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**Museum Professionals in
Dialogue: “Challenges of
Permanent Exhibitions”**

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ИСТОРИЈСКИ МУЗЕЈ СРБИЈЕ

МУЗЕЈ
ЈУГОСЛАВИЈЕ

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Introduction

During the last two decades, history museums in Europe and the Balkans have been and still are undergoing processes of significant change. No matter whether they be national, local or city museums, they all have in common the re-conceptualization of their objectives, as well as changes to their organizational structure, in accordance with a newly defined role for the museum in society, its mission and vision, with new techniques and technologies of protection, and a variety of new ways to present the cultural heritage.

The Historical Museum of Serbia was established in 1963 as the Museum of the First Serbian Uprising. The basic fund of this newly established museum was created from the objects taken over from the History Collection of the National Museum in Belgrade. There were several reasons why the Serbian and Yugoslav political elites of the time wanted to establish a controlling connection with the national past prior to World War Two and the socialist revolution of the Yugoslav peoples. Above all, the fact that the insurgent and revolutionary discourse of that past was singled out suggested the idea that within the concepts of class struggle and revolution, the elite was looked for an acceptable and thus controllable element of nationalism.

Between 1963 and 2005, despite public appeals and the support of political authorities, academicians, university professors and

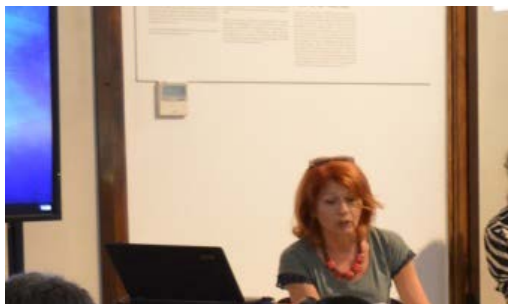
other public figures, the Historical Museum lacked the room for its collections and permanent exhibition. For several decades, the continued marginalization of the Museum affected almost all aspects of its work: the protection of cultural heritage, staff policy, the policy of museum acquisitions and programme activity.

It is more than evident that history museums were directly confronted with politics and ideology, and that they still are. They depend on national power structures and dominant identity constructions, and have a heavy burden to carry. With their various collections, history museums differ a lot from, for example, those agile art museums which, less burdened with political issues, can more eagerly assume new, sometimes even stylish courses of action. Now, we should have no illusions as regards the de-ideologisation and/or de-politisation of history disciplines on the one hand, and the new, seemingly not too politically oriented museological practices of national history museums, on the other. Also, we should not believe in the independent, de-contextualized importance of the museum object taken as the measure of absolute truth. All three attitudes represent a self-satisfied utopia, and the more we are aware that we, as both historians and curators, work on different interpretative levels simultaneously, the better we will do our job.

Although we are strongly of the opinion that the question of concept of the Historical Museum of Serbia is a question of broader national, political and social consensus, we also believe that, as the first phase in a long process, the professionals from different humanistic sciences, such as historians, art historians, anthropologists and archaeologists, should be involved in defining its concept, content and objectives. We are also very aware of the fact that we are at the beginning of a long and uncertain path, because practice has shown that the perception of the past, even when it radiates the aura of science, varies in its dependence not only on political and social circumstances, but also on subjective and personal affinities.

For all these reasons, some questions, common both to historical disciplines and museology, need to be asked: How do history museums “manage” the truth? Can they speak in their own voice or should they only illustrate the “knowledge” about the past by various means? Do they have the power to present their own interpretations, and can they demand to define independently their policies and long-term strategies? Or need they only promote the truth of the state “authorities”? Do they have to accept the latest marketing strategies of a state, nation and region? How should the national past be presented now, and in the broader Balkan and European context? What are the museum’s objectives: to commemorate, or to communicate and inform? What should be preserved and what displayed to the public?

We are convinced that history museums should not take a linear course in the presentation of historical processes with a predefined goal. On the contrary – they should encourage the visitors to create their own opinion through a system of antitheses, clear comparisons, contrasts and juxtapositions. The responsibility of a history museum is to create the conditions for the visitors to mingle with history, to enable them to learn and develop a consciousness of the causes of violence and injustice in history, and of conflicts in general, as well as to highlight all those aspects of life of the people in Serbia which are directly connected with historical processes in different epochs.



**Katarina Mitrović
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PERMANENT EXHIBITION as a new CHALLENGE

According to Enlightenment tradition, museums were to be defined as public institutions whose primary role was the protection of cultural heritage, and their primary mission the advancement of people's cultural and educational needs. Furthermore, museums were considered to be treasuries of everlasting values, "depositories of knowledge" whose role of protection of values was extended to participation in the formation of collective identities. Unlike artistic museums, historical museums have the particularly delicate and publicly exposed task of carrying the burden of collective identification.

Created as a museum yet to be filled with items which were to "illustrate historical eras", the Historical Museum of Serbia began its journey as a museum whose mission would only be fulfilled in the future – to present thematically unique historical eras as a logical, undivided chronological chain.

ACQUISITION POLICY

In spite of all the difficulties the Historical Museum of Serbia has had since its formation, the acquisition of items and formation of collections have been conducted uninterruptedly. The largest group of items originate from the fund of the Museum of the First Serbian Insurrection, founded in 1954. Whether procured from various other museums or acquired from private collectors or monastic treasuries, the items were all related to the Serbian Revolution – specifically, the uprisings for liberation from the Ottoman Empire between 1804 and 1815. The second significant part of the Museum fund consists of items which belonged to Serbian royal families, and which were initially part of the historical collection of the National Museum in Belgrade:

Amongst the most representative are two items that symbolize the continuity of Serbian statehood. The first is the royal crown of King Petar Karadjordjević I which, together with other insignia, was a part of the crowning ceremony in 1904. The second, more recently acquired object, is Prince Strojimir's seal from the 9th century, which represents the oldest material proof of the existence of a Serbian Christian ruler, until then only known from the historical sources.

Although the acquisition policy has been dictated by the demands of the time, the Museum has been persistent in collecting objects that reflect the building of the state and its institutions, such as the collections of uniforms, seals, weapons, medals, memorial objects, maps and flags. In response to the new interests and demands of socio-cultural history, the Museum started collecting items which focus on the life of "ordinary people" through the 20th century, and especially in the more recent past. In addition, the new collections like *Costume* and *Everyday life and Popular Culture* were formed to comprise the typical elements of householding, nutrition, personal hygiene, work, travel or fun as important elements of the modern era.



MUSEUM SPACE

Another special circumstance concerning the Historical Museum of Serbia (HMS) is that it has lacked a proper exhibition space ever since its foundation. This has deprived it of the opportunity to produce a permanent exhibition. The permanent exhibition in the Prince Miloš Residence in Topčider, an annex to the HMS dedicated to the early 19th century Serbian Revolution, represents only one, albeit important part of Serbian history.

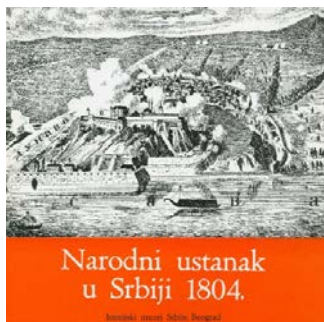
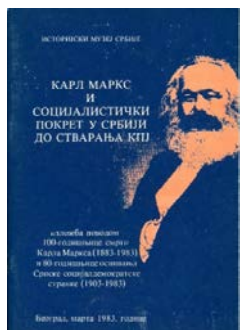
The opportunity to start addressing the problem of permanent museum accommodation had not emerged before the year 2006, when the Museum was granted to opportunity to occupy a part of the building in Trg Nikole Pasica, where we are now. The safe deposits were turned into museum storage rooms as early as 2006, but the ground floor rooms and upper galleries are still in the process of adjustment to the exhibitions and follow the demands of their content.

EXHIBITING POLICY

Despite the lack of a proper exhibition space, the Historical Museum of Serbia has proved to be very active since its formation. The Museum has organized thematic exhibitions at various public urban locations and organized guest exhibitions in other museums and galleries. The Museum's activities outside of the capital deserve to be especially emphasized. It has taken an active part not only in organizing temporary and travelling exhibitions, but also a number of permanent exhibitions in local and regional museums around Serbia.

The HMS exhibition policy from its early beginnings until the end of the eighties and the relinquishment of party control over public life has demonstrated a parallel flow of topics – on the one hand, illustrating the workers' movement in Serbia and Yugoslavia and the history of WWII, and on the other, Serbia's pre-communist national history. Although declaratively national,

the contents of these exhibitions were always carefully cleansed ideologically. The elements concerning the Serbian and Yugoslav







monarchical past, as well as the civil society's cultural tradition, were deliberately left out. The memories of these two typical ideological and class enemies of the communist power were systematically suppressed. The only segments of national history that were introduced into the official public memory, were those like the history of the early C19th Serbian Revolution, because they were interpreted through the matrix of class struggle and the efforts for liberation from occupying forces.

With the collapse of the country and the socialist establishment which bound it together, changes in the exhibition policy became possible. The predominant identity cornerstone located in the class struggle of "ordinary" people and their reduction to peasantry was reexamined and reconsidered. Consequently, the exhibitions during the nineties displayed Serbian dynastic and pre-communist national heroes, such as neglected statesmen, politicians or military commanders from the WWI.

The new millennium brought not only the expansion of the thematic repertoire but also new "readings" of the traditional contents. The following exhibitions shed light on little known phenomena of the traditional heroic history: the several exhibitions dedicated to the historical roles of women (*Princesses and Queens, Female Face of the Great War, Being Beautiful: Photography and Self-presentation – Image of Women in Serbia*

1918-1941). The exhibition *Assassination of the Ruler* opened up a painful subject in Serbian political history, especially because it presented the tragically murdered Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjić. HMS is the first museum to have opened up another painful subject: *In the Name of the People* was the first exhibition dedicated to the victims of communist repression ever to be organized in Serbian museums. The exhibition showed the repressive system of the political "people's" tribunals, whose purpose was to strip individuals of their freedom or even their lives, and to take away their private property in the process of creating a new socialist society. Since many of the participants in these events are still alive, the exhibition caused massive public reactions, while the following programme articulated the conflicted attitudes and controversies evoked by the subject. The exhibition *Final Destination – Auschwitz* is an example of another project which thoroughly and successfully conveyed and communicated what could be called "a difficult heritage". The last two mentioned exhibitions indicate the Museum's readiness to face and display more than conventional, heroic historical contents – contents that often make people ashamed and uncomfortable but nonetheless, need to be seen and included into the public memory. Finally, the exhibition *Pupin – from Physical to Spiritual Reality*, which was dedicated to one of the most extraordinary scientists of the 20th, proved the importance of the application of high-end technological achievements in creating augmented reality.

Although quite different in terms of their thematics, the last four mentioned exhibitions were the most visited and, consequently, successful exhibitions because, for us, the most important measure of success are our visitors' reactions to the work we do. We believe the secret to this success lies in the fact that they were all complex projects gathering professionals and experts from different disciplines and fields of knowledge, such as theoretical and practical explorers and investigators, authors, technical and information engineers, excellent designers and, last but not least, the curators and other museum personnel who made the projects come alive in our Museum. This

interdependent cooperation of equally important parties has proved to be an invaluable experience for the museum curators which will definitely play its part in the creation of the permanent exhibition.

PERMANENT EXIBITION -- WHAT, HOW AND FOR WHOM

The history of the acquisition and exhibition policies has provided significant experiences with regard to the process of making the permanent exhibition. The concept of the permanent exhibition, which is to say, the information, values and ideals that it aims to communicate, are as important as the representation of objects. This is why one of the most important questions for us is, What exactly is Serbian history? Should it be a narrative about the Serbian people as a political entity which is self-defined by the creation of a state, first in the Middle Ages, then in the 19th century, which lasted until the creation of Yugoslavia? In other words, should the permanent exhibition look like a materialized history book, in which the museum objects act as points of encounter with the (ideally imagined) past? Should we expect the museum to be a school of history – or a temple where history is displayed for visitors to admire?

The downfall of Yugoslavia caused a crisis in identity policies and the official determination of the basic values of the Serbian people, state and nation. This is an unusual situation for a museum and the curators who take part in the creation of the concept of a permanent exhibition, because it provides new opportunities to "think outside the box" of predetermined and expected concept boundaries.

Currently, when the very concept of identity is being redefined, historical museums in general have a decidedly delicate task. Are



historical museums still delegated to answer questions like, "Who are we?", "Where do we come from" and "What is our position regarding the past?"

But are there any other questions that museums should answer? In the HMS in the nineties, the classical historical metanarratives on the heroic fight for freedom and independence were reintroduced into the national history framework, but only recently have they been modified by new social and cultural history interests. The culmination of these new interests has been the museum's experience in its preparations for the exhibition, "The History of the Private Lives of Serbs". Although, regrettably, this exhibition was never finalized, the very process of work and creation proved to be an invaluable experience for the museum curators. Apart from the experience in exhibition organization, the reflection on audience expectations and on the potential social groups to be targeted by the future permanent exhibition have been equally important. Our visitation analysis show the same amount of interest for the exhibitions displaying great historical topics

In addition, the structural analysis of the audience provokes another question about who the exhibition is intended for: Foreign tourists, youth, school children, women, professionals or the general public? Curiously, the interest in seeing the permanent exhibition is mostly expressed by foreign visitors, while the local audience is more interested in seeing temporary exhibitions. This confirms the representative function of the museum as an institution that needs to provide an answer to the question asked at the beginning: Who are we? In that case, it is safe to say that:

1. the permanent exhibition functions as an identity determinate towards *the other*, which is to say, the foreigners;
2. it aims to confirm, recall, amend or challenge what the local audience of different ages and background already know from the history books.

Keeping in mind the available museum objects, the experiences so far in organizing exhibitions in different museums all over Serbia, the audience's expectations, and the need to include interests of the new generations, we have done our best to provide a structure for a permanent exhibition that overcomes the traditional lapse of those periods where political history overshadows all other aspects of life in the past. Instead, we have proposed that the chronologically displayed political history should only work as a frame within which the variety of social relations, economy, culture or everyday life take place.

This approach draws attention to issues such as cultural interchange, as well as the wider regional and European context of local events. Also, it leads to new readings of museum objects.

