Creative Sustainability and its Application in the Design of the Exhibition in Slovak National Museum

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Abstract. The Museum of History located in the Bratislava Castle is an important part of the complex of specialised museums of the Slovak National Museum. Its basic mission is to purposefully acquire, preserve, scientifically and professionally process, use and make available the museum collections, documenting the development of society in Slovakia from the Middle Ages until the present. In this context of the museum’s specialisation, it has a nationwide scope. The current character of the exhibition spaces in the Bratislava Castle is based on the context of the building. At the last reconstruction was castle returned to the Baroque period. This reconstruction recognizes the historicity not only of the building but also of the architectural design of the interior. The individual exhibitions, made in the castle’s premises, are adapted to the specific architectural space. The paper presents a case study of the presentation of selected specific piece of artwork in the traditional interior of the Slovak National Museum in the Bratislava Castle. The proposed presentation strategy of artwork provides a comprehensive use of information and communication technologies. These modern presentation possibilities increase the visibility and attendance this type of exhibitions. The use of new technologies and the minimalist installation of the artwork is in sharp contrast to the essence of the exhibition – The St. Ursula vax statue. In addition to the physical presentation of the piece of artwork, emphasis is placed on the presentation of the process of restoration of the statue through the itself story. The applied research, that is presented in this paper is realized through the setup of exhibition. Its aim is to present a piece of art for the general public and professional researcher. Emphasis is focusing on the use of intellectual perception of reality through vision and hearing in conjunction with the presentation of the restoration of the piece of art. By combining the spoken word, story, music and visual background in relation to the architectural space, we verify the possibilities of the exhibition system itself in the context of the sustainability of creative activities in the Slovak National Museum. Thanks to the non-traditional form of exhibitions in the architectural space of the museum, this type of presentation is innovative and unconventional.

1. Introduction

Current tendencies when presenting the collection items on temporary exhibitions in the premises of the Slovak National Museum are managed in a standard way. This way is based on the usual instructions for creating these exhibitions, how to present the works of art and how to mediate experience from the exhibition. At the same time, we must declare a decreasing interest of visitors themselves in standard ways of presenting exhibited items. It is essential that institutions such as the Slovak National Museum undergo a transformation process. In relation to the visitors, in addition to
administrative and technical changes, there must also be a change in how temporary exhibitions are presented.

One of the cornerstones of such transformation in the process of adapting to new perceptions is technical innovation and the ability to use information and communication technologies to present artworks. Information and communication technologies are methods, procedures and ways for processing, preserving, presenting or collecting and distributing the necessary information in the required form and quality. The advantage of using ICT and non-traditional methods in the exhibition system helps us to increase the effectiveness of the exhibitions themselves in relation to the educative and educational dimension of exhibitions. The use of these methods is not only interesting for children and young people - it creates joy and positive experience from the exhibition, it increases their motivation and perception [1]. At the same time, new technologies make it possible to mediate the experience from exhibitions even for people with physical or mental disabilities.

2. Artwork
In the research, we deal with the presentation of the work of art - the wax sculpture of St. Ursula. Work on the consolidation of the sculpture was ongoing from 2012 and restoration was completed in 2018. Originally it is the work of art which was accidentally discovered in the depository of the Slovak National Museum branch - Castle Červený Kameň under the registration number SNM-MČK, S-145. The author of the artwork is not proven, the date of origin is estimated for the second half of the 19th century. According to available written sources, the statue was confiscated in October 1950 by the National Cultural Commission from the Monastery of St. Ursula in Trnava. It was transported to Červený kameň Castle and it was registered in the Museum's collections in 1953. The origin of the object and the preserved iconographic elements thus make it possible to think of it as the statue of St. Ursula from the unknown altar of the Ursuline Monastery in Trnava.

![Figure 1. Detailed images of sculpture before restoration](image_url)

2.1. Analysis of the artwork and its restoration
The sculpture has slightly undersized human dimensions and it contains mixed material. Originally, heavily damaged work of art is in the sitting position, dressed opulently and it represents most likely St. Ursula. There are conjectures that it might be Virgin Mary. However, the statue is missing the figure of little Jesus (Figure 1). The overall position, the gesture of the hands and fingers of the manikin do not admit that the work of art originally contained it. The sculpture consists of various materials: visible body parts (head, face, bare feet and hands) are from wax, parts hidden under clothing (arms, torso, tights) are made from a non-specified mixture of fabrics, wood, paper and oil paint. The unit seems to be seated on a chair without backrest. The head of the manikin is decorated with a wooden gilded crown with a cross in the centre of the ball – the Earth’s Apple. According to the available documents, it had originally even preserved remains of real hair. Shiny eyes look extremely vivid. The statue is dressed in a flowered brocade dress of different colours on a white background.
The dress is complemented with handmade lace fabrics and a soft linen white collar. One of the stripes with machine lace covers the head.

The statue was presented to the public for the first time during the exhibition called “Nahliadnite” (Look inside) in 2012. The subject was presented as a part of the cultural heritage that is stored in the depository and it is in disrepair. This fact is common in our museums. Although the demands for the protection of our cultural heritage are increasing, personnel and financial resources are decreasing. The state of collection fund is getting worse. Restoration of the artwork was extremely demanding because of the ambiguity of the materials. However, the methodological problem of restoration was solved, and its result is an interesting and, in our collections, unique statue of the saint in the way of so-called "Living sculptures”, especially known from the Spanish environment.

