

## Educational Programs Accompanying the Exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life*

The exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life* by Zvezdana Antoš, PhD, museum advisor, opened at the Ethnographic Museum on May 19, 2023. The exhibition displays objects from the Collection of Furniture, mainly from the 19th and first half of the 20th century, along with contemporary interpretations by artist Ana Hušman that raise questions of intimacy, identity, and women's perspectives in everyday life. The exhibited objects are placed in the context not only of home decoration, but also of the impact they have on the private and social lives of individuals, but also of entire families. The exhibition also speaks about the role that objects play in preserving family heritage and tradition, and about the way in which our relationship to space is changing, especially in the context of migration, earthquakes, pandemics and loss of home. Seventeen personal stories of individuals from various life circumstances and different understandings of the intimate space are presented alongside photographs by Damil Kalogjera that, with accompanying short exhibitions of contemporary Croatian artists, complement and contextualize the exhibited objects.

Given the diversity of the exhibited objects, but also the multitude of topics it raised, the exhibition was accompanied by a diverse educational program authored by Željka Jelavić, PhD, Anastazija Petrović and Silvija Vrsalović, Museum Educators of the Ethnographic Museum. Given the complexity of the exhibition and the objects and topics presented, as well as the age and interests of the users, the guided tours varied in length and content, but they almost always preceded workshops and other activities related to the exhibition. A large number of independent guided tours (without workshops) also took place, mostly for upper elementary school students and adults. The number of guided tours for vulnerable groups is also noticeable, primarily for users of Zagreb psychiatric clinics and Zagreb hospitals who come to the museum as part of a sociotherapeutic treatment program, which contributes to their resocialization and more successful reintegration into the community.

Vulnerable groups are also present in the museum as participants in workshops, which was also the case with the program accompanying this exhibition. During the exhibition, the workshops were attended by users of several Zagreb psychiatric clinics and Zagreb hospitals, patients of the pediatric department of the Clinical Hospital Center Sisters of Mercy, members of the Down Syndrome Association in Zagreb, and members of the Croatian Association of the Deaf-Blind *Dodir* (Figure 1).

Workshops for elementary school students were designed to guide them in thinking about the home and intimate spaces, and to come up with their own innovative ideas for improving their own corners at home. Various art techniques were used – students made collages of their



Figure 1. Chest painting workshop with users of the deaf-blind association *Dodir*

imagined rooms, made models and houses using the origami technique (Figure 2). The workshops were also inspired by the exhibited examples of traditional chests with painted and carved ornaments that inspired children, but also adult visitors who, after seeing the exhibition, painted wooden chests handmade by Zvonimir Majdak, a craftsman who makes traditional wooden toys.

The Ethnographic Museum has been actively promoting reading for many years by organizing various programs such as reading folk tales, storytelling and kamishibai performances. It is therefore worth mentioning the program *When Objects Speak*, authored by Lorena Martinić, head of the museum library, which was carried out during 2024 and 2025 by museum educators and external collaborators, storytellers Srebrenka Peregrin and Ivanka Ferenčić Martinčić. The program also included the play *The Big Bad Fox* performed by Ana Gabaj Miloš and Ivana Palčić Borić, librarians from the Ivan Goran Kovačić Library.

The objects exhibited in the permanent exhibition and the exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life* served as the starting point for the workshop *The Objects We Keep*. The workshop was designed as a space for sharing stories about objects that have a special meaning for their owners, especially in the context of home and intimate spaces, and the collected stories became part



Figure 2. Model-making workshop

of the play *Memories of My Grandmother*, which was performed at the Ethnographic Museum in 2024 and 2025. The workshop leader, author and actress in the play is Svetlana Patafta from the Theatre *Puna kuća*. In November 2023, the Ethnographic Museum hosted the second Kamishibai Theatre Festival during which Vera Pfaff and Relja Dušek from the association *Kozličići* performed for elementary school students the story *Ježeva kućica* in the space of the exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life*. A customized guide through the exhibition, a story told in the kamishibai technique, and a creative workshop allowed participants to reflect on the importance of home and discuss the elements that make a space private and intimate.

In addition to organized kindergarten and school groups, the exhibition and accompanying workshops were part of the extremely popular summer program *In the Shade of the Museum*, which has been continuously carried out for nine years at the Ethnographic Museum for students during school holidays. In August 2023, an entire cycle of this program was dedicated to the exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life*, and was carried out in collaboration with Maša Udovičić, an animator and producer of animated films. During these five days, the participants learned about the history of animation and the process of creating an animated film. Using stop motion and cut-out animation techniques, they jointly created a short animated film called



Figure 3. Animation workshop as part of the *In the Shade of the Museum* summer camp

*Animated Spaces of Everyday Life*<sup>1</sup> (Figure 3).

The exhibition was part of several interactive museum quests organized for visitors and organized school groups (e.g. *The Secret of My Chest, Where the Wooden Horse Is Hiding, Explore, Find...*). Museum Educators Anastazija Petrović and Silvia Vrsalović designed an educational leaflet for children aged 7 to 12. Although it was designed primarily for independent visits, the leaflet also proved successful in group visits. Through twelve puzzles and tasks adapted to the target group, users tour the exhibition, search for answers, reflect on what they have seen, and learn interesting facts about the exhibited objects.

Adult participants were also able to enjoy a diverse program. In collaboration with the Center for Women's Studies, the project *Women's Heritage – Intimate Spaces as a Testimony of Community* was designed and implemented in 2023 and 2024, which, inspired by the exhibition, explored

1 BEUSAN, Lukas, BLAGAIĆ KIŠIČEK, Maša, ĐOKIĆ, Luna, HORVATIN, Stella Chiara, LUŠIĆ, Dora, MASOUD, Majd, MASOUD, Reem, MATJAČIĆ, Matej, MATJAČIĆ, Nika, PAVELIĆ, Weena, PUHALO, Jana, ŠARIĆ, Goa, URŠIĆ, Iskra and Tonka VUKAŠINOVIĆ. 2023. *Animirani prostori svakodnevice: Tjedan animacije u Etnografskom muzeju*, 28.8.-1.9.2023. Animated film. Published by "Ethnographic Museum", September 06, 2023 YouTube, 2:14, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VU5rL432L2k> (accessed August 1, 2025).



Figure 4. Conversation about furniture with Diana Sokolić

the role of women in shaping society throughout history and today. The authors of the project are Anastazija Petrović and Silvia Vrsalović, Museum Educators. Two workshop cycles were held as part of the project. The creative writing cycle, led by Katja Grcić, an independent artist and playwright, took place in four meetings during November and December 2023. The cycle of workshops on the reinterpretation of wall hangings was held in March 2024, also in four meetings, under the leadership of independent artists Hana Lukas Midžić and Ivana Ognjanovac. This project provided participants with a space for expression, dialogue and shared reflection on heritage and identity, which resulted in improved visibility of women's heritage. In November 2023, Ksenija Jurinec, a multidisciplinary designer, held two workshops for adult participants. As a part of the workshop *Put it together traditionally!*, participants were inspired by joints in traditional construction and furniture production, which they reinterpreted and then designed and made a board game – a puzzle. In the second workshop, participants made leather key chains inspired by the plant ornaments found on the exhibited objects.

A conversation about furniture took place in the exhibition space with Diana Sokolić, an academic-trained painter and co-author of the text and drawings in the book *O namještaju (About Furniture)* in October 2023. The conversation was conceived as an informal reminder of general culture about the history of furniture, while revealing how the history of civilization is reflected

through it. The author of the conversation pointed out the names of individual pieces of furniture that are no longer used, reminded us of historical periods and characteristics of styles, and connected the pieces of furniture with the stories of the people after whom they were named (Figure 4).

The exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life* offered diverse but universal stories that many could relate to, so it is not surprising that it also included programs that did not originate from the exhibition itself, but were thematically related to it, so the exhibition was used as a backdrop. Two programs stand out. *Museum for the Soul* authored by Željka Jelavić, PhD, Museum Advisor, is a new program of the Ethnographic Museum, and its part entitled *Poetry in the Museum* through the poems of contemporary poets brings visitors closer to the meaning that intimacy and home have for poetic creativity. The first performance within this program was held in the space of the exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life* in May 2025, when poets Aida Bagić, Ana Dević, Darija Žilić, Dorotea Šušak and Sanja Baković read their verses. Another program that has found its place in this exhibition is *Bharatanatyam*, a traditional South Indian dance recital that, among other, speaks about intimacy, love, and social and family relationships. The program is part of the project *The Harmony of India in Dance and Music* carried out by the Croatian Philological Society, and *Bharatanatyam* was performed by dancer Maja Drobac in February and April 2025 at the Ethnographic Museum.

It is certainly worth mentioning some of the programs that were carried out with the accompanying exhibitions as a part of this exhibition project. For example, with the exhibitions of academic-trained sculptor Manuela Pauk *Sweet Saints* and artist Dijana Nazor Čorda *Luminous Easter Eggs*, for adults were organized extremely popular workshops on making ceramics, while with the exhibition of academic-trained painter Bane Milenković *Kuleri, šmizle, foteljaši*, for children was organized a workshop of making needle felt animals. The exhibition *Tinel* by academic-trained painter Mejra Mujičić was accompanied by an interesting and well-attended *Conversation with the Artist*, a format that is not often present at the Ethnographic Museum. Direct interaction with the artist allowed visitors to penetrate deeper into the meaning of her artistic intervention.

The aim of the educational programs accompanying the exhibition *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life* was to reflect on different aspects of the spaces in which we live and their influence on our everyday lives. Educational activities examined complex topics such as the position of women in the household, the emotional relationship towards home and personal items, as well as leaving home and making a new one. Visitors of all age groups and levels of experience participated in the programs accompanying the exhibition – from kindergarten groups, to students and senior visitors, members of vulnerable groups, adult individual visitors and families, to whom we provided space for reflection, creativity and dialogue. A total of 5,139 visitors participated in the programs between May 2023 and September 2025<sup>2</sup>. We believe that such programs not only enrich the visitor experience, but also contribute to social inclusion, emotional empowerment and community bonding, creating an accessible and relevant cultural offer.

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2 It should be noted that the number of visitors who participated in the programs accompanying the exhibition would be even higher if we also included visitors who participated in the programs *Intimacy in Art* by Ivana Lušić, PhD, Marketing Manager of the Ethnographic Museum, and students who participated in the *Intimate Spaces of Everyday Life Workshop* from October 2023 to March 2024, which resulted in the exhibition *New Spaces of Intimacy*. However, since they were not designed or implemented by museum educators and have already been written about, they are not included in this overview.