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## EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN BELGRADE AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE IN EDUCATION, PRESENTATION AND POPULARIZATION OF SCIENCE

### ABSTRACT

*Archaeological collections from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic times, Bronze and Iron age, as well as cultures of classical Greek and Hellenistic period, Roman times, until the first centuries of Christianity and the Great Migration period constitute part of the National Museum's in Belgrade rich treasures. Besides collecting and research, professionals from the National Museum place great focus on the representation of the heritage through thematic exhibitions, publications and specific public programmes.*

*In this paper presented are several methods of work with different categories of visitors by way of archaeological collections. Combined with new ways of communication and forms of informal education, they open up possibilities for a development of new, qualitative relations with audience of all ages and types. Educational programmes of the National Museum in Belgrade are an integral part of learning and leisure activities that contribute to the creative development of individual and to the popularisation of various spheres of science.*

**Keywords:** museum, public, education, popularisation of science.

The National Museum in Belgrade is the central museum institution in Serbia, housing more than 400.000 archaeological artefacts and works of art from the Palaeolithic times to the modern art, from the territory of present-day Serbia and its surroundings. Besides collecting and research, professionals from the National Museum place great focus on the representation of the cultural heritage through thematic exhibitions, publications and specific public programmes, designed for education of the whole of public and popularisation of the science.

Founded in 1844, the main intention of the museum from the very beginning was to be accessible to all interested citizens. Already in the annual reports from 1886-87 a guide, *presenter*

*of collections to Museum's visitors...well-known Toma is mentioned (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> The focus on public continued to be in the core of the museum activities, especially visible while the museum was in force under the name of the Museum of Prince Paul (1935-1944). Fulfilled was the vision of the contemporary director Milutin Kašanin who emphasized that the museum *must be to every man accessible, not at all boring, eagerly visited high school, appealing and vivid house, in which not only knowledge is gained and enriched but sensibility is being developed* (Fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> In 1930-ies the Museum was a meeting centre of the young people interested in specialized courses as well.*

<sup>1</sup> Поповић, Јевремовић 1994:13

<sup>2</sup> Кашанин 1936:5



Fig. 1 Toma, the first presenter of the National Museum, 1880-ies

Museum custodians were main actors in a development of visitor's programmes until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, growth of the number of visitors after the WWII and the state educational reform posed the formation of the separate department for work with public. In the year 1954 the Promotional Department for educational and publicity activities and cultural relationships was founded, running international and inter-institutional cooperation, public relations, publishing and museum education.<sup>3</sup> The department, renamed in 1978 into the Department for cultural-educational activities,<sup>4</sup> successfully carried out different educational activities in accordance with interests of museum public and social movements. Efforts to transform museum characterise its activities at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Very poor conditions of the museum exhibition spaces caused gradual removal of the permanent display after 1999 and the shutting down in 2003. At the same time the analyses of the effects of the museum performance and the vision for the future lead to creation of the Strategic development plan that included reorganisation of institutional departments. In 2004 separate Department for education and public activities was established, and public relations and international cooperation were omitted from its activities.<sup>5</sup> Starting weaknesses, poor technological resources and personnel dilemmas

3 Мано-Зиси 1964-1965:355

4 Поповић, Јевремовић 1994:31

5 Gavrilović 2012:46



Fig. 2 Visitors in the exhibition space of the Museum of Prince Paul, 1935-1944

were prevailed over, and the Department for education and public activities developed in the highly professional service whose activities, programmes and visitor surveys are one of the main actors in the general development of the Museum.

Custodians in the Department of education are involved in all activities of the National Museum created for public, in exhibitions (permanent display, thematic, temporary exhibitions), special events as well as customary activities of the Museum, including so-called attached museums.<sup>6</sup> With the lack of the permanent display in the central building, conduct of the educational department is the most visible in temporary exhibitions. The museum educators are timely involved in their preparation, acquainted with the exhibition theme, its goals and selected exhibits. They are involved in a creation of the exhibition design, suggesting changes to make more adaptive display to different categories of audience. At the same time with the author(s) of the exhibition they prepare additional didactic contents of the exhibition, as well as guiding tours, interpretational and educational programmes for youngest visitors, schools and adult public.

