

MUSEO

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**SIMPLE
MUSEOLOGY**

**MUSEOLOGIA
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Simple museology
Museologia simplex

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EXAMINATION

*Quod quaesitum semper antecedit, et sine quo quaesitum minime quaeri potest.*¹
Nicolaus Cusanus

¹ Nicolaus Cusanus,
Directio speculantis seu
de non aliud, Capitulum III.
Cited from Stephan Otto,
Ogledi o filozofiji renesanse,
Zagreb, 2000, p. 62.

Museum locus (place)

A museum is usually a building or several buildings. When we say museum, we usually mean the museum building, the building in which the museum is located. When we say *I'm going to the museum*, what is usually meant is going to the museum building. A building is the most common museum locus. However, a museum does not have to be in a building. There are museums in the open such as ethnological parks; archeoindustrial parks, archeological parks, as well as many other museums which by their nature keep their exhibits, all of them or just some of them, outside under the open sky: railway museums which often keep their locomotives and railway cars, maritime museums which keep their museum ships in the sea, military museums which keep some of the weapons, equipment and military installations outside... Also in the open are memorial areas and sites, sites of great battles, events, sufferings... The open area museum *locus* is a larger or smaller territory or aquatory.

There can be and there actually are museums which are not in actual space at all, but are in virtual space². Their *locus* is also virtual, but it is quite certain that it exists. We call such museums online, cyber, electronic, digital or Web museums. Still, the most common term is – virtual museums. These

museums exist on the Internet. Their reality is an electronic network, and they are located at a Web address (URL). That is their locus. Web displays of actual museums in a cyber environment are not *real* virtual museums, though we often call them that. A museum and objects of a museum displayed on the Internet are only pictures of the objects and not the objects themselves. The Internet is only the means of communicating information here. On the other hand, virtual museums have as their objects works on the Internet, which do not exist outside of the Internet in the physical reality.

So, every museum must have a locus to exist in. Without it there is simply no museum. As we can see, a *locus* may not only be in physical space but it can also be in virtual space and subsequently, museums, given their *locus*, may be actual in the physical environment, or virtual in the electronic environment. Both kinds are part of our reality. They quite certainly both exist.

Beginning from the 19th century special buildings started being built for museums (Altes Museum, Museumsinsel, Berlin³, British Museum in 1857), and thus began the history of museum architecture which is also significant for our age, in which the most daring and anthological architectural projects are those for museums⁴. Some say these are cathedrals of our age.

³ Altesmuseum in Berlin is a masterpiece by Karl Friedrich Schinkel from 1830. It is the first building or palace for which we can say that it is really a museum one. They did not first design a building into which then a museum moved in, but a completely new building was designed and constructed in such a way that the rooms serve as supplements and support to the exhibits displayed and also other museum needs are taken into account, such as offices and storerooms. Everything is focused on the needs of the museum, from room size and layout and lighting to architectural details. It is therefore not surprising that in the discussions of museum architecture Schinkel is quoted time after time.

⁴ It suffices to mention Libeskind and Jüdische Museum in Berlin or Gehry and Museo Guggenheim in Bilbao. Museum architecture is the avant-garde of contemporary architecture.

² Virtual reality is the one that exists in the electronic world. The term *virtuality* is not the best solution here because it denotes something which could become real, actual, but it is not so yet. Virtual is kind of similar to potential, but a bit closer to actuality. But the Internet is very much real and actual and constitutes a reality parallel to the space-time reality of the material world. It might be better to speak of cyber reality or electronic reality, but the term *virtual* is commonly used so I will use it as well.

At the same time museums started to be placed in buildings built for other uses, mostly for the nobility – castles and palaces. In the bourgeois world which has abolished privileges and a great part of benefits which were previously enjoyed by the nobility and the clergy, many palaces and castles are repurposed and become museums. Many private, aristocratic and even royal collections become museum collections and are put on public display in representative buildings. There is an entire special history of museum architecture, both new construction and renovation of existing buildings, various interpolations, rearrangements and expansions. All these buildings are museum loci, they are the most common and most people when saying *museum* mean a museum in a building.

Museum locus is subject to frequent debates and new museology and eco museums have brought great confusion into what we usually consider the locus of the museum. For them loci encompass wide areas, whole regions together with the people and their lives. Heritage needs to live and this is why they refuse to define museums, which to them are lumber rooms for dead things, whatever that meant as a gesture. If we were to go to extremes, we could understand the whole world as a museum, with all of its nature, landscapes, cities and people with their lives,

and the locus of this museum would then be planet Earth. However, to some people even that would probably be too small so we should extend the locus into space. The new museology is not really a museum theory as such, but an attempt to abolish the museum and introduce something else. The same is true for the vague construction *Eco museums*, for which nobody knows what they are, or what they should be, except that may not in any way be traditional museums⁵. But these are topics for discussion in Museologia complex. We maintain that every museum, as we have established, has its own easily determinable physical or virtual locus. Every museum has an address at which you can find it.

Museum objects

All museums contain objects. **Without objects there is no museum.** Objects, like museums, can be physical or virtual.

Physical museums contain physical objects, things, while virtual museums contain virtual (non-actual) objects. Whatever kind these museum objects are, they must meet a single basic condition – they must as real or virtual items be available to our senses. We must be able to see or hear or touch museum objects, and sometimes even smell them. Virtual objects have been (for the time being) limited to sight and hearing only. In actual

⁵ It turns out that living one's heritage in an ecomuseum, in a certain area, is not a concept that can take hold. Apart from these not being museums at all and it has become obvious this is not the future of the museum, this blurry concept gives the same kind of results. Therefore it is no wonder that even the followers of Rivier's ideas such as Gob and Drouguet state: *Today ecomuseums are in a crisis*. See: André Gob – Noémie Drouguet, *Muzeologija*, Zagreb, 2007, p. 54. It is hard to imagine how we could get the people of our time to live their heritage, to live the past and to live in a museum!

museums objects are usually also available to the same senses, but there are museums which use touch, such as typhlological museums, some museums of sculpture, etc.

Arriving at the museum, an object becomes a museum object but does not change physically, it remains the same as it was before. In fact, it is the museum's obligation to preserve such an object, whatever it may be, in its original form, not to change it physically. This is important to note. Museum objects as facts are indifferent to our interpretations. Human opinion, arguments, interpretations or statements do not concern them. Of course, we form opinions, interpretations, etc. about them every day, but these do not in any way change these objects physically. In another time some other people may have a different opinion and a different interpretation of a particular museum object; some other properties of this object, which we do not notice, may become more important than those we attribute to it today. This is what actually happens in museums all the time – reinterpretations. Hence an important characteristic of museum objects – they never lie. Everything around them can be fake and incorrect, our statements about them can be deceptive and fraudulent, sometimes even on purpose, but they themselves are there and each of us can check whether a claim is true or false, whether an evaluation is accurate or not, etc. Our world

today produces a huge amount of information (on the Internet, TV, video, film, etc.) which can rarely be verified. This information is open to general manipulation which happens all the time. With museum objects this is not impossible, but it is much harder to do because every visitor can check any claim by checking the material – museum objects. This makes museums more credible than, for instance, TV or the Internet... Therefore **it is important to preserve the physical authenticity of museum objects or integrity of virtual items**. This is why museums must not turn into information points or constructs without original items. The museum has value precisely because in it we can experience objects first-hand, verify and face original objects. In the age of information world and the Internet this is of utmost importance.

Let's assume we are interpreting the life of the ancient Romans, the way they constructed their buildings and protected them from rain. In our exhibition we have included drawings, reconstructions, captions, animations... and we have put on display a number of tegulas. All of our drawings, reconstructions, etc. can be wrong. The interpretation may be incorrect and false, and very often it is. But a museum object never lies – it does not in any way refer to the issue of truth or falsity of cognition. It does not interpret anything. It is simply there, it

just exists and lasts (for a longer or a shorter period). A tegula is a tegula, neither true nor false. People trust heritage object because they are things; the more confirmation a given interpretation has in objects, the more credible it is. These things, museum objects, contain the importance of the museum – this is why people trust museums. The museum is the *locus credibilis* of our time, which we will discuss further on. One should never lose sight of that. Ultimately, this is why the question of the authenticity of museum objects is so important to us. The more a physical object has been modified, for example with too much restoration work, the less authentic it is considered to be. And the less authentic it is, the less credible it is, we trust it less. It's logical – why would we believe a restorer's interpretation? Heritage items the authenticity of which has been fully or partially destroyed become worthless or at least less valuable things.

With today's technology we can assemble exceedingly attractive sets of symbols (multimedia, the Internet, TV, holograms...) which can in a great and attractive way present to us how the Romans constructed their buildings, but we will time and again, every now and then, take a look at the tegula, the thing. It is only things that give interpretations veracity. Otherwise we are at Disneyland – and Disneyland is not a museum.

I hope it never will be.

Things (objects) give the museum credibility. This does not mean we have to give up all the multimedia advantages in our interpretation (in an exhibition, for example), or presentation on the Internet, but it does mean that we need to preserve the authenticity of the objects in museums and realize that they are the backbone of the museum. Once we have to carefully and meticulously separate lies from the truth in a museum, this will mark the beginning of the end of the museum as our civilization knows it. The lack of authenticity of museum objects casts doubt on the mission and reason for existence (*raison d'être*) of the museum.

Authentic items are genuine if they are the work of man and not copies, plagiarism, or replicas. In the case of natural objects, they are authentic if they are taken from nature and not models, artificial structures and the like.

Everything that we see as a tangible or virtual object in our surroundings can become a museum object. There is no limit. The only limit is the size. The Himalayas will probably never become a museum object. It is hard to imagine a museum of cities in which the objects would be cities or museum of stars in which the objects would be stars. In this case the museum locus would be too large. Almost anything around us can become a museum object – even the kitchen sink. The same

is true for any virtual (intangible) creation. The condition is for it to exist, to affect our senses, and to be brought (or located) into the museum.

