

Ivona Orlić. *Economy in Istria: from the Collection at the Ethnographic Museum of Istria / L'economia in Istria: dalla Collezione del Museo Etnografico dell'Istria*. Pazin, The Ethnographic Museum of Istria / Museo Etnografico dell'Istria, 2017, p. 96

Catalogue Review

The author of the catalogue "Economy in Istria," Ivona Orlić, has been employed as a senior curator at the Ethnographic Museum of Istria since 2006. She received her Ph.D. in 2011 after having successfully defended her dissertation "Regional Identity in the Contemporary Tourism Offer in Istria."

In the introduction the author of the Catalogue stipulates she is aware of her own position as a museum curator who is taking over the Economy Collection with a feeling of slight unease stating that "Curators (...) are often hesitant to take over the Economy Collection" (Orlić 2017: 5) because objects in it are cumbersome, heavy, very "commonplace" and often have no aesthetic value. After becoming familiar with the holdings and contents of the Economy Collection the catalogue author, who is also the Economy Collection curator, becomes aware of its importance and becomes aware of its vital connectedness to "all other collections in the Museum" (ibid). Although the objects preserved in the Collection have no aesthetic value they are bearers of contextualization. Therefore, the author states that the Economy Collection "can answer the question of how work changed men in Istria" (ibid). Because of her desire to bring the Collection closer to a wide audience, the author symbolically attributes objects an aesthetic component by using photographs, which abound in the catalogue. Moreover, Orlić permeates the entire catalogue with her own attitudes and shifts in perception of the Collection contents, which makes a catalogue packed with facts more intimate and much warmer. The catalogue was published by the Ethnographic Museum of Istria in 2017 in Croatian and Italian languages. Vanesa Bagić translated the catalogue into Italian, and Tanja Kocković Zaborski, a senior curator, and Mirjana Margetić, a senior museum pedagogue, reviewed the catalogue.

In the introduction numerous exhibits testify to the importance of this Collection whose contents are linked to every single aspect of everyday life. The catalogue is conceived so that the author in the first chapter on "Economy collection – Basics" informs the reader about the institution she works at and enumerates all collections kept at the museum in the introduction: Architecture and House Furnishing, Economy, Production of Textiles, Clothes and Footwear, Clothing and Personal Items, Social and Spiritual Culture, Migrations, Souvenirs and Contemporary Interpretation of Traditional Culture, Photographs, Postcards, Greeting Cards, and Letters, Engravings and Legacy. She also names ethnologists who founded the Economy Collection and who complemented it: Josip Miličević, Zlatko Mileusnić, Robert Bilić – Vrana and Mario Buletić. In the

chapter on "Economic Circumstances in Istria in the History" Orlić sets the collection within a historical context by proffering information on the most important economic activities in Istria in the 19th century - livestock farming and working the land. For agriculture, Orlić relied on Pietro Predonzani's manuscript "An Economic Dissertation with Practical Instructions Dedicated to Ploughmen" written in 1820 in which he writes about climate changes accompanied by famine. He mentions potato as one of the most resistant crops, unlike cereals and vine that are susceptible to climate changes. Despite this, these crops were grown in Istria, as well as several kinds of leaf vegetables and olives. The author mentions sheep as the backbone of livestock farming. Sheep were a source of food (meat, milk and curd), and a source of wool for textile products. In Čičarija area semi-nomadic livestock farming was the main industry for a long time due to lack of arable land. According to the author fishing is the third most important industry in coastal areas, but also in riverside areas. In addition to these industries people developed trade by exchanging products.

In the chapter that follows, "The Economy Collection - from Requisition to Interpretation", the reader learns about the methodology of division and learns the details of analysis. The first objects in this Collection became a part of the inventory in 1957; since then until now 1329 objects were inventorized. The Collection re-interpretation took place in 2014 in cooperation with Duga Mavrinac, who was then an intern at the EMI / MEI. Despite numerous dilemmas and questions concerning the organization and classification of the collection - based on the way an object was made / where it was made or based on how an object was used / where it was used a decision was made to divide the collection based on professions. Hence the following categories were formed: Craft, Tilling, Tourism and Catering, Livestock Farming, Fishery, Wine Growing and Wine Production, Mining, Olive Growing, Hunting, Trade and unidentified objects that were in the inventory but were never found. Moreover, a statistical analysis of the number of objects in each individual category, of the number of objects in specific intervals, and of objects based on industry they belong to, was conducted. Most of the items collected / requisitioned belongs to the primary sector, and the secondary sector, and not very many belong to the tertiary sector. As far as time periods go, most items were gathered in the period from 1982 to 1991, and least items were collected in the years before the Museum opened, i.e. in the period from 1957 to 1961. The author puts emphasis on the fact that, up until 1981, most items were purchased in rural areas, it is only after 1981 that we can see items bought in Istrian towns in the Collection. Once again, the author stresses that the Economy Collection cannot be separated from other collections at the Museum, but it does need to be done as a part of museum work.