In the relationship of the museum and public, the most sensitive is rapport between the museum and the youngest. The first contact with a museum is of the essential importance, and some-

6 The National Museum has following attached museums within its structure: Gallery of Frescoes (from 1973), Memorial Museum of Nadežda and Rastko Petrović (1975), Lepenski Vir Museum (1978), Museum of Vuk and Dositej (1979) and Archaeological Museum of Iron Gates (1996)



Fig. 3 Activities with the youngest visitors, the exhibition *Vinča – Prehistoric Metropolis*, Gallery of Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art, 2008

times the indifference of the host or unnecessary rebuke is enough to discourage a child as a beneficiary of cultural contents and consumer of a new knowledge. The important question is of the most suitable approach for the youngest to familiarize with museum contents and potentials of the modern museum to offer knowledge and experience in multiple fields and not just mere facts about themes studied and presented in display.

Educational activities of the National Museum intended for the young visitors are realized in cooperation with psychologist or pedagogue. Programmes are prepared with careful choice of topics and working methods, suitable for the particular age. Museum objects are chosen from the range of artefacts or works of art from current exhibitions or museum collections. Programmes differ according to age of the young public. The most detailed attention is placed in the work with pre-school and early-school children through individual workshops. Collective visits of school

groups are typical for higher classes of elementary school. The great challenge represents creation of attractive programmes adequate and interesting for teenagers from 13 to 18 years old and their stay in the museum. For families with kids 3 to 12 years old joint events within programmes of the Children's club are organized.

The experiences in the work with the youngest, children by the age of 8, as part of the standard activities of the National Museum, are demonstrating all of the particulars of the work where communication and interpretation were develop according to target audience group. Most of the programmes include different visual materials important for the pre-school children to directly express themselves. Using small-scale materials (beads, kernels, thread, scissors, paper) children practice coordination and motion of the hands and with larger objects and materials (sponge cubes, parts of Styrofoam models, cushions) they move complete musculature. What has



Fig. 4 Museum workshop, the exhibition *In Touch with Antiquity*, National Museum, 2006

to be encouraged more and is not utilized enough in our educational institutions is verbal expression as well as dance, acting and mime that allow children to, understand through motion space concepts, numbers, letters, and to practise visual memory and verbal communication.<sup>7</sup> Thus, for children of this age is important to prepare educational programmes combining several learning methods, and to allow them to spontaneously and through play, using reproductions, replicas and didactic aids, accept the subject and idea of what is being exhibited (Fig. 3). Precedes fine preparation for the museum visit, together with pre-school teachers. Museum experiences afterwards, in the next couple of weeks, are excellent base for additional numerous activities inside classroom/playroom (finishing works of art, making of posters, mini-exhibitions, performance or making jointly picture book).

Good preparation, knowledge of children's psychology and their cognitive abilities are necessary in the work with children 9 to 12 years old. That is the age when all children through the

formal education, alongside basic literacy, are gaining different subject knowledge, and its right reception becomes qualitative ground in future academic efforts (Fig. 4). On the other hand, lacklustre of school programmes, its performance with in advance determined outcomes, results and system of grades, could produce lack of interest and, already at that age, boredom and nonattendance of school lessons. The situation is a bit simpler in the beginning classes, but there again almost everything depends on inventiveness and enthusiasm of a teacher, and his/her willingness to enable common meetings and events outside schoolrooms. The authenticity of encounter with new contents, creative personalities, future working places, and materials, apparatus and objects that are not part of children's daily life, could generate avalanche of different and new sensory and emotional feelings, necessary in the development of creativity, strengthening intellectual abilities and upgrading existing knowledge.

