

MUSEOLOGIE

STUDENTS OF MUSEOLOGY AND A CHILD VISITOR

“... by its unique and originality the exhibition has completed the knowledge of students about Egypt which they gained at school, and, moreover, it has made the field of history even more various and interesting. It has been motivating not only for pupils but also for teachers. We hope that we will have opportunity to visit similar exhibitions in future, too. Thanks to all who have participated in its realization.”

Eva Kabrhelová, Elementary School in Šoporňa

“We do not have to go to Egypt – Egypt has come to us! We experienced it personally in Ponitrianske Museum. I thank to the students of museology for a beautiful exhibition prepared (not only) for children. It was the time that something interesting, attractive and funny has happened! Ponitrianske Museum proved that it is not just a “grey and dead” institution not visited by anybody. The truth is absolutely opposite. My overall impression – it’s number one! You have gained children’s attention”.

Katarína Juríková, 5th grade of University study of Slovak language and Cultural studies

And this is exactly what we have intended. To gain children’s attention. And not only their but of all the visitors – adults, adolescents, teachers, professional museologists and wide public.

At the beginning of the second semester we were confronted by the duty of realizing exhibition within the subject called Museal Communication. Teaching plan and Bc-study both require this condition. Up to the end of study we will have to prepare one more exhibition – the graduate’s exhibition. The pedagogists try to connect the theory and practice within this exhibition.

The best way to do it was to present ourselves through something that is natural to museologists – the exhibition. This is one of means by which museum can gain its visitors. It is concentrated on museal communication and presentation. Forms and methods of this work are obvious in various spectres of products which are offered to the visitors in museum. Recently, museums have tried to find new approaches to the work presentation. Besides the classical forms (expositions, exhibitions), non-traditional activities have appeared in museums¹.

In this way museum can become not only the place of exposition, but it can also become a kind of theatre, library, concert hall, film studio, playground, festival, park, workshop, church, startrack through which we enter history².

Solution of the problem how to gain visitors becomes one of the most important goals of museums in the present because through their activities they can form the relationship between public and museums. This relation is, however, influenced not only by museums but also indirectly by current political, cultural and economic situation. Many museums have to fight for their mere existence and economic situation does not allow them to realize various projects which would increase the visitor’s interest in museum. Other museums are visited in certain periods connected with non-traditional form of presentation. This is one way how to encourage visitors to come here regularly. However, there also exist such museums in which it is impossible to connect the experience of older professionals with the initiative of the young.

We, the students of museology, have not become the professional museologists yet. We are still not confronted with problems mentioned above, so we are very glad that we could use the room of Ponitrianske Museum – whose director is one of our pedagogists – for our exhibition. We have teachers who try to show us and make us experience what we will have to

¹ G. Podušelová, *Information in Museum About Museum – the Guide and Servant of Museum*, in *Museum in Society*. Collection of Papers from Seminar in Banská Bystrica, 2002, p. 34.

² M. Číž, *Methods and Forms of Museal Communication – The Age Category of Children and the Youth*, in *Museum*, number 4, 2003, p. 15.

face after coming to the practice. Besides the museum work, our teachers are opened to various experiments and they encourage our activities if the result of them is culturally and professionally beneficial.

Our study is professionally profiled as museal communication, presentation, management and marketing. Our colleagues have become the first connectors between museum and visitors. We know that we are the third factor in this non-traditional relation³.

Our aim is to use the means and opportunity we have to gain the attention of potential and regular visitor in the way of non-traditional exhibition. We do our best to leave the long lasting impression from our exhibition in its visitors. Children became the main group of our interest because this is the group which is much influenced by the huge amount of information forming its opinions and stances towards culture, cultural values and experiences. We can influence children so that they will choose museum as one of cultural institution forming their personalities.

From the point of view of the preparing phase of exhibition, comparing to our predecessors, we had already known what to expect. We knew what the non-traditional way of exhibition required so we decided to continue in the cycle of exhibition aimed at history. Unlike our predecessors, we did not use questionnaires to choose the topic but we discussed and had to agree on it.

We divided ourselves into groups and prepared presentations of our ideas for discussion at seminars. Suggested topics were the following: Great Moravia, Celts, Life in Middle-Ages and Egypt. There was a very fruitful discussion and each group wanted to assert its own topic but finally in secret voting Egypt won.

