
Melanija Belaj

Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, Zagreb
melanija@ief.hr

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It's Either a Struggle or It's Fear – A Reflection on the Co-Author's Involvement in the Exhibition *Faces of Hunger*

*This paper is a reflection on the co-author's involvement in the creation of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* – in shaping the very idea of the exhibition,¹ research, its planning and implementation, processing of the collected material, selection of topics to be presented, in what way and why, and consequently on the perception of the exhibition, the curatorial experience of leading through the exhibition and the “life” of the exhibition itself after the primary installation. I base my reflective experience on the reflection on the idea of “difficult topics” in museum practice, as well as on the insights of the so-called affective turn in museums in recent decades. I pay special attention to certain elements in the exhibition, as well as to the experience of a non-museologist who, within the framework of the ethnological, i.e. cultural-anthropological profession, is born out of the scientific habitus, one who primarily writes about the conducted research, and does not visualise, in this case specifically the lack of food, i.e. hunger in the world.*

Keywords: exhibition on hunger, ethnology, cultural anthropology, affective curatorship, difficult topics

1 The idea for the exhibition came from my colleague Tanja Kocković Zaborski, who invited me to make it happen together.

INTRODUCTION

In the autumn of 2022, more specifically on 22nd September, the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* was opened at the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, where I participated as a co-author in all the stages – in shaping the very idea of the exhibition, the research that preceded the exhibition, its planning and implementation, the processing of the collected material, the selection of topics to be presented, in what way and why.² Summarised in one sentence, it does not seem like a great nor perhaps an impressive experience, especially from the perspective of museum professionals, but to me, for whom the presentation of the results of the research is not primarily visual, it greatly influenced the overall experience, as well as the joy and inexplicable frustration that I did not have time to explore in detail about every single topic that we touched upon or opened during the research itself. I did not have time to think about it, to write about it, and ultimately to say even more with the exhibition, which I co-authored.

Without the intention of devoting myself here to the elaboration of reflection in the sciences of ethnology and cultural anthropology, I will only briefly remind you that reflection on research experience (Rabinow 1977) in sciences of cultural anthropology is not unusual. Reflection on the research experience is of great importance for understanding the researched community, and it also contributes to the awareness of certain parts of the material collected by research, which without self-reflection might remain unaddressed, and ultimately not be included in the interpretation and presentation of the material (Eliss, Adams and Bochner 2010). Kirsten Hastrup considers reflexivity to be a fundamental and constitutive characteristic of fieldwork in ethnology and cultural anthropology (1995: 149), while Marianne Gullestad points out that reflexivity does not necessarily have to be related only to the fieldwork but needs to cover as many aspects of the research process as possible. In presenting some of the classic phenomenological pillars of ethnological and cultural anthropological research, Škrbić-Alempijević and Potkonjak point out, relying on the reflections of Ellis (2000) on the foundations of autoethnography, that the researcher can be treated at the same time as a creator and mediator of knowledge about the world whose personal experience provides insight into the wider social context, while at the same time the researcher's autobiographical recording of their own experiences, narratives, memories and practices becomes the basis of ethnological and cultural-anthropological analysis and a key factor "in understanding cultural and social reality" (Škrbić-Alempijević, Potkonjak, Rubić 2014: 19). I describe the experience of sharing the "task" of creating an exhibition as an ethnographic terrain, where I gathered valuable experience in the context of presenting difficult and demanding exhibition topics, and where I faced the "frustration" of writing a short text on topics on which at the beginning of the research I thought needed to be addressed in much more detail because the exhibition may not be "telling" enough.

THE LEGACY OF HUNGER

The legacy of hunger can also be used to teach about human suffering and human rights in a globalised present. (Murphy 2013: 104)

The idea of an exhibition about hunger proposed by a colleague interested me right from the

2 The paper was written as a part of the project "The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography Today" funded by the *European Union – NextGenerationEU*.