Basically, we would like to interlace two different structures – the history of big events with the many so to speak “small histories”.

First is **THE POLITICAL FRAME**, which is organized into 3 historical periods:

I PERIOD – MIDDLE AGES – from the settlement of Serbs in the Balkans (7th century) to the Ottoman Conquest (1459)

II PERIOD – EARLY MODERN AGE – from the Ottoman Conquest to the beginning of the Liberation (the end of the C15th – the beginning of the C19th). It covers the events of the Habsburg Monarchy

III PERIOD – MODERN AGE, the creation of the state and the nation (1804–1918)

From the Uprising in the Belgrade Pasalik 1804–1815, to the Balkan Wars 1912–1913, and the First World War.

The other frame, the one that relates to cultural and social history, is based on what we called "typical representatives":

THE SOCIAL and CULTURAL FRAME

* In the First Period, the Middle Ages, we would isolate KNIGHTS, MONASTICS AND PEASANTS as typical personalities of the feudal-warrior society

* In the Second Period, under the Turkish rule, a typical character would be the GRANIČAR, a peasant/warrior connected to the establishment of the military border system under the Habsburg Monarchy at the end of the C16th. This character would serve as a symbolic image of the specific position of the Serbs as free peasant-warriors fighting against the Ottomans for the Habsburg Monarchy. But also his strong ties to his homeland traditions and religion relates him to the peasants who stayed in Serbia under the Ottoman rule. Peasant characters from both sides of the border provided the building blocks of what was to become the ideal basis of the modern nation – freedom, the small peasant landholding, and the "heroic" mentality.

Another character, the Balkan MERCHANT, appears as a symbol of communication and exchange in a world divided between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, but also of the cultural unity of Balkan cities, regardless of the different faiths or ethnic identities.

The ever developing urban processes in Europe produce the character of the CITIZEN, who became an enlightened intellectual in the C18th and symbolized the processes of growing secularization and religious tolerance.

The Third Period is best represented by the REBEL-INSURGENT against the Ottoman Repression from the beginning of the C19th, as well as by the CLERK, the symbol of the modern Serbian state.

Women, their roles, rights and visibility in society starting from the Middle Ages until the beginning of the processes of emancipation, need to be especially stressed. "Female history" provides valuable insights into the histories of family, costume, nutrition and households. The symbolic characters which represent them would be found on the margins of political power: the NOBLEWOMAN on one hand and the PEASANT WOMAN on the other, and the TOWNSWOMAN as the representative of the new C18th and C19th European civil society. The "female history" would end with the characters of the TEACHER and NURSE as symbols of her attempts at emancipation and active participation in C19th century society, especially during difficult wartime periods.

The chronological frame of this structure is not going to be so strict in the final concept. The issue of chronology also draws attention to the problem of museum objects that do not correspond equally to each given period. That is why the pre-Slavic history of the Serbian territory will be presented in smallscale. In contrast to that, the Museum's collections relating to the post-WWI period and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia are significant, which means that the new permanent display should by all means extend deeply into the C20th.

This leads us more to an object-related than thematic-related concept, and in this respect, we are thinking about objects that have more than one meaning and can tell different stories. For example, the collection of medieval coins illustrates the

medieval mining which was very important from the national history point of view; but on the other hand, the fact that Serbian rulers used to invite Saxons to initiate mining activities, stresses the importance of communication and transmission of technological crafts in the Middle Ages. This only shows the many ways we can work with the objects in our fund; but at the moment we are engaged in formulating the general concept.

In the conclusion, we believe that the interconnected representation of big history with the many other histories can provide a platform for the further development of many small narratives which will be able to inspire visitors to contemplate the past. The measure of success would be not devotion to a particular canonical history or to one or other narrative in particular, but the impression the exhibition leaves on the visitors, the questions it raises and the values and ideals it conveys. We believe the permanent exhibition should not be a collection of historical victories but the objective representation of the national past in the context of regional and European history and social processes. This is precisely why we have relied on the "typical representatives" and the inclusion of so-called "small" topics as the meeting-points between the present and the past. Finally, we are deeply aware that the formation of a permanent exhibition raises the level of the Museum's responsibility. The Museum should open itself towards the audience, and communicate with as well as learn from them. That is why we are planning to initiate public debates which would encourage new and fresh visions of the ways in which Serbian history should be represented.



Tea Perinčić, PhD

**Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral,
Rijeka**

Permanent Exhibitions – Permanent Challenges

The official establishment of the Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral in Rijeka dates to 1961, although it inherited collections from previous museum institutions in Rijeka such as the oldest City Museum (*Museo Civico*), which was established back in 1893. The museum was established as a complex institution with archaeological, ethnographic, maritime and cultural history departments, with a mission to communicate the cultural heritage of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County and the City of Rijeka as the capital of the province.

The Museum has its seat in the former residence of the Hungarian Governor in Rijeka – the Governor’s Palace, which was built in 1896 according to the architectural project of Alajos Hauszman, the leading Hungarian architect at the time. The palace then hosted different governors as the political rulers of the City of Rijeka, who changed very often during the first half of the 20th century. Soon after the end of WWII, the palace was proclaimed a protected cultural heritage.

Since the palace was not built as a museum building, hosting a museum inside it has required many compromises. However, the palace was a very well organized resident-representative building, and thus has in some ways met museums standards, such as dividing public from private spaces – i.e. those spaces dedicated to visitors from spaces used only by museum employees. Nevertheless, since we are speaking about a protected cultural monument, interventions within this space must be very limited, and all exhibitions have to respect the already given architectural frames.

Therefore the permanent exhibitions in the Governor’s Palace in Rijeka have two aims:







a) presenting the history of the palace and the political history of the Rijeka region;b) presenting the rich museum collections.

The political history of Rijeka and its region from the 18th to the middle of the 20th centuries is presented on the first floor of the palace. There, the originally designed spaces from the Governor's period are mostly preserved, and they need to be represented as such. We have organized the spaces as a walk through living rooms, interpreting in each of them different historically important topics, such as: the origins of Rijeka's Gubernium back in 1776 and its importance within the Habsburg Monarchy; the role of the Hungarian Governor; the importance of the Habsburg Royal Family; representations and high society of the late 20th century; the roots of Fascism, and Rijeka in the difficult years 1918–1924; important entrepreneurs and merchants of Rijeka in the 19th and 20th centuries. The problem was with the interpretations – how to put the text of the interpretations alongside the objects on display, since no interventions on the walls were allowed. We have temporarily overcome this problem

by using new technologies – computer pads in every living room, each with a different content that interprets the objects on display as well as the wider historical context. Nevertheless, some visitors have left us comments indicating that they would prefer a more classical way of interpretation – i.e. a printed text on the wall – because computer contents are too dense and someone can easily get lost in them. However, this was the only way possible for us to present each of the living rooms and its function during the Governor’s time, and alongside this, to narrate the history of the region from different aspects. The objects on display on the first floor of the Governor’s Palace are selected from our collections and are here to support the historical narrative, although our intention has been to select and present objects from amongst the most valuable artworks in our collections.

On the second floor of the Governor’s Palace, where originally the Governor and members of his family had their private space, we were less restricted, since this part of the palace passed through different rebuilding phases and there are not many original architectural elements to represent and protect. Therefore the usage of this space for the permanent exhibition was freer and much easier. On this floor we started with interpreting the most ancient history of Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (Coast and Mountain Regions) onwards, with the intention primarily of presenting our rich archaeological collections. The museological concept was developed by Margita Cvijetinović Starac, who was at the time also Director of the Museum. She coordinated the creative process of a small team of museum archaeologists and historians. Nikolina Jelavić Mitrović was chosen to design the permanent exhibition. This permanent exhibition has created a densely filled space with showcases full of different objects from prehistory to medieval times, indicating the intensity of life and events throughout history on a limited territory. Nevertheless, we met other obstacles here before opening this permanent exhibition to visitors. First of all, the Museum didn’t have enough money to finish the whole project at once. Most of the financial support came from the County and State budgets, but only for a few years. While the space for the

exhibition was under construction and the showcases already set up, the Governor's Palace suffered some roof leakage, exactly



above the rooms for the permanent exhibition, which were almost ready. Water and damp damaged the showcases and caused a delay in finishing the permanent exhibition. Only later did we manage to find financial support to refurbish the roof of the palace. Although this part of the permanent exhibition might seem very classical, almost like an open museum depot in the way the collection objects are displayed, innovation is evident in the use of computer devices allowing interaction with the visitor, for research, discovery and play. Special attention from visitors to this part of the exhibition is often directed to a box which virtually reproduces a medieval Croatian grave. Visitors can use brushes to virtually excavate the grave and discover bones as well as different objects, and in this way experience what it is like to conduct archaeological research.

The weaker part of this exhibition might be information overload, since in a relatively small space we are presenting a wide span of history from the Neolithic to the Early Modern

Ages. We have tried to resolve this with the use of computer devices.

However, this is only a part of our new permanent exhibition. Owing to lack of money, we had to stop with works on the permanent exhibition. Along with the exhibition, the Governor's Palace needs a refurbishment after 120 years of existence. Thanks to EU funds, we are due to embark on the preparation of all necessary documentation for refurbishment of the palace, as well as the preparations for the continuation of our permanent exhibition. In the meantime, we have had to present our maritime collection, owing to a huge demand from our visitors, because when they come to a museum which includes the adjective 'maritime' in its title, they are expecting to see some maritime objects. More than this, in our maritime collection we have a very valuable object – a life jacket from "The Titanic" (one of five still existing in the world), and this is our prize object. And so in 2011 we organized a temporary 'permanent' maritime history exhibition, in order to be able to present the maritime history of the City of Rijeka and its region.

The last part of our permanent exhibition in the Governor's Palace is the one dedicated to the recent war in Croatia. The permanent exhibition was created at the demand of the regional government and associations of victims of the War for Croatian Independence. Since the seat of the Civil Service during the 1990s was in the Governor's Palace, this was related to recent war events in Rijeka, and had a connection to the Museum. At the beginning of this project, our museum disliked the idea of creating a permanent exhibition in response to demands connected with possible political trends and ideas, but since the political pressure was really strong, we accepted the idea of the creation of a space where the recent war events in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County would be presented in the wider context of events in Eastern Europe, the collapse of Yugoslavia and changes of regimes. We intended to present the facts without taking sides

and by trying to avoid biases, narrating events through a display of parts of press releases and of TV programmes, and the photos

of professional photographers who were in the war. The key feature of this permanent exhibition was the creation of a wall with the names of deceased soldiers from Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, which was the main demand of the members of the



associations of war victims. The most important role in the creation of this permanent exhibition was that of the designer, Vesna Rožman. She created a subtle and solemn space, concentrating more on atmosphere than narration.

When talking about the importance of design in permanent exhibitions, then mention must be made here of our relatively recent display in the renewed “Lipa Remembers” Memorial Centre, in the village of Lipa, some 30 kilometres from Rijeka. This exhibition is dedicated to commemorating an unhappy event from WWII, when the Nazis killed 269 villagers and burned all the houses in the village of Lipa. Survivors from the war renewed the village and very soon started to prepare a memorial centre in the old school house. Finally, in 1968 the centre was opened, but owing to a lack of financial resources, it was closed in 1989. Since that moment, the villagers had

nurtured a strong wish to reopen their memorial centre. Finally, in 2012 our Museum took over the memorial centre and renewed the permanent exhibition. A few photographs taken by a Nazi soldier when the war crime was being committed in Lipa in April 1944 were the only objects being used to commemorate the event in the memorial centre. Thus the designers Anton Sevšek and Damir Gamulin had the key role in the re-creation of the permanent exhibition. The whole space is divided into black and white areas, symbolising death and life. On the first floor, painted in white, the history of the village of Lipa and neighbouring villages from prehistory to WWII is presented. On the second floor, all painted in black, the wartime events are explained. The wider context is presented through a computer projection, while the April event in Lipa is represented through the voice narration of Danica Maljavac, who was the author and first curator of the memorial centre, as well as the first post-war baby born in Lipa. The photographs of the war atrocity are hidden and become present only when a visitor comes closer to a frame. We intended in this way to avoid any trivialisation of the victims.



This permanent exhibition finishes by visiting again a part of the memorial centre building with a display of ethnographic objects indicating the continuation of life and its victory over death.

When working on this permanent exhibition we had to find a satisfactory balance between narratives, objects on display and design, since the whole exhibition aims to tell a story as well as promote a very strong anti-war message. These kind of problems or struggles between designers and curators are very frequent, and it is not always easy to find a balance and achieve a fine tuning as to the relative importance of displaying valuable collections, storytelling and arriving at a design which also preserves its artistic intentions.



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The Post-Yugoslav Museumscape
The process of the nationalization of the historical
perception of World War II in memorial museums in Serbia,
Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia

Abstract

The aim of this text¹ is to categorize the tendencies – the museo(ideo)logical twists and turns – in the transformation of the WWII memorial museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, by focusing on the following research questions: How has the designation of World War II *images* (of museum artefacts) been developing since the breakup of Yugoslavia? Which strategies have curators pursued to revitalize these museums?

1. The Foundational Principles of WWII Memorial Museums in Socialist Yugoslavia

The building of WWII memorial museums² i.e. People's Liberation Struggle Museums (hereinafter NOB Museums, *Muzeji narodnooslobodilačke borbe*) intensively began to spread across all six socialist republics of Yugoslavia in 1952, when the Associations of Veterans of the People's Liberation War (*Savez*

¹ This text was specially written for the “Museum Professionals in Dialogue XI” workshop held from 7th to 9th June 2017 at the Historical Museum of Serbia. Citations from this text may only be used with the express permission of the author.

² Under the catchphrase “WWII memorial museums” will be designated the NOB Museums which were built in Yugoslavia as memorial museums dedicated to World War Two events and the museums which succeeded the NOB Museums after the splitting-up of Yugoslavia, i.e. the memorial museums dedicated to World War II in the successor states of Yugoslavia.

*boraca NOR-a*³) formed the Committee for the Maintenance and Marking of Historical Sites from the People's Liberation War (*Odbor za obeležavanje i uređivanje istorijskih mesta NOR-a*). The purpose of the memorial NOB Museums was to collect, carry out scientific work, exhibit and communicate museal material concerning significant events, institutions and personalities related to World War II. Their conceptual foundations were based on the following tasks:

- the leading role of the Yugoslavian Communist Party
- Yugoslavian patriotism (both the national and social components)
- the brotherhood and unity of the nation and nationalities of Yugoslavia
- the moral and ethical message of the revolution and People's Liberation War
- the military experience of the People's Liberation War (Čejvan 1972: 11-15).

