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TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATIONAL WORK IN STATE-ESTABLISHED GALLERIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC – SITUATION IN THE MORAVIAN GALLERY

Introduction

This article focuses on the transformation of work with the public in the Moravian Gallery in Brno as an example of good practice in Czech state-established institutions and its transformation in the last ten years. The position of the authors of the article is based on Andrea Kaňkovská’s personal experience as Head of the Lecturer’s Department at the Moravian Gallery in 2013-2015. She was part of a team that implemented and planned the transformation at the Moravian Gallery. In the following years she examined the ongoing process of transformation from the position of an outside observer. The qualitative research uses facts and sources in the Moravian Gallery’s sources such as its website, social networks, annual reports, personal visits in the institution, articles about the institution in the press and on art media websites, and personal interview with other employees.

The Moravian Gallery is one of three art and design museums established by the state, more precisely by the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic. Brno, where the gallery is located, is the second largest city in the Czech Republic. It is not surprising that the Moravian Gallery is the second largest institution of its kind in the Czech Republic after the National Gallery in Prague (NGP). The third largest museum is the Museum of Art Olomouc (MUO).

In this paper, we focus on the example of the Moravian Gallery in Brno, which, of the three state-established art museums mentioned above, has the most clearly defined vision and audience development plan, which were transformed with the arrival of new management in 2013.

The Moravian Gallery is exceptional both in the size of its collections and the breadth of its focus. The Moravian Gallery presents its collections of over 200,000 works of art in the form of permanent and temporary exhibitions. In its permanent displays and exhibitions, the gallery focuses on art from the earliest periods through modern and contemporary art to photography, architecture, applied art and design. The Moravian Gallery uses four buildings in Brno that embody significant architectural values: the Pražák Palace, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Governor’s Palace and the villa of architect Dušan S. Jurkovič. In addition, together with the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna (MAK), it manages Josef Hoffmann’s birthplace in Brtnice near Jihlava.

The Moravian Gallery also has its detached restoration department in a building in Řečkovice, which also houses a depository that is currently inaccessible to the public. The Pražák Palace building houses a library focused on publications on art, design and art theory. This building also houses the newly established Artotheque, which offers its services to the professional and general public.
The main buildings of the Moravian Gallery include a neo-Renaissance building in the centre of the city, called Pražák's Palace. A permanent exhibition has been newly created under the name ART IS HERE. It focuses on the art of the second half of the 20th century; at its core is the collection of the outstanding Czech (Brno-based) art historian, collector and conceptual artist Jiří Valoch. International fame was brought to the Moravian Gallery by the organisation of the Biennial of Graphic Design, founded by Jan Rajlich in 1963, shortly after the establishment of the gallery led by Jiří Hlušička. It was one of the first exhibition events of this kind in the world and was perceived by the professional public as very prestigious throughout its existence. 600-900 printmakers from all over the world participated in the Biennial’s competitively conceived show. After the departure of Jan Rajlich from the head of the Biennial’s organizing team and after a number of attempts to establish a new model for organizing the Biennial, it was finally decided to close this glorious chapter of the Moravian Gallery in 2019.

The Moravian Gallery was established in 1961 from the merger of the Picture Gallery of the Moravian Museum and the Moravian Museum of Decorative Arts, both institutions dating back to the nineteenth century. However, although Moravian Gallery is an organisation with a rich history and tradition, in its activities it strives to be a contemporary institution, responding directly to the needs of a dynamic modern society. It should be emphasized here that one of the main tasks of the MG is to carry out basic and applied research and to disseminate the results of this research through professional publications, exhibitions, lectures and other educational activities.

**Transformation of the institution's leadership**

In our contribution, we want to focus on the transformation of work with the public at the Moravian Gallery (hereafter MG) in the past decade 2013-2023. There was an important change in the leadership of the MG as director: Jan Press took up the position on 1 April 2013. With this change, the views and ideas of Ondřej Chrobák, who eventually became the chief curator of the entire institution, began to be reflected in the thinking about the direction of the MG. Later, Silvie Šeborová joined the management of MG as Deputy for External Relations. New strategies and visions began to crystallize, which became part of the MG’s audience development plan with their help. It set out a new orientation of the institution towards the audience, reformulated the medium-term vision of the institution and was reflected in most of the sub-activities. The emphasis shifted to working with the audience.