start, from the moment we started working together on the exhibition.³ The topic of the exhibition “troubled” my colleague for a long time, and by sharing it with me, she verbalised it and set out to realise. Hunger as the theme of the exhibition has imposed many challenges on us. Namely, hunger, in addition to being a biological state, also needs to be discussed as a cultural and social fact that needs to be thought about in an interdisciplinary way in today’s world. As I point out in the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, hunger is also one of the motives of human progress, the development of cities and social life, the economy, especially agriculture. Hunger makes us think about the future, about creating stocks and preserving seeds. The history of human nutrition has been deeply directed and shaped by periods of hunger (Belaj 2023a). Human history has been determined to a greater extent by the experience of hunger than by the abundance of food. The agony of hunger has accompanied people from the very beginning, and the reasons for its occurrence are diverse – from climate change, adverse weather conditions, natural disasters to various social, political and economic turmoil. Thinking about hunger as a social fact from the perspective of historians and social theorists points to the complexity of understanding and interpreting hunger throughout history – it is impossible to see it only as a consequence of natural phenomena or inadequate production, or only as a consequence of man-made disasters (Alfani and Ó Gráda 2017) These views are complementary, since the actual characteristics of historical famines are very diverse and different causes seem to have prevailed in different places and in different epochs. The fact is that the poor strata of society in economically underdeveloped areas have always encountered hunger and have been most exposed to it. Hunger is woven into all areas of life and is approached from completely different aspects, scientific fields and disciplines such as medicine, archaeology, history, social work, nutrition, cookery, ecology, agronomy, sociology, economics, botany, mythology, psychology, ethnology and cultural anthropology, among others (Belaj 2023a: 3). This has been confirmed by the thinking of two authors, Marguérite Corporaal and Ingrid de Zwart, who, in the article “Heritages of Hunger: European Famine Legacies in Current Academic Debates”, explore the legacy of hunger in Europe by analysing the ways in which historical years of famine have shaped contemporary academic debates and museum practice dealing with the topic of hunger (2021). In the previously mentioned article, they emphasise the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of hunger, combining historical, sociological, cultural and economic perspectives in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of these complex phenomena, which I myself became aware of at the very beginning by thinking about the course and possible ways of approaching the topic. The manifestations of hunger are numerous, and it was impossible to capture and show all its manifestations in an exhibition. During the research for the exhibition, a multitude of complex topics were opened. It was necessary to talk about them and deal with and present them in a special way, as well as discuss them. The previously mentioned authors point out how various episodes of famine, including those such as the Great Irish Famine (also known as Irish

3 Tanja Kocković Zaborski and I have been colleagues for a number of years, since studying ethnology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, when during a student internship, during an exhibition in the Ethnographic Museum that we “guarded” together as students, we began to socialise more intensively and share thoughts about the profession itself, personal aspirations and work in it. This continued throughout our work in the profession for many years, my colleague Kocković Zaborski in ethnographic museums (Ethnographic Museum of Istria in Pazin, Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb), and I in a scientific institute (Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb).

Potato Famine) and the Holodomor⁴ in Ukraine (also known as Ukrainian Famine), have resulted in permanent consequences on the social, political and cultural structures of European countries. In addition, they comment on the ways in which these events have been interpreted in museum practice, emphasising the importance of understanding historical years of famine not only as past events, but also as dynamic factors that affect the present and future of European societies (Corporaal and de Zwarte 2021), and I would add much more broadly. The intertwining of the author's understanding of hunger in the creation of the exhibition with how aspects of hunger have been accepted by a possible audience throughout history necessarily affects the presentation of that topic or a certain aspect in the exhibition. Namely, during the research and processing of famine throughout world history, the periods of the Great Irish Famine and the Holodomor in Ukraine emerged as important "points" as those to which it would be good to dedicate a part of the exhibition. Just at the point when we were dealing with the Holodomor, the war began in Ukraine, which immediately changed the lives of many people, and over time had a long-term impact on the change of the economic outlook for Europe and the world.⁵ It was necessary to think carefully about how to approach this topic within the exhibition. As Corporaal and de Zwarte (2021) note, depicting hunger in museums presents a number of challenges, as it is difficult to present suffering and plight in a way that is both sensitive to the victims and their descendants, while being informative and engaging for the visitors (2021). Reflecting on the perception and actualisation of hunger both in academic discussions and in museum practice, they pay special attention to the connection between the memory of periods of famine and the creation of a legacy about it. They see legacy creation processes as "an expression of values, historical interpretations and perceived shared past of communities". In these processes, legacy can be viewed, as stated by the previously mentioned authors, as 'the place where memory is embodied' (Apaydin 2020: 16) in selective ways 'according to the demands of the present' or 'imagined future' (Ashworth and Graham 2005: 4). Corporaal and de Zwarte further note that we can simultaneously witness the interaction between legacy building and the dynamics of cultural memory (and oblivion), because the collective memory of a culturally active community can also be an incentive for the creation of new heritage such as monuments, commemorative rituals and museum collections, or the preservation of tangible and intangible artifacts and practices (2021: 31). The previously mentioned authors are very good at detecting possible problems in conveying and presenting hunger within a certain historical context to today's audience. They point out that the social use and relevance of the past of famine today depends on the ways in which a certain famine legacy is conveyed, that it is important to bridge the possible gap between the legacy that is in memory and today's perception of the museum audience, especially when it comes to evoking empathy in today's audience, while it very often has, as the authors

4 *Holodomor* known also as *Gladomor* denotes the period of the Great Famine in Ukraine from 1932 to 1933. The causes of the famine in Ukraine are linked with the excessively high demands for grain requisitioning set by Stalin and his aides. Although there was grain stored in the areas where there was famine, it was not allowed to be distributed to peasants. The government forbade information and reports about the hungry and those who died from famine. According to more recent estimates, five million people died at that time as a direct consequence of Stalin's policy towards Ukraine (from the label of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger*).

