

Mirjana Margetić. Spin, spin, my dear daughter– Fila, fila, figlia mia. A children’s guide to the collection “Production of Textile, Clothing, Footwear, Menswear and Womenswear and Personal Items” / Guida per bambini alla collezione “Produzione di tessuti, indumenti, calzature, abbigliamento e oggetti personali”. Pazin: Ethnographic Museum of Istria / Museo etnografico dell’ Istria. 2020, p. 69

Children’s Guide Review

In 2020 the Ethnographic Museum of Istria – Museo Etnografico dell’ Istria (hereinafter EMI/MEI) released a special publication entitled “Spin, spin, my dear daughter– Fila, fila, figlia mia” Children’s Guide to the Collection “Production of Textile, Clothing, Footwear, Menswear and Womenswear and Personal Items” / Guida per bambini alla collezione “Produzione di tessuti, indumenti, calzature, abbigliamento e oggetti personali” by the author Mirjana Margetić. The 69-page publication was released in two languages – Croatian and Italian.

Namely, in 2008 EMI/MEI disbanded the existing collections, formed according to the type of material from which they were made, and formed new ones that place the objects in a broader context. A catalog of the collection Production of Textile, Clothing, Footwear, Menswear and Womenswear and Personal Items was presented to the public in 2018, as one of catalogs from the EMI/MEI edition.

The curator of the newly formed collection, Mirjana Margetić, who is simultaneously also a museum advisor educator, made a step forward in accordance with her profession. After a “classic” guide to the collection, with her associates she devised a bilingual, Croatian-Italian guide to the collection intended for children. Tina Erman Popović from Lastik Studio provided an attractive, adequate and very thoughtful design of the entire guidebook, the illustrations were made by Marko Cerovac, while the photographs of the objects were taken by Tanja Draškić, Nikolina Rusac and Dragan Dimovski. This guide was included into the finals of this year Zagreb Design Week’s competition in the category of graphic design.

Educational work with children is one of important missions of the museum, yet publications and educational materials are seldom adapted to them. In 2009 Tončika Cukrov (Cukrov 2009) wrote about children’s guides as specific educational publications intended for target audience. In the latter work she provided a historical overview of such publications, starting from the independence of the Republic of Croatia. Considering the fact that specialized guides (both printed and multimedia) have gradually (since 1996 and educational museum initiative “What Delighted Professor Balthazar in the Museum?” organized by the Museum Documentation Centre to celebrate the

International Museum Day) have become, if not the standard, then very close to it, in many Croatian museums. Consequently, Mirjana Margetić takes the credit for including EMI/MEI in this list.

Since I am personally connected with the collection, I thought it logical to give an idea for a review linked with it and also for the Children's Guide to the Collection as soon as it was released. The colleague Mirjana Margetić kindly sent me the Guide, which at some point I left on the back seat of my car. On that very same day, my ten-year-old daughter, who had been waiting for me in the car for some time, exclaimed when I returned: "Mom, where did you get such a cool book? You didn't tell me you had it!" Aware of her infatuation with dogs, I first thought that she was talking about another book that was also in the car and I reminded her that she had received it from her grandfather. But she replied: "No, not that one, the one about clothing!" At that point that I realized that Mirjana Margetić has done a great job. I am aware that such scenes from personal life are not common in book reviews, but I believed it to be the best authentic review by a member of the target audience. I told my daughter that I had received the book for a review and I asked her for help, which she was delighted to accept and then she "appropriated" the book. The bookmark to be found in the pocket of the front cover that contains a picture of Šiško, formal/informal guide through the collection and the museum, in the shape of a cute bat, disappeared at once, i.e., it is probably being used elsewhere.

The guide has been prepared to appeal to children up to higher grades of primary school. The likeable Šiško adds to every page with his witty remarks and hints. An extremely impressive visual identity, an optimum amount of text, as well as a simple and adapted text that is easily remembered are crucial in terms of keeping children's attention. Irrespective of the fact that at first sight all that does not seem too difficult to prepare, it is exactly the opposite – adapting museum content to children is an extremely demanding and complex job. Even rather complicated topics in connection with *traditional clothing* that most probably most primary school pupils do not find too interesting, have been presented masterfully and in an entertaining way. Even the wedge-shaped cut of women's clothing, that was analyzed in detail by Jelka Radauš-Ribarić, Ph.D. (Radauš-Ribarić 1997, 2002) has been presented to children in an understandable way (a huge well done for Šiško's "remark" about himself actually having a wedge-shaped cut, that is wedge shaped wings!).

At the very beginning, the readers are introduced to the Castle that houses the Museum, the edifice that used to have a different purpose, as well as the date of museum foundation and the methods of collection formation. These are the things that children may know, but it is also possible that they do not think about how museums are founded or about what the job of the curator is like (as well as about what curator actually is and what it means). The latter and many other details have been explained on a fake *post-it* note that has been "attached" with a pin onto almost every page of the Guide.

The following chapter is about extremely sophisticated, even though nowadays belittled, weaving process and all the preparatory procedures for the process that are not at all simple and that have resulted in textile being extremely appreciated, which is

far from the current fast and consumerist fashion. From the current perspective of consumerist society, it is a challenge to introduce children to the fact that clothing was so valuable that it was frequently bequeathed (comp. e.g. Budeč 2007) (not only in Istria, of course) and very often it was used clothing! (e.g. Fazinić 1985: 149, Celio Cega 2015: 51, Doričić and Eterović 2016: 67)

Traditional clothing, better known as traditional *folk costume*, has been presented in several units. The first unit is dedicated to women's clothing and it primarily points out specific *traditional clothing* items from Vodnjan and Peroj (this is *traditional clothing* of autochthonous Italian inhabitants of Istria in Vodnjan and descendants of Montenegrin settlers in Peroj). Then there is a unit dedicated to men's clothing and accessories and last, but not least, Children's Clothing and Accessories. According to the author herself, directly addressing children (throughout the guide), this is the part of the collection that has the smallest number of objects, primarily because like nowadays, children's clothing was perhaps the most "worn out by use", which was also due to the fact that children's clothing was passed down among siblings from older to the youngest ones. That is the way that it used to be and hence the EMI/MEI currently preserves only more ceremonial children's clothing items.

It is important to point out the fact that at the end of each chapter the author provides a small dictionary of local terms for the previously mentioned objects for potential readers who are not familiar with the local idiom or they are simply not acquainted with *traditional clothing* terminology.

In addition to providing the readers with an insight into the *traditional clothing* of Istria, the Guide can be used as a specific aid during the preparation of school children for a visit to the museum, as well as an addition to homeland teaching in Istria, hence all the texts are bilingual (Croatian-Italian).

The fact that the Guide is extremely attractive and in color appears self-evident, yet anyone involved in any type of publishing is aware of the financial aspect to it and hence I would like to congratulate all those who have recognized the importance of the release of such a specialized guide.

Olga Orlić