Since then we had started to think individually about libreto and to prepare technical scripting. Eighteen different points of view were discussed and the topic was gradually specified. We also had to solve the problem of particular period of Egyptian history on which the exhibition should be concentrated. Everyday life, history or combination of these possibilities came into consideration. Moreover, the information we were required to offer had to be beyond standard and not corresponding with the text and knowledge in the textbooks of history. We had to remember that the group we were aimed at were children. After a long discussion the idea of combination won. The Nile was our main subject and everything rooted in it. Final libreto was established: Egypt – gift of the Nile.

On the base of our experience from previous exhibition about the Neolithic period we knew that the room will have to be divided into several parts. We tried to avoid the situation when the visitor enters exhibition room and can see everything at once. Moreover, dividing of room is a good way of communication because sensual acquiring of experiences becomes gradual then. It keeps the visitor in tension and he/she can concentrate on the particular place he-she is just in. We divided our exhibition into the following 5 parts:

- Introductory room
- Egypt - gift of the Nile
- Market and military
- In the twilight of temples
- In the shadow of Pyramids.

As the room was divided, we needed one motif which would connect all the parts. A story which would move visitors naturally and in an inspiring way through the whole exhibition. Story which would also define the role of visitors in it. That was a difficult task to do. First we thought about a startrack and time travelers finding themselves in Egypt. Entering the startrack and appearing in Egypt was fine but the question *What then?* still resisted. The only way how to solve this situation was to begin the hard study of historical literature. In the following

³ D. Prelovská, *Essays on the Cooperation among Different Types of Schools and Museums*, in *Museum in Society. Collection of Papers from Seminar in Banská Bystrica*, 2002, p. 74-75.

discussions we agreed on the conclusion that startrack could be attractive, however, it would not fulfill our intention. Finally, the curse of god Sutech became the connecting motif which was developed from the Nile as the life gift of Egyptians. Sutech threatened them by hunger because Egyptians were not faithful to him. Our child visitor was put into the role of a foreigner from Slovakia asked to save Egypt.

Abolishing, of course, meant finding out the means and the way how to do it.

Form: something that is natural to people – good deeds. We were thinking of creative games as the necessary part of our students' exhibition. Actually, they should help our visitors in each room to get and use the information which they have from lectures and texts.

Mean: the reward for good deeds which was represented by the sacred beetle of Egyptians – scarabeus. The visitors kept him as an amulet without recognizing what kind of amulet it is. We made it of wood and cut into four parts which were put into four separate pouches. In the first four rooms the visitors got these parts and in the final one – pyramid – they built scarabeus to abolish the curse.

As we divided children into groups of about ten, we also had to gain their interest outside exhibition room. Here we decided to use another form of game – puzzle. Two groups could have built pictures with the scenes from the life of the old Egyptians. Another additional activity was painting the picture of Tutankhamen. In connection with the lecturer's explanation, the waiting visitors could have solved some messages written in hieroglyph or they could have written their names in it. The fourth way how to attract children's attention was a riddle in the form of the picture which could be built only in the correct combination of numbers on the back side. In this part of exhibition visitors had an interesting opportunity to have themselves photographed as Egyptians. The figures were painted on cardboard and the hole for face was cut out.

One non-traditional feature of our exhibition is that they are based on lecturer's word. This is because we want museum to become a school and game for children. For this reason the text of the exhibition was minimal. We chose the form of dialogues and parallels between the present and old-time Egypt. This form is not conventional and we are sure that it will influence the presentations in other museums, too. Besides that, the lectures of four lecturers take place at the same time something what something hardly possible in many museums. Moreover, while lecturing, we were wearing the clothes typical for old-time Egyptians to create true atmosphere of that period.

One of our aim is to give the visitors the possibility of touching the exhibited objects. Of course, they were all replicas. Egypt, still remains Egypt and we do not have such objects in our museum collections that could be substituted, so, unfortunately, we were not able to keep one of the main principle of museal communication.

We had to think of the economic aspect of our project, too. We got the room and panels necessary for our exhibition from Ponitrianske Museum. Paper, wood, textile and other reproduction material we bought from the grants of our school (490 Eu). From our own sources and with the help of sponsorship we provided cardboard and material for building the pyramid. The complete expenses were cca 630 Eu.