5 One of the exhibits at the exhibition is the so-called Hunger Map, which very quickly reflected the changes caused by the war in Ukraine. The interactive hunger map is a map of the world that shows areas of hunger, malnutrition and difficult food availability. The map can be found on the World Food Programme website. It is a specialised agency of the United Nations in charge of providing food aid and the world's largest humanitarian organisation to solve hunger and promote food security. See more at: <https://hungermap.wfp.org/> (accessed 1st July 2024)

state, “a different cultural origin” (2021: 41). While preparing the exhibition together with my colleague, I found myself in front of a multitude of courses and directions, of which we were able to follow only a few. We strived to show hunger in its entirety, but on the other hand, I personally wondered if we would be able to do it without being superficial, whether we should still deal only with individual topics, periods, approaches and think about and show them. I wondered whether the idea of the exhibition, which I only suspected during its creation and work on it, whether this idea would be so clear to the “reader”, that is, to the visitor to the exhibition. In the beginning, I continuously suggested dealing with only “one hunger”, only one context, one historical period, one aspect for fear that simply everything we have collected over time (and the holdings, materials and insights into the complexity of the topic have grown), we will not be able to present in the exhibition, we will not be able to show it visually. Nevertheless, during intensive research on several levels – archival, field and historical, I became more confident in my own research position and way of working, as well as the idea of the exhibition itself and conveying it all to the audience. Close co-operation with my colleague influenced my understanding of the possibilities that this way of dealing with the topic of hunger gives us and calmed my fears. I realised that we have to tackle the challenges and avoid the risk that always exists in thinking, interpreting and presenting difficult and painful topics – the risk of sensationalism or trivialisation, while paying attention not to succumb to the “brutalisation of the viewer”, the “normalisation of atrocities” or “sanitisation” when it comes to difficult topics, as stated by Silke Arnold-de Simine (2013: 46) in a study of the limits of affective in museums. During the research, we visited the Jasenovac Memorial Site – primarily in search of Andela Heder’s cookbook, and in fact in search of possible objects or stories that we could show in the exhibition. Through conversations with colleagues and reviewing the prepared materials, we came across a lot of terrifying information, sad destinies and life stories. After reviewing the material, archival and published, as well as after looking into the complex, destructive, sad and dense history, we had to think carefully about what we will show in the exhibition and in what way, without succumbing to the possible traps mentioned by individual authors when it comes to evoking empathy in the museum audience – whereby, following the principle of “mediation empathy”, it is possible to distort the historical context (Gourievidis 2010) or overdramatise and to contribute to theatricality of historical scenes in which there is a stronger emphasis on effect than in following historical facts, then the result is a “dramatic condensation of the line of history” that is consequently less informative (Kelly 2018: 180).

DIFFICULT TOPICS, “BURDENSOME GIFT” AND “INTIMATE ENCOUNTER”

Faced with new emergencies, museums are no longer just places of presentation; they are increasingly promoters of social change and places of social activism.
(Marzia Varutti 2022)

The previous chapter states and presents hunger as a museum topic that is extremely complex and challenging. That is so because hunger, like death, for example, belongs to the corpus of difficult topics – not only in museum practice, but in any form of their elaboration or processing in various sciences or arts. What are the difficult topics in museum practice and how to characterise them in today’s understanding of the operation of museums as institutions in which an encounter with them is inevitable – from the perspective of museum experts and curators, but equally from that of the audience, the visitors?

Marzia Varutti (2022) argues that the current context of global crises – humanitarian, health, environmental, racial, and social justice – has forced museums to deal with situations and themes that elicit a range of emotional responses, from anxiety to fear, despair, nostalgia, and hope, to an unprecedented extent. As I state in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, Varutti further points out, that museums are no longer just places of presentation. They are increasingly promoters of social change and places of social activism. In doing so, she points out that curatorial practice is rapidly adapting, creating “exhibition narratives that explicitly call for vulnerability, resilience, and empathy, offering a roadmap by which we navigate through the emotional instability and uncertainty of our time” (Varutti 2022).

At the International Council of Museums’ Annual Conference in 2000, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett noted that museums have been spurred on by a “new honesty” rather than simply celebrating history to “open up to public interpretation the darker side of human society” and to do so “more reflectively and self-critically” (2000: 9). The same thought of Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett was also pointed out by Jennifer Bonnell and Roger I. Simon in a 2007 paper on so-called difficult exhibitions, in which they noted that over the last thirty years, many museums have tried to move away from a single emphasis on “affirmative presentations of patriotism, triumph and great deeds” and move more and more towards a greater appreciation of the complexity of heritage (2007: 65). The authors further noted that, when it comes to museum practice, it is important not only to acquire knowledge and admire what is institutionally preserved and displayed as a valuable heritage, but also “necessary practices of social memory that conceive of cultural heritage as a process that requires a commitment to a critical confrontation with the past that is both inspiring and desperate” (Bonnell and Simon 2007: 65). In the previously mentioned text, Bonnell and Simon strived to encourage a discussion about the presentation of “painful histories” and “difficult topics”, aware that it is increasingly presented and elaborated through museum practice, but they also noticed a lack of discussion on this topic in museological practice. They begin the discussion by reflecting on difficult exhibitions through two concepts – one is the concept of the “burdensome gift” – which they describe as a demanding legacy that contains the expectation of an emphatic response; the second is through the concept of “intimate encounter” – this would be an exhibition experience that offers visitors the potential for insight that can support new ways of connecting with the world and within in (Bonnell and Simon 2007: 66). The previously mentioned authors also think about which and what kind of exhibitions could be difficult. In addition to those that are controversial, there are also exhibitions in which the concept of difficulty can be understood through the visitor’s experience, which includes the difficulty in the cognitive and affective aspect of the experience of the exhibition itself, the exhibition can also cause the burden of “negative emotions” – unpleasant, troublesome, conflicting, difficult exhibitions can also cause increased anxiety with identification with the victims, violence, illness, as well as the re-traumatisation of those who were once victims of all of the above (Bonnell and Simon 2007: 67). Silvén and Bjorklünd (2006) believe that one of the roles of museums is to confront the problematic sides of history, as well as to take responsibility for preserving individuals’ experiences of general social processes. This responsibility also includes showing compassion as well as an engaged role in managing society’s emotional crises, the peculiarities of museums as a non-commercial place to reflect on existential issues from a historical and cultural perspective (Silvén and Bjorklünd 2006: 256). Namely, an exhibition about difficult moments of history needs to succeed in constituting a meaning in the relationship between the visitor and the presented material that manages to convey the message that the encounter with history can support hope for the future (Bonnell and Simon 2007). It is clear