Presenting similar subjects in a museum or gallery environment is becoming increasingly complicated. We see the need to educate the public and to increase the popularity of each collection item. One of the options is to create stories for individual artworks [2]. The classic presentation of artworks with a low level of interaction in the form of “exposition in the space with accompanying text” is not enough. In case if the form of exhibition is chosen in this way, the curve of visitors decreases almost immediately from the vernissage. Museums are becoming a home for tourists and in the longer term, they are uninteresting for inhabitants if the presentation of the artwork is not linked to the other activities.

The presentation of the artwork itself takes place at several levels. The first is the artwork’s physical essence itself and its location in space. The second level is the overall exposure of the exhibition. On the last level, we will outline the possibility of linking the exhibition spaces of the Slovak National Museum and the original locality - Červený Kameň Castle using the Optical Trap Display (OTD) technology (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. a) Exhibition space of the Slovak National Museum in the Bratislava Castle b) the possibility of linking it with the original locality – Červený Kameň Castle](image)
3. The space and the exposition
The proposed presentation of the artwork envisages the comprehensive use of modern presentation
technologies to increase the attendance of the exhibition itself, but also to increase the popularity of
the museum itself. It also highlights the importance of restoration work. In the investigated example,
the technologies are chosen mainly with the impact on vision and hearing. The presentation itself is to
be done through sound installation and spoken words with an emphasis on the story. We create
detailed views of the statue before and after the restoration. The aim of such a presentation of all those
processes that are not acceptable and strange to the general public. In addition to the public, we
observe the issue that the importance of restoration in the process of preserving cultural heritage is
poorly communicated also among experts in museum and gallery exhibitions. From the above, we feel
the need to show all the procedures, not just the result of restored work.

3.1. Relationship between space and the artwork
We enter the extraordinary historical interior with an ephemeral and contemporary architecture. We
work with it which is supposed to give the visitor more personal feeling from the exposition. This
concept is supported also by the relationship of the experts, who worked on its restoration and analysis
of its individual parts and components, to the artwork. Because it is a statue of a saint, with the time
spent working on this artwork, statue began to be a person with its own story that has not been
narrated. We know the name of the statue, the story of its rescue and restoration and our goal is to
mediate the experience in the form of personal testimony of the statue. [3] Therefore, the presentation
of the collection item will be unconventional and innovative when considering the present traditional
forms. The installation will be with a small amount of written text, we focus on the voice component
of the installation and its visual processing. The artwork presents itself to the visitor through a  certain
female voice. The way of presenting the artwork with written text is not effective. With recording of
an engaging personal story, the sculpture speaks to the visitor, and he automatically builds a
relationship with the artwork and experiences the feeling of "meeting" with St. Ursula.

The space itself, provided for our exhibition is minimally divided. It is one room of 100 m². Because physically presented is the only object, we decided to divide the space by mobile partitions so
that we are creating a zigzag corridor. This corridor offers smaller spaces for presenting the individual
stages of restoration work. These will be presented through LED panels. Visual loops represent the
details of the artwork in the restoration process. The relationship between spoken word and visual
perception is in free cooperation. We meet with the physical statue of St. Ursula only at the very end
of the presentation - it is the natural culmination of the entire exposition. The path to it is guided by
the voice loop which is triggered sequentially by the sensor.

3.2. Technology-mediated experience
The visitor enters the divided dark space formed by the mobile walls. Entrance and exit are separated.
The visitor finds himself in a zigzag corridor, where individual sensory switches are automatically
triggered, depending on his movement, gradually opening new dimensions of exposure. Passive
infrared sensor (PIR sensor) always detects only visible space. In relation to the concept of spatial
arrangement, it is indispensable for us that it does not detect through the building materials and it has a
reduced sensitivity. Its main part is a pyroelectric sensor that sends a signal when it senses a change in
temperature in the section of space being monitored. In simplicity, it reacts to human movement,
whose body radiates heat in the form of infrared radiation. The moment the visitor gets in the sensor
range, it automatically triggers module and part of the exposure. If necessary, we can also use the
Fresnel lens to direct the heat beams directly onto the sensor.

The entire presentation is launched now of entering in the exposition. The visitor is addressed by
the voice of a young woman who portrays St. Ursula. At this moment, the relationship between the
artwork and the visitor begins. Ursula begins to tell her story. The visitor is led by a young female
voice, he does not need a guidance system or additional descriptions – he only needs his own intuition and desire to discover. He recognizes the story of St. Ursula; the pace of her narration determines the pace of movement in the space. Short sequences on the screens show the restoration parts of the work. They serve as educational material from which the viewer gets to know the artwork in detail. It is up to the visitor how long he spends time near each screen, as the loop of the audio track and the visual perceptions are not linked. At the end of the exhibition, the statue of St. Ursula is placed in the central part of the divided space. The viewer has known her story, he got to know her through his movement in the exhibition space, now he meets her personally. The sculpture is illuminated by one spotlight, giving the presentation more personal character. Subsequently, the visitor walks out through a dark separated corridor (Figure 3).

![Figure 3. Mobile partitions with the zigzag corridor (a) and the divided space into individual zones of perception (b)](image)

4. Conclusions
In the paper we point out a new possible trend in the conceiving of the exhibition system in the premises of the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava Castle. It points to the declining interest in standard ways of presenting exhibited items and it points to the need of using new information and communication technologies in the presentation of the collection fund. These can be used not only in the presentation itself, but also, they can be used in the analysis of the exposition itself – the number of visitors, the duration of the visitor’s stay, the movement around the exhibition, the specification of the individual areas and the elements that interested him.

This mapping may indicate the need for the focus change od the institution itself from the traditional handover of information about the artworks to the acquiring of new processing and presentation methods. These statements also correspond to our view that traditional forms and methods of artworks presentation are inadequate and therefore they need to be innovated. We also support the relationship of remembrance art – an art that is linked to an emotional experience through their memories and story [4].
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