Knowledge, ideas, laws (of mathematics, science...), skills and the like cannot be museum objects because they are neither physical nor virtual. We cannot experience them with our senses. They can be the subject of an exhibition, for example one in which some of these will be illustrated with objects, but are not museum objects themselves.

According to bioethics living beings should not be considered as objects and consequently they should not be museum exhibits.

In recent postmodern or post-postmodern artistic projects there are some acts which deliberately and in advance, as intended by the artist, resist becoming museum objects. There are works of art that are made from highly perishable materials which cannot be permanently preserved. Also, a performance is, for example, such a type of artistic activity which escapes musealisation. It is impossible to preserve an artist's gesture, as it is impossible to preserve a theatre performance as an object. There is not and there cannot be a collection of performances. The only thing that can be done here is keeping the documentation of the

event: image, film, video, sound, etc. But the documentation is not the object itself. What is possible to preserve from a performance is only that what is physical and accessible to our senses, but never the act as such.

This is the line the museum cannot cross. Leave the object framework. But the vast majority of works of art, especially the older ones, all the archaeological, ethnographic, natural, historical objects... are physical things. They are, as museum objects, kept, interpreted and displayed for us by museums.

In different museologies, different theories, museum objects are transformed into most diverse things and are attributed surprising and sometimes bizarre properties. At times they are pure spiritualities, at times they are completely physical; one time they are documents of the past, another just pathetic material remains; sometimes they are a special kind of symbols which one cannot find anywhere but in museums and which emit messages, and sometimes they are just small pieces of past times from which we reconstruct a broader picture of a culture, that is, only an aid. This diversity is not surprising, because museum objects can be very different things, such as a fragment of a Roman tegula, a piece of tusk of an extinct mammoth, and a work of art such as the legendary Mona Lisa ... We will not discuss these and similar issues here. That is really a topic for Museologia complex.

What is important is the requirement that museum objects, whether they are physical or virtual, are available to our senses and are placed in a museum.

Collecting

It is not entirely clear and it has not so far been unequivocally explained why people do this – collect things, but what is clear is that they have been doing so since the very beginning of civilization. Some have suggested reasons such as curiosity, interest in the past, desire to possess, expressing of power, the art market and even the bizarre, such as a sense of order or pious worship⁶. There is probably a touch of truth in some of these reasons, but generally they do not give an answer nor do they sufficiently explain the reasons why people collect things.

Collecting is the acquiring of items and their inclusion in a group of more or less related objects. Collecting can also be described as a process of placing somehow related objects (red thread) from different place in one locus – a collection, in our case a museum collection, in a museum.

Many people collect stamps and make a collection – and we have a special name for them, philatelists. For a stamp collection the *differentia specifica* from other collections is the very fact that what is being collected are

stamps and not something else. People collect diverse and sometimes bizarre or mundane things. Collecting is always done by a criterion set by the collector. There is always a red thread of collecting which makes a group of objects interconnected. If you put a china cup in a stamp collection, it will be a foreign body there. We will see right away that it does not belong there, that the red thread of collecting has been transgressed against. If we put a Renaissance painting in an impressionist collection, it will be a foreign body there, despite the fact these are generally paintings. The red thread here is impressionist painting. Of course, those things are collected which are considered to be worth collecting. An object will attract a collector because it is valuable within its kind or fits well with the criteria of collecting, or this very object is the missing link in the collection, etc. The criterion is not necessarily the value (artistic value, value in money, in handicraft...) or the age of the object. It all depends on the collection and the criteria of collecting. For example, some museums keep paper packaging less than decades old, and recent packaging is constantly added to the collection. This type of paper confection which is collected has no value in money, it is not particularly old, and its only value is that for the collector of such a collection and perhaps in the more or less foreseeable future.

Collecting in museums is just one

⁶ André Gob
– Noémie Drouguet,
Muzeologija, Zagreb, 2007, p.
22.

of many types and ways of collecting and essentially it is no different than any other type of collecting. For example, a private collector may collect impressionist paintings. If he sticks to his criteria, the collection will contain no objects which are not impressionist paintings. If he is successful, he will acquire a number of exactly such paintings for his collection. Such a collection can be fully transferred to a museum, into an art gallery. So, there is no fundamental distinction between a museum and private collecting, but it is also true that museums in most cases are more organized and do it more professionally and overall better, because they are institutions which have their mission and their expert museum staff, professionals, who realize this mission.

The minimum for collecting includes: searching, locating and acquiring items.

The scope of objects that can be collected is unlimited and the following witticism is true: If the objects exist, someone somewhere collects them.

A museum can collect objects for its collections by itself or it can come into possession of already complete or established collections (mostly private ones) or, most commonly, museums combine these two modes.

The history of collecting is a long one, from the wundercamera for which wonders and monstrosities were obtained, all the way

to the situation today, when we collect all that is more or less mobile and everything you can imagine. What used to be collected in the past were only paintings and sculptures, antiques, a number of wondrous natural history objects, and a few other things. The selection was tight and only the most valuable or the most important items would enter the museum. This has changed over time and now we collect and cram into museums almost everything that has ever been produced. From antiquity every shard, from animal bones all living and extinct species (see dinosaur fever sweeping the world for several decades now), of locomotives every one that has ever pulled train cars on our railways, from everyday objects all yesterday's and sometimes even today's objects of everyday use... We are frantically attempting to cram everything into the museum, every last piece of traditional costumes, every last piece of clothing fashion, all the sports equipment, all the space rockets, all the war machines, etc., etc. It is the same for conservators. Cultural goods include almost all things that exist, the vast majority of buildings of a city, some historical centers, all traditional buildings, industrial buildings, etc., etc. This explosion of objects that we collect literally swamps museums. For now, there seems to be no end to this explosion. Still, a limit will have to be set at some point. This limit may be set by the requirement of quality, or the requirement

of excellence. Although postmodernism sought to destroy any evaluation and any criteria for assessing the value of a work or an object, there are still the old criteria, old distinctions which need to be awakened in a new light. We all have some vague sense of the value or quality of a creation, but it needs to be awakened, deepened and criteria must be developed. If this does not happen, museums will suffocate themselves. A limit must be set for what should really be kept, beside the iron repertoire of museums (natural objects, works of art, archeology, ethnology, historical and cultural objects of the past). However, one must be cautious because you never know what kind of topic can come up which suddenly gives high value to only recently despised objects, as is the case with the Museum of Broken Relationships, which displays objects in which museums did not use to show any interest, and today are a valuable part of this cute museum.

Collection

Museums keep museum objects in museum collections. **A collection is an organized group of object which have something in common.** This makes them a whole. We have botanic collections (herbaria), stamp collections, collections of paintings ... In the multitude of the most diverse collections

there are museum collections as well. Every collection has a read thread which links the objects into a whole, and according to which an object is collected. This can be expressed using a phrase borrowed from mathematics: all the items in a collection have a common denominator, a thing that makes them part of this very collection. For example, in numismatic collections all items are coins. In painting collections all the objects are paintings, in collections of paintings by old masters all the objects are paintings by old masters, in a mineralogical collection all the objects are minerals, in porcelain collections all the objects are made of porcelain, etc. All the objects in a given collection are always somehow connected, even when it seems there is no red thread. Such, for example, are collections of everyday objects which are collected by the criteria of being used today or having been used in the past in everyday life. They can even, to a certain extent, define negatively as collections that do not contain objects of *high art*. There are countless examples.

The difference between all other collections and museum collections is not a particularly significant one. Museum collections are collections in museums, and all the others are not. Perhaps the most important difference is the fact that those who take care of collections in museums are curators, specialized professional experts for certain

types of objects, while private and other collectors are often dilettantes, amateurs (in the best and not the pejorative sense of the word).

Since the mid-18th century, which saw the beginning of the history of the museum as we know it today, collections were limited to objects of fine art and archaeological objects. Later on the list of the types of objects collected has been significantly expanded to include ethnological, technical, everyday, historical and similar objects, and today this list contains almost all the objects from the past, even the most recent past.

The type of museum determines the type of collections it has, and also the other way around, the type of collections determines the type of museum. Archaeological museums have exclusively archaeological collections, or, in other words, archaeological collections make archaeological museums, they constitute them. Ethnographic collections constitute ethnographic museums, art collections constitute art museums, etc. General museums have a combination of collections. For example, an art collection, an ethnographic one, a cultural and historical collection (whatever this phrase meant) ... and they usually collect items from a territory or place – a city, region, or country. This is a common situation with collections, determined by tradition and museum development. The division into

types of collections and types of museums should be taken very broadly and very freely. The Museum of Broken Relationships holds items which people wanted to get rid of after a relationship ended. In this museum curators collect, too. Their museum is also determined by the collection, but this collection is not traditional and does not conform to traditional molds of collecting. They cannot simply be classified within standard types of museums. There are actually infinitely many types of collections and, at least potentially, as many types of museums.

Collections are not simple sums, mechanical totals of objects, but the collection itself holds a meaning for us. For example, the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters is a gallery of old paintings. Each one of them is a work of art and a museum object, but together they are a testimony of a time, they tell us something about their main founder and about the Yugoslav (now Croatian) Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the main collector, Bishop Strossmayer. Every collection speaks about the time in which it was founded, its collector or collectors, or administrations and curators today. Also, a lack of collecting, especially in museums, serves as proof that something is wrong with a country's culture. Collections are something more than just a pile, a simple total of objects, and they say a lot about times past and present.

There can really be all kinds of collections, from collections of space rockets and rural houses and farm buildings in ethnological parks to coins that you have to look at with a magnifying glass. All that man has ever produced, all that we have inherited in nature can become the object of collecting. The limit is only the size of the object and the accommodation capabilities of a locus.