that what could be perceived as a difficult topic does not depend on specific objects or the events to which they refer, but on the way in which a particular exhibition conveys a message about a particular topic. It is in this transmission that the acceptance of the “burdensome gift” or the “intimate encounter” with the very essence of the message, its only individual element or the complete idea, story, or the main idea of the message of the exhibition takes place. Bonnell and Simon observe an intimate encounter as an individual experience of an element of the exhibition by the visitor, i.e. the impression and understanding of the exhibition through the complex lens of personal experience of what is shown in the exhibition with the possibility of “transformative criticism of one’s own understanding of the world” (2007: 69). An intimate encounter can be understood as a sensitivity that has the capacity to disturb one’s own being, but at the same time allowing it a reflective critique and a transformative insight into the relationship to the past. Particularly important is the aspect of empathy that, according to the authors, presupposes the similarity of feelings, it is then a transformed empathy responsible for the feelings of others and one which opens a question that changes our experience of the world and our actions in it (2007: 70). An intimate encounter with transformed empathy, Bonnell and Simon conclude, referring to Vetlesen, can also be thought of as a process of responsibility and reaching out to the other in which the other remains the other, a process within which our uniqueness as individuals is not erased (1994: 204-5), in which individual, particular experience is important. With all this in mind, the authors further in the text open a conceptual discussion on how certain features of the design of specifically two exhibitions – *No Name Fever. AIDS in the Age of Globalisation* and *Surviving. Voices of Ravensbrück*⁶ can help induce intimate encounters and consider these to be those features that enhance the uniqueness of the experiences presented, those that enhance focus and absorption in certain objects and texts, and those that provoke a reflective critique of one’s own understanding of what the exhibition offers (2007: 70).

The previously presented insights contributed to the reflection on my own research and (co)authorial position in developing the idea of the exhibition – the one I want to convey and the way I want it to be conveyed, while not imposing a certain ideology, resentment or the development of conflicting emotions on the visitors or the audience. Nevertheless, like the previously mentioned authors, I will not only look at the possibilities of intimate encounters, i.e. possible experiences of the exhibition, the visitor experience of the exhibition, but I will devote myself to recording and presenting certain elements that I have noticed through my own curatorial experience in direct contact with the visitors and their experiences and permeation of certain elements of the exhibition, as well as some that were shared with me by the colleague for whom the experience of leading through the exhibition was not such a departure as it was for me, but it was still specific considering the fact that it was an exhibition that she co-created.

6 *No Name Fever. AIDS in the Age of Globalisation* (2004-2006), The Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg; *Surviving. Voices of Ravensbrück* (2005), Kulturen, Lund.

AFFECTIVE CURATORSHIP OF THE DARKER THEMES OF THE *FACES OF HUNGER* EXHIBITION

[...] *Theories of affect can usefully expand the mediation processes inherent in curatorial practice. Museums, galleries, art events and the works of art themselves function as contact zones in which affect is transmitted. Every element in an exhibition can be imbued with affect and can produce it. Some affects are intentionally caused, others less consciously.* (Fisher and Reckitt 2015: 361)