The first musealized spaces were those linked to the political sessions of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and war locations of the Supreme Headquarters of the People's Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Yugoslavia. Subsequently, museums were built dedicated to certain battles, sites of execution and concentration camps.

The People's Heroes took a central place in the exhibition space. Their orations – often in the form of quotes, but also in audio and visual material – were personalized, whilst as a rule the voices of victims were labelled numerically or as a list of names. One of

³ The Associations of Veterans took care of veterans' social benefits (pensions, invalid pension plans, flats, health care, social welfare, education, employment) and nurturing the "tradition of the NOB" (by building monuments, marking graves, issuing commemorative medals to war heroes, listing victims, establishing museums), and from the 1970s until the end of socialist Yugoslavia, it organized numerous pedagogical activities. From 1961, the Veterans' Association, by joining with the Association of War Military Invalids and the Association of Reserve Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers, assumed the name of SUBNOR – the Federation of Veterans Organisations from the People's Liberation War (*Savez udruženja boraca Narodnooslobodilačkog rata*).

the strategies for representing massacres was an art installation.⁴

The attribution of national affiliation, to both perpetrators and victims of the war, was avoided.

Alongside the Partisan movement, all the other military formations which participated in World War II on Yugoslavian territory were marked as collaborationist forces, without any further elaboration or clarification. The dichotomy of *us* and *them* was thus created, by taking the *right side* (Partisans, i.e. fighters) and the side of the enemy (“traitors,” i.e. “collaborators”). By establishing and building memorial NOB Museums – viewed in a broader perspective as part of the larger enterprise of creating monuments, sculptures, busts, etc. – the “landscape of belonging,” on the national and general Yugoslav level, was projected.

Three categories of NOB Museum emerged: memorial museums, memorial exhibitions i.e. museum collections and memorial houses. The founders of the WWII memorial museums were the councils, republics and Federation, and they were ranked in terms of importance in accordance with the founder’s status, as were the budgets of these memorial institutions.

It is important to note, that precisely this type of memorial museum – which not only educates but also rears – appeared in response to a specific need following World War II, which revealed “an increasing desire to add both a moral framework to the narration of terrible historical events and more in-depth contextual explanations to commemorative acts” (Williams, 2007: 8). The mediation of intangible heritage was supposed to

⁴ An example of this is the 21st October Museum in Kragujevac, in which Petar Lubarda’s paintings dominated, and the Memorial collection “Lipa pamti” in which the theme of the tragedy of the execution of almost the entire village in one day (30/4/1944), in retaliation to their engagement among partisan lines, was presented through several environment-reconstructing and ambience installations.

create “living museums” (Jagdhuhn 2017: 86) that communicate and embody the society in which they operate. Their political mission was reflected in the development of socialist culture. Consequently, Yugoslav NOB Museums organized not only exhibitions, but also youth meetings, summer schools, partisan marches, mountain partisan hikes, etc.

In contrast to the film industry and literature, the “frozen picture” of the World War II history endured in the WWII memorial museums until the final days of Yugoslavia.

2. Museums at War(s) 1991-1995: Communal – Therefore, No-one’s Heritage

During the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the “battle for memory” meant the destruction of all symbols of Yugoslavia, in the first place WWII monuments and museums. Museums of “brotherhood and unity” were looted, bombed and sometimes even turned into military barracks. World War II monuments and museums, as pillars of Yugoslav identity, had to disappear, to make space for picturing new national memorial landscapes.

To date, a complete list of WWII memorial museums/exhibitions/houses looted, demolished, abandoned or destroyed after the breakup of Yugoslavia – either regionally or in the individual successor states of Yugoslavia – does not exist. For which reason, in the following section a remapping of the WWII memorial landscapes in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Serbia will be attempted.

3. Fragments of the Dismembered Memory

3.1. Bosnia and Herzegovina

There are nine independent memorial NOB Museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Museum of the First AVNOJ Session in

Bihać, the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session in Jajce, the Museum of the Foča period of the NOB, the Museum of 25th May 1944 in Drvar, the Museum of the Battle on Kozara at Mrakovica, the Museum of the First Proletarian Brigade in Rudo, the Museum of the Battle on Neretva in Jablanica, the Museum of Podgrmeč in the NOB in Jasenica, the Museum of Džemal Bijedić in Mostar and a large number of museum collections,⁵ exhibitions⁶ and memorial houses,⁷ which were devastated, abandoned and forgotten in the Bosnian War. On the other hand, all the mentioned memorial museums – apart from the Podgrmeč Museum in NOB Jasenica,⁸ which doesn't exist anymore – in the post-war period (mostly from 2000 on) passed through adaptations and/or (only) renovations of their permanent exhibitions according to changing social and political circumstances, and they are now under the jurisdiction of the local authorities.

The process of rebuilding WWII memorial museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina was a “bottom-up” process, depending on a

⁵ Museum Collection of Bijeljina (part of the Centre for Culture and Education), the Collection of the Nemila youth workers brigade (department of the City Museum of Zenica), Memorial Collection of the High Command in Šerići (department of the City Museum of Zenica), Mrkonjić Grad Museum Collection (part of People's University), Museum Collection of Gradačac (part of the Vaso Pelagić Centre for Education and Culture), Museum collection Tešanj (part of the Museum of Doboj), Maglaj Museum Collection (part of the local Culture Center), Derвента Museum Collection (part of the local Culture Center), Bosanska Gradiška Museum Collection (part of the local Culture Center). For more details and definitions of the museum collections, see Malčić 1984: 58.

⁶ Of the 20 registered museum exhibitions in Yugoslavia, the only surviving example is the rebuilt Museum of the Battle of Sutjeska Tjentište.

⁷ According to Maličić (1984: 62-63), there were 16 memorial houses of which the only working case today is the Memorial House of Dr. Mladen Stojanović in Prijedor. Memorial house “Battle on Sutjeska” is still in process of renovation. The Memorial House of the First ZAVNOBIH (the State Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) Session in Mrkonjić Grad has been declared national monument of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Commission for the Maintenance of the National Monuments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but in spite of this it has not been rebuilt.

⁸ The museum was destroyed during the war in the '90s. See: Derajić 2010.

small number of people, who after the wars of the '90s fought to restore legitimacy and bring back their former functions to these institutions. They managed to re-open them, but until today, these institutions work with minimum resources. In this atmosphere, in which cut-backs constantly threaten the museum, the employees are denied every type of professional dignity and freedom, and to the basic question of this study – “How has your museum changed since the breakup of Yugoslavia?” – their answer has been: “We haven’t changed anything of crucial significance.”⁹

Memories of the last war dominate the subjects which the political leaders of the different divisions of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society stir up unremittingly, and this has exercised a strong influence over the memory of World War II. What one notices in the tearing-apart of entities, is that in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina entity “the old [Yugoslav] official narrative of the Second World War has been accepted in a biased way, and this depends on how important it was for the promotion of the continuity of Bosnian-Herzegovinian statehood” (Karačić 2012: 24). On the other hand, in the Republika Srpska entity, World War II-related exhibitions are mostly transformed in such a way, that they put the accent on the mass murder of Serbs on the territory of the Independent State of Croatia.

3.2. Croatia

The political climate in Croatia, especially in the wars of the '90s and immediately afterwards, was characterized by the systematic destruction and demolition of the WWII monuments/memorial houses/museum exhibitions, which had been built in and *for* Yugoslavia. During the ten-year period, from 1990 to 2000, World War II-related museum collections/houses

⁹ This is the actual answer given in interviews with curators employed in the Museum of Old Herzegovina in Foča, the Museum of the Battle on Neretva and Museum of the First AVNOJ Session, which I conducted in October 2014.

were being destroyed, because they were considered inadequate for projecting the vision of Croatian nationalism.

According to the last museum index,¹⁰ drawn up at the end of 1988 by the Museum Documentation Centre, the Socialist Republic of Croatia had six memorial museum exhibitions and collections under the umbrella of the central Museum of the Revolution of the Croatian People: the Memorial Museum of the 1st Conference of the Communist Party of Croatia, the Memorial Museum of the 5th National Conference of KPJ, the Memorial Museum of the 8th Conference of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in Zagreb, the Memorial Museum of Ivan Goran Kovačić, the Memorial Museum of Rade Končar and the Museum in Vis, better known as “Tito’s Cave.”¹¹ Not a single one exists today. There were four independent memorial museums, which constituted an integral part of the memorial zones in Croatia, in the time of Yugoslavia, of which today two have been devastated and abandoned (the Petrova Gora and Šamarica Memorial Parks), and two, which after falling into disrepair during the recent war in Croatia, had their museum displays renewed (the Jasenovac Memorial Complex and the Kumrovec Memorial Park). In addition to these, there were a number of other memorial houses (the Memorial House in Živaja, the Memorial House in Žirovac, the Memorial House of 3rd Session of ZAVNOH (the State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia) in Topusko, the Memorial House at Plitvice, the Memorial Room of the 21st Slavonija Brigade in Voćin, and many others) and exhibitions or “departments of the NOB” as part of local and

¹⁰ This was a study of the state of museums and other institutions that keep and exhibit materials connected with the period of the Labour Movement, the People’s Liberation War and socialist reconstruction on the territory of the Socialist Republic of Croatia. See: Kanižaj 1988: 5-17.

¹¹ Since this study focuses on the WWII memorial museums, it is important to note that the following memorial museums were dedicated to the events (political sessions) preceding World War II: Memorial Museum of the First Conference of the Communist Party of Croatia, the Memorial Museum of the Fifth National Conference of the Communist Party of Croatia, the Memorial Museum of the Eighth Conference of the Communist Party of Croatia in Zagreb.

historical museums. Only one memorial house is renovated, and that is the Memorial House of the Battle of Batina. Even though it was devastated during the war, it has been reestablished, without too major investment, that is to say, the remaining exhibits have been restored and displayed in a way similar to how they were exhibited in the time of Yugoslavia. The Memorial House today plays an exhibitory role only; it employs no curators and can only be visited by prior appointment. The most extreme example of the radical reconstruction was the Glina Memorial House, which was devastated during the war in Croatia and afterwards renamed as the Croatian House.

However, there is one Museum collection “Lipa Remembers” – after the dissolution of Yugoslavia renamed as the Memorial Centre Lipa Remembers – which has been successfully restored, and whose museum display was modernized in 2015 with the financial support of the local community.

The single novelty is the Memorial House of the Victory and Liberation of Dalmatia, which was opened in Šibenik in 2016, but it still doesn't have the status of a museum and functions under the management of the Association of Anti-Fascists of the Šibenik-Knin District.

3.3. Serbia

The following memorial museums dedicated to World War II could be found in the Socialist Republic of Serbia, in the period of Yugoslavia: the Museum 21st October in Kragujevac, the Museum of 7th July 1941 in Bela Crkva, the Memorial Complex Stolice (the Museum of “Military Advising in Stolice” and the Museum of Republics and Provinces), the Museum of the Srem Front and the Memorial Complex of Boško Buha (the Museum of the Pioneer and Youth Movements of Yugoslavia and the Memorial House “Boško Buha”). Aside from these museums, there were also a number of other WWII-related memorial museum institutions which worked under the umbrella of the larger history and regional/city museums: the Memorial House of Kadinjača and the Museum exhibition of the 1941 Uprising (as

part of the National Museum in Užice), the Memorial Museum of February 12th (a subsidiary of the National Museum in Niš), the Museum of Illegal Partisan Printing-Houses, the Museum of 4th July and the Museum of the Banjica Concentration Camp (as departments of the City Museum of Belgrade), the Museum of Revolutionary Youth (a department of the National Museum in Čačak), the Museum of the Battle of Batina (a department of the City Museum of Sombor), and plenty of memorial houses/exhibitions.¹²

The fact that the war of the early '90s didn't play out on Serbian territory meant that in contrast to what happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, there were no cases of the destruction¹³ or looting of museums by military units. Nevertheless, a large number of WWII memorial museums remained shut after the break-up of Yugoslavia. This applies to the following WWII memorial museums: the Museum of 7th July 1941, the entire Memorial Complex in Stolice¹⁴ and the Museum of the Pioneer and Youth Movements of Yugoslavia.

Paradoxically enough, the socialist heritage in Serbia is an object of merchandise. The Museum of Revolutionary Youth in Čačak "was sold to a local businessman and is lost forever as a cultural good" (Marković 2006). The Museum of Illegal Partisan Printing-Houses and the Museum of 4th July (departments of the City Museum of Belgrade) were by a court decision returned to the family which owned the houses before the Second World War. In

¹² There is no officially published list, but some examples are: the Memorial House in Robaje (near Mionica), the "Sakar" Memorial House (Mali Zvornik), the House of Stevan Čolović (Arlje), the House in Botoš – Partisan Base (Zrenjanin), the Memorial Complex "Slobodište" (Kruševac), the House of Fighter Momčilo Ranković Rajac (Negotin), the House of Dobrosav Petrović (Boljevac) and many more.

¹³ In the war period (in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) the Serbian military units were stationed in the Museum of the Battle of Batina, but the museum material was removed and for this reason not damaged.

¹⁴ The Memorial Complex in Stolice is not open to the public; all the pavilion buildings are overgrown with grass and weeds.

spite of the fact that these buildings were on the list of national monuments “the common good was turned into private ownership” (Vasiljević 2012: 42). The Museum of the Banjica Concentration Camp, also the space under the remit of the City Museum of Belgrade, has not disappeared, but it can only be visited by prior appointment.

Since 2000, the museum narrative of World War II has been “updated” with the “Second Resistance Movement” – the Chetnik Detachments of the Yugoslav Army led by Draža Mihailović (the Museum of 21st October in Kragujevac, the Military Museum in Belgrade, the museum exhibition “Užice Republic” as part of the National Museum Užice, the Museum of the Banjica Concentration Camp and the Memorial Museum of February 12th in Niš). The only museum (department) whose display has been completely renewed is that of the memorial setting for the “Užice Republic.” The questions of why there were two resistance movements in the Second World War, and what their relationship was to each other, have been left untouched. In 2000 – which is symbolic for Serbian historiography (the “October 5th Revolution”) – the Memorial Centre Ravna Gora was opened as part of the Memorial Complex of Ravna Gora.