The cooperation of the National museum with schools is not recent; it was carried out in accordance with the times, educational system

<sup>7</sup> Garman, Piantanida 1996



Fig. 5 Museum workshop, exhibition *Belgrade before Belgrade. Roman Portrait and the Residents of Singidunum*, Belgrade Fortress, 2012

and determined results during last several decades with modest success. School visits, realisation of education units, participation of schoolchildren in quizzes and artistic competitions were common methods of work at that time.<sup>8</sup> Today highly institutionalized educational system and optional realization of the syllabus outside classroom, as well as organisational and financial crises of leading cultural and scientific bodies, played a part in weakening of connections between schools and cultural institutions that managed, in previous system, to instil the need in young generations to cultivate personal experiences and creativity in the fields of culture, art and science. It contributed to the weakening of the informal learning, intensity of which could be fully experienced just in museums. With richness of contents and programmes museums could enhance the quality of development of school age children (Fig. 5).

As to the current programmes of the National Museum for children up to 12 years old they are the most attracted by preparation of theatrical performances, reading of historical sources, dramatisation of shorter texts, data search, creation of joint picture books and guides, encounters with actors playing historical persons, and all other forms of activities involving research, speech, mime and creative work with artistic materials. Valuable are children's fondness for collecting, passion for gathering small items and, still at that age, tendency for orderliness that can refine and complement their

activities unburden with teenage bunt characteristic for children of later age.

All mentioned forms of work with pre-school and school children up to 12 years are applied in the actions of the Children's club of the National Museum established in 2004 with the idea to create an appreciation of cultural heritage, history and art in the youngest members of community, as well as to encourage their curiosity, creativity and acquirement of a new knowledge. The members of the Club gather in museum workshops organised during exhibitions, special occasions or other events. Children from different social settings and with different background partake in those programmes, and that contributes to their understanding of tolerance, cultural diversity and appreciation of other people's customs, habits, language and behaviours. Sometimes the Club's activities are aimed for particular age, and sometimes topic, choice of materials and methods allow simultaneous work with children of different age where younger children learn to rely on older ones and at the same time older children are taught to carefully interrelate with younger ones. One of characteristics of the Children's club is an inclusion of parents in the gatherings and workshops, and following specific rules and activities represents added experience for parents and child companions, one they are involved with particular eagerness (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6 Children's club of the National Museum, family programme, 2005

Facts speak about the success of the Club: in numerous museum's workshops around 1,000 members participated and more than 100 educational programmes was organized. Some of them

<sup>8</sup> Gavrilović 2012: 38-39

were realized inside the museum space (*In touch with Antiquity* (2006), *Magic of Amber* (2006), *Trajan's Market in Rome* (2006), *Mosaics from Gamzigrad* (2009), *Italy and Restoration of the Magnificent Crate – Treasure from Princely Graves from the National Museum* (2011)) and others outside the museum, in different city spaces where the museum had exhibitions (*Mystery of the Lepenski Vir* (2008), *Vinča – Prehistoric Metropolis* (2008), *French-Serbian Cooperation in the Field of Archaeology* (2008)). Various anniversaries, winter and summer breaks, events and happenings were the occasions for specific thematic workshops for the Club members and for the youngest guests of city of Belgrade (such as the International Museum day, European Heritage Days, Science Festival, Belgrade Days, etc). Although the implementation could seem effortless and breezy, the preparation of the educational programmes for the youngest requires the thorough knowledge of teaching methods, museum materials and superb communication skills, and only with fulfilling those preconditions could new programmes, that can like existing one in best possible way meet the needs of the youngest, be developed (Fig. 7).

The Children's Club of the National Museum, having been active for nine years ago, have



Fig. 7 European Heritage Days, 2005

now more than 300 members that outgrew the limits of didactical programmes for children up to 12 years old. Successfully realised pilot-programmes were the guidelines for the establishment of the Teen's club of the National Museum (2008) for youth between 13 and 18 years of age. Although founded as a logical extension of the Children's club, especially in the terms of approach to target audience, the Teen's club did not generate result that could be consider relevant for resourceful work with young people of mentioned age. Reasons probably could be found in the lack of conditions for the continuous work with young people as well as in limited accomplishment in a creation of contents relevant to specific frame of mind of young people that should be conveyed in their language and style with means that are familiar to them (Fig. 8).