In the article “The Affective Turn in Museums and the Rise of Affective Curatorship” (2023), Marzia Varutti explores the affective turn in museums, that is, what it means for museum theory and practice, while developing the concept of “affective curatorship” (affective curation), denoting curatorial approaches that are specifically focused on emotional action on visitors. Drawing on recent museological literature and exhibition projects in Europe and North America, Varutti illustrates the qualities of affective curatorship and examines how emotions can be harnessed in curatorial practice in relation to the exhibition theme, activities, design, and the senses. She notes that affective curatorship subtly transforms curatorial practice and the way we think and feel about museums because she considers affect as a curatorial, theoretical, and analytical perspective, offering key insights into the new roles of museums in a time that increasingly requires emotional engagement (Varutti 2023: 61). Namely, affect transforms the relationships between objects, spaces, visitors and curatorial interventions; engages visitors in a variety of ways that complement the cognitive processes necessary to understand a text, object, image, or performance (which, of course, can be inherently affective). Moreover, Varutti believes affect opens up new analytical perspectives on the power of objects (Varutti 2023: 63). In doing so, she draws on the reflections of Sandra Dudley, who warns against polarised views of museums and their activities, whereby museums are viewed either as those that deal exclusively with the preservation of objects (in the essentialist sense) or as those completely dedicated to serving society (2010: 4). Dudley emphasises the need for an intermediate approach that explores objects as having an impact on visitors—objects as potential bridges between museums and visitors, as well as among visitors themselves (2010: 4). Furthermore, Varutti notes that the affective power of each museum element is further enhanced by multimedia and multisensory museum environments that connect the visual, textual, material and digital. Museum elements interact to create a mixture of emotions, physical sensations, memories, moods, and imaginative moments, which together form what we call affect. The experience of a strong emotion in a museum can be conceptualised, according to Varutti, as a result of an encounter with something that touches us deeply, and she refers to such encounters as “affective encounters” (Varutti 2023). In an exhibition, affective encounters can occur at the intersection point between museum inputs (anything our senses and attention can focus on – object, story, sound, performance), curatorial intervention (*mise-en-scène*, exhibition context), and visitor subjectivity (coloured by personal moods, memories, personality traits, and expectations, among others) (Varutti 2023: 62).

“Affective encounter” or “intimate encounter” or “burdensome gift” are the categories through which I can reflect on the exhibition that I co-authored. Especially important to me is the experience of guiding through the exhibition, which moved me away from my usual way of sharing knowledge and research results in the form of a presentation or a written text. Guided tours through the exhibition are a special experience that I can observe from the perspective of affective curatorship, in which the perception of the emotions shared by the exhibition can very well

be recognised and experienced through the momentary impression experienced by the visitor, or a group of them. I believe that this is a particularly enriching and transformative experience for the author of the exhibition, but sometimes very challenging. I was thinking about whether and how we managed to convey the emotion we wanted through the exhibition, I wondered if the way we communicated it and interacted with the audience in direct or indirect contact created a “burdensome gift” and whether the “intimate encounter” recognised the individual experience not only of the one who “reads” the exhibition, but also of the one whose experience we convey in it.

In the exhibition and consequently in the catalogue, we approached the topic of hunger from three aspects. The first refers to the fight against hunger, and this is also the most comprehensive part of the exhibition, in which we show some of the ways in which people try to ensure the availability of food, save supplies or simply improvise. A part of this unit, although it was not realised in the visual set up of the exhibition, is the fight against the fear of hunger.⁷ In the second segment of the exhibition, we observe hunger as a means by which we can manipulate the masses, but also individuals, resist, express power, encourage conflict, kill. The third segment of the exhibition is dedicated to the relationship between hunger and the body. Namely, the face of hunger can also be recognised in the ever-increasing eating disorders, especially in the younger population. Although various forms of eating disorders can be traced throughout history, they are defined very late as disorders that need special attention in treatment and approach. We became aware of this during the research for the exhibition when, after talking to experts dealing with this issue, eating disorders imposed themselves on us as the main topic of this part of the exhibition. The unit that brings together the themes of hunger as a political tool and the one about the relationship between hunger and the body, in which we address the issue of the relationship to the body, which is completely distorted in today’s consumerist world and in which uncontrolled fasting and diets develop eating disorders, mostly in the younger population – represent the darker side of the exhibition. In the visual set up of the exhibition⁸, the unit *Hunger as a Political Tool* was also visually dark – the rocks on which the exhibits for this unit were placed were of dark colour, as were the backgrounds of the museum labels. The sub-themes of these two units were a challenge – namely, in both units, especially in some topics, death is very clearly visible. Throughout the *Hunger as a Political Tool* unit, we presented the previously mentioned great world famines in Ireland,⁹ Ukraine, world wars through items from concentration and refugee camps, consumer cards, the Croatian War of Independence, the siege of Dubrovnik and Sarajevo and hunger strike.

Particularly challenging and intriguing were the parts of the implementation, as well as the guided tour of the exhibition of objects from the Jasenovac concentration camp, for which, after reviewing the multitude of materials and processing it, we concluded that Jasenovac was actually a famine camp. We exhibited several items from the Jasenovac camp: a correspondence card, a

7 In the visual set up of the exhibition, the whole of the fight against the fear of hunger was between two “darker” units – the one about hunger as a political tool and the one about eating disorders. For an overview of the visual segment and the visual set up of the exhibition, see: <https://emz.hr/izlozbe/izlozba-etnografskog-muzeja-i-instituta-za-etnologiju-i-folkloristiku-lica-gladi/> (accessed 1st July 2024)

