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Review

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# Activities Accompanying the Exhibition *Faces of Hunger*

## INTRODUCTION

The exhibition *Faces of Hunger* is the result of co-operation between the Ethnographic Museum and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, i.e. of two ethnologists who have been dealing with the topic of nutrition for many years, Tanja Kocković Zaborski and Melanija Belaj.

At a time when strategies for the fight against hunger and its existence are being devised at the global level, the authors of the exhibition wanted to raise awareness of hunger, primarily of the imposed hunger, but also of self-imposed starvation. The topic of hunger has been presented throughout history, as well as the fight against hunger in today's society which has been particularly emphasised. While focusing primarily on Croatia, the topic was presented to visitors also in the wider context of hunger at the global level. We have become more aware of hunger as a fact during the times of the crisis throughout the world such as the pandemic and lockdown, and in Croatia after the earthquakes in Zagreb and its immediate surroundings and Sisak-Moslavina County (in Petrinja, Sisak and Glina). The war in Ukraine is continuously changing the economic outlook not only of Europe, but also of the world, affecting the distribution of food, provisions, their availability and it has also caused scarcity, poverty and hunger.

By choosing this topic, we wanted to provide an insight into the deep issues of hunger, raise questions and open a discussion. We did not want to provide answers and solutions. One of our objectives was to encourage thinking, as well as action. What can an individual, a small group of people, a community do to avoid hunger? How to help your neighbour, a friend?

The exhibition has been conceptualised through several topics. The largest unit consists of a segment of the exhibition titled *Fight Against Hunger*, which addressed the ways in which people throughout history up until now have been fighting against hunger. A part of the exhibition is dedicated to recent events in earthquake-affected areas and life during the pandemic and lockdown. In the second part of the exhibition, we considered hunger as a political tool. Examples from both the world and national history clearly showed how hunger has become a means by which one can manipulate the masses, but also individuals, offer resistance, express power, incite conflict, kill. In the part of the exhibition titled *Rituals/Customs for Well-Being or How We Suppress the Primordial Fear of Hunger*, through a different prism, we presented customs that

everyone is familiar with, many of which are still practiced today. In fact, most people plant Christmas wheat grains for St. Lucy's Day, decorate their house or apartment with greenery and dye eggs at Easter. Yet only few know that these ritual acts primarily helped our ancestors overcome the primordial fear of hunger. In the past, people lived more in harmony with nature and their life depended on crop yield in the fields and on the health of their animals. Their health, financial status and survival also depended on that. Through the symbolic actions that we focused on at the exhibition, we raised awareness of their universal background, and we guided people towards gentleness and respect for the natural and animal world because in this way we will ensure the survival of the planet in the future. In the last part of the exhibition, which is dedicated to the relationship between hunger and the body, we dealt with self-imposed starvation. In this part, we addressed the issue of the attitude towards the body, which in today's consumer society has been completely distorted and in which uncontrolled fasting and diets are progressively developing eating disorders at an increasingly early age (Belaj 2023:1).

## WORKSHOPS

One of the important goals of the museum as a heritage institution is to co-operate with the community, which could be seen in numerous segments at this exhibition, such as the organisation of many activities for visitors consisting of workshops, lectures and round tables. Many visitors participated in the activities, from the youngest ones to the retirees.

During the research and preparation of the exhibition, a framework plan of activities was agreed upon with museum educators, which we expanded as needed after the opening of the exhibition and we decided to give one lecture and provide several workshops and guided tours featuring exhibition authors every month. As authors, we were particularly impressed by the tours guided by the exhibition authors, of which we really provided a significant number. We often found them very interactive, instructive and impressive. At times after the tour, we collected almost the same amount of material as that presented to the audience. The topic of the exhibition and its subtopics proved to be an important thread that connects all the people and visitors often shared experiences in connection with hunger, their own or their family's or even their acquaintances'. We gained a lot of insights from the visitors into the topics we presented, which allowed us to start thinking about the exhibition as a project or a kind of platform that would collect further material on the topic, but also articulate and inform problems in connection with hunger around the world.

Since the exhibition showed only some of the many faces of hunger, our wish was to act in a wider context through the activities accompanying the exhibition. That is why we decided that the activities accompanying the exhibition, which serve as a possibility of deepening some of the topics that we have only touched upon, will be in connection with nutrition, because nutrition is also one of the faces of hunger – it can manifest itself through the development of eating disorders, but also as the unavailability of food to certain social groups or parts of the world. That is why during the exhibition, many workshops were held both for children and adults concerning the preparation of balanced meals.