Any one and any kind of institution or organization which does not have a collection is not included in our deliberations and is not a museum, not even when it is called a museum, like the Krapina Neanderthal Museum. It can be a great Neanderthal park, a Neanderthal cultural center, an amusement park, an important tourist attraction, a Neanderthal show or whatever else, but it is not a museum. It does not have a single collection.

Preservation

Preservation of museum objects is one of the most important functions of the museum, at least this is the case with museums from the 19th century onwards. **When an object or an entire collection becomes property of the museum, it is understood that it is the duty of museums to preserve the object in its original state as long as possible, ideally ad infinitum, and as such hand it on to future generations.** Here we will not go into

the techniques applied to achieve this. These things one can learn from manuals anyway. We will only mention the importance of the so-called preventive care. Today, unlike a few decades ago, we are well versed in what is harmful to objects – we have the knowledge. Unfortunately, this does not mean we all apply it optimally or even at all in object preservation and protection. Those museums which do not do it, or do it poorly or inadequately, betray their core mission and an important social obligation.

Keeping is the basic civilizational function of the museum – to keep items which are at one point in time for any reason considered valuable for the future. Based on analogy, we assume that, if objects from the past are very important to us, they will also be important to the people of the future. Drawing on the experience that today we consider very important some objects which nobody before us deemed important, we often keep even those objects the importance of which we cannot really swear to, because we do not know what the future people are going to consider important, so we try to preserve as many objects for them as possible. We leave the decision on their importance to the people who will live in the near or distant future.

Without the keeping of objects museums lose their purpose of existence and they cease to be credible places. Lots of things

happen in the museum. Documentation, entertainment and education of children and adults, scientific research, presentation of topics and objects, setting up exhibitions, interpretation of collections and objects..... but these are all functions, all are dependent or at least in close relation with objects and collections of the museum. There's nothing to study, exhibit, or discover if there are no objects. Without objects and their keeping there is no museum. If we talk about art, this is the difference between a museum and a gallery – a gallery has no collections and does not keep paintings (except for a short while); an archaeological museum and an archaeological institute – an archaeological institute does not keep collections (and if it has collections, then it is obliged to act in accordance with the rules of the museum). There are numerous examples. What is worth bearing in mind is the fact that **museums possess and keep objects.**

Preventive protection is carried out (or should be carried out) by everyone from the management to the cleaning staff, and a special responsibility is that of curators (keepers) of each collection. The museum staff share their care for the preservation of cultural property with professionals of institutions for the protection of cultural property, especially and most often in the part that applies to movable cultural property. Possible hazards

are similar, methods of protection are often identical, etc. A polychrome sculpture and an altarpiece behind an altar face the same or similar hazards as their counterparts in museums – an unfavorable microclimate, too much light, wormholes, etc. Therefore the measures to be taken to preserve them are identical or similar.

Although keeping is the ultimate task of the museum and without it there is no museum, it is not the only one doing this. In addition to the already mentioned professionals, let me say that for special types of cultural property there are also archivists, who keep archives, and librarians, who keep books. Archives, libraries, museums and cultural property institutions (commissions and administrations) make a complex of the so-called heritage institutions. The only thing they fully have in common and that makes them different from many other non-heritage institutions, organizations, centers, or the like, whatever other names we give to cultural institutions – is the care of keeping, protection and preservation of objects. They can also share some other function to a greater or lesser extent, but what they fully share is the care about preservation of cultural goods.

The museum takes care of the authenticity and the duration of objects. This is its traditional role, but I maintain that it is the crucial one today as well, both for us and

for the future generations. When they cease to be important (if that should ever happen), museums will no longer exist.

Protection of museum objects is a process in which we, in the long run, slow down their natural decay and we try to maintain their original material and appearance – as long as possible. The most important role in this is that of preventive protection, which creates such storing conditions in which the decay of the objects is slowest. Here, depending on the material used for the construction of objects, an important role is that of: relative humidity, temperature, radiation (infrared, UV and visible light), chemical environment, pests (rodents, insects, microorganisms). What is also important are such things as cleaning, type of ventilation, methods of storage in drawers, in cabinets, behind screens, modes of exhibiting, etc. Virtual objects are of a different nature and are kept in other, specific ways, but are still kept. Objects are kept even despite the belief that they will not be exhibited in our lifetime or in the next few decades. They will sit in the darkness of the storage room. Why do we keep them anyway? Isn't that pointless? We keep them because we have developed a historical consciousness.⁷ Museums contain objects of the past. This is true of all museums. It is quite logical that galleries of old masters, technical museums, archaeological museums,

etc. feature and exhibit items made in the past. But this is true even for museums of contemporary art, which exhibit works of art produced recently, in the recent past, but the past nonetheless. The fact that a particular museum participates in the recent production of art and other objects, as do many non-museum institutions, galleries, cultural centers and others, does not change things. Historical consciousness tells us that in each of us lurk some past people, their thoughts and deeds. We are in a way the top or the crown of history. Within us we carry historical experiences that define us and that we add to and change again and again. Without this we would be constantly starting from scratch. Within us lies the Palaeolithic and Neolithic man, the ancient Greek, ancient Latin, medieval or baroque and even the modern and post-modern man. Museums keep the remaining items that were produced by past people. Museums help us understand our past, past people and thus ourselves. And that is why museums are important to us.

For whom does the museum exhibit objects? For the people of today – that is clear and understood. And for whom does it keep objects? For the future audience, future users, future people. This is not so self-evident any more in this self-oriented time, which is narcissistic and aimless and that has no idea which way we should go today in order

⁷ For our purposes, we define the otherwise complicated and ambiguous phrase *historical consciousness* as: understanding of the past that shapes our awareness of the present and the future.

to get somewhere tomorrow. Therefore, the civilizational mission of the museum to keep and preserve items for the future needs special emphasis. The thing is, museums have experienced radical changes in the last few decades. Their managements have been exposed to political and economic pressure, and they ask the experts to shift their focus from their collections to visitors⁸. That weakens the traditional role of the museum, particularly the keeping of objects, and strengthens the production of attractions with multimedia and communication at the forefront.⁹ Oh yes, attractiveness for visitors is important but we need the right measure. The attraction must not push out the objects themselves as long as there is a civilization which deems important their authenticity and originality. In the fact that we are not just people of today but also of the past, that we have been to a large extent shaped by the past, lies the importance of authentic items of the past. They are our mirror in which we see ourselves. As long as this is so, museums should keep selected material objects – things. In preserving that part of material heritage that is kept in them, museums are responsible to the future. If it so happens that people and objects of the past should become irrelevant to us, no worries, museums will die out on their own. If the past should become irrelevant to us, then museums would have no point in existing any more

either. But as long as it is not so, let's not allow political and economic pressure make our museums lose themselves in the present and become a tourist attraction like Disneyland, or worse, that instead of objects they begin to offer us only puppet-play reproductions or shiny internet sites.

In museums there is a constant fateful battle with time that we are seldom aware of. In them we strive to stop time, to stop the decay that comes with time. To save objects from the ravages of time. This is, of course, impossible – to completely stop natural decay. Depending on the material the object is made of, it is possible, to a greater or a lesser extent, to slow it down. This way museums keep the memory of the past and the evidence for the truth of our interpretations of the past. In a geological collection we will have evidence of Earth's geological past, in a historical collection we will have material remains of historical times... Time passes, things change, one cannot step into the same river twice, but still a part of the objects made in the past can be saved. That is what museums do. Therefore they are, paradoxically or not, to a large extent future-oriented, they preserve objects that we consider valuable, documentary, important, illustrative, representative ... for us today and for future generations, for future people. Today we are less interested in old set-ups, old visual solutions, old museum equipment,

8 See: Max Ross: *Interpreting the new museology* // *Museum and Society*, Jul 2004. 2 (2) 84-103, ISSN 1479-8360

9 A good example of this is the Krapina Neanderthal Museum. It has the word "museum" in its name but it has no authentic objects (except for a few completely marginal ones). Everything there is a play, show, Disneyland.

old display cabinets and the such (except the occasional curator, or museum historian), but we are certainly interested in objects which are preserved in the museums and which are being exhibited in a new museum attire. The museum equipment is constantly changing, photography has changed a lot in museums, video and computers even more, but all these museum accessories are, ultimately, secondary – they change. Everything in the museum is transient – except for the museum objects. They are the intransient foundation of the museum and will remain so. The purpose and mission of the museum is to preserve the objects of the past, interpret them, explain them and publicly exhibit them today, and to keep them undamaged for the future. Keeping of objects is one of the two basic social tasks of the museum. The other one is exhibiting.

Conservation - restoration

Conservation – restoration is the process by which we try to return damaged objects their initial, original appearance. Of course, to achieve something like that in its entirety – is not possible. It is possible, however, to come close to this ideal to a greater or a lesser extent. This means scrupulously keeping every remaining piece of the original.

The conservation-restoration process

is one and the same for each type of cultural property respectively (for oil paintings, polychrome sculpture, metal, ceramic, glass, paper, leather, and other objects) regardless of whether the object is located in a church, a museum, someone's home or anywhere else. A good conservator - restorer of oil paintings will be a good conservator - restorer of oil paintings regardless of where he works, in a museum, a conservation - restoration institution or in a private conservation - restoration workshop. Museums share conservation-restoration work as a method with other cultural heritage institutions. Conservation-restoration work is a special profession that is subdivided by the type of material for which the restorers specialize.

While keeping museum objects is an unconditional task of museums that must constantly take place in the museum, conservation - restoration work is not such an obligation. A museum can easily order restoration services from others – from conservation - restoration workshops. Large museums have a greater number of their own workshops, but no museum in the world has a conservation - restoration workshop for all kinds of cultural property or museum objects. This is where specialization comes in. For example, large archaeological museums can have conservation - restoration workshops for archaeological metal, ceramic, etc.,

ethnographic museums often have workshops for textiles, technical museums for machines, etc.