8 Visual set up and visual identity of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger*: Studio Bilić Müller

9 The failure of two potato crops, due to an infestation with a strain of fungi that cause downy mildew or potato blight, led to the collapse of peasant society and a catastrophic famine in Ireland in 1845-1851. Irish peasants survived on a small amount of potatoes, while English landlords simultaneously exported wheat, pork, poultry and butter to overseas countries. In 1841, Ireland had a population of 8 million, and in 1847 only 5 million (Kocković Zaborski 2023: 63).

cookbook by Anđela Heder and a spoon of the prisoner Berger. In one of the guided tours of the exhibition, one of the visitors separated herself from the group with which she visited the exhibition. She told the colleague, who was leading this group, that it was her father's spoon. At that moment, my colleague was taken aback like the rest of the visitors, she told me that her voice literally "broke", that she was left not only without a word, the right word, but literally without a voice, unable to say something and continue the guided tour through the exhibition. The silence was broken by the visitor, saying almost comfortingly and reassuringly that it was okay, that it was good that it was her father's spoon, that it was proof that everything was fine with her father, that her father had survived the camp and returned home, and that they had decided to donate the spoon as a family to the Jasenovac Memorial Site. Subsequently, in the following guided tours of the exhibition, my colleague and I would mention this fact, the fact, the testimony of a visitor who, along with the object already burdened with history, became a part of its new history, a new written legacy of the difficult topic of the hungry years, a period of history, the place of the camp where people were killed by starvation. In addition to the spoon as an important object whose fate we did not fully know until the moment of one of the guided tours of the exhibition, we also drew the attention of the visitors to the cookbook by Anđela Heder as a testimony of hope and consolation in which the recipes of happy times were inscribed, as a pledge for the future that it will be repeated again. During January 1944, when there was a great famine in the camp, records of kitchen recipes were created, which were written down in her notebook by the prisoner Anđela Heder. After a whole day of exhausting work, the prisoners talked to each other about the types of food, ingredients and proportions for the preparation of individual dishes. Anđela Heder recorded recipes in her notebook, writing with the smallest possible letters in order to collect as many recipes as possible. Namely, there was extremely little writing paper in the camp (Kocković Zaborski 2023: 57).

The second dark part of the exhibition is the one about eating disorders. Although originally in this part the emphasis was on thinking about the body and the relationship to the body in the present, mostly in the 20th century, during the research, in conversation with many interlocutors, especially experts in the field of eating disorders, it was decided to devote almost an entire segment of the exhibition to specific highlights. And these are precisely those that provoke reflection on the role and meaning of modern diets and the relationship to the body that arises under the influence of the consumerism of the society in which we live and the various influences of the media and popular culture on the perception of our own bodies, and consequently on our relationship both to our own and the bodies of others, as well as to ourselves and the people around us (Belaj 2024 in print). This part of the exhibition also resulted in co-operation with the Day Hospital for Eating Disorders of the Psychiatric Hospital Sveti Ivan. The "Masterpiece Body" (*RemekTijelo*) campaign was jointly designed, and an online competition was held for students of higher grades of elementary schools and the first and second grades of high schools. As a part of the competition, students could apply, and in a creative way, using all the tools available today (recording videos on *Tik-Tok*, *Instagram*, visual artworks, compositions, stories and songs, to name a few), express what "Masterpiece Body" means to them. The students could look for inspiration for their works in the following statements: "If appearance is important to you, you may be tiny inside", "I rule even when I fail", "Every body is a masterpiece", "A chat is better than a picture", "I'm perfectly imperfect", "Like me in the eye", "Food is not a wound" and "Love loves flaws". The authors of the best papers were given the opportunity to participate in a Crash Course for the Prevention of Eating Disorders. The Crash Course for the Prevention of Eating Disorders consisted of eight workshops that were held every other Saturday and was

led by trained therapists of the Day Hospital for Eating Disorders. About twenty girls, some of whom came from Osijek, became ambassadors of the prevention of eating disorders and will transfer their knowledge to the students at their schools and to everyone interested in this topic (Belaj 2024 in print). One of the exhibits in this unit is a poster of the beneficiaries of the Day Hospital for Eating Disorders of the Psychiatric Hospital Sveti Ivan. The poster was made by the users themselves, and if we return to the reflection on the presentation of “difficult topics” in the exhibition according to Bonnell and Simon and intimate encounters according to Bonnell and Simon (2007), we can ask ourselves whether the poster is not one of the features that emphasises the importance of the particular, the individual, not only in the experience of the one who, as the author of the exhibition, wants to convey a message that is equally an emotion, but also the one who perceives the exhibition, gets an impression of it, understands it and is “affected” by it.

FIGHTING HUNGER AND FEAR OF HUNGER¹⁰

I'm only interested in those revolutions that will make people sit at the table.
(Agualusa 2016: 83)

The largest unit of the exhibition titled *Fight against Hunger* includes topics that show how people have dealt with the lack of food and food insecurity throughout history and how they are dealing with the lack of food and food insecurity in recent times. Namely, access to food can be understood as a basic human right. Hunger and malnutrition are the result of violation of this basic human right. There are many ways in which people provide food, store supplies, and fight hunger. They do it as individuals, but also in an organised way with the help of state (public), city and local services. Such action is encouraged by times of crisis caused by food shortages due to natural disasters such as earthquakes, wars, both throughout history and today. On a global level, in this sense, there are various types of humanitarian aid¹¹, on the local level, these are soup kitchens¹², humanitarian societies and civic initiatives. As individuals and within our own homes, we can fight hunger by preparing winter food, planting gardens¹³ and recycling. In

10 Parts of this chapter have been published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* in the text “Rituals and customs by which we symbolically eradicate the primordial fear of hunger” (Belaj 2023b: 41-47).