4. Kaleidoscopic Revisions of the Successor WWII Memorial Museums of Yugoslavia

As the collapse of Yugoslavia demanded a new museological form and a new interpretation of history, the WWII memorial museums – in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia – as actors involved in the post-Yugoslav nation-building process, have been using similar tactics in the redefinition of their spatial narrative *images*: “decommunization,” installing exhibitions dedicated to the wars of the '90s parallel with the WWII exhibitions, rebranding the historic sites, introducing religious rituals into museums, and “performing museology” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000) tactic, i.e. leaving exhibitions from the Yugoslav period intact.

The transitional route taken by the museums is guided by the state-driven project(s) of restoring national identity, and for that purpose the same methods in the reinterpretation of the historical chapters of World War II are used by curators.

One of the first turning-points in the museological need to find a new approach in the mediation of the period 1941-1945 has been mirrored in the cleansing of communist ideology from the museal narrative. As one such example, there is the curatorial aspiration behind the Memorial Centre Lipa Remembers. In the scenario for the new museum display, the exhibition author(s) explains the curatorial attitude and intention in the following way: “to free the exhibition from the communist idea of the ‘victim,’ and by so doing, to overcome notions of victimization and the sense of injustice, and to make a universal appeal to conscience.”¹⁵ The same logic is applied in the renovation of the permanent exhibition of the Museum of 21st October in Serbia, and the Memorial Museum of Jasenovac in Croatia, which in both cases, with the introduction of lists of names of victims, results in a recounting of the official numbers of victims established in Yugoslavia. One of the main postulates of “post-1989 museology,” the so-called “democratic museology,” is the curatorial tactic of developing in the visitor an empathy towards the victims, often referred to as the “method of personalizing the history,” as a counter-politics of display to the abstract collective images of victims used by communist countries in the second half of the 20th century.

The rebranding and commercialization of the museum space of memory is also one of the de-ideologization tactics in political education on the subject of World War II. Under pressure from the local authorities, the social function of many WWII memorial

¹⁵ Directly paraphrasing from the document “The museological concept of the permanent exhibition” (Perinčić 2013: 12). The document is a part of the museum archive of the Memorial Centre Lipa Remembers, and I was given access to it when visiting the museum in 2016.

museums was changed through the renaming of the institutions and the addition of ethnographic displays (the Museum of Old Herzegovina, Museum of the Battle on Neretva). This strategy is also reflected in the use of the museum space for political election campaigns and various cultural events (the Museum of the First AVNOJ Session, the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session and the Museum of the Battle on Neretva).

The liberation from “regime museology” is also apparent in the straightforward erasure of the war slogans of the Communist leaders, which had been a part of World War II exhibits in Yugoslavia. In the case of the Museum of Old Herzegovina in Foča, the curator states that the World War II exhibition has essentially remained the same, only its volume has been reduced and it has been freed from ideology: “We got rid of the slogans and glorifications of the Yugoslav Communist Party.”¹⁶

The next curatorial tactic, which can be read from the many examples of redefinition of museums on the post-Yugoslavian territory, is to affirm an historical continuity – the curatorial strategy which I would name here: World War II through the lens of the most recent war(s). Namely, the exhibitions dedicated to the war(s) of the '90s were moved into the museums which succeeded the NOB Museums. For example, the typical representatives of this “turn” would be the Museum of the Battle on Neretva (located in the Federation entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina) which as a part of the permanent display has the exhibition “IV Corps of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and the Museum of Old Herzegovina (the former Museum of the NOB period in Foča, located in the Republika Srpska entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina) which in its permanent display, alongside the

¹⁶ The quote is from an interview with Danko Mihajlović, curator of the Museum of Old Herzegovina, which I conducted in October 2015. From a comparison of the synopsis of the exhibition “Foča in NOB,” published by Kojović (1978: 46-131) in his Master’s thesis, with the current exhibition, it can be concluded that following slogans were removed: *Long live the People’s Liberation Front of all the Peoples of Yugoslavia!*, *Long live our heroic People’s Liberation Partisan and Volunteer Army of Yugoslavia!*, *Long live the heroic Red Army!*, *Salutations to our great allies, the Soviet Union, England and America!*

memorial room dedicated to World War II, has an additional exhibition space – a memorial room dedicated to fallen soldiers and civilian victims of the Defensive Patriotic War. According to the claims of the above-mentioned museums, these exhibitions were to be of a temporary nature. However, after two decades, the heritage of both wars, using the same aesthetics and rhetoric, but with an inverted concept of who the victims are, is still being displayed.

It is important to stress that, unlike in the Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Croatian contexts, in Serbia there isn't any single museum exhibition dedicated to the war period of 1991–1995. But on the other hand, there are museum displays dedicated to the NATO bombing, without any historical contextualization of the war in Kosovo (for example in the Military Museum in Belgrade and as a part of the permanent exhibition of the Memorial House of the Battle of Kadinjača, where the exhibition “The Užice Region during the NATO Aggression” is presented in the same building beside the still intact museum display of the Worker's Battalion and the Battle of Kadinjača from the Yugoslavian period).

What is also very characteristic of Serbian WWII memorial museums is the combination of religious celebrations with commemorations of World War II. On 21st October 2017 a liturgy was held in the Memorial Park of Šumarice,¹⁷ whilst in the Memorial Complex of Kadinjača, in 2017, an annual dirge was held for the fallen fighters of the Workers Battalion at Kadinjača on the anniversary of the battle.¹⁸ The nationalist and clericalist tones to the WWII heritage are apparent in the direct interventions in the memorial sites, as for example in the Srem Front Memorial Complex, at the very entrance of which – before you step into the “Alley of the Meritorious,” which contains the

¹⁷ A Serbian Christian Orthodox church was established as part of the Memorial Park, as a sort of monument to the victims of the mass execution in Šumarice.

¹⁸ Religious ceremonies were held, in both cases – memorial parks in Šumarice and Kadinjača, in 2017, but also in previous years.

names of the dead fighters of the NOVJ (People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia, *Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije*), the Red Army, the Bulgarian National Army and the Italian Brigade – is crammed a Serbian Christian Orthodox chapel.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, an example of the introduction of religious rituals into WWII memorial museums is found exclusively in the Republika Srpska. A paradigmatical example would be the Kozara Memorial Complex, where in 1993, a monumental wooden cross¹⁹ was placed at its entrance to mark the occasion when the Patriarch of the Serbian Christian Orthodox Church celebrated a liturgy for the Kozara victims of World War II.

Almost all remained WWII memorial museums – in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina – partially and sometimes fully, retain parts of or entire exhibitions from the Yugoslavian period, in an untouched state (the Museum of the Second AVNOJ Session, the Museum of Old Herzegovina, the Museum of the Battle on Neretva, the Memorial House of the Battle of Kadinjača, the Memorial House of the Battle of Batina in Croatia and many more). Due to the lack of political consensus concerning the WWII heritage in the “Region” (the strategic designation applied by the political elites), new governments are simply bypassing the former NOB Museums. Consequently, these museums have since the break-up of Yugoslavia been insulated from change. This means they preserve “the order and knowledge formations” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2000) created in Yugoslavia. For museums which have “survived their own death,” it turned out to be self-explanatory and reasonable to (re)stage their previous forms (exhibitions), embracing their own historical role in teaching the history of World War II. The willingness not to hide

¹⁹ In front of this monumental wooden cross, in 2017 (but also in previous years), as part of the 75th Anniversary Commemoration Program, a dirge was held.

the state of *Heimatlosigkeit*²⁰ of a museum is an encouragement for the visitor to rediscover the museum medium in its own right, i.e. the knowledge procedures behind the *images* of the artifacts. Visitors are stimulated not (just) to study World War II events, but rather how this period was supposed to be remembered in Yugoslavia. As a consequence, the "frozen" display either provokes a feeling of nostalgia or, to the contrary, mobilizes a critical review of the institution of memory in the period of Communism, as the current director of the Museum of Prijepolje explained when referring to the Museum of the Pioneer and Youth Movements of Yugoslavia: "We need to maintain the museum in the condition in which it was conceived in Yugoslavia, so that museologist don't build any more [ideological] museums of this type."²¹ On the other hand, gatherings and reunions around old Yugoslav songs and flags are still organized by SUBNORs and various anti-fascist associations (on the World War II dates which were celebrated in Yugoslavia in the museums), which "regional" media (strategically) call "nostalgic pilgrimages."

5. In Place of a Conclusion

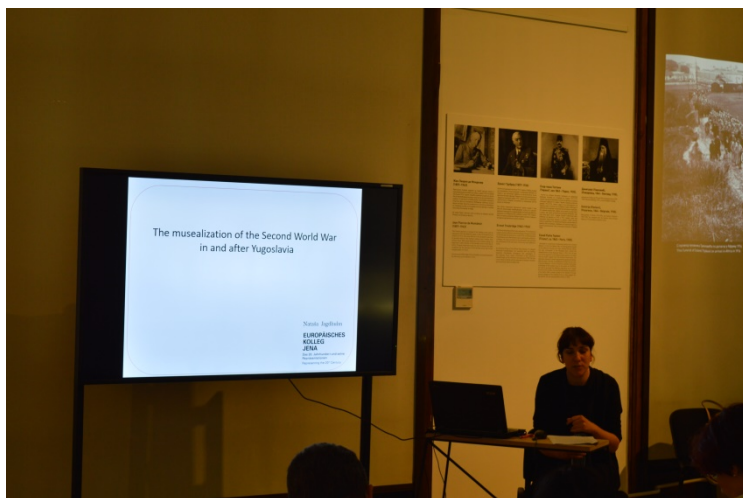
6. The process of the "thawing" of the *image* of the Second World War started with the disappearance of the Yugoslavian state. The transformation of the WWII memorial museums, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, is a reflection of the conflicted memory which leaves no space for critical historiography.

The fear of changing the former Yugoslav exhibitions – even in museums which have lost original items in the war(s) of the '90s – is apparent in the production of copies, not only of the exhibits

²⁰ The term *Heimat* is a German word that could be translated as a "place of belonging." *Heimatlosigkeit* would mean a state of broken relationship between individuals, or between an object of heritage, and its space of belonging.

²¹ Paraphrasing from Slavoljub Pušica's speech at the panel discussion "Muzeji kao meste (za)ključa(va)nja," 2nd September 2016, Šabac Library, Serbia.

but also of their style of discourse. The origin of this can be found in the cacophony of different state politics and the absence of any consensual attitude towards the heritage of the Second World War. A very important additional factor, for the understanding of the WWII heritage (in) transition as a continuous condition, is the general financial and political uncertainty in which these institutions are functioning. Because of the above-mentioned reasons, the employees of the WWII memorial museums find themselves engaged in a strenuous struggle for the survival of the museum collections and buildings, as well as for the very status of the institutions.



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List of acronyms

AVNOJ – Antifašističko veće narodnog oslobođenja Jugoslavije (Anti-Fascist Council for the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia)

KPJ – Komunistička Partija Jugoslavije (Communist Party of Yugoslavia)

NDH – Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia)

NOB – Narodnooslobodilačka borba (People's Liberation Struggle)

NOB Muzeji – Muzeji narodnooslobodilačke borbe (Museums of People's Liberation Struggle)

NOR – Narodnooslobodilački rat (People's Liberation War)

NOVJ – Narodnooslobodilačka vojska Jugoslavije (People's Liberation Army of Yugoslavia)

SUBNOR – Savez udruženja boraca Narodnooslobodilačkog rata (Federation of Veterans Associations of the People's Liberation War)

ZAVNOBIH – Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Bosne i Hercegovine (State Anti-fascist Council for the National Liberation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)

ZAVNOH – Zemaljsko antifašističko vijeće narodnog oslobođenja Hrvatske (State Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia)

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“Dark Tourism” and Renewing Permanent Exhibitions in Former Concentration Camp Museums

Instead of an Introduction

In 2016, film director Sergei Loznitsa made a documentary on the peculiar contemporary phenomenon of “dark tourism”, and named it *Austerlitz*. The title did not refer to the famous “Battle of The Three Emperors” in the Napoleonic Wars, or offer a clear association with the Auschwitz camp (although one can trace veiled meanings and notions reminiscent of both terms throughout the film). As Loznitsa explained, it was taken from W. G. Sebald’s fourth and (unexpectedly) last novel, bearing the same name and published fifteen years earlier.¹

The novel’s title character, Jacques Austerlitz, was described as a middle-aged historian of architecture, puzzled and fascinated by lavishly planned railroad stations. This multilayered and profound novel was structured around an accidental event that revived memories suppressed in Austerlitz’s mind for half a century, and

¹ For many critics, the book published in February 2001 represented the pinnacle of Sebald’s work and final proof that the humble German professor living and working reticently in the English countryside for decades, is one of the most intriguing of contemporary writers and a most serious candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature. The haunting past and eternal burden of the Second World War represented the core of his work, described as “the very end of the oneiric history of sadness and futility”. However, in December 2001, sudden news shocked the public. W.G. Sebald died unexpectedly while driving his car. Compared with Primo Levi and Thomas Bernhard, he was perceived “more like a new kind of historian than a new kind of novelist”. Mark O’Connell, “Why You Should Read W. G.”, *The New Yorker*, December 14, 2011. <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/why-you-should-read-w-g-sebald>

consequently revealed his real identity. The moment in which Austerlitz fortuitously stepped into the Ladies Waiting Room of Liverpool Street Station was the turning point that enabled him to visualize a small Jewish boy sitting in that same space after being brought to London from Prague in one of the 1939 Kindertransports.