Organising food preparation workshops is more challenging and expensive than preparing other workshops. Namely, it is not possible to cook food in the museum, so we organised workshops for adults where cooking, baking and pickling was organized in the premises of Kuhaona in the Upper Town. It is a facility intended for organising food workshops because it is equipped

with stove oven units, dishwashing areas and refrigerators. The leaders of cooking workshops for adults were Sanja Bilas and Hrvoje Krajinović. Sanja Bilas, the owner of the *Fakat fino* brand, a chef and organiser of numerous cooking workshops, held two workshops within the exhibition: *Fermentation* and *Meatless Nutrition* in the Kuhaona premises in the Upper Town. Hrvoje Krajinović, a leader of culinary and educational workshops, led the *Zero Food Waste* workshop. The idea behind both workshops was how to prepare delicious and healthy meals while simultaneously respecting the principles of frugality and recycling.

Maja Brekalo, the creator of the blog *Delicious & Healthy by Maja* and the author of the popular cookbook *My Happy Food*, also held a workshop at the Museum on preparing simple and delicious meals. The peculiarity of this workshop was that everything that was prepared at the workshop was raw, that is, it did not require heat treatment.

In autumn and spring, we organised particularly interesting workshops on picking wild herbs in nature for children and adults under the guidance of Martin Reljanović, a forest chef. At these workshops, the participants learned to recognise and pick wild herbs and they also learned interesting facts about edible mushrooms and at the end of the walk they prepared and tasted what they had picked.

In addition to workshops for adults, we have organised numerous food preparation workshops for children. Bearing in mind that these workshops were held at the Museum, our workshop leaders prepared simple recipes with children that workshop participants could later prepare at home. Hrvoje Krajinović, a leader of culinary and educational workshops, prepared healthy and simple fruit and vegetables recipes with our youngest visitors at four workshops. At a workshop held during a mini-holiday, the museum educator Anastazija Petrović and children shaped healthy date and nuts balls. In addition, we organised two workshops titled *Healthy and Nice* in co-operation and under the guidance of the Union of Societies “Naša djeca” (“Our Children”), the Society “Naša djeca” (“Our Children”) Zabok.

In addition to food preparation workshops, we organised wool felting workshops by making pumpkins in the autumn of 2022 under the guidance of Anamarija Marčinko, crocheting bags for the market under the guidance of Ana Marija Mužević, a workshop on making spring wreaths on the occasion of St. George’s festivities under the guidance of the Culture and Art Society “Magda and Luisa”, a workshop and a *kamishibai*<sup>1</sup> story *The Cat that Ate a Lot* on the occasion of the Night of Museums held by the Society “Kozlič”. We organised animation workshops for children during the school holidays led by Maša Udovičić. The animated movie *Hungry as a Dog* was created at the workshops. The museum advisor and head of museum education Željka Jelavić held two workshops *Body Images* for secondary and primary schools.

## LECTURES, ROUND TABLES AND PRESENTATIONS OF INITIATIVES

Several lectures were held alongside the exhibition. Immediately after the opening, Jelena Ivanišević, an exhibition associate from the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, held a lecture on unusual ingredients: *Someone Who Knows How to Cook Grass will Never Go Hungry*.

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1 *Kamishibai* is a Japanese art of storytelling using picture cards on a small wooden stage. The storytelling takes place using a small wooden *butai* box in which picture cards/drawings are inserted that serve as an illustration during storytelling (<https://www.skolskiportal.hr/sadrzaj/ucitelji-stvaraju/kamisibaj-pri-povijedanje-uz-slike/>, accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023)

Unusual ingredients that people have used throughout history during hard times and hunger is precisely the topic that the colleague addressed in more detail for the purposes of this exhibition. In addition to wild herbs, meat of various birds, starfish, wolves, as well as a large group of ingredients, as pointed out in the lecture, which consists of alternative cheap grain (in Croatian *krušarice*) from which flour was made that was mixed with the usual flour in order to make the provisions of the kitchens of the poor as plentiful as possible. Some of them are cattail root, birch bark and holm oak acorns. This was followed by a lecture titled *Organic/Biological Food Production* by the farmer and philosopher Ana Smokrović, who grows food according to biodynamic principles, sells vegetables at the market in Rijeka, as well as holds courses on natural and balanced diet and gardening. In the lecture, she reflected on the time that we live in and in which we are recording a dangerous decline in wildlife populations, as well as pollution and a radical biodiversity loss due to climate changes. She strived to present her opinions on agriculture and pointed out that we should adopt new paradigms of food production and cultivation that will help prevent the devastation of the world as we know it. Against the backdrop of the previous two lectures, there was also the one given by Sana Sardelić, a curator of the Korčula City Museum: *Wild Edible Plants – One of the Faces of Hunger or Abundance?* In the lecture, she reflected on the forgotten plants of the region of Korčula, but also beyond, in the region of the entire Dalmatia and in the Mediterranean and shared knowledge of its beneficial impact on nutrition, health, life and survival of the planet.