If objects did not decay, if they did not get damaged or ravaged by time, we would not need conservation - restoration at all, because all objects would be in an excellent condition. But this is not so, nor will be, and therefore conservation - restoration is necessary. It is, however, true that each conservation - restoration intervention is a necessary evil and each takes away a portion of the originality and authenticity of the object, however small this portion may be. Therefore, some people advocate the so-called museum restoration. It applies the most rigorous criteria and seeks to intervene the least in the material as much as it is possible, and especially avoids reconstruction, renovation and retouching. This is logical. If you have a picture of a saint that was heavily damaged and that must be returned to the church as a saintly image, then you will need to allow a little retouching where there is a layer of paint missing. In the museum this is not the primary thing, the primary thing is only **to preserve the originality of the painting, its authenticity**. It can easily be additionally retouched in the future if that is considered necessary at some point.

Documentation

The fundamental document of a museum is the inventory. It is an administrative list of museum objects that should meet several basic requirements. It must clearly identify each object. Based on the inventory we must be able to identify each object in the exhibition or in the storerooms, and in the event of theft it must provide the police with sufficient information to identify and find it. This is why beside identification data (ID) a photo is also required. Another important function of the inventory is a legal one. The inventory proves that an object belongs to the museum. Additionally, the inventory can also contain information about the origin of the objects, as well as some other data, depending on the location or country.

Doing the inventory is, therefore, administrative work which only occasionally and sporadically requires special expertise of curators who are art historians, archaeologists and so on. In some countries curators do not do the inventory no matter what type of museum objects is involved, and it is done by other museum staff (in the Anglo-Saxon world most widely by registrars). They only occasionally ask curators for help about expert issues. In some others, in turn, they go overboard by insisting the inventory is to be done exclusively by experts, specialist curators,

because of the supposedly great expertise required. This is, of course, irrational and dissimulative for the top experts.

Some museums also keep the so-called secondary documentation of their activities. For example, they have chronicles listing a smaller or greater amount of information about their exhibitions, publications, educational activities, workshops, etc.

In some places the documenting is highly overrated so it is unnecessarily exhausting the experts, and in some places it is underestimated so it is done poorly. The minimum is, of course, a good and accurate inventory. This is the basic document of a museum and it cannot do without it, because without one the museum does not know what it owns. It should, therefore, be regularly maintained and updated but with minimum effort and with the least unnecessary “wear” of curators.

Beside the inventory there are many other forms of documenting. Some of them are photo, film, and video documentation, sometimes technical documentation, written documentation of all kinds, and in some places there are regulations about what the so-called catalog of museum objects or professional records, etc. must look like – this depends on the place. All this documentation is, of course, important but it is also important to distinguish between professional papers of

certain professions or disciplines and museum documentation. If an art historian, curator writes about a painting, then he researches and works mainly as an art historian, and only then as a museum worker. There is no particular museum method for the study of museum paintings or archaeological museum objects, ethnographic museum objects, etc. but what is applied here is the methodology and operation mode of particular scientific or scholarly disciplines. Therefore such work should not be considered as pure museum work nor as outright museum documentation, despite the fact that in a museum such papers, by all documentary standards, will be kept as part of documentation on a particular object, group of objects or an entire collection.

Expert treatment (curation)

In addition to keeping and documentation of objects in the collection, expert treatment is an important task of curators. Expert treatment implies special knowledge and specialists. It often involves study and research. This it, as the name suggests, highly professional work. A curator for a painting collection studies the paintings, interprets them, identifies their style, dates them (to a century, decade, year, a phase of a painter), explains them, critically evaluates them, finds them a place in the

artistic production of the author, time, and style, explains the biographical and social context of the painting, explores the origin of the painting, its owners and its path before ending up in the collection, closely monitors opportunities for new acquisitions to the collection... It is therefore natural for the curator of a painting collection to be an expert art historian. Similarly, it is common sense to have an archaeologist as the curator for an archaeological collection. Among other things a museum archaeologist, if he is lucky, explores, „digs“, which means that he leads or participates in research and scientific analysis of archaeological sites and materials. This way he also takes care of the enrichment of the museum collection he is in charge of. It is similar with ethnographic collections and ethnologists, historical collections and historians, paleontological collections and paleontologists, etc. Expert treatment always leans on the methodology of the original scientific discipline.

Expert treatment is also accompanied by corresponding documentation, corresponding review, expert or scientific articles etc. It is best for the expert treatment documentation to comply with the field to which the collection and the curator belong. If we strictly adhered to this, many misunderstandings would be avoided.

There is no expert treatment of objects

which would be specific only for museums. The same methodology of excavation, the same kind of documentation and the same layout for a published paper will be followed by an archaeologist who works at a museum, as well as one that works at a university or an institute. In fact, there should not be much difference. It is the same for an art historian, historian, ethnologist, mineralogist, biologist, engineer... There are rules of profession that must be followed.

Expert treatment has the characteristics of and very often is scientific work.

Some museums are denied field research, but it is a big mistake. Curators are or should be the top experts in their field. A curator archaeologist must have a broader picture, his collecting depends on digging and he should know how to dig, he has to be able to interpret what is found, he needs knowledge of the wider context, credible knowledge of how the long gone people lived and what this has to do with us today. In other words, like an archaeologist at an institute or a university, he must also be a real archaeologist. The same goes, of course, for other curatorial professions. This is very important. **An expert curator in the museum should not become a technician who knows just how to preserve objects, or how to set up an exhibition, who has neglected his role of a researcher and interpreter of human or natural activity.** Without this collections cannot be interpreted or explicated well.

Interpretation

If we are interested in archeology we will go to the archaeological museum, if we want to learn about the past of a city we will visit the city museum, if we are interested in contemporary art we will visit the museum of contemporary art, if we want to find out about the old life of a nation will go to the ethnographic museum, a love of old machines and devices will take us to the technical museum, etc. In these museums, we primarily expect to see original objects: archaeological findings, works of art, costumes, devices, etc. There can also be all possible combinations of various professions, collections of objects and so on. In museums the objects of interest are available in exhibitions. Objects are displayed and can be viewed.

Every exhibition is an interpretation.

Objects are usually accompanied by legends. They are part of the interpretation. The objects are placed in a context, they are set in a relationship with other objects, with a certain scenography, equipment (display cabinets, pedestals...), there is a certain atmosphere created around them, they are illuminated in different ways and are often surrounded by different implements – drawings, videos, various types of projections, touch screens, music and a lot more. All this serves the interpretation of museum objects and themes

of which they are a physical part.

Interpretation is explication and elucidation of the significance, value, importance, interestingness, ambiguity... of museum objects, a collection and/or the topic covered. While expert treatment is done mainly by the curator and his team, interpretation is often the work of a number of different experts. This applies to exhibitions, videos, presentations, etc. in real space and time, but also to virtual interpretations.

From the past only fragments can reach us, and not whole realities, and these are only material fragments. There had to be a physical object in the past so it could last all the way to the present day. All such objects, no matter how big and important they are, are only fragments of the overall reality of the past. It depends on the interpretation of these objects how authentic the explication of past reality will be, that is, how close we will get to the supposed original reality. What we do is an attempt of an authentic rendition, an authentic (true – if you will) interpretation of the past. Objects that remain from this past can help us do it, but still it is only our interpretation. So, they are not only authentic proof of a past reality (that the past existed is a trivial statement) but they also serve as evidence of the authenticity of our interpretation of this past. The difference is huge.

Works of art in museums are themselves

objects made in the past, but except for the fact we can interpret them as historical objects they are also interpreted, explained, experienced, analysed... as works of art. If it is a machine, as a technical work, etc. There are also natural objects in the collections of natural history museums, which are authentic proof of natural history interpretations of nature.

Let's take for example the already mentioned Roman tegulas. They only had a practical purpose and ancient Romans did not ponder much over their meaning, just as we do not theorize about ordinary roof tiles today. But they help us interpret the past Roman reality, at least in the part relating to construction. Therefore we keep the tiles. We interpret construction, and the tegulas serve as physical evidence in our interpretation. From a fairly insignificant practical item the tegula has become a museum object which is kept or displayed. To us it has historical value, cultural value, etc. All this time, from the Ancient Rome when it was made until today when it has its place in a museum, it is one and the same physical object (thing). Interpretations can change, but not the object. This applies to all museum objects no matter how unnoticeable or noticeable they are. Like we said, interpretations can be a little or completely wrong, but objects are indifferent towards interpretations. We are the ones who, based on these objects, estimate the value

and truth of an interpretation. Therefore, care should be taken that our interpretations of a time and place, of activities in the past, be in line with the conclusions we make on the basis of the objects.

Exhibition

Exhibitions are organized public displays of selected objects.

When it comes to size exhibitions can be enormously large. The largest ones, such as for instance World exhibitions, are not museum exhibitions at all. Exhibitions can also be very small; some can have only one exhibit, and it can be a small object.

Museums are not the only ones who produce exhibitions. There are plenty of art galleries that are not museums, which have no collections, but which exhibit works of art. There are also commercial exhibitions of things such as food, furniture, cars... Therefore, exhibitions are not something exclusive and specific to museums.

Two kinds of exhibitions are prevalent in museums. One type can be called art exhibitions, which include display of paintings, drawings, craft objects, sculptures, video installations, performances, etc. In their focus they may have one artist, a group of artists, a genre, a theme or collection, or may be a selection of a jury and the like.

The other type could be termed interpretive exhibitions. They are often dedicated to science, history, technology, natural history, ethnographic and numerous other topics. The list of topics which can be interpreted in an exhibition is almost non-exhaustive, and there are also bizarre ones (e.g. *the plague, cemeteries and burial customs...*).