From the idea to libreto, technical scenario and lectures we participated in providing all the material as well as in the technical and final realization of exhibition. We made everything by ourselves. Maps, panoramas, church reconstruction, obelisks, pyramid and its interior, sarcophagus, amulets, puzzle, legends, 1500 pieces of small scarabeus made of rock and presents for visitors. Our colleagues from other grades helped us with scenic correction of particular parts of exhibition. Museum staff gave us the hand with the installation of panels.

Whole promotion was realized in our leadership. We proposed and put into practice entrance tickets, posters, invitations to exhibition. Invitations were distributed personally to all schools in Nitra and its surrounding. The representatives of county and town offices as well as the departments of education were informed about it. We promoted our exhibition in local TV

Zobor and N-Radio. Regional news of public television STV 2 published our advertisement and invitation to the exhibition, too. Daily newspapers *Nový čas* and *Nitrianske noviny* referred about it.

The installation of exhibition took us one week and the exhibition itself lasted for three weeks. We were surprised and very pleased by the positive feedback from our visitors. The exhibition was even more successful than the previous one about Neolithic era because it was thematically more interesting and colorful.

Another part of our project was the attendance of our exhibition and the interest of visitors. As the exhibition had its aimed group, it was visited mainly pupils and students of elementary and secondary schools. The opening hours were from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. every day. Up to 3 p. m. the attendance was increasing. Many adults visited our exhibition either individually or in groups. Many of them came on the base of recommendation of their children. Also some individuals who had just returned from Egypt or spent holiday there came to see it. We can divide these visitors into two main groups: those who were really interested in our exhibition and considered it non-traditional, and those who just wanted to test our knowledge and were not able to accept the form of exhibition – they wanted to see a traditional window-exhibition which are common in Egypt. 2500 visitors saw our exhibition. We used the system of orders for visits. School classes were divided into some smaller groups so not the whole class could have seen the exhibition at once. The visiting time of complete exhibition was more than one hour. This depended also on children's interest, participation and activity. Lecturers explained some basic facts to them and prepared creative games. When unexpected visitors, we had much work to satisfy their needs, but, however, they were never refused. All of them were prepared to wait and enjoy their time doing activities which we arranged for them before entering the exhibition room.

Feedback is one of the most important parts of communication. We were also interested in the way how children perceived our exhibition. The reactions were positive and very honest not only from children visitors but also from adults. We recorded them into the visitor's book which includes actual feelings and impressions as well as the reactions of lecturers. We also recorded some children's utterances on video. As students were we interested in the opinions of professional museologists. About 10 professionals including museum directors from all Slovakia have visited our exhibition. Four museums near Nitra were interested in it. Like in the first exhibition, here also appeared the idea of a wandering exhibition. Unfortunately, this is not possible because our exhibition is challenging from the technical point of view and we do not have the possibility to present it in different places because we are restricted by our study duties.

Before entering the first room, children were informed about the topic of our exhibition. By the mean of dialogue we asked them about their knowledge of Egypt, hunger, curse. In this way we simulated the situation in which they were made the foreigners from Slovakia who were asked to save Egypt from the death of hunger.

In the introductory room children were welcome by the panorama of god Sutech and the content of his curse. They should have read it together. Some letters at the end of words were written in different colors: green, red and yellow. After connecting all these colors children found out what to do on their journey through Egypt: to do good deeds and look for amulet. This represented the first good deed, actually, and opened the door to the first room.

Egypt – gift of the Nile. We placed the map of historical remains along the river Nile here. In this way children realized why the Nile was a kind of gift for Egyptians. It was connected with the second good deed. Remains were placed in bad order so children had to sequence them correctly. Two big panoramas, agricultural cycle and dwelling represented the everyday life of Egyptians. Gods as the part of life were depicted by the map showing their faces and roles in the life of Egyptian people. The minimalized accurate copy of the map represented the fulfillment of the third good deed. It was placed under the big map. With the help of skittles showing the faces of gods children were asked to pair them with the appropriate town. The fourth good deed was represented by cobra on whose body there were some openings. The body of cobra was divided into some parts which differed in color. The years connected with the Egyptian history were

places at both ends of cobra's body. The colors should have helped children to connect the particular year with the historical event. After the successful solution of all the previous tasks children got the second part of amulet and were allowed to continue in their journey through Egypt.

