fashion, toys, and graphic design. The Gallery’s narrative takes a historical approach and revolves around the relationship between the state and design. First part of the paper provides an overview of the history of the Museum’s design collection. Second part discusses all the parts of the permanent Gallery and explains the link between the objects on display and historical periods. The last part talks about practical decision concerning the design of the display made by the gallery architects in order to fit more objects into the limited space and make the narrative more comprehensible.

Homeland War Museum Karlovac – Turanj: permanent exhibition – challenges

Ružica Stjepanović

Abstract

The permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Homeland War Karlovac – Turanj is located on the premises of the former Križanić-Turanj military complex. The starting point of our thoughts in creating the museological programme was the strong memory value of the place where the great Serbian aggression was stopped and the city was defended during the Homeland War. The project

is planned for the reconstruction of the California building, as it was called by the defenders of Karlovac, and the arrangement of a permanent exhibition dedicated to Karlovac in the Homeland War. The project is the result of interdisciplinary cooperation and dialogue of all stakeholders, and was conducted through research, collection and restoration of materials, determination and analysis of target visitor groups, creation of multimedia content and design, which ultimately resulted in a visually rounded exhibition, impressive for the visitors.

***Iovia* Archaeological Park - how to present heritage in an understandable and interesting way**

Tajana Pleše, Bernarda Cesar, Marija Juza, Ivan Radman Livaja, Erina Stančin and Marko Zeko

Abstract

Iovia Ludbreg Archaeological Park (presented site with interpretative and didactic permanent exhibition and visitor centre), a new point on the map of key places of Ludbreg identity, was opened in 2021. In the paper, the authors explain the steps that preceded the final result (from archaeological research, documentation, interpretation and valorisation to sensitising the local population, choosing a model for using the potential of this cultural capital, securing financial resources for realisation, design and execution of works) and consider the problems they encountered during the realisation.

Sound as an interpretation strategy at exhibitions in Zagreb museums and galleries

Hana Bečević and Žarka Vujić

Abstract

As sound is a complex medium, the paper introduces the basic facts about it, its properties, significance and impact it has on the environment and people. After that, it elaborates on the physical and especially psychological perception of sound. Some of the most important factors

that influence the psychological perception of sound, such as attention, previous experience, emotions and context, are specially addressed. The narrower topic of sound as an interpretation strategy in the museum is discussed in the light of understanding the museum exhibition as a multimodal environment. For the purposes of analysing the use of sound in museums and galleries in Zagreb, the following typology of use was adopted: 1. sound as the theme and focus of the exhibition, 2. sound as an aid to communication and interpretation of a complex topic, 3. sound as a didactic tool, i.e., a tool for learning with a great potential for involvement and active participation of visitors and 4. sound as an immaterial aspect of the museum material on display. The mentioned analysis, limited in the circumstances of the earthquake and pandemic, pointed to a number of interesting and different examples of the use of sound. Museums have shown how they use sound to educate, but also to create visitor experiences, while art galleries have gone a step further by experimenting with sound, using it to form additional layers of meaning and connect with contemporary social issues.

Publications of permanent museum exhibitions

Snježana Radovanlija Mileusnić

Abstract

The paper gives basic definitions as well as content and formal features of museum publications that are prepared and published alongside the permanent exhibitions of the museum. These museum publications primarily refer to catalogues of permanent exhibitions or individual museum collections in the permanent exhibition, guides through the whole or part of the museum exhibition, as well as various informative brochures and leaflets about the permanent exhibition. An effort was made to point out their expediency and purpose in communicating the exhibited museum contents. The results of the research on publications of permanent museum exhibitions published by Croatian museums and galleries from 2000 to 2022 are presented. Their number, types, medium and target audience are indicated. In the end, an attempt was made to point out the observed shortcomings, but also excellent achievements as a contribution to the improvement of the museums' publishing policy.

IIC-Croatian group: *RIZIK* questionnaire for successful preparedness, assessment and management of risks in Croatian museums

Valentina Ljubić Tobisch, Mirta Pavić, Jasna Širec and Žana Matulić Bilač

Abstract

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and the uncertainty of its development, in March 2020, a strong earthquake occurred in Zagreb and the surrounding area, during which major material damage was recorded not only in the historic centre of the city, but also in the museum collections. Soon after the earthquake, the International Institute for the Restoration of Historical and Artistic Works, IIC-Croatian group, created and conducted a national survey on the readiness of Croatian cultural institutions for various types of risks. The research was conducted in the form of a questionnaire called *RIZIK* with the aim of collecting the first comprehensive data on risk assessment and management for museum institutions throughout the country. The online survey consisted of 72 questions divided into four categories: general information about the institution, about the property, including the building that houses the museum and collections, and questions about finances and visitors. An integral part of the survey consisted of questions about the security and regular maintenance of museum spaces, work and business plans, emergency services in case of danger, possible dangers and risks affecting property and collections, as well as questions about measures that can help prevent or reduce risks and damage to collections, building assets, staff and visitors. The results of the anonymous survey provided a general overview of the state of readiness for risk in Croatian institutions and detected areas for potential improvement.