The concept and the context are important for every exhibition, but with interpretive exhibitions this is of particular importance and there are usually more explanations, illustrations, projections, use of electronics and the like. The basic purpose of art exhibitions is to provide artistic experience. The basic purpose of interpretive exhibitions is the interpretation and explication of the topic. In the former special importance is placed on works of art (objects), and in the latter the objects are crucial evidence of the truthfulness of interpretation of a topic. Of course, some exhibitions which display works of art can also be interpretive, or both at once. The two types of exhibitions should not be taken as completely separate groups. They are often intertwined, but there remain two basic types.

Museums (unlike art galleries¹⁰) have permanent exhibitions. Although the vast majority of museums also have occasional exhibitions, permanent exhibitions are typical for them. While galleries produce exhibitions of short duration (up to several months),

museums have longer lasting exhibitions, for several years, and sometimes even decades. The term *permanent* is ill-chosen because today there is a tendency to make even permanent exhibitions modifiable, at least in part, that some of their parts can be rearranged and redisplayed and thus motivate the audience to come visit more often. With a bit of humor we can say that the permanent exhibitions have become permanently modifiable permanent exhibitions.

Virtual, online or cyber exhibitions are those that take place on the Internet. They are not specific to museums either, but museums increasingly use them. Unlike physical exhibitions, they are not limited by time. Each exhibition can be permanent and be open 24 hours every day. They are most diverse and here we will mention only those of importance to museums.

By phrases *virtual museum* and *virtual exhibition* we mean:

- Museums that have virtual permanent exhibitions of virtual objects. Such is the MOWA Museum of Web Art – address: <http://www.mowa.org/>
- Museums that display copies (reproductions) of real objects but their locus is on the Web only. The exhibition does not exist in any one place physically, but only on the Internet. Items shown are usually from different locations. Such is

10 Gallery is the name of the room or building in which works of art are displayed (or sold). Because they display works of art, some museums have the word *gallery* in their names, such as the Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters in Zagreb or the National Gallery of Art in Washington. But these galleries are museums and have permanent exhibitions and everything else that makes a museum what it is, unlike other galleries which do not have permanent exhibitions, do not have collections and produce only occasional exhibitions.

the exhibition (or the museum) *Art of the First world war* at the address: <http://www.memorial-caen.fr/>

- Displaying real permanent exhibitions and / or objects from the collections of a museum on the Internet. These are not really virtual museums, though they are often called so, but are merely illustrations of actual museums. They are more or less an invitation to visit the museum in the physical reality.

There is no museum-specific way of exhibiting. Museum exhibitions are simply those that are put up in a museum. Exhibitions outside the museum are sometimes also called museum exhibitions, in cases when they are organized and facilitated by museums, usually by curators.

The concept and setting up of an exhibition is creative work. In each exhibition some new or at least different value is produced (or reduced, sometimes) from what was previously attributed to the objects. We cannot change the objects, but we can change what they mean to us. Let us take the example of the thematic exhibition about Casanova which was at one time set up in Venice¹¹. Some of the paintings at the exhibition were given, in addition to their artistic meaning, a whole new non-artistic one. Each portrait of a woman opened a question – whether Casanova

seduced the lady in the painting or not? Did Casanova choose his ladies without criteria or did he have his own special measure of female beauty? Etc. This new different view, different experience is something that we could call a new meaning. The paintings here were not just works of art. There is a whole range of new associations, experiences, and questions woven around them ... But of course all the while they remain the same physical object – oil on canvas. The selection of paintings was not dependent on their artistic value, they were chosen to illustrate and support the exhibition theme. They showed what the women Casanova seduced looked like. In an art exhibition I can experience a portrait of a lady only as a work of art, and in the thematic exhibition of Casanova it can be viewed as a work of art, but I will find it more important to see what kind of a woman it was that he seduced, from which social group, whether there is any correlation between Casanova's taste and our taste in women today... Simple, isn't it?

Objects in storerooms and objects in the exhibition are distinguished precisely by the characteristics given to them by the exhibition. This is, of course, temporary and goes away when the exhibition is over. All the while the objects do not change, what changes is everything around them and our experience.

The value of an exhibition is not only

11 *The World of Giacomo Casanova: A Venetian in Europe 1725-1798*, at Ca' Rezzonico on the Grand Canal – 1998. - Ca' Rezzonico - Museum of 18th-Century Art

12 Some would include communication here. They think that the role of the museum and museum staff is to communicate museum objects. But it seems to me there is a misunderstanding here. Among various definitions of communication, only one thing is indisputable – that it always consists of sending some information (message) through a channel to a receiver. In this scheme the museum objects can only and exclusively be the channel (actually just a sign or a group of signs) by which the information or message is transmitted. An object can be our source of information, which can be reached by studying it and learning about it – this is not debatable, but it is not communication. Telling others about a finding or an assertion about an object – that is communication. Of course, if we have a system of symbols such as a book or an inscription in stone, then with such a museum object we can speak of communication in which we read what some people in the past were telling themselves, others or us. But the number of such objects in museums is relatively small and for any work of art it is obvious that we are not dealing with a *channel* or a *sign* only. This is actually a typical topic for discussion in the Museology complex.

dependent on the value of the exhibited items but also on the skill, professionalism, communicativeness and inventiveness of those who produce it. Every exhibition, whatever it may be, has a message. It represents value (high, low, negative) by itself. The choice of topic, author, object choices, the set-up – all this in itself is already a message, already says something about those who created the exhibition, and I suppose something about our society and time.

The creation of exhibitions is creative work of various experts. In most museums the author of an exhibition is the curator, but there can also be others. A very important role is also that of the exhibition designer (visual design), and lately computer guys are also important. There are also restorers, lighting experts, carpenters...

Exhibiting (showing, presentation)¹² of objects and topics that are illustrated and which are based on objects is the second most important social function of the museum. Museums and their activity are recognized by their exhibitions (permanent and temporary). The average user goes to the museum to see an exhibition. The most important thing in a museum is the permanent exhibition. This is what we recognize different museums by. There are different types of permanent exhibitions and they depend on the type of collections that a museum has.

We go to the archaeological museum to see the oldest items manufactured by man, to the geological museum to see objects that testify to the origin and changes on Earth as a planet, usually before the emergence of man, and of living beings in general, we go to the art museum to enjoy of works of art (mostly visual) of a historical period, etc. Other social functions of the museum are less visible and not that present in the general public – they are not as attractive as exhibitions. That is why this social role of museums is the most vulnerable to ideological influences¹³.

Ideological conditioning is very easy to establish. In Great Britain there is a museum called Imperial War Museums¹⁴. Perhaps it would be better to have Anti-imperial Anti-war Museums. How do people in the former British colonies feel when faced with a museum that deals with imperial wars? Of course, my remark is also ideological in nature. What is certain is that in this case, ideology plays a significant role. Try to imagine an Austro-Hungarian Imperial War Museum or a Nazi/Fascist Imperial War Museum. This, of course, is not possible for quite clear ideological reasons. Much depends on the current, recent or distant past and its interpretation today.

A no less ideologised example is the Peasants' Revolt Museum in Gornja Stubica in Croatia. In its permanent exhibition there are few serfs and little revolt, but there is as

13 By *ideology* I mean a system of concepts (ideas) about human life and culture that affects the way and content of thinking of persons, groups, nations, and politics ...

14 It is a museum in several locations (loci), or, if you so prefer, several museums under the same hood.

much nobility as you want. All protagonists, from noblemen to rebels, are positive figures (not even the notorious Tahy is much loathed any more), probably because this was deemed necessary at the time of the formation of the nation state. The display was opened after Croatia's separation from Yugoslavia and its independence. Prior to this the museum was also ideologised to the utmost degree – the rebels, trouble makers were portrayed as the precursors of the proletarian struggle. The new nation state gave rise to the concept of a glossed over and heroic history of a nation in which there is no place for disputed matters. History must be smooth and in one line and must inevitably lead to the present Croatian state. It was therefore possible for the Peasants' Revolt Museum to at the same time become the Nobility Glorification Museum.

But ideology is also reflected in many other museum matters. For example, in the exhibition *100 Masterpieces of Croatian Art from the Collection of the National Museum in Belgrade*¹⁵ the topic was not the collaboration of Zagreb and Belgrade, Serbian and Croatian artists in Yugoslavia, the cross-influences between the two environments or why Croatian artists' works are so massively present in a museum in Belgrade. This would be inconvenient for the awakened national consciousness, that there was such close and important collaboration between the two, for

nationalism opposing backgrounds. No matter what kind of works there were or what the exhibition was like – everything is filled with ideology and tongues in cheeks.

While wanting to raise the importance of the museum and its exhibits, on the occasion of the exhibition "Treasures of the World's Cultures" in Beijing, Mr. McGregor, the Director of the British Museum, wrote: *How China understands the world around it will be a fundamental question for us in decades to come. Collections like the British Museum's have an important role to play.*¹⁶ There, the museum is not only a slave to ideology, it is also its creator.

The museum is quite clearly influenced by ideology to a certain degree. In the social function the impact of ideology is powerful and impossible to fully avoid. Speaking of ideology and museums, it would be nice if museums always represented humane and humanitarian values, human rights, bioethics and similar universal positive legacy. The social functions of museums, whatever they may be, are of course ideologically conditioned and they are, consciously or unconsciously, no matter, more or less carried out by all museums.

In Croatia, up to recently every general museum had as its permanent exhibition a display of the working class struggle and of the NOB¹⁷. Some local museums were initially founded as museums of the NOB

16 See: "Treasures of the World's Cultures," exhibition in Beijing. Mr. MacGregor wrote this in The London Spectator. Cited from The New York Times, July 1, 2006.