Market and military. We placed an Egyptian dock and showed what ships were used in Egypt and why in this room. Two maps were offering information about home and foreign market and military activities. The fifth and sixth good deed was connected with them. With the help of charts including six kinds of goods children were asked to choose the one which could be exported by Egyptians. For the identification of two soldiers we used puzzle. After their building children should have connected them with the countries of their origin. The seventh good deed had something to do with market-place which was represented by a big panorama with the ware booths in front of it. Barter business was the information that allowed children to substitute merchants. They were asked to sell a cow and a barter it for another goods of the same value. The third part of amulet was given to them as the reward for fulfillment of all the tasks. Then, passing the alley of sphinx, they found themselves in church.

In the twilight of temple. Before entering the temple, children were informed about temple towns and their importance in the life of Egyptians. They entered temple passing two obelisks. Here we told them about different parts of Egyptian temples, about their priests, scribes and print. Penetration to the mystery of mathematics stood for the last – eighth good deed. The child should have imagined him/herself being a typist counting the sacrifice together with the priest (our lecturer). This sacrifice was taken to the temple by peasants every day. The state of stockpile was recorded in the charts. This must have been counted together with the recent sacrifice to get the final amount of stockpile in the temple. The fourth part of amulet expressed the success in mathematical abilities and children were allowed to enter the wishful Pyramid.

Pyramid – gate to eternity. It represented the end of foreigner's wandering and the possibility to abolish the curse. After getting some information about the meaning of pyramids, children entered the vault with sarcophagus. The walls of vault were decorated with the scenes from pharaon's life and we placed four burying pots in it. These helped us to explain the process of mummification. The frame of scarabeus in the size of amulet was drawn on the top of sarcophagus. The moment of true came finally – to realize if the curse was abolished or not. Children were allowed to open their pouches then, find out what was in and build the scarabeus. This was put on the pre-scribed place on sarcophagus and the children said abolishing words together with the priest. After that one part of sarcophagus opened and the mask of the pharaon appeared inside. The sacred curse was abolished. Saved Egyptians gave a gift – the small scarabeus made of rock to all the foreigners who helped them to abolish the curse.

“Oh, sacred scarabeus, born of yourself, help us to abolish the curse of the god of desert Sutech! Use your sacred power! Put to flight the locusts and feed the hungry people in the country of sand! Foreigners built your body from the different parts of Earth, so extend them! Thank you.”

Considering the feedback which we got, we can say that we reached our aim to do something for children as future potential and regular museum visitors. Visitors who can choose among information and decide for those which are offered by museum.

Exhibition was realized on October 7-21, 2004.

PETER BALÁŽ
University of Constantine the Philosopher Nitra

STUDENTS OF MUSEOLOGY AND A CHILD VISITOR

We present ourselves: Students of 3rd grade of museology study
Place of study: Department of Archeology and Museology, Faculty of Arts,
 Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovak Republic
Non-traditional activity: non-traditional exhibition "Egypt – gift of the Nile"
Non-traditionality: * form of museal communication *non-classical window exposition
Aimed group: school youth aged 6-15
Motivation: * children as future potential * regular museum visitors
 Why? To enable them to choose also from the information offered by museum in the
 future
Form: museum as school and play
School: * extra knowledge from history * beyond teaching plans
Play: * motif: curse of god Sutech, Egyptians in danger of hunger
Possibility of rescue: * good deeds * they are plays and fix knowledge
Mean: * parts of sacred scarabeus
 * they are rewards for good deeds
 * by setting of these parts they make Sutech up
Division of exhibition: * Egypt – gift of the Nile
 * market and warfare
 * in the shadow of temples
 * pyramid – gate to eternity
Promotion: * mass-communication means * posters
Financing: * grants
 * sponsorship gifts
 * expenses – cca 630 Eu
Feedback: * visitors' book * video record of children's reactions
Attendance: 2500 visitors
Lasting time: 7. 10.-27. 10. 2004
Place: Ponitrianske Museum, Nitra, Slovak Republic

