

## **Old Fashion - New Fashion in Museology.**

### **Proposal**

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#### ***Introduction:***

The modernization of museums tend to involve all the aspects of the domain, changing almost anything. Maybe is a good trend. But some aspects of this all days work must be preserved for the future, considering the principle of the field: keeping alive the past.

The Theme of this Conference can be the perfect opportunity for drawing the attention to some aspects of our daily work, an almost neglected domain: the recent history of museology, in all its aspects, with a special emphasis on the material meaning of the artifacts used for dealing with this profession.

My presentation may be taken as the expression of an old aged person disturbed by the news, but also as a bridge to the modernity based on the “recent” (or older) ancient times.

#### ***Objectives:***

A cultural object is interesting for a museum because of its exemplarity, or from the moment when it is considered in danger to disappear. So, a lot of common items arrived in time at a new level and raise their values, leaving their original place in the world and entering in museums.

The presented few examples will introduce the already known case of Photographic Materials, in order to plead for another approach of modernization, by preserving the old elements of actual use, for a somehow new idea: a museum of museum and museology. The tangible heritage of the hidden life of museums must be emphasized and turn to the public knowledge.

All of us knows that History became History when the importance of the moment can be seen over the past time. Also, all of us observe that the speed of the recent changes can turn in History even the very close events of yesterday. Many of this historical moments consist alike, in an immaterial structure made of our memories and accounts, but mostly in the material testimonies of those moments.

Under this important moments of the Great History are standing the modest elements of the Petty History, which became significant when the moment of their extinction is coming.

Some examples will remind us how this things happens, especially in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, when the general interest for collecting things passed from Fine Arts and Curiosities to the apparent invaluable items of the moment, such as plastic toys, boxes of candy, matches or anything else, flatting irons, lamps, and so on. A relevant case is the evolution of photography, invented at the end of the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, as an alternative to documentary paintings,

and which became object of collection and conservation in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Museology is, especially in recent time, in a continuous adaptation to the modernity. Any novelty is envied and even imitated. Those who cannot do some modernization begin almost to hate the old things they still have to use. The confrontation of new and old is permanent in our mind. Also, my - over a quarter of century - professional experience, together with those of our entire guild of conservators, lead me to assert that the novelty of a method or substance is never a guarantee of quality, so that the modernization at any price is rather the expression of an inferiority complex than a salutary and high qualitative action.

- So, what I really want to say with all this considerations?

- This is the key: my intention is to introduce to you a new vision (again, something new) able to integrate the old information about our work to the new world that comes.

There is a history of museology in different books, where we can read the description of the old exhibitions (almost always), the old conservation ways (seldom), the old researches in the field (almost never), or we can even see the images of this kind of work (mostly from the photographs period). What is missing in all that books is the reference to common items of the daily work of that people, who spend their life in the service of museology. Even us, today, we do not pay attention to the objects we use for our work, or to the results of what we do "behind the scene" of the exhibitions.

The revaluation of the museographic places and means, untouched by modernization, of the old and dusty museums, still in function, can be helpful for the benefit of museology itself.

I know that parts of this idea are studied in different places in the world, but here in Romania there are a very few interest for the old (and, of course, no more modern) items. Everybody dreams about the modernization of all aspects of the everyday work: from how to write a survey, to on what one can use to write the survey. And from how nice a successful exhibition can be, to how and what to use for proper make it.

For a better understanding of my message I shall give you **some examples:**

For instance, about **the frames**, I see now that there is abroad a good interest and sound studies about them. This annexe of the painting gained in recent years a history. Before that moment, they were only something that must eventually be repaired or even replaced with a new and modern piece of gilded wood or something else.

Do we know now where and who were owners of the most famous workshops for frames? How the painting is kept in frame, how is hang on the wall? What they put in the back of the frame to protect the painting? What kind of nails they use?

Another example is the **register of the collection**, which is sometime subject for paper conservation, because of its documentary value. But the way they use to register the items, the columns and how they proceed, the manner of inserting the information, and even the ink and pen used on the old paper, alongside with the calligraphy of the time, are precious information of the ancient time.

The third example concerns the **exhibition furniture**. Also, I wonder if once, will be not very interesting the old storage furniture. But now in exhibitions, the old wooden and glass displays are considered dangerous in all aspects of the conservation point of view, and tend to be replaced with metallic boxes with a special kind of glass and devices for conservation proposes. I think that is absolutely correct for the objects displayed in. But the old furniture is still a part of a stage of the museology and has to be protected as it is, and maybe used in appropriate conditions for some kind of exhibition. We need to make unforgettable our own work of today for sharing the experience and help against the repeated mistakes.

Also, can be mentioned here: the evidence and conservation **records, papers and boxes** for **packing, magnifiers, stamps** of administrative use, **writing pens** (for ink or ball), **folders, holders, textiles** used in display **cases, old glues**, even **brooms** and **rags** or **vacuum cleaners** used once upon a time, all that things, big or small, that prove the complexity of the thought of museology that worked once.

We may save all this things, and maybe is the moment to think about some **museums of the Museum**, for a even better understanding of the time. All this few examples aim to prove the importance of the attention owed to the things sitting around us with modesty, that we neglect, but which include time and became time-deposits, proving the ancient world. As museologists, we have to pay attention even to this little antiquities staying around us with our everyday work.

### ***Conclusions:***

Because we are still in the beginning of modernization, will be a great mistake to waste all the information about how we do in present days our work. The future museologists, who will use some other technology, will look to the actual neglected things we use today as to some quite exotic ones. So let's preserve them, from now.

As I mentioned in the beginning of my presentation, I think that we are now still in the best moment to treasure the items of our professional practice, before all that information involved in, are finally disappear.

Maybe their marked price will not be the highest, to stimulate the interest for this action, but this situation will be corrected soon, precisely by this new movement, which can be included even in the new general trend of the Vintage Fashion.