MG began to strive to create the institution as a place for leisure with all its complementary activities, welcoming and friendly to all segments of visitors.

Economic considerations are also of interest to MG: the founder’s criterion for the gallery’s success is the growth of visitor numbers. The innovation of educational programmes and the audience development plan, which took place between 2013 and 2023, has created a slight increase in visitors, but above all it has brought about a change in the spectrum and structure of visitors.
When the new management took over in 2013, the number of visitors to permanent exhibitions was 16,674, to temporary exhibitions 18,785, and to educational and accompanying programmes 44,532. In 2018, attendance rose to 56,945 for short-term exhibitions, 50,933 for educational and accompanying programs, and fell to 13,595 for permanent exhibitions. Of course, during the covid crisis, attendance dropped dramatically for all types of visitors. But as the 2022 numbers show, attendance continues to rise: 82,306 visitors visited permanent exhibitions, 44,286 visited temporary exhibitions, and only 28,813 attended educational and accompanying programs. Today, MG is succeeding in attracting children and younger visitors and other target groups from the general public (Moravské galerie, n.d.).

**Marketing, Public Relation and visual style of the Moravian Gallery**

The transformation of the approach to the audience was gradually reflected in all areas of the Moravian Gallery's activities: from marketing strategies (social networks, web), visual and content transformation of printed materials, the creation of a new orientation system, the modification of the use of space to the creation of new educational and entertainment formats under the umbrella of the education department and a new direction in the gallery's exhibition programme. It was a comprehensive strategy of transformation of approaches, which was gradually reflected in all areas of the gallery, taking into account the operational and financial possibilities of the institution.

New printed materials are also part of the transformation of the work with the public. The Moravian Gallery Magazine was created, which tries to inform about all the news in the MG in a friendly way through interviews, short features or columns accompanied by many visually striking colour photographs. The management, the Centre for New Strategies of Museum Presentation, the marketing department and the external graphic designer Lukáš Kijonka are involved in the creation of this visual identity.

Another such easily visible change was the creation of an orientation system in the Pražák Palace, also designed by Lukáš Kijonka. Distinctive red stickers with the markings of the individual locations navigate the entire building from the entrance. A simple graphic element was added - a red painted railing, which makes the building easily identifiable from other buildings. At the same time as the change in the orientation system and the associated uniform visual style, the gallery space has been transformed by minor structural changes.

The unified visual style has been reflected in all the transformations of the institution - from the website, social media, printed materials, wayfinding systems to the gallery's march. The traditional MG logo was discontinued, and the corporate font used on most MG materials was transformed, from press releases, annual reports, exhibition invitations to the printed magazine and program. However, it is clear that the choice of topics and the way the texts are written are aimed at popularisation and reaching the general population at the expense of expertise.
Building and operational modifications in the interior as support for the new communication

The emphasis on parents with children has also been reflected in the design of exhibitions and displays, transforming the interiors of the buildings. Many small but visible changes that showed a turn in thinking were made without major financial subsidies or within the normal budget framework. The origins of the orientation system were preceded by minor structural changes that made the building accessible from multiple sides, so that the institution had an open and welcoming feel from the very first meeting. The ticket office was transformed into a contemporary-looking design shop focusing mainly on children’s art books, specialist books, small Czech design and march of the gallery.

The addition of a slide, inspired by the realisations of Belgian artist Carsten Höller, which since 2016 connects the second and third floors of the Pražák Palace and the permanent exhibitions of modern and contemporary art housed there, under the subtitle "Art is here", has brought another element of the entertainment industry into the building. The allocation of one room from the exhibition space for short-term exhibitions for the purpose of a playroom - a multifunctional room suitable also for educational programmes for children and workshops was just the logical culmination of the overall conceptual transformation. Its furnishings and appearance are regularly renewed, with the participation of contemporary artists (Vendula Chalánková and the Rafani art group). Currently, the interior of the playroom relates to the Valoch & Valoch exhibition, which is located in the ground floor exhibition space in the past.