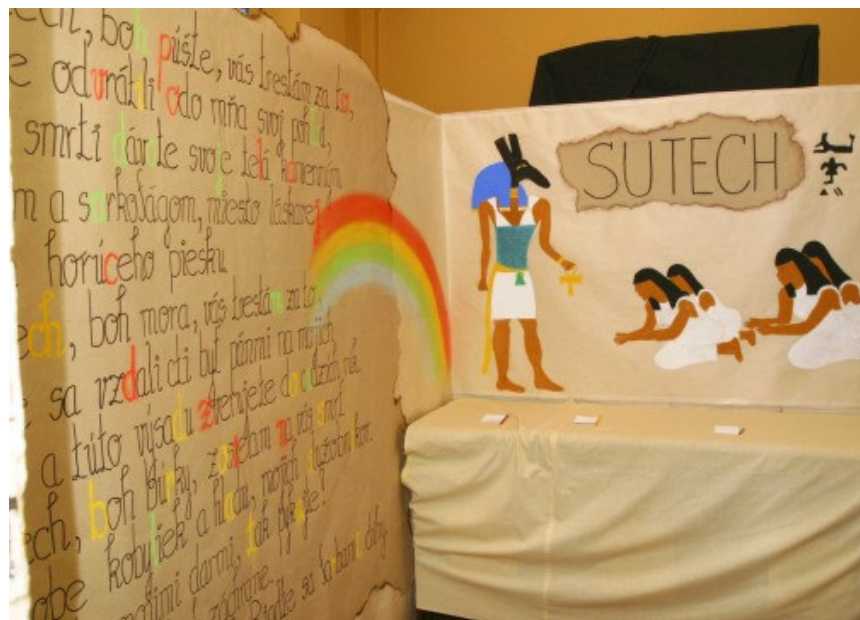
STUDENŢII LA MUZEOLOGIE ŞI COPILUL VIZITATOR AL MUZEULUI

REZUMAT

Acest articol prezintă desfășurarea unui proiect de cercetare practică a studenților la Muzeologie din Nitra care au proiectat și realizat o expoziție tematică destinată școlărilor. Autorul prezintă tot procesul de luare a deciziilor extragere de fonduri, conceperea expoziției, subiectelor și libretului.



Installation of Exhibition



The curse of god Sutekh



Egypt - the gift of the Nile



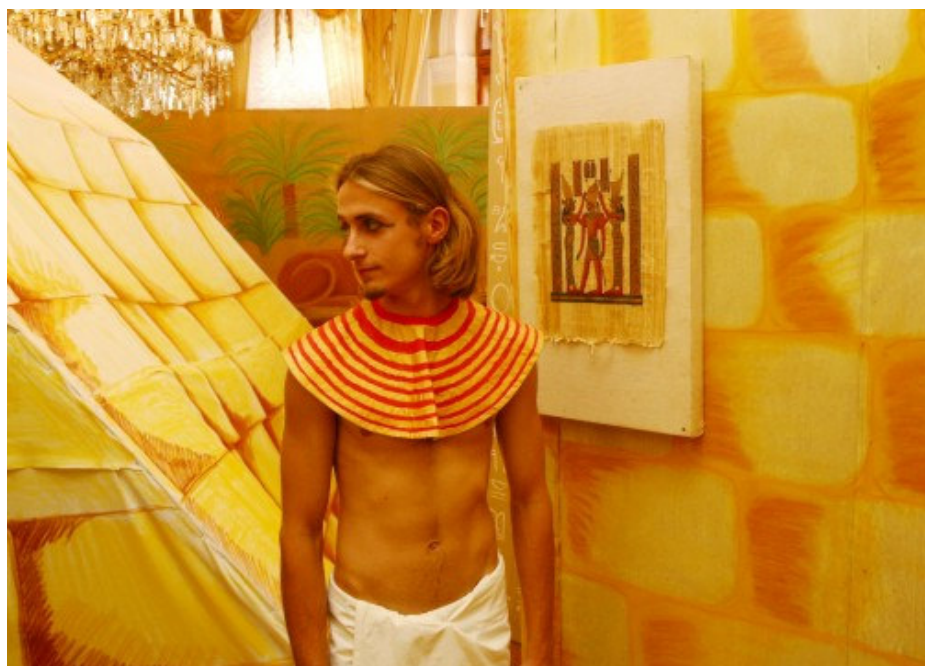
Market and warfare



In the shadow of the temples



Burial chamber of a pyramid



Opening ceremony



Communication with young visitor...



Communication with young visitor...



... at the market



Egyptian calculating



...in the front of a pyramid



Accompanying activities