Young people in senior classes of an elementary school and in a high school are entering the world that is presenting them new ques-

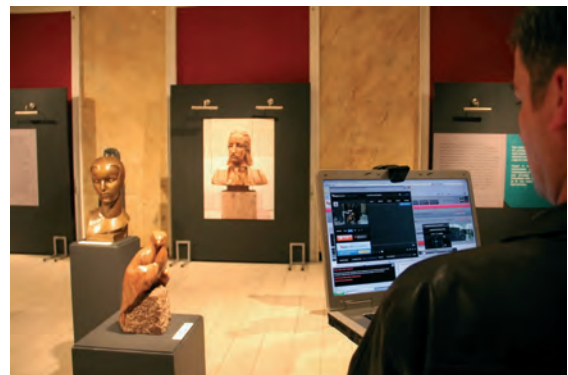


Fig. 8 Educational and research project for young I+I: *Life and Love*, National Museum, 2011

tions in all the spheres – in economy, politics, science, technology, and social relations. To answer those new requests the formal education should become more flexible, sensible, functional and based on cooperation and engagement of all relevant partners – participants in education.<sup>9</sup> This is not the task for schools only but for larger community, witch should through different interested groups contribute to the flow of educational programmes suitable for the development of various abilities and potentials of youth. However, insufficient cooperation of educational cur-  
 9 Strategy on development of education in Serbia until 2020, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia 2012

riculum with quality-driven endeavours leaves huge space for the choice of less valuable leisure time activities that are not able to answer to real needs of young people. Although society in general is quick to throw over many of troubles to educational institutions, it is hard to believe that schools can struggle on their own with weakening of hitherto educational objectives and goals without consistent support of the state.<sup>10</sup>

Although for the majority of young persons the response to any kind of institutional way of spending leisure time is characterised with a rebellion and refusal to partake in anything unfamiliar, even not knowing the essence of it, some of the museums recognized their problems and demands. They offer various contents in language and style of youth, and with familiar instruments. One of more favourable ways of the work with teenagers in museum is teamwork on joint projects. It creates opportunity for each individual to give the maximum in the most well known field and, in the same time, it offers sense of strength and protection of the group. The main goal of these projects is to make museum objects known in interesting and comprehensible way, and to experience culture, art and science through embodied experience, to demystify them and recognize as something familiar and something that person can relate to.

In planning of these educational projects it the museum all phases of preparation and realisation are developing jointly with young people. They are responsible for their own learning and have control over their personal work.<sup>11</sup> The goal of this approach is involvement and engagement of the young people in the museum activities, recognition of the importance of their opinions in the choice of methods and forms of work, and practice in a teamwork and group solving of questions. It encourages creative questioning, analytical spirit and ability to contemplate the world on different plains. Young people determine the course of research in which chosen subject is investigated from different angles (analysing original, studying research topic through modern media or scrutiniz-

<sup>10</sup> In our society situation is burdened with imposed rhythm of life where parents pay less attention to the needs of their children as well as degradation of ambition for further academic studies

<sup>11</sup> Garman, Piantanida 1996

ing materials from other museums, libraries and archives) and they are gaining habit and requirements for the creative learning. The choice of project presentation is on the young people as well; they have to agree on the form of a public presentation of their work. Presentations could differ in genre: exhibition, photo album, map or model, reconstruction of historical events with electronic media, performance, video clip, animation, computer game, glossary or touristic guide. The young people are in the centre of the project and museum educator is just observer and, sometimes, when array of ideas is too overwhelming and it is threatening to lead the project a bit astray, co-pilot. It is necessary in each phase of the project to reflect on its goals, existing resources and possibilities, rounding up all the aspects in an evaluation, the last phase of the project when participants openly, from different standpoints, discuss the project, observing weakness as well. During the life span of the project cooperation with teachers is necessary and they have to be informed about all the stages of the project developing continuously in the museum, classroom and other places to be able to participate timely in particular phases of the realisation, when institutionalized support of the school is needed.<sup>12</sup>