The entire Pražák Palace building is complemented by the open sculpture depository in the basement and the Artotheque on the 3rd floor. The Open Depository shows (behind the glass) the usually inaccessible spaces of the depositories, reveals additional fundus that is not used in the permanent exhibitions and reveals other functions and activities of the art museum.

The experience of foreign artotheques in the German-speaking area was the impetus for the establishment of the first public artotheque in Moravia, and it was and still is an inspirational source for its gradual development. In its formation, the Brno Artotheque was significantly influenced by the Viennese art lending library in the city museum MUSA, which was an inspiration for it both in operational and technical matters and in the field of conception.

Artotheque of the Moravian Gallery in Brno is a non-profit project that was created as part of the activities of the Centre for New Strategies of Museum Presentation (CENS) at the Moravian Gallery. It was opened in the autumn of 2017 in the premises of the specialist library in Pražák Palace, thus succeeding in linking two models of operation common abroad: artotheques established at museums and those operated within libraries. This offers the curious visitor the opportunity to borrow a painting and a book or accompanying literature about the artist’s work from one artist, and to complement the visit to the art library with a visit to the exhibition or current exhibition in the gallery. The intention of a comprehensive perception of visual art is also reflected in the Artotheque’s website (https://moravskagalerie.cz/artoteka/), which is linked to the library catalogue and thus allows searching for paintings and related literature at the same time.
Táňa Šedová, the initiator of the Brno Artotheque, claims that besides making art accessible to the public, the goal of the Artotheque is also to support contemporary artists. This is done by purchasing works and promoting their work. This includes educational and accompanying programmes for all target groups, which take place in the Artotheque and elsewhere. These are prepared in collaboration with artists and theorists. Accompanying printed materials are produced, for example, Cities made of art dough worksheets that introduce the public to the artists of the Artoteca, or an illustrated manual that explains how to properly handle the artworks. Other products are short videos featuring interviews with selected artists on the artotheque’s website, which aim to bring their personality and artistic work to the attention of the general public (Šedová, 2019).

**Audience development**

Under the previous management, the lecture department already offered a wide range of educational programmes covering most visitor segments. Programmes were designed for all types of schools (nursery, primary, secondary, university), children, seniors, English-speaking expats, and the disabled. Programmes were also being prepared for teachers of art, art history, etc. at primary and secondary schools. The range of educational and accompanying programmes should have had the potential to appeal to everyone in the general public, but unfortunately it was not possible to arouse sufficient interest in some programmes, some had to be cancelled or were implemented with very few participants. This has begun to change with the arrival of new leadership. The management’s push for efficient use of public funds has resulted in better coordination between departments, the use more social media, and greater outreach through newsletters. Gradually, existing programs have been revised, upgraded and attendance numbers for individual events have increased.

As part of the concept of an "open institution" that decided to compete with the contemporary entertainment industry, the lecturing department began to complement the classical framework of educational programs and workshops with new formats using strategies from the gaming industry and commercial mass culture. Examples of practice from abroad have inspired several new educational formats, most of which are now firmly established in the MG portfolio.

Is to what extent foreign examples of good practice can be easily transferred to the Czech environment is questionable. Is the Czech audience ready for the concept of "cultural supermarkets"? (Kottová, 2019)

Is MG able to fulfil its audience development plans? Is it possible to pursue such ambitious plans in a state institution without sufficient resources? Can these new strategies be combined with a traditionally structured exhibition plan? Or is attendance such a high value that any marketing methods can be used to increase it? How much should a state gallery be oriented towards current trends?