Determined to continue his search for truth and to discover the fate of his parents, Austerlitz took several (seemingly self-destructive) voyages. On one of them – the journey to Prague and Theresienstadt – he became overwhelmed by a peculiar emotion that further induced his specific mental state. While wondering through the corridors, halls and yards of the former Jewish ghetto and concentration camp, the past and present overlapped in his mind, as well as reality and dreams, memories and fiction, and he started to feel the presence of the people detained there during the Second World War. “It suddenly seemed to me, with the greatest clarity, that they had never been taken away after all, but were still living crammed into those buildings and basements and attics, as if they were incessantly going up and down the stairs, looking out of the windows, moving in vast numbers through the streets and alleys, and even, a silent assembly, filling the entire space occupied by the air, hatched with gray as it was by the fine rain.”²

Sergei Loznitsa placed his camera in the memorial museums of the former concentration camps Dachau and Sachsenhausen and filmed hundreds and thousands of their daily visitors “going up and down the stairs, looking out of the windows, moving in vast numbers through the streets and alleys”. He recorded and edited a black and white film with unusually long-lasting frames, without any comments. The spectators could only hear the sound of footsteps on the pebbles, distant rumours, squeaking doors and (from time to time) the voices of tour-guides explaining the functioning of the camps. On a hot summer day, Loznitsa shot men and women casually dressed in short pants, stretched T-shirts and flip-flops while they observed the original objects, read inscriptions, rested, enjoyed a sandwich break, or took photos and selfies. They performed the same activities tourists usually do in other museums, landscapes of unique natural beauty, natural wilderness,

² W.G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, Modern Library Trade Paperback Edition, 2011. iBooks.

picturesque villages, or modern cities. Stunned by this phenomenon, but without any intention of judging or ironising, Loznitsa raised some basic questions: Why are people visiting former camps in such large numbers? Why are they entering the crematoria and gas chambers and taking hundreds of photos in front of the sign “Arbeit macht frei”? Are they determined to improve their knowledge of the Second World War, to face the past and realize the scope of the Nazi crimes, or are they trying to overcome the fear of death in places of mass killings? He didn't offer answers, but further induced viewers to search for them and to ask new questions.



For the readers of Sebald's novel it seemed as if Loznitsa was wondering whether he could capture the mute witnesses from the past whose presence Austerlitz felt in Theresienstadt, to recognize them while silently monitoring the crowd and walking side by side with the visitors through once functional parts of the death factories.



It is rare that a novel and a film inspired by a novel are so perfectly intertwined, and proving authentic and evocative on so many levels, as is the case with Sebald's novel and Loznitsa's film. They both deal with the ambiguous topics of living history, collective responsibility and the individual search for truth. Sebald followed Benjamin in his analysis of modernity. Inside the framework of the imperial legacy he implicitly and subtly connected the dazzling rise of Europe as a cradle of human emancipation, with its consequent fall into the barbarity of Fascism. He placed the magnificent, enchanting edifices built on colonial wealth next to the death camps, gas chambers and crematoria. Loznitsa, on the other hand, has further questioned the space, time and memory relationship. His approach to "dark tourism" and the new forms and contents of museumisation has relied on Primo Levi's statement that not even those who survived the camps could be considered witnesses of the Holocaust/Shoah.³ How then can people of the third, fourth or fifth generations after the Holocaust/Shoah deal with this trauma?

In this text, I am analysing the transformation of the places of the former concentration camps into archeological sites, and the process of renewing the permanent exhibitions in their museums. In the closing part, I inform the reader on the current project of the successor states of Yugoslavia, "Renewing the 'Ex-Yugoslav' Permanent Exhibition in Block 17 of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum".

³ "We who survived the Camps are not true witnesses. This is an uncomfortable notion which I have gradually come to accept by reading what other survivors have written, including myself, when I re-read my writings after a lapse of years. We, the survivors, are not only a tiny but also an anomalous minority. We are those who, through prevarication, skill or luck, never touched bottom. Those who have, and who have seen the face of the Gorgon, did not return, or returned wordless." Levi, Primo. *The Drowned and the Saved*. Trans. Raymond Rosenthal. New York: Vintage International, 1988.

1. Traditionally perceived as “the guardians of the truth” concerning “national greatness”, museums played a crucial role in the creation of romanticized narratives about the so-called glorious heroic and martyr past. The “patriotic religion” of modern states perceived national history museums as secular temples in which the sharp distinction between “us” and “them” was firmly established. Precisely this binary division was meant to educate by celebrating the “self” and simultaneously shaming the “other”.⁴ The exhibiting practices demonized, ridiculed, or criminalized the role of the “inner” or “external” enemy in the national history. The impression of national superiority, and its longevity and continuity deeply rooted in history, were created through the museums’ permanent exhibitions and their suggestive meanings.⁵ From the period of early childhood, repeated visits to the museum were not only for improving one’s knowledge of the past as officially envisaged and interpreted, but also for firming up one’s self-esteem and sense of personal security within the larger (national) group.⁶

At the end of the 20th century, however, existing historical narratives were challenged, and decades-long official interpretations were

⁴ Orhan Pamuk, as an observer of the Western world in his *Museum of Innocence*, wrote that: “Visiting the museum for the citizens of the West, during the school years and later as parents eager to show the wonders of the world and its beauty to their children, became part of the life cycle and an element of individual and collective improvement.” However, he pointed to the museum as the institution producing the comfortable feeling of pride and an endless source of the self-security while excluding and shaming “the other”. Orhan Pamuk, *The Museum of Innocence*, Faber&Faber, London 2010.

⁵ The concept of a monolith society endangered by foreign and domestic enemies through the history, was skillfully developed in the permanent museum exhibitions of the Nazi and Fascist regimes. “The masses could be tamed and educated in a museum space, which trapped and spoke directly to the viewers in personal terms.” Sandra Esslinger, in: Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds. *Gasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Burlington 2004.

⁶ In Salinger’s *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield describes his early visits to the American Museum of Natural History in New York and its ecclesiastical atmosphere: “I loved that damn museum,” says Holden. “It was a long, long room, and you were only supposed to whisper. (...) The floor was all stone, and if you had some marbles in your hand and you dropped them, they bounced like madmen all over the floor and made a helluva racket, and the teacher would hold up the class and go back and see what the hell was going on.” He continues: “The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was. Nobody’d move. You could go there a hundred thousand times, (...) Nobody’d be different. The only thing that would be different would be you.” J. D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1951.

relativized. The demands for multi-perspective as opposed to monolithic historical narratives introduced the new paradigm of the museum-forum, which was perceived as a space for a dialogue that didn't exclude disagreements over the various interpretations of the past. The museum was considered to be a field with the potential to transfer social antagonisms into the realm of agonism.⁷ The aim was to include political opponents in the dialogue, in order to avoid a devastating social antagonization. Instead of the exclusion of the "other", social inclusion through a debate was affirmed and promoted. However, the planned dialogue often ended in the promotion of totalitarian theories, and the criminalization and trivialization of socialist discourse, which led numerous attempts to establish a critical museum to failure.⁸

Ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the horizon of expectations has radically changed. Once "the end of history" was proclaimed, revolutionary visions were perceived only as utopias and revolutionary practices identified only with terror. Humanity seemed to be trapped in the present and compelled to search for its new perspectives in the past instead of in the future. It had entered the age of commemorations, and the past, whether it was considered golden, dark, glorious or martyr, became the repository of the arguments constantly needed in never-ending political disputes. "Facing the past", treating its "scars" and "bleeding wounds", are expressions that have marked the prominent concepts and ideals of the last two decades. History applied and exhibited in the public space, living memories and reenactments of historical events have been constantly raising the public interest in the past. The preserved, or reconstructed historical sites, particularly those created at the places of killings and deaths, became the final destinations of contemporary "pilgrimages". The obsessive wish of millions of men and women to visit the museums and memorial sites created in the former concentration and death camps, reflected the need of individuals, various social groups and the wider societies in

⁷ See: Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics: Thinking The World Politically*. London – New York: Verso, 2013.

⁸ Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, Piotr Piotrowski, *From Museum Critique to the Critical Museum*. Routledge 2015.

general, to face Nazism and anti-Semitism as the deepest downfall of humanity. The majority of those who were participants in the “dark”, “black”, or “grief” tours were determined to recognize and, thus, to fight the revival of fascism and to suppress its legacy.

The museums that were established at the former concentration and death camps, have gained one of the central positions in the post-socialist European historical discourse. Remembering those who were killed or died in the camps, and reviving, reconstructing these experiences from the pieces, and preserving the memory of those who survived, has crucially defined present-day collective identities. Nevertheless, one cannot neglect the fact that the heightened interest in the heavy burden of the Second World War that produced the new branches of tourism, came out of consumeristic curiosity as well.

2. The space of the concentration camps has been transformed into the archaeological sites that have conserved, or partially reconstructed the authentic remnants of the camp barracks, gas chambers and crematoria, so as to create a clear impression of their former look. The intention has been to preserve the camp remains for the future generations, as permanent warning and proof that, in the 20th century, millions of people were killed in gas chambers, or driven to death by exhaustion. The ruins were restored and, together with their surroundings, established the *mise-en-scène* ready to stage and to face the past, and simultaneously to warn against hidden or openly expressed manifestations of fascism in the present. The visitors to the sites become not only observers, but also actors, politically and socially engaged and emotional challenged. Whether the reconstructions took part at devastated, partly destroyed, or preserved sites, those areas were treated as authentic and unique. Not only for the descendants of the men and women who perished in the camps, but for all who have entered into the memorial sites, they have represented an area of sanctity – a space literally marked with human ashes, unmarked graves and public execution sites.



The walks through the former camps have represented a specific form of pilgrimage that reaches its climax in front of the gas chambers. It is precisely this cathartic function of the walk which the museums have presented as the reference point of every visit. The men and women are given the possibility of deciding whether they are prepared for the walks through the camp surroundings at the beginning of their visit, and whether they will summarize the impressions and the emotions of their tour in the museum. The museums inside the memorial sites contain the main information and sketch the context of the Second World War and the Nazi ideology; however, their main focus is on the victims of the camps, especially those who didn't survive. After the deconstruction of the socialist regimes, the permanent exhibitions that existed for decades have been or are in the process of being renewed, in accordance with the changed political realities. Their official interpretations of the war, in which the narrative of the anti-fascist struggle had the central position, were abandoned and the Holocaust/Shoah was distinguished as being a unique phenomenon not only in the Second World War, but in the entire history of humanity.



Remembering the victims of Holocaust/Shoah and marking the ideology that formulated and carried it became the essence of the new historical culture. The Holocaust/Shoah museums, together with the various types of museums of Socialism, became the central institutions that defined and constructed the new European identity. Thematically and conceptually, they closely intertwined, further strengthening the increased public interest in the past. Personalizing the victims, individualizing the perpetrators and their collaborators, questioning the neutral role of the bystanders, and recognizing the ideology of Nazism and Fascism that prepared and committed the Holocaust/Shoah, genocides and numerous violations of the warfare – all these elements became the foundations for the historical discourse of contemporary Europe.

However, defining the spaces of the former concentration and death camps as “memory sites” widened the thematic focus of their permanent museum exhibitions. Besides the camps’ history before and during the Second World War, the history of the space that the camps occupied included the postwar period as well. Not only was the ideology which produced the camps museumised, but also the ideology marking the period when some of them had been used as detention camps and prisons for former Nazis and their collaborators. The idea of presenting the afterlives of the camps was an attempt to produce a

more nuanced insight into the history. However, this kind of sensibilisation of the public contained certain dubious meanings. In an attempt to provide a precise history of the site, this practice evened out the two dictatorial regimes and contributed towards further equalizations of the two ideologies – Nazism and Socialism. (Un)intentionally, it risked victimising the perpetrators. The concept of shared victimhood and the universality of human suffering was recognized and introduced as an important part of so-called museum diplomacy in the post-Cold War world.

Finally, besides the two changes mentioned – the introduction of the victim as the central focus of interest, and the inclusion of the post-war history of the camps – , the re-conceptualized museum exhibitions included in their new narratives the concise histories of the process of museumisation as well. This intervention presented the specific outlook of the Cold War and the analysis of the memory culture during the second half of the 20th century. Thus, the visitors were given the possibility to rethink not only the Holocaust/Shoah, but the ways the memory of it had developed through time.

3. Besides the thematic transformation, the museums of the former concentration and death camps have been forced to search for new organizational and financial practices too. On the one hand, they are faced with the growing number of visitors and the need to provide adequate information, to maintain the exhibitions and to preserve the authenticity of the objects and sites. On the other, the neoliberal pragmatism based on private property, and the withdrawal of the state support from many areas of social provisions, is creating a sense of constant uncertainty for these institutions.

Today, the questions of museum transformation discussed on various levels and from various perspectives where the art museums are concerned, have become crucial for historical museums too. “The cultural logic of the late capitalist museum” shook up the traditional and imposed new principles of functioning.⁹ History museums that were considered as encyclopaedic institutions, faced the possibility of being transformed into corporate entities. In a world based on the

⁹ Rosalind Krauss, “The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum”, in: *October*, Vol. 54 (Autumn, 1990), pp. 3-17.

phrase, “History sells”, the “museum industry” was expected to be an important contributor to the wider economy. Their commercialization and the constantly increasing number of visitors challenged the traditional forms of organization and financing. In that respect, the institution of “the foundation” was introduced, with the intention to facilitate long-term preservation programmes that could enable the further functioning and preservation of the museums.

Whether museums at the sites of the former camps were established shortly after the Second World War and existed for decades, or created as completely new institutions, the historical museums galvanized the political discourse. On the one hand, they crucially redefined the historical culture by focusing on the specific thematic contents, and on the other, they became the dam possessing the strength to block the rising tide of the “historical culture industry”, which threatened to endanger the emancipatory function of the museums.¹⁰

Linking “museology, history, theory, and criticism to contemporary social conditions” has appeared as “an urgent and painfully obvious issue” (229)¹¹. However, the “notion of a museum as a corporate entity with a highly marketable inventory and the desire for growth” complicates this noble and idealistic mission and goal. In such a position, museums are forced to meet the needs of visitors and to maximize profits. They become part of the consumeristic society framework and one of its important grounding points.