The rest of the catalogue contains long and short chapters, divided according to specific categories, in which most important objects are described and basic information is given. The category with the highest number of objects is Craft which encompasses blacksmith workshops, carpentry, basket making, coopering, pottery, stonemasonry, and shoemaking. Carpentry was widespread because of ease of access to material, almost every head of the family could craft wooden objects. Similarly, weaving baskets from willow, also known as *bekva* in the local dialect, was a common activity in every household. Blacksmith was a profession which required a lot of tools so not everyone

could opt for it. In every larger village there was one blacksmith who crafted objects and items for everyday use (agricultural tools, kitchen utensils, trappers for hunters, decorations, etc.). Blacksmiths were very important because they used to shoe cattle for working the land. The next category which ties nicely with the previous one is *Tilling*. This category encompasses all tools used to work the land - *vrganj* for ploughing land, *motika* (hoe, for digging), various types of harvest tools: *kosiri*, *kosirice* and *rankuni* (all type of billhook), *srpovi* (sickle) i *kose* (scythe). Items used for livestock also belong in this category: yoke for harnessing livestock and bonds for preventing them from walking fast. The third category covers more recent items used in tourism and catering industry, the items are mostly from the 20th century, which is when mass tourism first appears as a phenomenon. The category Livestock encompasses tools for shearing sheep, various bells, hay forks, and beehives used for beekeeping. Fishing tools collected were mostly used in sea fishery, but some tools for river fishery are in this category as well. Most of the items are from Moščenička Draga and most belonged to one fishing family. The last wave of collecting and purchasing items took place in 2002 for the purposes of a new permanent exhibition. In Wine Growing and Wine Production the author presents interesting facts about wine as a Mediterranean sort, and its longstanding presence in the Mediterranean and the Istrian peninsula. Some of the items used in vineyards are: *scissors for pruning and grafting wine*, contraptions for adding sulphur into wine, buckets for carrying harvested grapes, and crushers (*dežgran*) for separating the grapes from the stems. Mining, an industry which has taken many lives, has been present in Istria since the 15th century. In this chapter the author lays out facts about miners and the hard work they performed in dark tunnels in coal mines. Other than vine, olive, or *ulika* in the local dialect, is also typical of Mediterranean culture. Orlić gives an historic overview of olive growing in Istria, and describes in detail olive picking and olive oil production - by stomping olives with bare feet in wooden troughs (*maštenje*), or by crushing olives with wooden mallets, a process which has not exactly been proven. Categories with least objects come towards the end of the catalogue - Hunting and Trade. Only wealthy villagers who could afford buying guns could engage in hunting as a male activity. Hunting with modern guns was legalized after the Second World War. Naturally, many hunters used iron claw trappers, but such hunt was considered poaching. Traps (*lac*) were crafted by blacksmiths, and most were used for hunting rabbits, or bigger animals such as foxes. Trade has been around for centuries since people have always had the need to barter, supply and offer things. When trading it was important to determine the weight of a given item or produce, therefore a vast majority of objects in this collection pertain to various kinds of scales (*peza*).

It must be emphasised that the author constantly draws readers' attention to specific processes and activities and stresses the importance of timeline and context which brings the knowledge and understanding of everyday life in Istrian rural areas closer to readers. The catalogue follows a certain logic and abounds with illustrations. The items are intentionally accentuated, they are photographed with a black background and frequently take up an entire page. The author believes that she gave objects dignity and aesthetic value in this way and drew a line between her initial opinion and perception which changed as a result of research and becoming familiar with items in the

Collection. She wrote outright about her personal stances and musings while working on the collection and this contributed to the sense of self-reflexivity I believe that this catalogue gives a valuable overview of a part of the collections at the Ethnographic Museum of Istria by introducing us to basic industries and everyday life in Istria.

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