The Lecturer’s Department began to complement the classical framework of educational programmes with new formats using the strategies of the gaming industry and commercial mass culture within the concept of the "open institution", which decided to compete with the contemporary entertainment industry. However, it seems that this is paid
for by the hostility and criticism of the art and theoretical professional world. Efforts to balance individual activities have not succeeded to the extent that the management would have liked, and criticism of the decline in standards and the intrusion of low culture elements has been heard from art theoretical community. How far this traditional and conservative opposition is right will only become apparent with the passage of time, which we do not yet have. The loss of support from a section of the art and art theoretical community, which perceives too much emphasis on democratising the institution for the task of developing professional activities, is the result of managerial and strategic decisions that have transformed the very direction of Moravian Gallery. These include the cancellation of the International Biennial of Graphic Design (2022) or the reduction in the number of exhibition projects. Both of these decisions, however, are primarily based on the financial framework of the institution, which has long been underfunded in terms of both financial and human resources.

It can be assumed that the ideal format for working with audiences is a more multi-layered one, one that can sensitively meet the needs of a very demanding professional public, working with a broad mass of the general public and all minority groups of disabled, excluded or with specific educational needs. This is what MG has been trying to do for a long time. But it is also about the setting of the individual programmes, their frequency and focus, which creates a mix of educational and accompanying events. The search for a balance that meets the current needs of society is an ongoing process that never ends.

Kinski said, that audience development is a process that encompasses multiple aspects of arts management and production with the goal of engaging participants in the arts and creating a relationship with the arts. This process expands the diversity of the audience, increases the number of people involved, or enhances the nature of the experience (Culturenet, 2022).

**New educational programmes with elements of gamification**

New formats of educational and accompanying programmes, which started to appear in the portfolio of activities from 2013 with the arrival of the new management of the Moravian Gallery were to be based on the experiential potential of the activities, its attractiveness and fun. The current trends of the entertainment industry and the current interests/needs of sub-segments of the visitor population were to be taken into account. The measurable objective of the innovation was to increase the target groups, especially young people, from students to families with young children and the general public.

Can the inclusion of gamification elements in educational and accompanying programmes bring more visitors to Czech art museums? Are these programmes a beneficial way of making art accessible to a wider audience?

Since 2016, a cryptographic game (in both Czech and English versions), created in cooperation with the Brno-based company Cryptomania, has been used to introduce the ART IS HERE exhibition in a novel and exciting way. It is a detective chase designed for individuals and groups of visitors, which combines the artistic environment with game strategies and practices characteristic of the entertainment culture / industry since the turn of the millennium. With the help of a workbook, a phone and a QR code reading app,
participants complete challenges, unravel the meanings of cryptic symbols and passwords and learn about the permanent exhibition of art from the second half of the 20th century to the present day.

Another illustrative example of the use of the popular culture format was a "special experiential programme" called Jurkovič’s Villa in a Time Machine, created by Vendula Borůvková. The educational programme here uses a form of role-playing known as LARP (Live Action Role Play). Since 2017 (and since 2019 also in English), participants interested can "relive" the entire history of the villa in three situations: just after the villa was built, LARP participants can also meet Dušan Jurkovič and his wife; during Count Chorynský’s monděn party, they can be transported back to the villa’s heyday; and at a street committee meeting after World War II, it is possible to experience the atmosphere of communist meetings. This intimate larp is a popular format for students in high schools and colleges, and is often used as a corporate teambuilding.

The experiential larp programme from the history of Jurkovič’s villa uses the principle of simple role-playing of real and fictional characters, in which you can find yourself in different periods of its history. You can take part in a party with Dusan Jurkovic, Count Chorynsky’s monotonous party or a street committee meeting (Borůvková, 2023).

A play based on the historical realities of the building has also been created for school groups and adult visitors for the Viceroy’s Palace as part of the project Dr. Weisenstein’s Experiment. In which the participants have the opportunity to walk through parts of the Viceroy’s Palace that are normally not open to the public, such as the historic dungeon and the vast attic.

For the project, a specially adapted interactive table with a historical map of the layout of the Vice-Regal Palace and a hidden recording device was created by the ROsound Company. From the device, short recordings of the dreams of nine people who may have actually existed in the Viceroy’s Palace at different times in history, such as an Augustinian monk, a wounded defender from the time of the battles with the Swedes, a Baroque painter, Napoleon or the curator of the Museum of the Labour Movement. The whole installation serves above all to evoke a mysterious, fantastic and mystical atmosphere. This is also aided by the fact that the table is placed directly on the vast grounds of the Viceroy’s Palace.