The mass consumerism of historical culture became part of contemporary societies. The questions that Loznitsa raised while watching the people entering the former camps have one more answer. “The consumer is not king, as the culture industry would like to have us

¹⁰ When in 1944 the phenomenon of the “culture industry” was recognized, Adorno and Horkheimer concluded that instead of emancipating and enlightening, capitalism created a culture industry that has been producing goods for a market-oriented economy, and consequently creating the docile individuals as parts of the obedient masses. Adorno, Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry, Enlightenment as Mass Deception”, in: *Dialectics of Enlightenment* 93 – 136.
https://web.stanford.edu/dept/DLCL/files/pdf/adorno_culture_industry.pdf

¹¹ Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds. *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Ashgate Pub Ltd, Burlington 2004.

believe, not its subject, but its object (...) The masses are not the measure but the ideology of the culture industry...".¹²



The question of the funding and functioning of the historical sites of the former camps and their museum institutions, appears to be as important as the question of their thematic scope and interest. Although the central facts point to the justice of assuming a collective responsibility towards the war victims, these institutions are threatened by the continuous state withdrawal of financial support. Such a development endangers the positions of these museums, which are at risk of either becoming commercially overwhelmed sites, or of losing visitors owing to the lack of the substantial funding that is required for their proper functioning.

4. The Yugoslav exhibition at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum represents the paradigmatic example of this renewing permanent exhibitions phenomenon. Its long history and current search for a new manner of realization illustrate the whole process of memorialization and the phases through which the memory of the camp and its victims has changed since 1945.

¹² (Adorno 1967:16).

On September 29th 1963 in the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia opened its national exhibition on the first floor of Block 17. Representatives of the local Oswiecim population, around 200 ex-inmates from Yugoslavia and officials of the Yugoslav and Polish states were present at the opening.¹³ The exhibition contained 90 panels of 230 photographs, facsimiles, sculptures and graphics illustrating simultaneously the life and suffering of the Auschwitz and other Concentration Camp inmates and the Yugoslav antifascist struggle during the Second World War. The exhibition was opened on the initiative of the Federal Union of the People's Liberation War Fighters – an organization of war veterans that included former camp inmates as well. This exhibition was realized according to the plans of the architect Branko Bon and several other artists, amongst whom Vida Jocić was the most distinguished, as sculptor and surviving inmate of the Auschwitz camp. The exhibition was divided into three parts. The first part was designed to perform a sacred function. At the entrance, a commemorative plaque and stone were set down as a place for remembering and honouring the victims. The first room represented the struggle against fascism on the Yugoslav territory, focusing on the Partisan movement and the role of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in that movement. The photographs, documents and maps exhibited testified to the scope of the fascist terror in Yugoslavia and Europe. The second part of the exhibition was marked with the stained glass panels symbolizing, as was stressed, the defiance of the Auschwitz inmates. The exhibition included information on the number of the Yugoslav inmates and their fates in the camp. During the summer of the next year, Yugoslav President Josip Broz Tito visited the exhibition and the Museum with the intention of significantly demonstrating the importance of the whole project for the Yugoslav state and society, and for its positioning in the divided world of the Cold War.

¹³ The Auschwitz–Birkenau State Museum was established by special decree of the Polish Government in July 1947. From 1960 onwards, national exhibitions were opened in the Museum at the initiative of the former inmates' associations.



In anticipation of the celebrations for the 45th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, huge interventions and restorations of monuments and museums were realized all over Yugoslavia during the late 1980s. Among the numerous activities planned to mark the approaching anniversary was the renovation of the permanent exhibition in the Auschwitz–Birkenau State Museum in 1988. The institution responsible for the new exhibition was the Museum of the Revolution of the Nations and Nationalities of Yugoslavia, from Belgrade. Four years later, the Museum of the Revolution, together with the state whose history it was representing, was deconstructed, and its funds were incorporated into a new museum institution named The Museum of Yugoslav History. Unexpectedly, the exhibition in Poland outlasted the state that had set it up. In 2002, on the initiative of Croatia, it was closed for visitors and officially sealed in 2009.

The main reasons for the closure were listed by its initiator, Croatia: Yugoslavia no longer existed as a state, and after twenty years, the ideological and political realities, and the interpretations of the past, had substantially changed; the exhibition presented only copies of photographs and documents, which mostly could be seen in other

national settings; all the textual explanations were only in Serbo-Croatian and Polish; some historical data were not precise, or were incorrect – and the example chosen was the number of victims in the Jasenovac Concentration Camp under the Croatian Ustasha regime.



The Auschwitz–Birkenau State Museum management invited the Serbian Ministry of Culture, and the Museum of Yugoslav History as the successor institution of the former Museum of the Revolution, to answer accordingly. In June 2011, the Ministry of Culture, Media and Information Society of Serbia convened the first meeting with the representatives of all the former Yugoslav Republics, on the status of the former Yugoslav exhibition space. The participants at the meeting confirmed the attitude of all the former Yugoslav Republics not to divide up the exhibition space, but to prepare a joint permanent exhibition. It was the first time that the six independent states had agreed to work together on a common exhibition about the crimes committed during World War II and the Holocaust/Shoah. This process was considered remarkable and important, bearing in mind the fact that the states had faced the conflicts and wars between each other less

than 20 years ago. So a shared interpretation of the history was perceived as the best way to foster the process of understanding and reconciliation among these states in the present.

The International Steering Group was established with the aim of providing the necessary help in the organization of the future activities. These decisions were reconfirmed at the level of the ambassadors of the former Yugoslav Republics, who met at the Auschwitz–Birkenau State Museum in Poland in October the same year.



Six meetings on this subject took place in Belgrade (June 2012), Sarajevo (December 2012), Skopje (April 2013), the Auschwitz–Birkenau Museum (July 2013), Zagreb (February 2014) and Ljubljana (May 2015), with the support of UNESCO’s Venice Office, and within the framework of the global initiative “Culture: a bridge to development”. The meetings were attended by experts from the Shoah Memorial (France), The Topography of Terror (Germany) and the Holocaust Memorial Museum (USA), and the representatives of the Auschwitz–Birkenau State Museum and the National Fund for Victims of National Socialism from Austria as observers.



The meetings led to a general agreement on the framework and content of the exhibition. During the Skopje meeting in April 2013, the working groups agreed to prepare the first selection of items for the new exhibition. They were divided into 4 thematic chapters: Time and Space, Victims, Perpetrators and Collaborators, Resistance.

During the fourth meeting, in Auschwitz-Birkenau in July 2013, the participants presented a first selection of items and texts structured along the four chapters of the exhibition. This allowed for a clear definition of the inner structure of each chapter, as well as a precise listing of the elements still to be integrated. According to the selected materials, the Editorial Board was able to produce a short presentation of the complicated history of the region of former Yugoslavia within the focus of the Second World War. Most of the information was collected from the materials provided by the experts from each country involved in the joint project.



The whole idea and effort of all the participants to organize an international exhibition among the national exhibitions in the Auschwitz Museum received the unanimous support of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance at the conference which was organized in Manchester in December 2014. The idea was perceived as a unique attempt to create a museum forum that would overcome the conflicting interpretations of the past, and present a shared historical narrative of the events that took place in Yugoslavia during the Second World War.



At the final meeting, in Ljubljana, all the sides accepted the draft proposal for the future exhibition created by the Editorial Board and decided to await the formal agreement between the state officials. At the same time, the results of the Serbian experts were presented to the

Serbian public at the exhibition “Auschwitz – The Final Destination”, in the Historical Museum of Serbia in May 2015. Following the concept adopted by the participants in the project, the Belgrade exhibition presented the fates of those who were taken to Auschwitz–Birkenau from the territory of present-day Serbia.

Today, after two and a half years, all the participants in the project are waiting for the final approval of the respective states’ officials.



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The Work on Permanent Display in the Museum of Yugoslavia

In order to better understand the present work on permanent display in the Museum of Yugoslavia, one needs to be acquainted with the history and even pre-history of this institution, as well as the challenges and turning-points the Museum has experienced since it was established.



Originally founded as the Museum of Yugoslav History (MYH) in 1996, with the merging of two former institutions – the “Josip Broz Tito” Memorial Centre and the Museum of the Revolution of Yugoslav Nations and Ethnic Minorities – the Museum changed its name to the Museum of Yugoslavia in 2016, following its 20th anniversary. It is worth pointing out that

placing the two institutions under one roof in 1996 was a political decision, induced by the socio-political context of the 1990s, when the Yugoslav state broke up in a violent civil war. In such circumstances, these museums were perceived as a burden and as witnesses to an unwanted past. In this way, Yugoslavia was musealized and, in accordance with the understanding of a museum as being a place for old and unnecessary things, it was intended that Yugoslavia be put on the shelf. In addition to this, the Museum of Yugoslav History had faced a very peculiar situation from the onset, since the two institutions from which it originated differed in nature, mission, work, documentation, personnel and collections. The Museum of the Revolution, founded in 1959, was organized on the prevalent museological principles with the task to collect research and represent materials related to the workers' movement and the development of the idea of Socialism as the foundation of the new Yugoslav society.¹ The "Josip Broz Tito" Memorial Centre was founded in 1982 with the particular aim of keeping alive the memory of Yugoslavia's lifelong president.² Thus a dynamically structured museum was merged with an institution of a memorial character. The collection of the Museum of the Revolution was organized systematically, and it was enlarged with regards to a clear collection policy, which was, to provide an overview of the Yugoslav Revolution, from the establishment of the first workers' organizations to the last congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The collection of the Memorial Centre, on the other hand, was created almost spontaneously, consisting of the gifts Josip Broz Tito had received over the years. This collection is heterogeneous in term

¹ More about the history of the institution: Kastratović Ristić, V. "Nastajanje i nestajanje jednog muzeja" in *Muzeji kao mesta pomirenja*, ed. Slađana Bojković and Ana Stolić, Proceedings of the assembly, The Eighth Conference of the International Association of Museums of History: Belgrade, 2008, pp. 326–340.

² For more about the history of this institution: Erceg Sarajčić, G. *Memorijalni centar „Josip Broz Tito”, nastanak i perspektive*, MSc thesis, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Organizations and Informatics, Varaždin, 1990; Group of authors, *Memorijalni centar "Josip Broz Tito"* (ed. Bugarčić, R., Ćirković, B., Filipović, D., Grković, O., Tomašević, N.), Memorial Center "Josip Broz Tito", Belgrade, 1990.

of givers, types of objects, their time and place of origin, as well as materials and techniques. With the relay batons as the most distinctive part of the collection, its content varies from the handicrafts of preschoolers to fragments of the stone from the Moon, from models of industrial products to archaeological ruins from Cambodia.³

Both collections presented a challenge for the curators and researchers. Objects from the Memorial Centre have acquired the context of “a ruler’s collection”, and by labelling them as “gifts to the President”, we risk overlooking other layers of these objects’ meanings. In relation to this, it should be pointed out that a part of the public still identifies the Museum complex with the initial aim of the Memorial Centre, recognizing it only as the collection of gifts Tito received or the House of Flowers where he is buried, and thus reducing its function. Just as the collection of the former Memorial Centre is attempting to contest stereotypes and dominant narratives, so is the collection of the Museum of the Revolution confronting the prejudices that characterize it as the “Museum of the Party”. The documentation, the files of the museum objects, and the exhibition catalogues unravel the turbulent and layered histories of the two predecessor institutions. Thus, instead of “putting Yugoslavia on a shelf”, the merger of the two institutions in 1996 became the basis of a twenty-years-long

³ In addition to the relay batons, it consists of objects of fine and applied arts, children’s and amateur artefacts, archaeology, ethnology, numismatics, philately, mineralogy, phonography, technical objects, weapons, and photo albums, as well as a section of objects and documents directly related to documenting the social and political (public) life of Josip Broz Tito. Among them are the Photographic Archive of Josip Broz Tito, uniforms, medals and personal items, as well as the Archive of Josip Broz Tito, the library, and cinema material. Since 1983, a part of the Memorial Center was also been the Museum of “4th of July 1941”, which has since 1950 been under the jurisdiction of the Museum of the City of Belgrade.

search for ways of acknowledging Yugoslavia as a heritage and challenging deep-rooted opinions and prejudices about it.⁴

The second decade since the establishment of the Museum has brought significant changes resulting from the appointment of an experienced management, the involvement of experts familiar with modern museological theories, and recognition of the broader potential of the institution. This has been accompanied by the growing interest of researchers and

the public in the Yugoslav heritage. Within the work of the Museum, this decade has represented a period of self-reflection, the opening of new topics, the introduction of daring experiments, and redefinitions of the role of museums in society.

During this period, innovation has become one of the key characteristics of the Museum, which has to be seen among other ways in the new approach to interpretations of Yugoslav heritage, which have been primarily related to changes in the understanding of the very concept of heritage. According to the former concept, which is being increasingly abandoned, heritage is understood as final and non-renewable, consisting of objects with intrinsic properties and to be interpreted only by experts whose in-depth knowledge can best explain their value. Furthermore, heritage has been perceived as all that is good and glorious about the past, whereas the past's unsolicited features have been attributed with the special status of dissonant heritage.⁵ In place of this concept, an alternative definition is now being accepted, in accordance with which heritage is not a *noun* but a *verb*.⁶ Linked with this is the notion that heritage is

⁴ For more see: Vasiljević, M. Kastratović Ristić, V. Cvijović, M. „The Origins: The background for Understanding the Museum of Yugoslavia“ in *The Storeroom Opens* (ed. Sladojević, A), Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 2017.

⁵ Smith, L. *Uses of Heritage*, Routledge, New York – London, 2006.