15 Held in 2008 at the Modern Gallery in Zagreb.

and then later on formed typical museum collections: archaeological, historical, artistic, ethnographic... and displayed them. This is true for a large number of museums in Croatia. Suddenly, in 1990 in most of these museums their exhibitions of the NOB and the working class struggle simply vanished, disappeared, and they also stopped collecting objects for these collections, as well as studying the NOB. It is quite clear that in this case this was direct influence of social changes and a change in ideology. For the same reasons collections and exhibitions covering the Homeland War appeared overnight in museums. Is there a better confirmation of ideological influence on museums? Sometimes it is just impossible to avoid such crude and direct ideological influences, but museums and museum staff should make an effort to escape them as much as they possibly can. Ideology is inevitable, but this does not mean we should be slaves to it and subject ourselves to it no questions asked, especially not in the area where the museum is most oriented towards the public – and this means exhibitions.

Organization and management of museums

Most definitions say the museum is an institution. That would mean an organization founded with a special purpose in mind, in

our case a museum purpose. However, it is not necessary, especially not in a definition of a museum, to point out that it is an institution. Besides, this statement is not true. We can hardly call a small family museum an institution, and still there are thousands of such museums all over the world, and they are often quite well visited. In all their characteristics these are true museums. What is important is something else: organized performing of functions that make a museum a museum¹⁸. But it is true that the organization of a museum affects the way it functions.

Very simplified, we can say that there are two ways of organizing museums. One of them is to organize them by collections. A museum is a sum of its collections. Depending on the kind of collection, such kind of a museum it is. It is a curatorial museum where the main role is that of collection keepers. This kind of organization is completely logical if the museum is understood as a museum of objects and collections. The other option is to organize a museum according to the functions it performs. This is a museum that focuses on its functions. It is organized so that it has separate functions of object keeping, educational activities, marketing activities, and working with collections is only one function among many. There are people who think that the first way of organizing is outdated, that it belongs to the 19th century

18 On museum functions see the definition of the museum which I give in the chapter *Museology*.

17 In Croatian, NOB is short for National Liberation Struggle.

and that the museum of today should be organized according to its functions. This is completely in line with modern processes and the pressure on museums to become more efficient, more attractive, more sustainable, etc. The dilemma is false. Museums are defined by their collections and objects, otherwise we would not have archaeological, railroad, ethnographic, memorial, art and all other possible and impossible museums. It is really ridiculous to explain that art museums are art museums because they exhibit and collect works of art, or that archaeological museums are archaeological because they exhibit and collect archaeological objects, etc. They are not special types of museum neither by marketing, management, pedagogical activities, etc., not by their function, but are defined by their collections and exhibitions. Therefore collections and objects in them are crucial for museums, they define them, and their internal organization must take this into account. Everything else can be quite necessary but is not critical. It is clear that a museum should use all the skills of marketing to be successful, but a museum would remain a museum without marketing as well, only it may be a little more difficult to “sell”. **The museum must remain a curatorial museum in which an important role must always be that of curators of collections, but this in no way excludes all other functions that the**

museum performs, marketing, educational, documentary, restoration, etc. The art of museum management, which seems to be a big problem today, is actually to establish a balance between all that the museum should do and those who do it.

Marketing, PR¹⁹, management and the similar only serve as auxiliary skills that a museum uses. They are, of course, important for the functioning of the museum as well as pedagogy and similar activities but all of them must be established for and must serve what is really important in the museum – keeping, collecting, exhibiting and studying museum collections and objects.

It is similar with the request for the commercialization of the museum which is, of course, in connection with all of the mentioned other non-museum requirements.²⁰ Nobody has anything against museums making profit (except ICOM which hypocritically requires non-profitability), or against commercialization of any kind, as long as this does not challenge the essential museum functions of the museum. Of course, this is also a case of tautology. As long as a museum remains a museum (see the definition of a museum) and performs everything a museum must do and be to be a museum, so far commercialization can go. But if it begins to interfere with the essence of the museum, and I do not see how I would not, then it should be rejected. Profit

19 Public relations.
20 A. Breton said in his surrealist novel *Nadja* that *beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all*. In a programme called Triptih, on Radio Zagreb Channel 3, broadcast on 29th July 2014, Leila Topić paraphrased this statement by saying: *museums will be commercial or will not be at all*, true, with a question mark in the air but still...

is important in the museum until it begins to consume the substance, the essence of the museum. Commercialism can easily devour museums and I think this unfortunately happened at least to some so-called eco-museums, which have begun to function only as attractions serving profit, as a source of revenue and profit. In this case museums have simply been lost. On the other hand, as long as a museum functions as a museum and therefore is a museum, why would it not make money, why not be a commercial success?

When talking about the necessity of commercialization for museums if they are to survive, it is often stated that the already bleak situation of museums is intensified by the fact that many of new museums emerge in the world every year so the already modest cake needs to be shared and cut into smaller and smaller slices. However, the establishment of new museums only shows that our time is in need of museums, maybe not of all types of museums but of some certainly. This need to preserve, exhibit, etc. cultural goods, objects of a community, just proves that museums are still needed, even more than ever. There may be a crisis of organization, management and funding of museums but this applies only to a small number of museums, not to all of them. If museums founded on the principles of the new museology cannot survive, then their demise or their loss of museum properties does not

mean the demise of museums in general. This is simply not so. No serious museum with a tradition and important collections has been completely extinguished. Quite the opposite, most of them have gained in importance.

History

The museum is not an end in itself and the history of the museum testifies to it. Many museologies typically include an occasional longer or shorter chapter on the history of the museum. From those anyone can easily be informed about the date of origin of the museum and the course of events that followed. I will not repeat it here, but I will single out only those parts of the museum history that I consider important for museology.

Museums exist because of people, all people. The museum has a social function. It was actually created as a result of changes in society. When all people become equal before the law, they become equal and before art and science as well, and only then, all as equal citizens, they become worthy of the museum. Until then, there were many for whom art and museums were out of reach. The historical turning point, for many other things as well as for museums, was the emergence of civil society. Historically speaking, museums are a recent development. In feudal times there

were no museums, not in the modern sense of the word. There were only some elements of today's museums and then we can only talk about the beginnings of museums, which was also the case in the Antiquity. But the idea of public museums and museum as a public good is a civic phenomenon. The first museums were opened to the public in the late Baroque²¹ when the civil revolution was already in the air, and they were an indication of the general flourish of museums after the French Revolution. The statement on the official Web site of the Louvre Museum is typical: *With the Revolution, the Louvre entered a phase of intensive transformation.*²² At that time it became more or less what it is today. And not just Louvre. Museums were founded, castles and palaces transformed. There was a museum boom not only in civil France but worldwide. The museum found its home in the civil society. Hence the demand for museums to be public. It is rightfully open to all citizens. That is, despite all the changes, the foundation of the museum today as well. A lot has changed, in museums we keep things which in the past experts would not give more than one short contemptuous look, but the basis remains the same. Museums operate in a world whose prime slogan is *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. It is then closely followed by the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of 1789, which was a precursor of the he Universal Declaration

of Human Rights which still applies today and which is the basic document of the world in which we live. This is also the underlying ideological concept of today's museums, which are a product of civil revolution and the strengthening of historical consciousness of the civil society. For the first time in history. Even in the Baroque period Gothic churches were still transformed into Baroque ones without any awareness of the value of the Gothic style. Before civil society the only thing that was appreciated was the Antiquity, with the addition of some Renaissance works of art. Citizens extend this selection to many more objects of the past, medieval, baroque, folk, all the way to everyday objects completely without artistic halos. This process is still going on and no one can even guess where it will stop. The Communist historical episode in the 20th century that in some places lasted for over seven decades has not significantly changed museums. This can be claimed today from a pretty solid time distance already. Art, technical and archaeological museums have survived and mostly remained the same. Nothing terrible happened to them and they have, we can now safely say, their civic continuity²³. Drastic changes have taken place in historical and parts of general museums that are by the nature of things prone to ideological influences.

Will this civic world change into

²³ It is a whole different story with museum management, where we are already experiencing significant adverse consequences of the socialist period.

²¹ Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University Museum in Oxford, 1714; Naturhistorisches Museum in Vienna (1748); The British Museum in London (1753)...
²² See: <http://www.louvre.fr/en/history-louvre>

something different from what it is today, whether the potential social change will change the purpose and mission of the museum or the museums may perish from the earth, there is no telling today. That is why we act like museums will last forever, together with the objects kept in them. Today, the museum movement shows the greatest growth in its history so far. New museums are being established, and major old ones have millions of visits so some are developing programs to reduce the number of visitors. The strong development of cultural tourism, which, year after year, takes an increasing chunk of the tourist cash cake and the related increase in the number of visits to cultural property and museums, is proof that the human aspiration to experience things firsthand, to see and experience the authentic buildings and also such items in museums and elsewhere – is not weakening, but growing. If the trend continues, and there is no indication that it will not, then for museums, unlike some other heritage institutions, there is no danger.

Museum as locus credibilis

The museum is already in our environment a credible place (*locus credibilis*), which in our electronic civilization is very rare. Objects do not lie. In a museum one can see objects firsthand. Thus, the museum

returns to its primary task: the preservation and presentation of material objects. The modern world does not really need museums as sources of knowledge and learning. They did not need it as such before either, but it was not as obvious as it is now in the Internet era. If the museum becomes an information institution, it will be the end of it. The museum will, if it survives, become more and more of a guardian of human contact with tangible things, with something accessible to our senses. Today, Google knows infinitely more than museums and provides vastly more information than museums do. Of course, museums are also sources of information but to the extent they are related to objects and collections. The museum can problematize even abstract topics such as faith and hope or termination of relationships, but not in general but specifically by showing items. The best example is the Museum of Broken Relationships. It is a museum of objects that remain when a relationship is gone, and not a sociological, psychological, ideological or any other treatise or theory about human relationships and breakups. Of course, this all may be, but what is fundamental to the museum is not that, but the objects.