Currently, the entire Viceroy’s Palace is closed for renovation.

**Children’s openings as a new activation format for families with children**

Children’s openings are among the wide range of innovations that the lecturing department has come up with. Young visitors - children as young as 5 years old - are introduced to the exhibition in an active, experiential way. The first children’s opening at the Moravian Gallery took place in 2015 for the exhibition Václav Stratil: "I Do Nothing and Other Works", which included a "Children’s Exhibition". The exhibition presented drawings by Václav Stratil for his son, featuring animals, cars and other toys. The exhibition was installed suspended to accommodate the height of the child visitor. The opening for children, which took place in the afternoon before the main exhibition opening, included a creative
activity led by the artist himself. The initiators of this concept were Jiří Ptáček, the curator of the Václav Strátil exhibition, and Andrea Kaňkovská, the head of the Public Relations Department (the education department). What was originally a one-off event aimed at families with children and the youngest visitors gradually became an established format, which began to be used approximately two to three times a year for larger exhibition projects that were given priority by the MG management. Children’s openings take place on the day of the “big opening” in the afternoon under the guidance of the lecturer department, and contain all the usual attributes of regular openings, but enhanced with educational, play or entertainment elements to keep children active. Usually 40 to 80 children with accompaniment attend these openings.

New permanent exhibitions were also opened, such as “Art Design Fashion” at the Museum of Decorative Arts (2017) or the long-term exhibition “OCH! Olgoj Chorchoj: The Logic of Emotion” (also in 2017).

In the following years (2017 - 2023), the format of the children’s opening was already seamlessly integrated into the gallery’s production plans, and the selection of exhibitions that would be opened to both adult and child audiences brought broader guidance within the framework of longer-term planning.

The current exhibition of contemporary Czech designers Vrtiška and Žák in 2023 is currently underway at the Palace of Decorative Arts. The exhibition Moravian Picture Gallery, which mediated the basis of the institution’s collection, which was established from 1817, took place in 2022. In 2021, children’s openings were prepared for the Jindřich Chalupecký Prize exhibition dedicated to the youngest contemporary artists, the exhibition Civilized Woman about the concept of the modern woman in the 1930s, and the opening of the Museum of Decorative Arts with the exhibition Jiří Pelcl Design with the participation of the youngest visitors.

**Interactive zones**

In addition to the playroom in the Pražák Palace, interactive zones have become a natural part of exhibitions and expositions, activating the visitor. The ART IS HERE exhibition of modern art and the ART IS HERE exhibition of contemporary art are connected by a slide between the two floors in the gallery.

In November 2019, a new permanent exhibition called Brno Suburbs of Wien was inaugurated in the Vice-Regal Palace. This exhibition includes a custom-designed space called the Interactive Studio. It is equipped with an interactive video mapping game "Adventures of an Art Collector" (co-authored by Josef Kortan and Silvie Šeborová). The game in the form of interactive animated videos introduced visitors to the themes of the exhibition and won an award at the FAIMP International Festival of Museum Audiovisual. The painter Alexey Klyuykov participated in the realization as an illustrator.
Books of art, design and museums of art

The Centre for New Strategies of Museum Presentation of Moravian Gallery (Ondřej Chrobák, Martin Vaněk and Rostislav Koryčánek) also contributed to the publication of the book How to Make a Gallery (2016), which deals with art and cultural operations and is aimed at children aged 8-12 years old (Moravské galerie, n.d.) in 2020, the Moravian Gallery published How to Paint an Egg? The Story of the Painter Josef Šima (by Silvie Šeborová) (Moravské galerie, n.d.) and the currently published book: How to Make Design? (by Silvie Šeborová), which popularises applied art and design (iUmeni, n.d.). All these books are intended for children, teenagers and curious adults.

We can also encounter artistic fantasy, an imaginative world working with real works of art, or the environment of a fictional museum or gallery, often working with blockbuster artworks as pop culture references. In terms of transfiguration, artworks are transformed to fit the story being told. The principle of the fictional ideal museum can be found, for example, in the Czech publications How to Make a Gallery or Why Paintings Don’t Need Titles, says Kateřina Minaříková, head of the Moravian Gallery’s lecturing department (Education department) in 2016-2023 (Divina et al., 2019).