⁶ Harvey, D. “Heritage pasts and heritage presents: Temporality meaning and the scope of heritage studies” in *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 7 (4), 2001, p. 327.

not a thing, site or place, but a process of creating multiple meanings or a cultural performance.⁷ Societies use heritage as a cultural tool in order to remember the past, and in this process of memorizing, they generate meanings that are relevant and useful for the present. By viewing the term heritage in this way, we define interpretation as the process of creating a meaning from the material and immaterial traces of the past that contributes to its better understanding and use. Of course, this does not mean that the traditional concept of heritage is being completely abandoned, but that the Museum is proposing a solution as to how to transform a one-way into a two-way channel of communication, by developing its collections into sources of unity, reconciliation, knowledge and entertainment. In fact, through its programmes, the Museum is gradually transitioning to this new, more desirable system of values and actions, which can be defined also as inclusive heritage discourse.⁸ In this process, the emphasis has been put on the development of partnerships – that is, on the involvement of various participants: the representatives of communities of the Yugoslav heritage, marginalized and vulnerable groups, artists, researchers from different scientific disciplines and others. Guided by the idea of an inclusive institution in the service of the community, the Museum has removed the barrier that firmly stood between the public and the professionals.⁹

Previous work on the Permanent Display

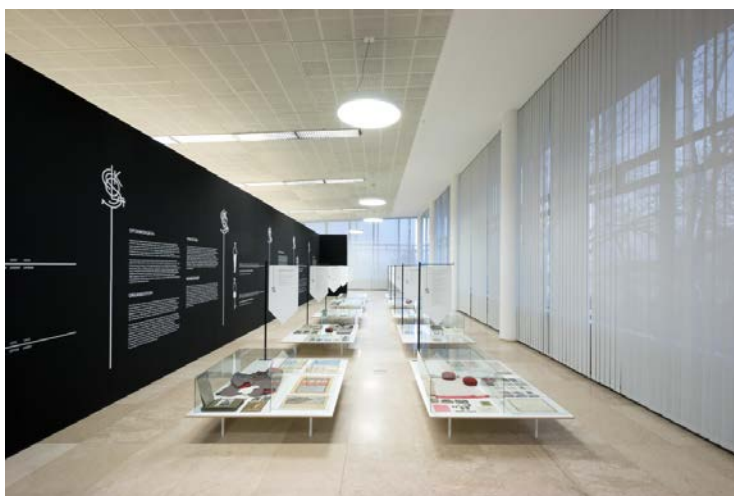
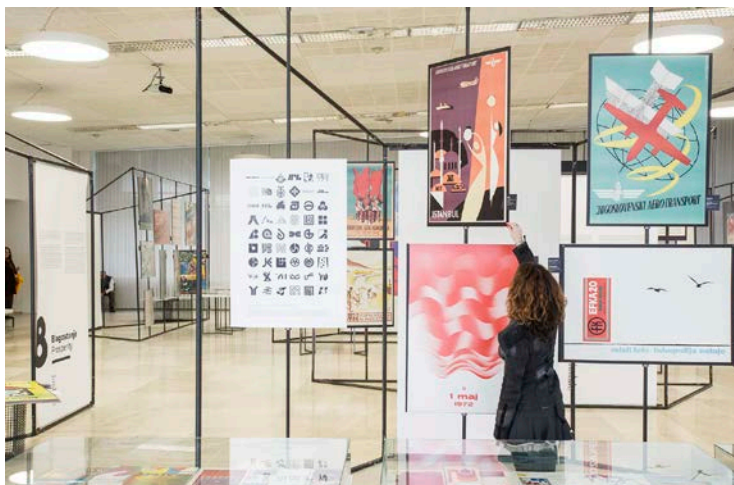
Work on the permanent exhibition can be traced back to 2009 and the project called *The New Old Museum*, the first project to initiate the process of self-reflection and the redefinition of the

⁷ Maroević, I. *Uvod u muzeologiju*. Zagreb: Zavod za informacijske studije, 1993; Smith L, 2006.

⁸ Kisić, V. *Governing Heritage Dissonance: Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies*. Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2016

⁹ Živanović, K, Toroman, T. „The Museum of Yugoslav History: Innovations and Turning Points“ in *The Storeroom Opens* (ed. Sladojević, A), Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 2017.









Museum, its mission and its concept of the permanent display. This project has encompassed a series of discussion programmes and gathered acknowledged experts in the fields of social history, museology, history of art, sociology, and communication studies, as well as graduate students of arts, history, sociology, etc. Some of the experiences and conclusions were implemented in the exhibition *Yugoslavia from Beginning to the End* (realized in three months in late 2012 and early 2013), which was meant to be the basis of the work on the future permanent exhibition at the Museum. Researchers and experts from the former Yugoslavia were involved in the project,¹⁰ while museum, archival, library and film material

¹⁰ The team of authors and curators consisted of Dr Jovo Bakić, professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Belgrade, Dr Srđan Cvetković, research fellow at the Institute for Contemporary History in Belgrade, Dr Ivana Dobrivojević, research fellow at the Institute for Contemporary History in Belgrade, Dr Hrvoje Klasić, professor at the Department of History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, Dr Vladimir Petrović, research fellow at the Institute for Contemporary History in Belgrade and Ana

belonging to other institutions in Serbia and the region was used for the purposes of the exhibition. The fundamental concept of the exhibition was based on a thematic approach and divided into six larger entities: Yugoslavia – ID, The Peoples of Yugoslavia, The Seamy Side of the Regime, Yugoslavia in the World – the World in Yugoslavia, Economy and Society and The End of Yugoslavia, and four smaller sections outside the main narrative of the exhibition (the so-called niches): Assassinations, the Croatian Spring and Serbian Liberals, Bad Debt (the Agrokomerc Affair and Neue Slowenische Kunst). The purpose of the “niches” was to highlight the “details” – mainly crisis situations, that would point to the permanent presence of destabilizing elements during the existence of the Yugoslav state, both the pre-war monarchy and socialist Yugoslavia.¹¹

This exhibition was the first attempt at a summary presentation of Yugoslav history and, furthermore, resulted from the collaborative work of experts from the region. However, there was a gap between the interpretations and the museum collections. Despite these shortcomings, its realization, rich accompanying programme and wide-ranging evaluation have influenced the development of future programmes of the Museum. Especially notable has been its impact on the musealisation of the Yugoslav heritage and on the research into topics and phenomena that have not been previously treated, related to the daily life, culture and various social layers and circumstances of the first Yugoslavia. Thus, thematic exhibitions were created and presented: *They Never Had It Better?* (2014), *Design for a New World* (2015/2016), *To Be a Falcon Is to Be a Yugoslav* (2016), and *Yuga, my Yuga* (2016). The result of the work on these exhibitions was not just a presentation of previously untreated subjects or the introduction of some new thematic areas, but also an attempt to develop a methodology of Yugoslav heritage research that starts

Panić, curator at the Museum of Yugoslavia.

¹¹ *Yugoslavia: from Beginning to the End*, Museum of Yugoslav History, Belgrade, 2013, pp. 3–4.

from the recognition of the dissonance, polychronicity, and polyvalence of this heritage, and to interpret it using a transdisciplinary, participatory approach.

Current Work on the Permanent Display

In 2014, within the framework of the project *The 100th Anniversary of the Formation of the First State of South Slavs*, a new methodology was introduced, which has encompassed a different approach, with the focus on the existing museum fund. The project is being implemented as a continuing transparent research, and is developing in three phases: *The Storeroom Opens*, *Museum Laboratory*, and *Yugoslavia in 100 Objects*.



During 2016, in the first phase of the project titled *The Storeroom Opens*, the basis for the new permanent display was created in the exhibition space of the so-called Old Museum, one of the venues within the complex of the Museum of Yugoslavia. This venue was used in accordance with its original purpose – a repository meant to house the gifts Josip Broz Tito received

during his life as President of socialist Yugoslavia.¹² The architecture of the Old Museum, a linear building in the form of a long hallway, consisting of five halls and four smaller mid-spaces, also affected the concept to a certain extent. Along one side of the exhibition space the items from the Museum of the Revolution were exhibited, following the original chronological principle of organization (four historical periods: 1) the labour movement from 1870 to 1919; 2) the inter-war period from 1919 to 1941; 3) the Second World War in Yugoslavia; and 4) the post-war reconstruction and building, and the socio-political situation in socialist Yugoslavia.). On the other side of the exhibition space the items from the “Josip Broz Tito” Memorial Centre were exhibited in the two halls, according to the following categories: 1) gifts from the world; 2) sovereign space, personal objects and symbols of power; and 3), gifts from Yugoslavia in both halls. The backbone of the entire display are the relay batons, placed in the centre of each hall of the Old Museum.



¹² The complex of the Museum of Yugoslavia consists of three venues: museum “May 25th” Museum, the House of Flowers (burial place of Josip Broz Tito), and the Old Museum.

The aim of this phase was to emphasize the heterogeneity and interpretative potential of the objects, by presenting a sample of the museum fund. Moreover, objects were exhibited with respect to their original context, ambiguity and contradictions. The juxtaposition of funds of the “Josip Broz Tito” Memorial Centre and the Museum of the Revolution, which were created in a similar time but in completely different ways, allowed a more direct interpretation of the ideas behind their creation. The concept of *The Storeroom Opens*, literally confronting the two collections, highlighted the opposites, complementarily of objects and narratives, but also accentuated gaps and inconsistencies within the context of Yugoslav heritage in general. Thus, the internal state was, symbolically and materially, transferred into the public sphere.¹³

The second phase, titled *Museum Laboratory*, was inaugurated with the presentation of the museum fund created in the period after 1996, when the Museum of Yugoslav History, today’s Museum of Yugoslavia, was created. Emphasis was placed on the latest acquisitions which indicated the shift in the policy of accession resulting from the different understanding of the role of the museum. Thus, in addition to acquisitions through previous exhibitions starting from *Yugoslavia from Beginning to the End*, we exhibited items belonging to legacies formed in the Museum starting from 2014, when the legacy of the photographer Stevan Kragujević was established. This part of the museum collection is also being complemented through long term co-operation and partnership with various organizations and individuals.

One of the acquisitions that stands out, especially in the context of the work on the permanent display, is *Project Yugoslavia*,

¹³ For more on this phase see: Momčilović Jovanović, A. Đorgović, M. “Musealization of the Yugoslav Heritage: From a (Re)valuation of the Museum of Yugoslav History’s Collections to the Permanent Display and the Concept of the Museum of Yugoslavia”, in *The Storeroom Opens* (ed. Sladojević, A), Museum of Yugoslavia, Belgrade, 2017.

which is the result of cooperation between the Museum of Yugoslavia and the organization Kiosk – the Platform for Contemporary Art, authored by Ana Adamović and Milica Pekić from the Kiosk organization. „Project Yugoslavia” consists of 100 statements by people of various ages, histories and backgrounds from the region of the former Yugoslavia. Instead of specific questions, every participant was given a card with information about an object from the Museum’s collection, containing the object’s description, the date or period when it was made, and its origin. By employing this method, the authors aimed to translate the Museum’s collection of material traces of the past



(collection of artifacts) into the form of live comments, contemporary thoughts, ideas and potentials for the future. Through brief statements, the thoughts of citizens were recorded about concepts such as nationlessness/transnationality, non-alignment, freedom of movement, solidarity, modernity, progress, states, the statesman, the hero, self-management, women, as well as many others. The importance of this acquisition is multifaceted. The statements of the participants in *Project Yugoslavia* complement

the previous curatorial interpretations of items, with voices that create new contexts and resources to understand the subject, the Yugoslav heritage and the entire experience in a more general sense.

The title of the second phase derives from the method employed: starting from the museum fund, and approaching it as a research material, the museum curators cooperated with experts, artists and members of different communities in order to perceive the items exhibited through a prism of multiple interpretations and contexts, as well as to reflect and exchange ideas on the Yugoslav heritage through open joint work.

The second phase also brought a shift in the methodology. The intersection of the two methodological approaches respectively employed in *Yugoslavia from Beginning to the End* and the original concept developed during *Storeroom Opens*, thematic and object-oriented, resulted in the modified concept for the final phase – the exhibition under the working title *Yugoslavia in 100 items*. This exhibition is meant to provide the visitors with the basic framework for understanding the Yugoslav heritage. The term Yugoslav heritage is understood here not only as the authentic outcome of different ideologies, but also as the genuine heritage of the time encompassing the four phases of the development of Yugoslav state, starting from the Yugoslav idea to the periods of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and socialist Yugoslavia, all the way to the Yugonostalgia resulting from the disintegration of the state. The exhibition will follow continuities and discontinuities from the mid-19th century until present time through phenomena which are defined as values (such as Yugoslavism, antifascism, revolution, (non)alignment, modernisation, emancipation, democratisation and internationalisation of culture, cult of personality etc.). The phenomena will be explained through 100 central items, and a deeper understanding for them will be additionally enabled with multiple narratives (of the donators, artists, researchers, curators or significant people living in Yugoslavia). By combining a relatively small quantity of items and emphasizing

the multivocality, the exhibition will highlight the complexity of the Yugoslav heritage, and at the same time try to answer the question of why it is considered controversial? Moreover, through the process of unravelling the mechanism of creating the heritage, the exhibition will also call attention to the potential of the present affirmation of this heritage, as well as its banalisation and abuse.



Lidija Milašinić
National Museum Kikinda

**MODEL OF LOCAL HERITAGE BASIC INTERPRETIVE PLAN –
National Museum Kikinda**

The National Museum Kikinda is a city museum, founded in 1946. The museum is located on the city square in the building of the former Magistrate of the Great Kikinda District. The museum has approximately 25000 objects in five collections: archaeology, history, ethnology, history of art and natural history.

Faced with the museum's transformations during the nineties and at the beginning of the C21st, as well as the museum's role in contemporary society, the National Museum Kikinda started with the project of a changing of the permanent exhibition.

In accordance with the accepted methodology, the first step in this project was the creation of an interpretive plan. Faced with almost no experiences of this methodology in Serbia, the museum management decided to hire outside experts, i.e. experts from the Martello Media firm in Ireland, which has huge experience in the field of interpretation and with whom the museum shared the first phase of the interpretation process.

INTRODUCTION

The plan sets out the key principles for the design approach, based on a consideration of the audiences, the historic assets and the objectives behind the audience engagement. It applies these principles to develop a hierarchy of topics based on three themes – Landscape, People and Industry.

The plan has been developed through:

- Site visit,
- Review of collections,
- Interpretation and Learning Workshop with key stakeholders from Kikinda Museum as well as a select group of curators from other museums, and architects and designers,
- Depth analysis of the previous concept proposal and a review of key themes and stories associated with the museum, its collection and location,
- A detailed space analysis,
- A detailed interpretative narrative developed by the curatorial staff of Kikinda Museum.

It presents a clear vision for the project along with an understanding of the collection and audiences, and with the aim of ensuring that the interpretation will promote learning and participation at Kikinda Museum and meet best standards of practice in terms of museum and exhibition design.

The key aims and objectives for the redesign of Kikinda Museum are as follows:

- To promote local participation and a greater appreciation for local heritage
- To create an engaging and participative museum experience
- To provide physical, sensory and intellectual access for all visitors
- To be a fun and memorable visitor experience
- To implement best practice interpretive design
- To become an exemplar of museum and exhibition design in the region

This will ensure the museum's vision, which is: that Kikinda Museum and its diverse collection become a benchmark for best practice museum and exhibition design in Serbia and the region. The museum will promote public participation in the heritage, in turn encouraging a greater sense of place and identity for local people.



INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

Interpretive framework includes a short description of the museum, its activities and different programmes, and its role in different local community events.

Based on this information, the National Museum Kikinda can:

- Continue to attract school visits from the large number of primary and secondary schools in the region,

- Build upon the existing success of their activities programme as well as the annual cultural activities taking place in the city,
- Utilise its central location and transport links to attract more visitors from neighbouring cities and countries,
- Offer spaces for conferences, events and temporary exhibitions which can support established cultural activities in the city.

THE AUDIENCE

During the workshop and the meetings with the external interpretative experts, the key primary and secondary audiences were identified. The primary audience for Kikinda Museum represents the profile of visitors for whom the museum is most relevant: school children, families, tourists, students, local community, museums professionals and visitors attending activities within the museum. The secondary audience for Kikinda Museum are visitor groups who may not be visiting the museum for its collection but may be attending an event, conducting research, or using the museum facilities. Although not the primary target of interpretation, this group can be very important, and includes students, visitors attending events in the city, researchers, visitors to the cafe, and visitors to the city archive (held within the same building).

On the basis of the above overview of the primary and secondary audiences, the following points must be taken into account when considering the interpretive media palette for the museum:

- Content must be accessible for school children and scholars alike,
- There should be opportunities for group learning,
- There should be interactive exhibits,
- It should be educational yet fun,
- There should be facilities for children and families,
- There should be facilities for large groups,

- There should be physical, sensory and intellectual access,
- Provision should be made for multi-lingual tours,
- There should be a quality cafe, and retail and toilet facilities.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This refers to setting our objectives for interpretation, i.e. what we would like people to experience, learn, understand, feel and do as a result of the interpretation at the National Museum Kikinda. They also provide the answer to the question: Why are we interpreting?

THEMES, KEY MESSAGES/WHAT ARE WE INTERPRETING

A number of interpretive themes have been considered in relation to Kikinda Museum. They are the results of the initial Learning and Interpretation Workshop. These themes have been grouped into main themes and sub-themes, to give an indication of the stories associated with the museum and its collection.

The main themes for the Kikinda Museum are Landscape (including terrain, wildlife, geology, archaeology and landscape as an industry), People (including cultural and ethnic diversity, everyday life, local traditions, migration, conflicts, resolutions and change) and Industry (including railways, different industries, modern factories, socio-economic change and geography in terms of changing borders). All these themes and sub-themes are interlinked, and are collectively used for defining the key interpretive message and sub-messages.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the main message to be interpreted through the visitors' museum experience is:
Kikinda's identity has been shaped by interrelationships between people as well as between people and the landscape.
 Regarding this, the sub-messages are:



The industrial heritage of Kikinda is a reflection of people's ability to maximise its natural resources.

Owing to its location in the northern Banat region, Kikinda has always been an intercultural environment welcoming people from a diverse range of cultures, religions and ethnicities. This interculturalism is reflected in the region's customs and traditions.

The natural landscape of Kikinda is an important habitat, economic resource and recreational asset for the region and its people.

Despite revolution and two World Wars, Kikinda has always remained a peaceful environment.

Kikinda has experienced much change, including changes in state borders and official language, as well as economic decline in the 20th and 21st centuries. The city is therefore continually evolving and adapting.

These messages are the basic guide for the development of the interpretive content of the Kikinda Museum, and a variety of interpretive methods will be used to ensure visitors will leave the museum with a level of understanding of the above interpretive messages.

After establishing this first step in the interpretation process, it is very easy to set up the next phases regarding the spatial analyses, defining the optimum visitors' journey, selecting the appropriate media palette and graphic look and style. Finally, this first step of the plan establishes the basis for the exhibiton, which will help in vision realization.





**Ana Sladojević
Emilia Epštajn
Museum of African Art**

***Nyimpa Kor Ndzidzi, One Man No Chop,
(Re)conceptualisation of the Museum of African Art – the
Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection***

- In 1977, at the time when it was opened to the public, the Museum of African Art – the Veda and Dr. Zdravko Pečar Collection – (MAA) was promoted as Europe's only anticolonial museum.
- Socialist Yugoslavia's positioning towards the Third World countries at the time of the cold war division of the blocs after World War II, and the support it provided to the anticolonial liberation movements, was furthered with the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement. Its first conference was held in September 1961, in Belgrade.
- The 1960s and 1970s were especially fruitful for the various degrees of cooperation within the Movement, and thus with numerous African countries. However, apart from the mention within the Museum's title of the Collectors of the Museum's primary collection – Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar – there is nothing in the original permanent display that points to the historical circumstances surrounding the establishment of this institution.

Collecting „African Art“ – Building a museum

- The title of the exhibition quotes the proverb *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi*, written on the side of the boat which was presented to Dr. Zdravko Pečar by the chief of the fishing village of Mankoadze in Ghana, in 1975.
- This photograph shows Veda Zagorac at the time of its acquisition (Inventory number 2). The inscribed proverb was



*Влада Зайнорц и др. Здраво Печар,
у недоконченој згради музеја, 1976.*





often used as the MAA's informal catchphrase, linking it to the zeitgeist and the policy of non-alignment within which the MAA was founded.

- *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* literally translates: “One man, no chop”, while it metaphorically suggests the spirit of community: “No man can survive alone.”

- The idea to open the museum, according to Zdravko Pečar, came from Veda Zagorac's deliberations on establishing a representative collection, one which would be gathered in one place and displayed in its entirety.

- The ground level building was constructed during 1975/1976, based on the architectural design of Slobodan Ilić. During the construction of the Museum, it was particularly challenging to include the building that was already on the lot – the atelier of Moša Pijade (and afterwards, of Zora Petrović and Boško

Karanović) – into the building’s context. In 1989 it was significantly altered, with the construction of an imposing first floor dome, based on the architectural project of Slobodan Milićević.

- The ethnologist and first director of the Museum, Jelena Aranđelović Lazić, undertook the effort to studiously process the objects and to plan their representation in the Museum. The local community at the time was not acquainted with the arts of African countries. It explains the informative tone of the labels, whose goal is to educate the visitor in a rather straightforward manner.

- The architects Saveta and Slobodan Mašić designed the modular display consisting of triangularly based blue and green platforms. The interpretation of the plinths’ colours as the colours of the “African landscape”, which appeared in several publications about the Museum, was often criticised as a stereotypical representation and simplification of the image of an entire continent. However, the use of these colours also meant a departure from the modernist aestheticization of the “African object”, and reflected efforts to consider what a museum of African Art in Belgrade should look like.

1977 Opening of the Museum

2017 After forty years, the Permanent display is conceptually unchanged

“Contexts and Representations” Programme 2014-2015
Keyword: *Self-reflection*

Conclusions reached through the “Contexts and Representations” programme:

-The visible/recognized as a value: the collection of artifacts.
The main “interface” for communication with the audience is the Permanent Display.

-It should not be abruptly changed, until it has been studied, documented and commented upon.

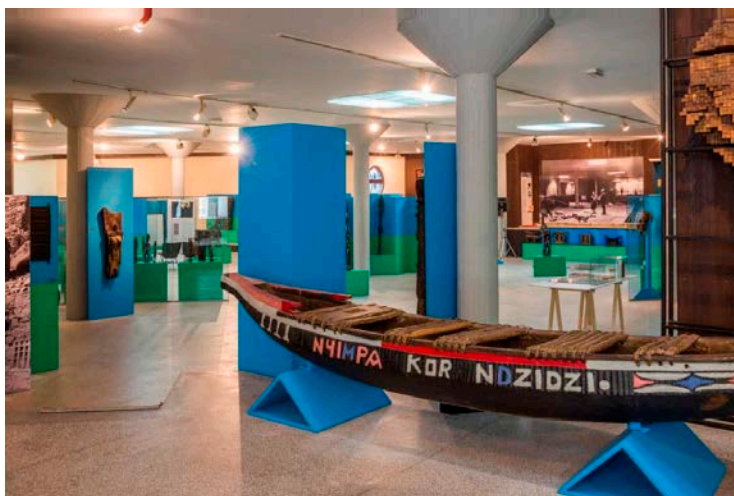
-The invisible/unrecognized as a value: the context of the 1960s and 1970s, the relations of Yugoslavia with African countries, the founding of the Museum.

-This context should be recognized and researched, on the basis of the Museum documentation, and the archive of Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar.

Keyword: *Overwriting*

•To emphasize the context of the emergence of this Museum and the work of its founders and initiators, the *Nyimpa kor ndzidzi* Exhibition focuses on lesser known Museum content, such as documents, texts, photographs, films and periodicals. By presenting them through thematic units within the original display, we re-examine the Museum's potential for grounded discussion about human rights issues, equality and solidarity.









- The exhibition uses minimal visual intervention, thus not disturbing the primary elements of the permanent display, but rather “writing over” them.

- While observing the permanent display as itself an object, the exhibition maps several themes or issues concerning anticolonial beliefs, collecting, the founding and development of the Museum, cooperation and exchange, and the theorisation of the MAA.

- The exhibition continues in the annexed space, that used to be the artists’ studio, under the title of *Unpacking the Veda Zagorac and Zdravko Pečar Archive*. The initiators of the Museum are presented for the first time through selection of photographs, film footages, objects and quotations from the documentation.

In conclusion

- Self-reflection

- Recognition
- Research
- Revalorization
- Historicization
- Re-conceptualization
- Permanent display as an artifact, the Museum as a totality
- “Overwriting” through *in situ* intervention, interpolation
- Cohabitation of the Museum’s narrative and meta-narrative(s)





**Duško Grbović, Historian, Museum Advisor
Regional Museum Jagodina**

„Permanent exhibitions – Regional Museum in Jagodina“

The Regional Museum in Jagodina was founded in 1954, during the so-called “museum boom” of the former socialist Yugoslavia. The museum has continuously operated since 1963. The first director of the institution was Dušan Vukićević, professor of history (1954, 1955–1961); and he was the only historian among the ten leading people in the local museum. The museum is of a complex type and has five departments: Historical, Archaeological, Art, Ethnological and Natural History. The Museum fund amounts to between 120.000 and 130.000 objects grouped into approximately fifty collections. The Museum also includes the following departments and services: Pedagogical, Conservation, Documentation, Library, Photo-library and Administration. Since 1994, the Museum has gained regional competence over the territory of the town of Jagodina, and the municipalities of Rekovac, Svilajnac and Despotovac. In the period from 1946 to 1992, Jagodina was called “Svetozarevo”, after the founder of the socialist movement in Serbia, Svetozar Marković, who spent part of his life in this town on the Belica River. Since its establishment, the Regional Museum has been located at seven different locations. In the period from 1964 to 2011, ten permanent exhibitions were on display.

The first permanent exhibition was opened in July 1964, in the building of the former Syndicate of the District Council (between the two World Wars, the house of the Ristić brothers, traders, and now the building of the Museum of Naïve and Marginal Art), and lasted until the second half of 1965, when the Museum was moved from there.



The new permanent exhibition was arranged in the new space, the former home of a district chief, and it was opened early, on 17 October 1965. The reorganization of the exhibition was completed in November 1966.

This exhibition lasted until the end of September 1969, when a new exhibition was prepared and opened on the occasion marking the 570 years since the first mention of Jagodina in historical sources. It was during the period when the temporary "Mayor" was the famous comedian Miodrag Petrović Čkalja.

This exhibition was remodeled in 1972, and reopened with materials from the Natural History and Archeology Departments.

When the Museum was moved to a new space, the former building of the "Soko" organization (DTV "Partizan"), there was room to present materials from all the museum departments. The first permanent exhibition in the new space was opened in July 1983 by General Petar Gračanin, an



outstanding member of the Communist Party in Jagodina. The focus of the exhibition was on the history of the Labour Movement, the Second World War and the Socialist Revolution.



The beginning of the 1990s brought the political transformation which led to the changes in the permanent exhibition. Another reorganization was undertaken in 1992, and opened for visitors on 26 January 1993. The emphasis was on the development of material and spiritual culture, with the exhibits from the archaeological collections prevailing.

In 1996, the permanent exhibition was partially changed during the reconstruction of the Museum and the restoration of the façade, when the amount of archaeological material was reduced.

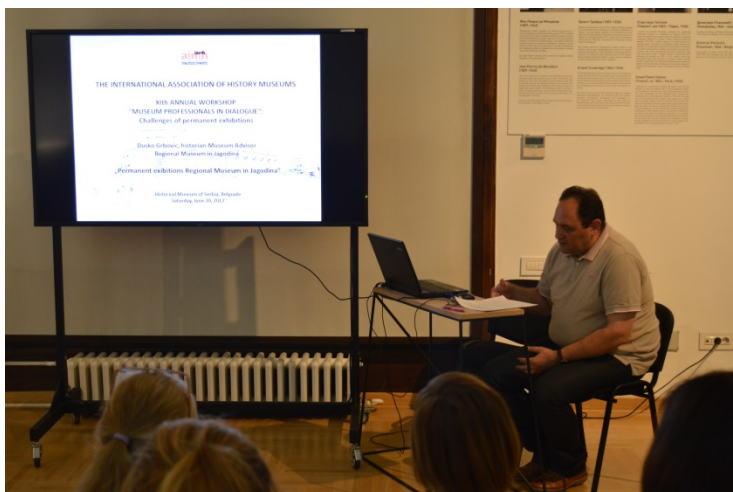
In early 1999, the work on a new permanent exhibition began, but was stopped because of the NATO bombing. Consequently, the opening was delayed again; another delay was caused by the political changes of October 2000, which resulted in the establishment of a new regime in the country. Finally, the



opening took place on 28 November 2001. The exhibition, designed to present four concentric circles, was opened by Academician Nikola Tasić, then director of the National Museum in Belgrade. The first, inner circle, presented the history of Jagodina, while the other three presented material from the museum collections.

In late 2010 and early 2011, the permanent display saw another reconstruction. This time, each of the Museum's department was allocated space to put on display material from its collections. The exhibition, named "Square in Jagodina 1930–2010", was opened at the beginning of March 2011.

In 2017, the Museum's experts have started activities on the implementation of the new permanent exhibition.



Стална изложбена поставка



Завичајни музеј
Јагодина Regional Museum
Jagodina