The lecture given by the museum advisor and head of museum education Željka Jelavić rounded off the thematic unit of the exhibition titled *Hunger and Body*. In her lecture *One Kilogram More, One Kilogram Less: Consumerism, Hunger and Body*, Jelavić addressed the issue of cultural constructs of desirable body ideals, diet culture, beauty myths, consumerism and self-imposed starvation in order to attain an ideal body.

As a part of the exhibition, *the Croatian Network for the Homeless*, an association that operates at the national and international level, was presented. It was established with the aim of improving the care for the homeless and other socially excluded groups by providing support and assistance to organisations dealing with the issue of homelessness, through raising awareness and level of public awareness and sensitivity to the issue of homelessness. During the Easter holidays, the museum educator Anastazija Petrović held an egg decoration workshop in the premises of the Network. In addition to presenting the Croatian Network for the Homeless during the exhibition, as well as during the Open Doors Day of the Museum, for its anniversary we hosted volunteers and beneficiaries of the initiative *Heart to Heart for the Homeless and the Needy*, a group involved in providing food and care for poor citizens and the homeless in the city of Zagreb. Moreover, the Ethnographic Museum joined the humanitarian action of the Croatian Caritas *For 1000 joys! Speak through Good!* The humanitarian action in question was launched twenty years ago and grew into a year-round programme that, as a part of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger*, collected concrete help for the poorest families who are struggling to survive while also coping with illness, unemployment and poverty. The revenue from the Ethnographic Museum's Christmas Market was intended for all those in need, as a part of the humanitarian action. These activities are a part of one of the larger units of the exhibition titled *Fight Against Hunger* and they were intended to raise public awareness of the problem of the poor and the hungry at the local level, both in the neighbourhood and in our city.

In addition, the exhibition presented the works of foreign students at Croaticum - Centre for Croatian as a Second and Foreign Language. As a part of this activity, students from Poland,

Albania and Ukraine held presentations in Croatian on research about hunger in their home countries through various historical epochs and involvement of individuals.

The Annual Forum of the Zagreb Library Association was held at the Ethnographic Museum as a part of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger*. The topic of this year's forum and the panel was *Hunger for Books*, which hosted several experts from various fields who discussed the importance of libraries and books in sensitising the public about socially vulnerable groups, climate changes, the importance of balanced diet and physical activity for the betterment of the planet and all of us on it.

## FINAL WORD

Another special feature of this exhibition is co-operation with institutions. It is primarily important to mention the co-operation on the preparation and realisation of the exhibition between the Ethnographic Museum and the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research. In addition, during the research for the exhibition, it is important to point out the co-operation with cultural anthropologists, historians, nutritionists and associations and institutions in which these experts work was crucial. During the preparation of the exhibition, it is important to emphasise the inter-museum co-operation in the form of borrowing and lending objects and other assistance among museum workers (Croatian State Archives, Public Institution Jasenovac Memorial Area, Zagreb City Museum, Croatian Museum of Medicine and Pharmacy at the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Maritime and Historical Museum of the Croatian Littoral Rijeka).

It is also important to point out the co-operation of the Museum with the health institution in the form of the organisation of the public health campaign *RemekTijelo (Masterpiece Body)* and the project *Little School of Eating Disorder Prevention*, which lasted during the exhibition. The authors of the exhibition, museum educators, museum librarian and experts of the Day Hospital for Eating Disorder H(RANA) of Sveti Ivan Psychiatric Hospital have devised the project *Masterpiece Body*, whose main objective is education and prevention of eating disorders for the most vulnerable population group – adolescents. Day Hospital experts held eight workshops (January – May 2023) at the Ethnographic Museum for about twenty participants of a small school for the prevention of eating disorders who were selected in a competition for which they applied by sending drawings, essays, poetry, films on the topic of prevention of eating disorders. At the end of this project, the participants were awarded diplomas and became ambassadors of the prevention of eating disorders who will transfer their knowledge to their schoolmates.

In addition to this project, a total of twenty-three workshops for adults and children, four lectures and three presentations of associations were provided during the exhibition. It needs to be pointed out that about a hundred guided tours featuring qualified professionals and exhibition authors were provided through the exhibition. We would primarily like to point out a significant increase in visits by secondary school students for whom guided tours were primarily thematically “enhanced” concerning the part of the exhibition that deals with the relationship between hunger and body (and eating disorders).

Moreover, it is important to point out that the Croatian Museum Association has decided to open this year's Night of Museums, addressing the topic *Museums are Important* at the Ethnographic Museum, i.e. at the premises of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* and thus showed the actuality and the importance both of this topic and the exhibition itself.

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