The teamwork in the implementation of the museum's educational programmes with teenagers could bring surprising results, which exceed by quality, ideas and forms all anticipated outcomes. Patient and skilful museum educator, carefully listening to the needs of young people for creative exploration and original expression, has a possibility to maximise all of the potentials of the juvenile groups and enable results equal to genuine cultural product presented by way of exhibition, performance, video clip or theatrical play inspired with museum collections or topics. On the other hand, the experience gained by the

<sup>12</sup> Recent encouraging example of the National Museum activities with young people is participation in the educational project 1+1: Live and Love, realized in 2010-11 with eleven museums from the Balkan region. Successful cooperation of the Balkan museums on the common project was the result of the establishment of the Balkan Museum Network, with the support of Swedish NGO Cultural Heritage without Borders, and with financial backing of the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). Exhibition catalogue: Гавриловић, Грујић 2011



Fig. 9 Museum in the suitcase project, programme *Inhabitation in the Past*, 2008

involvement in educational programmes of the museum might not only encourage further deepening of the knowledge but also strengthen the self-esteem and belief in personal potentials and talents that were not apparent or expressed before. Thus each positive experience in work with young people is precious contribution in building and nurture future museum visitors and future collaborators and professionals.<sup>13</sup>

The cooperation of the Department for education with educational institutions in the last several years is happening outside the Museum as well. Absence of the permanent display lead to preparation of different outreach programmes, such as the *Museum in suitcase*, applicable in non-museum spaces, schools, pre-school institutions, student homes, cultural centres, libraries, gerontology centres, peoples' universities, NGO

13 Report of the Department for cultural-educational and promotional activities, Reg. No. 900/43, 2nd of December 1982, Archive of the National Museum. Working with young people was cherished in the National Museum for several past decades. State educational reform and transition to so-called directional education in 1980-ies demanded the flexibility in activities of the Department. New forms of engagement were found for pupils of the high school Dimitrije Tucović that educated future museum technicians, registers and conservators. In cooperation with colleagues from other curatorial departments additional lectures, practical work in storage rooms, manipulation with artifacts, icons, paintings, etc. were prepared for students. Cooperation of the Museum and educational institutions on organizing practical work and hands-on activities resulted in building of several of nowadays experts, museologist, scientist and lecturers that remember sometimes with nostalgia their first encounter with "behind the scenes" museum activities



Fig. 10 Visitor's programme *National Museum for citizens*, National Museum, 2013

for disabled people, centres for children without parental care and all other places where interest for learning and understanding museum materials was shown (Fig. 9).<sup>14</sup> The implementation in spaces familiar to participants, where they feel relaxed and "at home" is the advantage of these programmes. During workshops reproductions and replicas of selected objects that could replace original artefacts are used. They are tangible, could be handled and copied, which is very helpful in working with young children, elderly and certain categories of disabled people. The concept of the educational programme *Museum in the suitcase* does not differ from programmes happening in the museum, and they are effective and valuable way of making museum collections and materials as well as new information more familiar to interested participants.

Programmes integrated in the *Museum in the suitcase* project had positive reception from educators in different institutions, and topics like *Food in the past*, *Inhabitation in the past* and *Clothing in the past*, part of the courses *The History of everyday life*, proved to be an excellent addition to the choice subjects for the elementary schoolchildren.<sup>15</sup> Teachers have been offered various topics included in the programme *Talking pictures* also (*Blue doors*, *Family*, *Groups and individuals*, *Brothers and sisters*, *Body in the art*, *Modern art*, *Know Belgrade*) realised together with psychologist with great success in more than

14 Gavrilović 2012: 52-53

15 Annual report of the National Museum for 2008, Reg. No. 163/1, 4th of March 2009, Archive of the National Museum



20 elementary and high schools.<sup>16</sup>

The great help in the implementation of educational programmes of the National Museum represents university senior students, engaged in museum work as obvious way to gain knowledge and practice. All interested students are gathered in the Club of associates of the National Museum, and the goal of this group is to support and help the development of educational activities and programmes of the National Museum. The Club consist of young associates studying archaeology, history, history of art, pedagogy, adult learning, special education and other fields. The engagement in the Club of associates provides students with opportunity of further professional training in the field of interpretation of cultural heritage and popularisation of the science, and in cooperation with experts of different profile they cultivate their cognitive and organizational skills and abilities. For the young graduates the programme of collaboration in the curatorial departments, behind the scene, is developed as well, and they participate in various projects, research documenting, exhibitions and in the preparation of different events.