11 One of the objects that we use to thematise the concept of global humanitarian aid is an item borrowed from the Croatian History Museum, a food box from the US Army to Yugoslavia. As we indicate in the labels of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger: UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) played a major role in the rehabilitation of post-war Yugoslavia. From personal testimonies, it can often be heard that UNRRA “saved Yugoslavia from starvation” in the post-war years. One of the food items that came this way was powdered milk, which was a good tool to combat malnutrition, especially in children. Through UNRRA, powdered eggs – the so-called Truman’s eggs – also reached the kitchens of the former Yugoslavia. During the operation of UNRRA from April 1945 to June 1947, when the Yugoslav mission ended, food worth 135,029,700 US dollars was received through its intercession.*

12 The topic of soup kitchens within the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* was dealt with by Ana-Marija Vukušić (Vukušić 2023: 19-23).

13 Text from the museum label of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger: Wartime Gardening Programs in the USA were modelled on programs in Great Britain and Canada during the First World War. They sprung up next to schools, kindergartens, hospitals, private houses, workplaces, military bases, but also in the background areas of war activities. In order to ensure nutrition with fresh vegetables, the City Administration in Zagreb at the same time established the system of city gardens Ekonomat or Ekonomija. Citizens were encouraged to cultivate their plots of land within the city, but also at abandoned construction sites and all the areas where they could plant. People in the cities fed themselves in this way during the Second World War, but also during the siege of Dubrovnik and Sarajevo.*

the range of topics that were planned, we chose those that we can present to the visitors and that they can relate to, those that we can discuss, especially those that can correspond to the present moment in their breadth on the one hand, and uniqueness on the other, and at the same time it is possible to build a bridge with a certain historical moment in guiding through the exhibition and thinking about the topic. For example, the box of humanitarian aid from the Second World War and the topic of rescuing hungry children during the First World War, the earthquake in Sisak-Moslavina County, which we thematise in the exhibition, can very well be linked with the current context of the migrant crisis. Topics such as unusual food items,¹⁴ Victory Gardens and recycling, waste and surplus food, which we touch on in this exhibition as a whole, start a discussion about the climate crisis in the sense that they question the exploitation of given natural resources. All these topics are presented in the exhibition, they encourage reflection on solidarity, empathy, resourcefulness, remind of the diversity and usability of natural resources, and also build awareness of attention to them. This unit, although a part of an exhibition that addresses an extremely difficult topic, is nevertheless affirmative and encouraging. In the visual set up of the exhibition, it differs from the unit *Hunger as a Political Tool* according to the background on which the exhibits and museum labels are highlighted – in this unit, white is predominant, while throughout the unit *Hunger as a Political Tool*, black is highlighted.

In addition to the above, a part of this unit is the fight against the fear of hunger. During the research for the exhibition, the thinking somehow emerged that the fight against hunger is the initiator, the motive for action, in fact, to put it simply, the satisfaction of the basic biological need has in some way shaped the history of mankind. However, at the very core of the motive of the fight against hunger, fear of hunger is still recognised. It is, in my opinion, an emotion that ultimately encourages action, at least when it comes to satisfying the basic biological need.

Fear is one of the most important and powerful human emotions, and it is a response to an existing or expected danger (Povrzanović 1992: 6). Fear in an ethnological or cultural-anthropological perspective can be understood as a cultural fact, i.e. as a cultural experience that can be considered from an individual and group perspective, as well as in a historical context (ibid).

Hunger and its biological features are constantly present, and the entire human history knows imposed hunger, the one caused by external factors and circumstances such as natural disasters, economic and political situations and pandemics, to name a few.

In ethnographic texts that describe traditional culture, especially in the units that deal with the description of the economy, cultivation, production and consumption of food, seasonality, frugality, use of all the resources of the specific environment, modesty and practicality in the disposal of goods – crops, food grown within the household, irrespective of whether it comes from animals, fields, gardens or vineyards, are emphasised. The attitude towards food, its preparation, preservation and disposal testify to the respect that people showed for all the goods that were the fruit of their labour, and which depended on the benevolence of nature, that is, on the absence of drought, or too much rain, too strong winds, premature frost, too late snow. People who lived according to the agrarian calendar wanted each season to be in harmony with the one that precedes and with the one that follows, so that there are no surprises in the form of extreme weather events and disasters, natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes.

14 Jelena Ivanišević wrote about unusual foods and gave a lecture as a part of the exhibition, see more in the catalogue of the exhibition *Faces of Hunger* (Ivanišević 2023: 23-28).