Latest trends in art mediation in the Moravian Gallery

A recent innovation at the MG are the creative workshops: such as the so-called Design Lab in the Museum of Decorative Arts, equipped with the latest digital technologies for visitors to try their hand at, for example, 3D printing, a cutting plotter, thermolysis, a programmable embroidery machine or various graphic programmes under the guidance of experienced tutors. The mission of the Design Lab is to create a stimulating creative environment that meets the latest standards and to offer the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills in digital fabrication technologies in relation to contemporary design (through graphic and product design, fashion, jewellery, toy and game design) and free artistic creation. It points to the leadership’s current inclination towards an interest in contemporary design and its mediation.

In the near future, plans are underway to build an open depository in Řečkovice, which should make the entire Moravian Gallery collection available, not just a small part of it in the collections and small depository in Pražák Palace or in an online version on the Moravian Gallery website (also made available under new management).

All these gradual changes respond to the new definitions of museums and their social status, the transformation of social themes and ways of spending leisure time.

These new educational and accompanying activities are confirmed by the new definition of museums adopted at the ICOM Prague 2022 conference: “A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.” (ICOM, n.d.)
Compared to the clearly defined audience development plan at MG, which the institutions are gradually trying to fulfil, the situation at MUO and NGP is not so clear.

National Gallery Prague is struggling with an ambivalent concept of development of the new director Alicja Knast, insufficient funding and lack of internal dialogue between departments and towards the audience (Večerek, 2022). Public relations and the ability to explain the position and vision of the NGP is a weak point of the institution and has long been criticized not only by professionals but also by the general public.

In the case of the Olomouc Museum of Art, it is an institution that does offer a quality educational programme. The offer is wide, it is dedicated to all segments of the visitor population and tries to attract visitors with various activation formats. The museum’s presentation and methods of working with audiences in the broadest framework show traditional thinking about the role of the museum in its public relations. However, even here there are exceptions - innovative one-off events or educational formats, but these are not supported by a wide range of departmental changes. If we start from the Concept of Development and Activities of the Olomouc Museum of Art 2020 - 2024, the definition and vision of the institution are traditional and conservative (Zatloukal, 2020).

**Conclusion**

Changing approaches to the audience also bring about its natural renewal and expansion to include younger audiences and families with children, while there is no significant increase in attendance. It should be noted, however, that other influences (covid, the post-covid era, the reduction in the number of exhibition projects due to the economic crisis) also have a significant impact on attendance.

A change in thinking is necessary not only in the educational departments, but also in the marketing departments, the management itself, as well as curators, and technical support as part of the change in approach. Only when the ideas of opening up the institution to all are sufficiently settled in the minds of individual employees can the transformation be implemented. The most difficult tasks of such a decision to change the scheme of work and the way of looking at a public gallery institution are precisely to convince the staff and, consequently, the public. Both the staff and the public seem to be ambivalent about such a change.

The solution to the dilemma of an elitist versus egalitarian orientation therefore seems obvious: If a museum institution is to be visible and attractive it must necessarily lean towards the egalitarian pole in the competition of attractive media and social networks, otherwise it will become an exclusively academic institution. The Moravian Gallery in Brno tries to oscillate between opening the institution to the masses and highly qualified and professional work. On the way to finding a balance between these two poles, it has unfortunately managed to lose the support and interest of the more conservative part of the professional public. The search for new relations with the elites of the professional world of Czech art history is a task that MG now faces. Creating a self-confident institution with a clear vision that generates higher attendance and general interest among the general public is the long-term mission of the MG and other state-established galleries.
However, it is a good example of an effort to turn a traditional institution into a place that creates space for the search for strategies and the current position of cultural institutions. It is somewhat difficult to evaluate the process currently underway. Most of the processes of transformation are too fresh to draw clear consequences and impact of such changes. But already in progress, it is obvious that most of the new steps are leading to the implementation of the new definition of the museum as defined by the experts at the ICOM Conference (ICOM, n.d.).

References: