

Silvio Braica

Ethnographic Museum Split

Split

Croatia

etnografski-muzej-st@st.tel.hr

The Seventh Permanent Exhibition of the Ethnographic Museum in Split

In the course of its history, the Ethnographic Museum staged the following permanent exhibitions:

- First permanent exhibition in 1910 in the Trade School on the island of Lučac ("Bartulica house")
- Second permanent exhibition in the Trade School on the island of Lovreta (today's technical school)
- Third permanent exhibition in 1924 in the Town hall at the square Pjaca
- Fourth permanent exhibition in 1934
- Fifth permanent exhibition in 1946
- Sixth permanent exhibition in 1965

For the sake of clarity, the background of the decision to prepare a new permanent exhibition needs to be illuminated. After the permanent exhibition was closed in 1989, the building at the Pjaca square (assigned to the Museum 1924) was used for temporary exhibitions and as working storage facilities. Nevertheless, the local authorities of Split, or certain influential individuals, made the uncompromising decision to reassign the building to a different purpose. No assurances were given to the Museum, other than empty promises, that a new adequate building would be provided within a reasonable time. With the pressure growing stronger, on Christmas 2000 the director of the Museum announced to the staff that the designing of the new permanent exhibition would begin after Epiphany 2001. This was supposed to put an end to all discussions about the Museum leaving this building, with no new premises available. This is precisely what happened - the value of the building increased with the staging of the Museum's permanent exhibition. The

show also opened the doors of the museum building to the public, making it impossible to work quietly on the removal of the Museum from the building.

Preparations for the seventh permanent exhibition started on the 15th of January 2001 and the public opening ceremony took place on the 27th of March 2001. In other words, it took the Museum staff just two and a half months to complete all works, including construction works in the interior (refurbishment of walls, painting of walls and woodwork, refurbishment of fittings), without any external help.

Glass pedestals were constructed for mannequins to exhibit folk costumes. Existing showcases were restored and new ones made for smaller exhibits, especially jewellery, to protect them from being stolen.

Real environment installations were staged, as depicted also in the guidebook, owing to the efforts of the Museum restorers and preparators.

The Museum staff completed all designer works, including the design of the interior and the showcases, on their own and without any external assistance.

After the exhibition was prepared, legends for the exhibition in general and for individual displays were created and mounted. The legends are sufficiently descriptive, making any additional explanation superfluous.

Photographs were taken of all objects and displays on the exhibition premises.

Every object on display in the building is described in the exhibition guide. The permanent exhibition plan was prepared earlier, even though for another building and for a much larger space.

It was not necessary to obtain authorization and consent from the Museum Council or any other competent body, since the permanent exhibition was not specifically funded by any institution or budget level.

Neither the Croatian Ministry of Culture nor the Splitsko-dalmatinska county provided earmarked funds for this project. Only the local authorities participated in the expenses with the amount of 89,900.00 kuna and the rest was covered by general-purpose funds of the county. Expenses were considerably reduced by charge-free efforts of the Museum staff and the help of the friends of the Museum.

The overall expenses of the permanent exhibition, including both guides, amounted to 134,832.28 kuna for the year 2001.

In addition to special 5-kuna and 10-kuna tickets, complimentary tickets were printed and numerated. Since the opening of the exhibition, the Museum was visited by 3,520 visitors, including both visitors who purchased tickets and the ones with complimentary tickets.

In the course of 2002, the Museum also renovated its permanent display both technically and in terms of content. Two rooms on the second floor of the Museum premises, which had been used as auxiliary storage facilities when the preparation of the display began, were now added to the showrooms and used to display the material that had been hitherto cramped on the second floor.

After one year of the life of the exhibition, it was decided that the premises needed improved lighting and sufficiently strong air-conditioning. Through these measures, the entire space got a new quality: it is now a pleasantly air-conditioned space with quality lighting.

As already mentioned, the display scenario had been prepared for another building. The work went nevertheless along these lines, which proved to be appropriate since the public content of the Museum is expected to be moved to another premises in time.

Some basic facts about the permanent exhibition:

Permanent exhibition of the Museum

Project head: Silvio Braica

Museological concept and material selection: Branka Vojnović-Traživuk, Sanja Ivančić, Ida Vranić, Silvio Braica

Permanent exhibition scenario: Silvio Braica

Expert preparation of museum objects: Branka Vojnović-Traživuk, Sanja Ivančić, Ida Vranić, Silvio Braica

Display and interior design: Miroslav Klarić, Volga Lopušinsky-Zoković, Lidija Labrović-Mataić, Sandro Vimer

Real space installations: Miroslav Klarić, Sandro Vimer

Showcase design: Volga Lopušinsky-Zoković, Lidija Labrović-Mataić

Exhibition photography: Branko Bralić

Restoration and preparation: Miroslav Klarić, Volga Lopušinsky-Zoković, Lidija Labrović-Mataić, Sandro Vimer

Costume replicas: Lidija Labrović-Mataić, Volga Zoković-Lopušinsky Božena Martinčević, Mirjana Kolumbić, Anita and Mario Galić, Folk costume rental and workshop

Description of topics by floors:

Ground floor: Weapons, Chivalry Games, Furniture

1st floor: Folk Costumes and Ornaments of the Adriatic, Decorative Textile Techniques

2nd floor: Folk Costumes and Ornaments of the Dalmatian Hinterland, Husbandry, Traditional Handicrafts

Loft: Household Appliances

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This exhibition displays only a part of the rich ethnographic material collected and stored by the Ethnographic Museum of Split. Some 500 objects from the region of Dalmatia are on display, although the Museum also holds material from other parts of Croatia and the region.

The entire project is a result of the teamwork of the Museum's entire expert staff, who approached the staging of the exhibition taking into account visual-design and professional criteria.

- In the course of 2001, the work on the permanent exhibition involved:
- Removing unnecessary remains of former exhibitions, packaging etc. from the premises
- Construction work in the interior - removal of the old plaster and application of the new layer
- Painting the interior
- Fixing the electric wiring
- Mounting showcases and construction of four new showcases
- Cleaning the showcases and all glass surfaces
- Construction of pedestals for objects
- Installation of an alarm system on the entire premises
- Installation of video surveillance devices
- Providing protection nets and changing glass on the ground floor windows
- Production and mounting of curtains on doors on the ground floor and other floors and windows on the floors
- Production of the permanent exhibition scenario and plan
- Selection of objects for permanent display
- Preparation and restoration of objects for permanent display
- Acquisition of 40 dummies to display folk costumes
- Acquisition of a touch screen to display the CD-ROM *Memories of Split*
- Preparation and mounting of objects in the premises
- Preparing real space installations on the three floors and in the loft, using material such as plaster, wood and styrofoam
- Making photographs of the entire exhibition
- Writing and production of legends (general and individual)
- Media promotion of the permanent exhibition - electronic media, daily newspapers, opening ceremony of the permanent exhibition
- Writing texts for the permanent exhibition Guide
- Selection of photographs for the Guide
- Printing and publishing the Croatian version of the Guide
- Translation of the Guide into English
- Printing the English version of the Guide

In the course of 2002, the work on the permanent exhibition involved:

- New lighting on the entire museum premises
- Installation of panic lighting
- Installation of a fire alarm system
- Video surveillance upgrade
- Preparing two rooms on the second floor of the museum premises for the exhibition
- Installation of air conditioning

All these activities, in addition to obtained attests for technical devices, have contributed both to the quality of the exhibition and to the security of visitors, which is not irrelevant taking into account all aspects of the museum activities. The Museum management believes that contingencies should be provided for well in time, instead of waiting for unpleasant events, such as theft or fire, to happen.

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The Guide of the Ethnological Museum in Split was finished only a month after the permanent exhibition had been opened, an achievement deserving attention in the museological circles.

The preparation of all texts, photographs and the draft of the Guide began simultaneously with the setting up of the exhibition, so that the curators worked on the exhibition and on the Guide at the same time. It is no secret that the Guide was created along the lines of the *Guide of the Zagreb Municipal Museum* in terms of format, general data and the overall concept. The final graphic design of the Guide was left to professionals.

As soon as the Croatian version was finished, the translation of the Guide into the English language started. Graphically, the Croatian and the English version of the Guide are identical. The English Guide was printed one month after the Croatian version, so that everything was ready before July, just in time for the tourist season.

As mentioned before, the municipal authorities of Split subsidized the entire production of the Guide, including texts, graphic design and printing (1500 copies, out of which 1000 Croatian Guides and 500 English Guides).

The Guide is a pocket-size (11.4 × 22.5 cm), full-colour, 76-page booklet with 11 monochrome and 79 colour photographs.

As already known, this project of the Ethnographic Museum of Split received the annual award of the Croatian Museum Society Pavao Ritter Vitezović for the year 2002. The award was well earned by the staff of the Ethnographic Museum of Split, who have been striving for professional excellence under very difficult conditions and in a situation when nobody cares for the Museum's development. All the progress achieved in 2001, as well as the preceding and following years, is based on

persistent efforts of underpaid experts. Talks about impressive museum premises, expensive exhibitions, museum managers, employment of museologist and other science fiction topics are becoming very questionable for all museum professionals of Split, as all museums financed from the budget of the Split municipality share more or less the same destiny.

This is why the described achievements are nothing remarkable under normal circumstances. However, when work and creation take place in an atmosphere of carelessness and unwillingness of the society and the authorities to preserve their own roots (which have been successfully preserved to a considerable extent by the ethnographic museums), every improvement is a great success.

The satisfaction of the Museum team is even greater in view of the fact that this project encountered a lack of understanding and belief on all levels of culture financing in the country.

Finally, one very important remark: the importance of various questionnaires, reports, percentages, correctly completed forms (arguments for this can be provided, if necessary at all) to be submitted to government, county and local authorities, as well as diverse institutions that collect data in order to justify their existence, are today getting more important than **the fact that museum displays, permanent exhibitions, books and publications are primarily creative work, which cannot be always predicted and measured in money equivalents**. Every project on any of the listed levels must be approved in good will and with full and honest confidence that the project deserves financial support (this is why directors should exist - they are persons in the confidence of the authority that appointed them, regardless of whether they justify the confidence invested into them or not). Only then should competent institutions make financial decisions and determine to which extent they wish to participate in the financing of a particular project.

Prevela: Sanja Novak