It is at such a time that we record the origin of various rituals and customs that symbolically condition and ensure balance in nature and the world that surrounds us. Thus, the origin of rituals and customs linked with fertility, i.e. the fertility of soil and vineyards and the health of livestock and cattle, dates back to the past when people depended exclusively on the whims of nature, more specifically on its effect on weather conditions and consequently on crops, hence on the health and well-being of people. Following the agrarian calendar, they divided the year into two parts: the time of light and flourishing, the greenery of nature, the period of the seasons of spring and summer, and the other time – figuratively speaking, winter, autumn, a period of a kind of darkness or dormancy of nature. In order to somehow ensure crops and health, and to appease nature and establish balance, people designed various rituals and customs that they believed would help in this. They intertwined the pagan and the Christian, the everyday and the mythical, and some of them are still present today and remind us of past times and the ways in which people tried to overcome the fear of hunger and poverty. Some of the mentioned rituals and customs are still recognised and people still participate in them today, without even being aware of it. Nevertheless, in a symbolic way, we are trying to overcome the primordial fear of hunger and imbalance in nature, unaware that we are still doing everything to ensure that in the new annual cycle around the sun, nature continues to follow the already established and known trajectory. In the visual set up of the exhibition, this part abounds in greenery and highlights elements from traditional culture that we see and use today (Easter eggs, Christmas wheat, Green George¹⁵), but the memory of their role and purpose is increasingly fading. Although this part of the exhibition presents fear, from the visual aspect and the messages that the exhibits send, it actually gives hope, meaning, or reminds of a ritual or custom that, on a universal level, is the purpose of giving hope, comfort, calming, happiness, and at the same time its beginning is at the very dawn of the civilised world. In this part of the exhibition, which actually corresponds closely with the profession, we did not emphasise fasting meals, poverty, the struggle with poverty that can be seen from ethnographic texts, but we show a brighter side in which it is symbolically possible to overcome the primordial fear and with which it is really overcome. The customs and rituals that we present thematise the fight against fear in a subtle way, point to the idea that the earth is food, and in that sense, they directly raise awareness of the importance of caring for the environment and the planet. The universality of the presented customs and rituals is proven by their use and presence in everyday life today, so I believe that we have managed to convey a message of hope and faith in a better future in which fear can be conquered. The struggle also has many faces, and as the other themes of this great show, this is visible not only on a symbolic level, but also on a life and practical level – in unity, solidarity and empathy. If we manage to conquer the fear of hunger, we will also deal with hunger.

...

15 In the exhibition, in co-operation with the designers of the exhibition, we emphasised the importance of these customs in this unit with the help of exhibits of Christmas wheat and Easter eggs. I am attaching a special description of Green George because his role is perhaps less known to the general public: Green George is the main one among *jurjaši* – a group of young people who go around the village on the feast of St. George's Day. A young man is usually disguised as him, who is accompanied by other girls and young men singing St. George's songs and visiting homes. The symbolism of St. George's processions is associated with the awakening of nature, the beginning of work in the fields and vineyards. The features of St. George's Day (in Croatian *Jurjevo*) are significant for the area of northwestern Croatia and occur in many forms. St George (in Croatian *Juraj*) himself does not sing, but usually remains silent and sometimes dances a little without moving too much (Belaj 2023b: 45).

The well-fed never understand the hungry.

In the text, I went through some important elements of creation of the exhibition, from the research itself through the exhibition to guidance through the exhibition, which is an extremely enriching experience for me. The fear that the frustration of not being able to cover all the topics in the way I thought they had to be elaborated in the text disappeared during the process I described. Moreover, I realised that I was able to process my own emotions concerning certain topics, and then convey them through the exhibition and guided tours through it, of course with the consent of my colleague and the design team. The synergy of collective work has resulted in a balanced reduction in the visual set up that is not intrusive and does not burden. Varutti proposes three interrelated, partially overlapping analytical perspectives on how emotions can be activated in the context of exhibitions. The first perspective refers to the most obvious example of exhibitions that explicitly thematise emotions in their theme and content. The second perspective focuses on exhibitions where emotions are implicitly evoked by the design and architecture of the exhibition. The third perspective looks at exhibitions where emotional responses are triggered by a particular activity (2023: 65). The three perspectives mentioned in our exhibition are intertwined. Although the exhibition thematises a difficult topic that, according to Bonnell and Simon, contains a demanding legacy of a “burdensome gift”, I believe that the expectation of an empathetic response from visitors is well established – that through the concept of an intimate encounter with the elements of the exhibition, and with it as a whole, it is possible to “support new ways of connecting with the world and within it” (Bonnell and Simon 2007: 66), that the exhibition, at least according to the impressions of my experience of guidance and interaction with the visitors, managed to act transformatively and with reflective critique when it comes to processing the past. I believe that the exhibition, with all the aspects that can be encompassed, with its architecture, design and activities that take place with it, manages to preserve responsibility in the processes of reaching the other, the visitor, and vice versa, so that, in the perception of the visitor, the other about whom the exhibition speaks does not lose their uniqueness, that their uniqueness as an individual is not erased (Vetlesen 1994: 204-5).

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