To experience something first-hand, see in situ, hear in concert, walk through an old building, participate in a theater performance and visit the museum, no Internet will ever

destroy that. Who says museums are in a crisis? There have never been more museum visits than there are today, in particular countries or the world in general. It is not the museums that are in a crisis. What is in a crisis is the financing of museums. In a great number of countries museums are perceived only as an expense. That is the way of things in rampant capitalism. Museums do not make a profit and therefore they represent a cost which needs to be economized. People need museums and they visit them. The state is not fond of museums because of money, so they are forced to make their own money so they would not have to depend on state or local government funds, whichever the case may be. States do not give back anything at all, or give back too little of what is earned from cultural tourism, let alone give more to museums. We need museums and we can see this in daily life. The number of museums is growing and the number of visits is growing as well. It is just that they are slowly losing their place in the wild world of profit because they are not profitable. Museums are in a crisis of finance and a crisis of management due to pressure on their administration to become self-financing. Their place in the society, people's need for them is not in a crisis, on the contrary, museums for that matter have been flourishing. A similar crisis has for similar reasons stricken the Arts and healthcare and everything else that does not bear a profit.

To change this we should change the world, but unfortunately we cannot do it here from museology.

The public aspect of the museum

A museum has to be public. The owner might be the state, a private person, a religious community, any social organization, but the condition for something to be a museum is for it to be public. This does not mean it needs to be managed publicly. Who cares how a private owner manages a museum. But a museum must be public, at least to the extent to which it is customary today, with certain restrictions. This, among other things, stems, a thing that is rarely mentioned, from the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UN 1948). Article 27 states²⁴: *Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts...* In the case of art museums being public springs directly from the Declaration, but if the museum participates in any way in the cultural life of a larger or a smaller community, and it seems obvious to me that it does, then this provision applies to all museums as well.

What does that actually mean for museums? By the Declaration, everyone has the right to work as well²⁵, yet many are out of work. So neither in museums is this declared right never fully implemented. The most important form

24 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948, article 27.

25 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948, article 23.

which helps actualize this right to participate and to enjoy art exhibitions. Therefore they must be public. Indeed they are, but only to a certain extent: they are available to anyone who pays the admission fee, but it must be paid. There are only few museums, in some countries only, which are available as a public good without an admission fee²⁶, so that they are truly available to anyone. We should hope that this great practice will spread throughout the world. Objects in storage are generally available, or should be available, to all researchers, but except in special cases of open storerooms, they are inaccessible to others and are not available to everyone. Usually there is a procedure for access to storerooms which one must undergo to be able to enter it, after someone in charge of the museum has approved it. This is understandable given the damage that could occur due to uncontrolled access to collections and objects. Some of the things in museums are not available for safety reasons as well.

Documentation created and kept by a museum is usually available, but there are also understandable restrictions. It would certainly not be the smartest move to let anyone see the documentation on the installation of alarm devices, or on the location of some immense valuables in the vault, or similar documentation. The documentation on the state of artworks, their restoration, is also rarely

available, although anyone interested should have insight into the degree of authenticity of the objects they wish to know about.

So, the situation is not ideal and museums still have a lot of work to do concerning the public, but it can be said that most museums have taken their public role seriously.

Source of knowledge and place of learning

The museum is still some kind of a source of knowledge and one can still learn something there, but this role is weakening. Knowledge is moving to the Internet. The museum has never had a crucial role in scientific learning about things and phenomena, though this role did exist. But today it has a different function. It has long ceased to be the primary source of knowledge. Traditional pedagogical and educational activities are weakening and will continue to weaken. The museum has a specific role, which is reflected in the ability to face, to encounter, to be in contact with the tangible object of some importance. What is important for the museum is direct contact and experience of objects and collections that they make. Such contact cannot be provided by the Internet, nor virtual reality, cyberspace, not even books, videos, TV or movies – no media, but

²⁷ Libraries are doing a similar thing with books. Increasingly, you will be able to hold a book in your hand only if you have borrowed it from a library or you are looking at it or reading it there. The same goes for archives with archival documents. Libraries will fade as sources of knowledge and will become ever more like museums, in them books will be things that will be kept, presented and allowed direct contact with. Only there will you be able to physically flip through books. Direct contact, direct access to the object is a privilege of heritage institutions.

²⁶ Such are, for example, all national museums in Great Britain, the National Gallery of Art in Washington and some others in the world. They are mostly state-financed museums. It is reckoned that the visitors have already paid their admission fees by paying taxes and other charges to the state.

only the museum²⁷ – with tangible objects. One does not go to the museum to learn but to experience, check things out firsthand. Here is the opportunity for museums. The museum is not a school nor should it become one, it is not an information institution so it should not become one either, but it is also not Disneyland or an amusement park, nor should it be. Some museums today are going in the wrong direction. They are moving to the Internet, trying to become an educational institution, become a tourist attraction and the like. Conversely, all this should be subjected to the actual role of the museum. All this should be just a preparation for the real thing – the encounter with museum exhibits and collections.

For example – you can learn about the drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, acquire knowledge about them on the Internet in the library, watching a movie, etc., but the drawings themselves you can only see in a museum or at least only in a heritage institution. To truly see Mona Lisa, you must go to the Louvre. The same goes for the plain Roman tegula. You can learn a lot about it in many different places but you can see it only in the museum²⁸. This is what museums are for. If they move into virtual reality, it will be their death²⁹.

Therefore, keeping all this in mind, we should adapt the pedagogical and educational

roles of museums. Their central point should be museum objects and collections.

Museums do not have to be dead serious, austere places where important things are learned, places where you have to watch your step and in which conversation at a normal volume is a terrible sin. Museums can and should be places of entertainment, places where we go to relax and rest. The museum is there for adults, the disabled, children ... for everyone. A museum is not a school. If you learn something there, it is not school learning. If one enters it, it does not have to be with the high goal of learning the ultimate truth and the last wisdom, or the great secret of art and things like that. Museum as a consecrated space is a thing of the past. The desacralization of museums has long been done. This does not mean that it is a place of clownery, that in a museum everything is allowed, but it also does not mean that it is a sacred place where humor is undesirable and sacred truth is guaranteed. The museum is of course a serious matter but this is not its only face. The museum, in addition to being a place of learning, can at the same time be a fun, friendly and intimate place.

The museum can also be a place of discovery. Man is by nature curious and exhibitions or some events in a museum can be conceptualized so that the visitor discovers the value, correlation, significance, beauty

28 Except, of course, in some special cases.

29 There are, of course, theorists who see the move to cyber space as the very future of the museum, but in fact they are pushing it into a place where it does not belong. This can cost the museum its life. In this way an important and basic meaning of its existence is ignored.

or horror of the items connected by the exhibition. In the museum one can discover the horrors of war, but also the beauty of butterfly wings. Curiosity can be directed towards in-depth knowledge of a subject or topic. For example, via the old Roman coin antoninianus we can find out about inflation and how it worked in ancient Rome.

MUSEOLOGY

Museology emerges as a relatively new (newer) humanities discipline, much like library science or archival science. In the Anglo-Saxon world in education learning about museums is often called *museum studies*, in addition to the term museology. This does not sound so rigorously scientific, but simply refers to the study of museums or learning about them. One should distinguish, which is rarely done, general or theoretical museology which wants to know the meaning, purpose and goals of museums in general, from practical or special museology (older folks may rather use the term museography) which analyzes and describes the museum work and teaches us how to preserve, document, exhibit, etc. museum objects and collections.

The museology, which I present here, is general and theoretical. I will try not to mix it with the practical one, although of course a confirmation of theoretical assumptions can be found in museum practice, or at least in the indication of what it should be. So, it is a theory. Its purpose is to explain the museum phenomenon and how it works. It is necessary in order to gain knowledge about museums and in order to organize, edit, and sort what we know about them and so we could take at least a little peek into the future of museums.

Simple museology omits all the views and discussions that are like infections spreading and roaming the theoretical

landscape such as museologies that rely on semantics (semiotics) or that see museums as part of communications, part of information science. We have also omitted the so-called new museology (eco museology) as well as all those which are trying to apply to museums any theoretical orientation, not to say a philosophy (which postmodernists would not like), any kind of epistemology³⁰, etc. I will leave the critique of these approaches for Museologia complex. I am confident that what has so far been presented in simple museology is sufficient for the interpretation and explanation of museums.

Museology cannot explain museums without the help of other sciences. Not many things (if any) are specifically museum-related. There are many building with many purposes and only some of them, and this is rare, have a museum purpose. Collecting is also done by individuals who are most certainly not museum institutions, lots of things are being documented, and museum documentation is only a subtype among many... What museology should seek and interpret is the *differentia specifica*, that is, what is specific for museums and museum activity, what sets them apart from everything else. What should also be interpreted is the connection and interactions between museum activities and interpretation of a field of human knowledge and other activities and interpretations - archaeological,

30 *Theoretical museology lays the philosophical foundation and connects museology to epistemological views* (P. van Mensch) – Ivo Maroević, *Uvod u muzeologiju*, Zagreb, 1993, p. 14.

ethnological, historical, natural, etc., if there is any difference and the extent to which there is one. If museology is a knowledge discipline or it wishes to be one, and museums do not do anything that would be very special and museum-specific, then the logical conclusion is that museology cannot alone explain or interpret museums and museum activity. It needs the help of other fields of knowledge. It is insane to think that archaeological museums can be explained without archeology, ethnographic without ethnology, etc. But the reverse is also true. One cannot explain an archaeological museum without museology. Archaeology does not teach us an exhibition is and what kind of exhibitions there are, how to interpret things so as to make them accessible and understandable to everyone, how to prove possession of an object, what kind of documentation is required, what is preventive care and why we use it, why keep the objects in the first place anyway, etc. **A museum, its place and role in our world, its operation can be explained and understood only by linking together (cum grano salis) a variety of scientific disciplines and museology.** An archaeological museum and its activities can be described and understood only by taking into account both archaeology and museology. In historical museums alongside museology there is history, perhaps art history, heraldry, sphragistics, palaeography... it could be a long

list. In art museums it is history of art. The same goes for other types of museums. Perhaps just a word about the so-called general museums. The same goes for them as well. They consist of heterogeneous collections of objects which are studied within a certain discipline. Even for the most diverse cultural and historical collections, into which we cram everything we do not know where else to put, we can still ascertain that their objects are studied within history, art history or the history of everyday life and so on. What is collected and sorted into collections are not museological objects. This is nonsense. What can be collected are all sorts of different objects which will make a collection if owned by a collector, an inventory if owned by a church, and only in a museum, logically, will they become museum objects in museum collections.