The members of the Club of associates are mostly engaged as museum communicators, animators and museum docents. They receive visitors, offer guiding tours, and are involved in various educational programmes and workshops. Their participation in a development of programmes for their peers is very valuable as well as in activities created for visitors not interested in usual lectures, visitors that want to have new experiences and possibility to perceive various contents, presented also in different media, in another way (Fig. 10).

Based on cited experiences, visitor surveys, evaluation of the educational programmes developed despite severe circumstances and the positive reception, we can assume that educational programmes of the National Museum are the important link between the museum and visitors. Creating programmes for the specific target groups, respecting needs of the public based on their age, educational background or working environment and changes in our community in the last two decades, crystallized forms of continu-

ous active work with public that could be implemented in the museum visitor programmes related to new permanent display, now in preparation.

Inspiring collections of the National museum offer abundant possibilities for different programmes that can give additional quality to the museum visit. Ideas could be drawn from interest of the public, their questions and thinking. Very stimulating and motivating for the public are subjects that connect different historical epochs or styles, as well as those related to present day. These require excellent knowledge of the museum materials, teamwork and cooperation of custodians from different fields.

The refurbishment of the National museum building and the new display expected in the near future will help young visitors to strengthen cultural habits, taste the joy of learning, build up connections to their surroundings, develop their self-esteem and enjoy at the place they are always welcome. For the adult public, citizens of Belgrade and guests, the stay in the museum will secure meaningful and active leisure activities in pleasing settings. For those high set goals we are obliged to provide high-quality exhibition spaces with expertly communicated exhibits, that is the positive environment for everyone and anyone and surroundings visitors will always come back with pleasure and anticipation of new discoveries.

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образovanja ukupne javnosti i popularizacije nauke.

U ovom radu predstavljeni su metodi rada sa različitim kategorijama posetilaca koji su bazirani na arheološkom nasleđu. Udruženi s novim vidovima komunikacije i oblicima neformalnog obrazovanja, otvorili su prostor za razvoj kvalitativnih odnosa sa publikom svih uzrasta i profila. Svojom utemeljenošću, pokazali su se kao sjajna baza za ulaganje u dalji razvoj i negovanje odnosa sa posetiocima kao sastavni deo ukupnih komunikacija kojima je Muzej prisutan u javnosti.

Poslednjih decenija ustanove kulture različitog tipa prepoznate su kao mesta opštekulturnog, neformalnog obrazovanja koja doprinose razvoju kreativnosti i dopuni znanja. Među njima se posebno izdvajaju muzeji koji predmet svog proučavanja – originalni muzejski predmet, koriste kao sredstvo edukacije i komunikacije. Komunikacija muzeja sa zajednicom kroz edukaciju, praktične aktivnosti, razonodu i rasterećenost može od muzejskih kuća da učini ustanove koje bogatstvom svojih zbirki i interpretacija doprinose neformalnom učenju, razvoju kreativnosti i popularizaciji svih domena nauke.

**REZIME**

**EDUKATIVNI PROGRAMI  
NARODNOG MUZEJA U  
BEOGRADU I NJIHOV ZNAČAJ  
U OBRAZOVANJU,  
PREDSTAVLJANJU I  
POPULARIZACIJI NAUKE**

**Ključne reči:** muzej, publika, edukacija, popularizacija nauke.

U sastavu Narodnog muzeja u Beogradu nalaze se arheološke zbirke koje pripadaju periodu paleolita, mezolita, neolita, bronzanog i gvozdеног doba, kulturi klasične Grčke, helenizma i antičkog Rima, do prvih vekova hrišćanstva i Seobe naroda. Pored prikupljanja, obrade i istraživanja, stručnjaci Narodnog muzeja veliku pažnju posvećuju predstavljanju nasleđa pripremom tematskih izložbi, publikacija i posebnih programa za publiku, u svrhu