

Educational programme during The *World of Toys* Project

The specific feature of learning in the Museum during the *World of Toys* exhibition project was based first of all on the experience of the exhibited toys: traditional wooden toys from Hrvatsko Zagorje and Zelovo near Sinj, industrial toys from different periods during the 20th century, toys from several European countries, and train models and toys donated to the Museum by the citizens of Zagreb.

This paper will briefly present the forms of learning in the museum and review in particular the constructivist approach to learning in the museum because the educational aspects of the *World of Toys* can be interpreted in terms of that theoretical framework.

When we speak about the educational aspects of museum work, we must bear in mind that the museum is visited by groups of visitors with different motivations. The character of learning in the museum is first of all informal and non-formal. In informal learning, the educational objective is not clearly defined, learning proceeds spontaneously, while in the non-formal form of learning the educational objective is defined but the process runs outside the educational system. An extraordinarily essential feature of education in the museum is to be found in the fact that it proceeds in most cases without coercion, in a relaxed atmosphere with a feeling of pleasure. The constructivist approach to learning in the museum stresses that the meaning created by the museum visitor derives from the object itself and from the way it is presented, but also from the experience of the visitor, his cultural environment and the circumstances of the visit.

In other words, what is important for an interactive museum experience is the mutual action of the personal, social and physical aspect of experience. Since people and their experiences differ, their experience of the visit to the museum also differs. Museum experience is based on the interweaving of

three dimensions, three different contexts of every museum visitor. The first is the personal context which covers previous knowledge, interest, motivations and expectations, while the social context includes the visit to the museum – whether individually, with the family or, for example, a school class. Finally, the third, physical context, comprises the museum environment – the architecture of the building, the sign system and the design of the exhibition (Falk and Dierking 1994).

The display of the *World of Toys* exhibition project offered visitors a unique experience. In addition to the observation of objects, the exhibited objects stimulated their curiosity and inquisitiveness. They could also realise a direct contact with the museum objects by touching them, exploring what was concealed in the boxes, under lids or hidden in the lining (Fig. 1/p. 346). Through multimedia they could perceive the context of origin of specific objects, the people that produce them and the meaning of these objects in their life. The exhibited toys served as a starting point for learning about cultural heritage, about its intangible part – ways of production, music and stories. At the same time this provided an incentive for considering the importance of toys as material objects in the child's life and development, the social aspect of toys and games, their impact on the child's emotional development and cognitive abilities, and on the development of his/her self-confidence.

Along the same line, the display of the exhibition and the toys evoked in adults memories of their childhood. They opened to them, just as to the children, the avenue to flights of fancy, but also to consideration of historical and cultural changes, and one's own relation to the exhibited museum objects (Fig. 2/p. 346). Without any exaggeration, this exhibition has embodied in the best possible way the constructivist museum pedagogy. As George Hein put it: "When the museum is based on constructivist museum pedagogy, the pedagogic substance is accessible in several ways, linked with everyday life and guided by information on the visitor's previous knowledge" (1998: 131).

Moreover, Nikolina Jelavić Mitrović's design of the exhibition satisfied another element of the constructivist approach, and that is the creation of a pleasant atmosphere suiting everybody, bringing a very broad circle of visitors to the museum and thereby enhancing their museum experience. Of course, children were the most numerous category of visitors, whether visiting the exhibition with their parents, kindergarten or school. But there was also a noticeable number of retired people who shared, with obvious pleasure, their childhood and youth experiences with the museum staff and compared their own toy collections with the exhibited items. It was precisely the concept of the whole exhibition project and the variable parts of the displayed ensembles that mo-

tivated many visitors for multiple visits to the museum.

Educational programmes covered a variety of user groups and work methods. Professional guided tours were organised for groups of kindergarten children, primary and secondary school pupils, students, families, retired people, persons with disabilities, psychiatric clinic day patients and tourists. Because of the great public interest, guided tour personnel included, along with the museum educator and the author of the exhibition, trainees, volunteers and, as required, other museum curators. The interactive display of the exhibition added an additional dynamic element to the guided tours, especially for the youngest visitors, by including play elements as well into guidance.

The Museum workshops covering various thematic, art and dramatic aspects of working with puppets were intended for families, organised pupil groups and individual visitors of all ages. As a form of work such a workshop is very suitable because it implies cooperative effort and non-hierarchical communication, and activates emotional, sensorial and moral, and not exclusively the intellectual functions of the participants (cf. Buljubašić-Kuzmanović 2006).

In addition to the museum educator assisted by trainees and volunteers, workshops were also run by guests. Thus, puppet pedagogue and director Krna Tarle organised *Make a Puppet!* workshops for children and their parents. In the workshops the attendees learned how to make simple types of puppets and played at dramatising characters.

At the Ethnographic Museum we often recycle materials used in organising exhibitions. Our motivation is primarily focused on encouraging the creativity of the workshop participants, and the reduced cost of material is not a negligible point either. Thus, in the workshop wooden ladles from one of the previous exhibitions became puppets clothed in rags from the textile workshop.

Another workshop was devoted to the making of toys from cardboard packaging and paper. Along with the toy theme, this workshop also discussed waste recycling and the development of environmental awareness (Fig. 3/p. 346).

During Advent the workshops made paper and cardboard decorations inspired by traditional toys from Hrvatsko Zagorje, and painted linen bags with wooden toy motifs. Workshops were always preceded by guided tours of the exhibition. Through discussions of toys the observed exhibits were linked with personal experience but also with the broad heritage context. The considered concepts included intangible and tangible culture, the carriers of culture, the meaning of heritage, the reasons why we protect it, and the components of the cultural identity of individuals and peoples.

Due mention needs to be made of the fact that workshop attendees had the

opportunity for direct contact with masters, tradition carriers. On several occasions master craftsman Zvonimir Majdak from Turnišće in Hrvatsko Zagorje demonstrated the production of wooden tamburitzas in the Museum. In the workshop school pupils could talk with him and find answers to all the points that attracted their interest regarding the making of toys – musical instruments he was making (Fig. 4). Similarly, inspired by his work they could paint the tamburitzas made in the/p. 346 Museum workshop.

In addition to master Majdak, during the *Long Night of Museums* event late in January 2013 visitors could also see and watch potter Tomo Kovačić from Globočec, the wooden toy maker Ivan Mesar from Marija Bistrica, and try their hand at making clay toys or painting wooden toys.

For the youngest visitors the toys were presented through stories and plays. In the story-telling sessions the writer Željka Horvat Vukelja presented her stories called *Storypics*, intended for pupils of lower primary school classes. Kruna Tarle and the puppet studio of the Zagreb Puppet Theatre performed a cycle of original puppet shows entitled *The Puppet in the Street* using wooden toys from Hrvatsko Zagorje, and the show *The Goat's Ears of the Emperor Trajan*. The youngest visitors could enjoy playing and investigating in the playroom open throughout the exhibition.

Between April and June 2013 the broadest circle of visitors could enjoy a number of interdisciplinary lectures on the history and production of children's toys, children's culture and childhood, and the role of toys in child's development. More data are provided in Matija Dronjić's paper in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

The *World of Toys* showed that the educational role of the museum was fulfilled completely offering varied categories of visitors the opportunity to experience the museum through communication, play, inquisitiveness and challenge – all that in the safe and pleasant museum setting.

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