However, to be able to distinguish between what is museum-specific and what is not we have to define what a museum is. We need a definition of the museum. So: What is a museum? The answer is easy when we have already, on the advice of Cusanus, conducted an examination.

Museum is the locus (place) in which authentic objects are collected and sorted into collections, and are in an organized manner kept, documented, studied, interpreted and exhibited for the benefit and

enjoyment of (existing and future) people³¹.

Everything that fully meets this definition is a museum. If something is missing, then it is not a museum or it is not a museum yet. It is important to note that none of the things listed in this definition are museum-specific only, neither the locus nor the collection nor collecting... Taken individually, all the characteristics that define the museum are shared with other places. But nothing else meets all that is in the definition above – except for museums. If a private collector or a religious community or anyone else has a collection or collections and they do everything specified in the definition, they have a museum.

Some speak of museal institutions³². This is a blurry syntagm and it is not always clear what it refers to. Often they are referred to as institutions that resemble museums. This implies that they do not have everything that is needed to be museums. Such are Eco museums which do not have traditional collections but instead they are about “living heritage” in a specific area, and which despite their name are not museums, they are only called that. One of them is the Neanderthal Museum in Krapina because it has no collection nor any museum objects, but such are also disneylandish amusement parks all around the globe – they are also museum-like. The Heureka science center

in Helsinki is a great, necessary, educational and fun establishment. I spent many hours there, learned a lot and had a great time, truly I only have kind words for this museum-like institution. But Heureka is not a museum, nor should it be. All of these institutions may look like a museum but are not museums. Paradoxically and absurdly, not only there are a lot of non-museums which would like to be more like museums, but there are also museums and museologists who think that the future of museums and their salvation from the supposed crisis lies in the option that museums become something else, to become like the non-museums, to be like Disneyland, the science center, the ecomuseum. It is dangerous when museums want to become an attraction, a type of entertainment, communication that is not based on collections and objects in them. In this way they betray their mission in our world and in the historical moment in which we live. I reject disneylandization, ecologization, and communicationalization of the museum as goals and objectives of museum development.

Everything mentioned in the definition is, of course, important but what should be emphasized is the keeping and exhibiting of authentic objects. This allows people to *feel* the things in museums themselves, to experience them firsthand, directly. A museum must document, interpret and so on, but the

31 This descriptive and approximate definition of a museum differs from many others, and is also different than the semi-official definition by ICOM. The reasons for this will be discussed in *The Complicated Museology*. R. S. August also defined the museum as a place, but the rest of his definition is quite different. See his work from 1983, *Museum: a legal definition*, Curator, p. 137.

32 See: André Gob – Noéme Drouguet, *Muzeologija*, Zagreb, 2007, p. 43.

keeping and preservation of authentic objects and their display is the essential function that determines the social role of museums. Without that museums are pointless to us. Statistics show steady growth in the so-called cultural tourism, and there the most important are visits to cultural property and museums. Why? In order to experience a cultural property or authentic museum objects firsthand. This is the fundamental civilizational function of the museum and this is why they exist, survive and have never been more visited than today. There are countless replicas, copies, modifications, reproductions of the Mona Lisa in countless ways applied to countless objects. Still, for decades now people have been waiting again and again for hours, waiting to briefly see it in reality from a considerable (yet perhaps ill-considered) distance, to see it firsthand, to encounter the original authentic object. To a greater or lesser extent, less visible, without the pomp and mythology that revolves around the Mona Lisa, the same is true for every museum object.

For something to be a museum it is completely irrelevant whether it is a state institution, a private individual, a group of people with a special interest, religious communities or something similar. The same goes for the museum being for profit or non-profit. If they are doing everything in the definition above then they are museums

regardless of earning or not earning money and of the way it is distributed. In determining whether it is a museum or something else this is irrelevant.³³

What happens when an object is brought to a museum? We have already said that it remains the same as it was, unchanged, more or less authentic. It will be added to the inventory (inventory book, electronic inventory book), preserved if necessary and will end in a collection in the storeroom or in the permanent exhibition of the museum. It will change its setting and be in a new context. And that is all. This simple sequence of events might as well be called musealisation. Musealisation does not add anything to the object nor does it take anything away from it; it is, so to speak, indifferent to the way we treat it in the museum. It is a completely different thing when it comes to our relationship towards it and the way we see it. First it is put in the context of a collection. Therefore it has to fit in the red thread of collecting, which is why we are including it in the collection in the first place. At an exhibition it will be on display in a context in which it can take on new meanings for us, like the paintings of ladies seduced by Casanova. We will perceive as particularly valuable those objects which are rare or those that we had thought were missing in a logical series of objects in the collection. What will change is our relationship

33 ICOM (International Council of Museums) thinks museums must be non-profit. I think this is a misunderstanding and/or an attempt to get a cheap humanistic justification. Museums are allegedly concerned with the general well-being and not with making money. This is also a topic for Museologia complex.

towards it, and not the object itself. We treat and perceive museum objects differently than any other objects.

If objects do not change at all by becoming museum objects, how can we then explain their museal value? This phrase is repeated constantly and it is common in, for example, archeology, art history and many other disciplines – museal value. It is said that an object has museal value. Is that statement meaningless? No, it is not, and the explanation is easy and simple. Take, for example, pinacothecas. They collect paintings according to their estimated art-historical value of an art work of a certain period, group, painter... It is clear that a pinacotheca (art museum) will select the best paintings it can acquire. What deserves to be in a museum should be of high artistic quality. We are dealing with the assessment of artistic value here. Over time, for all paintings in a museum a pervasive opinion has formed, and with much justification, that they are particularly valuable. Only the most valuable things can enter a museum, so over time we have begun to talk about museal quality of works of art much like the way we talk about their anthological value. There is actually no museal value of such art, but this phrase is used to express its great artistic value. In a museum there are only paintings of great artistic value. The syntagm is also applied to other objects so we talk about

museal value of handicrafts or old cars, etc. There is, therefore, no specific museal value of objects, but it certainly does make sense to claim that museums hold the most valuable of certain types of objects. Of paintings the best paintings, of wrought iron fences the most valuable ones, of minerals the most typical specimens, etc. The museum keeps the most valuable items that can be acquired. They are not the most valuable items because they are in a museum, but rather they are in a museum because they are the most valuable. It is one of the important functions of the museum – to keep the most valuable items that are assessed as the most valuable by the humanities or natural sciences: art history, archeology, ethnology, biology, mechanical engineering... So what does the commonly used term *musealisation* mean then? Nothing special, just that an object, for some reason of quality, rarity, typicality... was brought to a museum and there became part of it.

There is actually no museality as a specific property of objects kept or exhibited in a museum. But that does not mean that the museum staff is engaged in bureaucratic and technical work only. There can be very much creativity in a museum, it is just that it is not museum-specific. A museum expert (curator) can be fully affirmed in his core profession and there is no small number of curators who have PhDs, because they have the possibility of

research (in the field and within the collection), studying and interpreting. In addition, each exhibition is a creative challenge. When covering an exhibition topic objects can be shown in a whole new different light. Isn't that an exciting and creative challenge? There, objects can obtain meanings and properties that they do not have anywhere else but in this exhibition. True, an exhibition does not need to be in a museum, it can be organized and without a museum, in a gallery, and the authors may be experts outside of the museum, but we should not ignore the fact that a large number of good exhibitions take place in museums. On the other hand, museums are, or should be, the ones that are best at systematically and skillfully keeping objects from decay and in this way ensure that in the future some other people can study and experience them. And that is the mission of the museum and museum professionals in it. Is it not worthy of the effort? Motivation should be plenty.

CONCLUSION

This would be a short and concise simple general museology, museologia universalis simplex. Perhaps something can be added or taken away in some places, but mostly it is a theory that I think to some extent helps to explain and interpret museums and their activities. If so, then it is, regardless of the possible changes in some attitudes – successful and it holds water.

But to many this simple, common-sense, factual museology will be irritant and provocative. There is not, and I think there should not be, much philosophy here (in the best sense of the term), nor a lot of determination of spiritual values, or semantic, semiotic stunts, and neither post-modern and post-postmodern destructive theses, nor theoretical heavy artillery such as references to contemporary gurus Baudrillard, Derrida, Jameson or Lacan. We did not deconstruct or psychoanalyze anything. All such theories that came from the outside, from the Marxist, idealistic, psychoanalytic, to modernist or postmodernist, proved to be easily refutable and actually inapplicable to museums, and therefore they did not have any effect on museums. Museums have in these theoretical Procrustean beds more often been left without the head than without legs. I was not critical of museums and I did not, like Šola, enumerate the sins of the museum, of which there is quite a substantial number³⁴. This is not a diagnosis

of what is wrong or which theory would be suitable to be applied to museums. This theory attempts, as is wisely recommended by Cusanus, to first examine, then ask and based on the answers to the questions make conclusions. Our method is not deductive, it is rather more inductive. That is museology from the bottom up³⁵. I have left the discussion of other museological theories for Museologia complex, and the one I have set up here I will defend there, if there is sufficient interest and if the need arises.

35 Unlike museology from the top which is, among others, advocated by Dr. Ivo Maroević. See: Ivo Maroević, *Uvod u muzeologiju*, Radovi Zavoda za informacijske studije, Zagreb, 1993, p. 10.

34 Tomislav Šola, *Marketing u muzejima*, Zagreb, 2001, p. 50.

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