

## MED ZAČETKOM IN NADALJEVANJEM

### Prvi del stalne razstave Slovenskega etnografskega muzeja

Tatjana Dolžan Eržen

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*SEM je naša vez med preteklim in sedanjim, med tradicijsko in sodobno kulturo, med svojo in tujimi kulturami, je prostor, kjer se srečujemo z dediščino, jo doživljamo, razmišljamo ob njej, jo uživamo in se vedno znova učimo spoznavati sebe in druge, sožitja z drugačnostjo, se čudimo modrostim življenja v sobivanju z naravo. SEM je naša zakladnica. Nekako tako je zapisano v publikaciji SEM med stvarnostjo in vizijo, ki je izšla leta 2001 in zdi se prava stvar. V letu 2006 lahko z olajšanjem rečemo: Hvala Bogu, da SEM končno lahko začne izpolnjevati svoje poslanstvo tudi s pomočjo stalne postavitve, ne le najrazličnejših prireditev.*

Od načrtovanega je že uresničen Etno-Abecedaž in pa Enciklopedija stvari z dvema Naj predmetoma čupo in čanco, vendar se je koncept v teh petih letih deloma spremenil, saj se ta imena razen Etno-Abecedaža ne pojavljajo več. Novi naslov *Med naravo in kulturo* je na prvi pogled slabši kot Enciklopedija stvari, ker je nekako nedoločen, postavljen v vmesni – asociira na prazen – prostor. Naj stvari, ki bi lahko pritegnili pozornost obiskovalcev, sta zdaj sestavna dela slovenske oziroma zunajevropske postavitve. Prvo in drugo nadstropje zapolnjujejo zelo zanimive občasne razstave.

#### **Poročilo z obiska**

*V SEM sem povabila prijatelje iz Kanade. Ker smo imeli otroški voziček, smo se v tretje nadstropje povzpeli z dvigalom. Čeprav nam je receptor v angleščini jasno razložil, kaj si lahko ogledamo, in čeprav sem bila že velikokrat v stavbi, le da mi je ljubši dostop po stopnicah, smo bili zmedeni – naj od dvigala krenemo na levo ali na desno? Usmerjevalne plakate in bele napise na steklu smo opazili šele, ko smo raziskali obe smeri. Kotička s čanco in kitajskimi ženskimi čeveljčki sta nam bila premalo vabljivo označena, da bi nas potegnili notri, potrebno je bilo (moje) glasno vabilo. Šele potem smo začeli brati besedilo. A z nami sta bili mali deklici in morali smo pohiteti, preden bi se naveličali.*

*Ko smo prišli na konec razstave Med naravo in kulturo in na začetek Etno-Abecedaža, je našo triletnico in njeno mamó kar potegnulo vanj. Čeprav je besedilo zgolj v slovenščini, je bilo zabavno odpirati predale in kukati v vitrine, pri računalniški demonstraciji zvokov ljudskih glasbil pa nismo dojeli, kako jo uporabljati. Na sredi pri*



družabnih igrah je tudi enoletnica zahtevala sestop z vozička, da se je lahko poigrala z vtikanjem lesenih figur v luknjice table z igro Človek ne jezi se. Napisov v angleščini nismo pogrešali.

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Zadovoljni smo se napotili med vitrine s predmeti ljudske umetnosti; občudovali smo izdelke iz različnih materialov – celo iz skute! Preostali del razstave smo hitro prešli, ker večnoma manjka angleški prevod, ustavili pa smo se pri talnih oknih, kjer smo raziskovali različne naravne snovi. Pri nošah sem jih navdušila z izvlečnimi predali s predstavivami krasilnih tehnik. Zanimiv je bil nakit in zbirka pokrival. Kot potomci priseljencev v Novi svet so z zanimanjem ogledovali stare potne liste. Ob čupi se je prijatelj začudil: Kako pa to more pluti po morju, a ni nestabilno? Šele ko sem mu pokazala fotografijo čupe na morju, je razumel. Ogled smo končali na začetku razstave, pa nas ni motilo. Za multivizijo deklaci nista dali časa. Prepoznali smo še ribniške konjičke – piščalke, ki so jih dobili lani za darilo, in se napotili nadstropje nižje kar peš z vozičkom v rokah.

Poslikane skrinje so bile silno zanimive, mali dve sta tekali naokrog in kar naprej smo jima morali kaj pojasnjevati, med seboj smo primerjali pohištvo s tega in onega konca sveta. Skozi razstavo izdelkov domače obrti smo še vzdržali pozornost, čeprav zelo selektivno. Po uri in petinštiridesetih minutah ogledovanja smo se z užtkom usedli pod platane muzejske restavracije. Tu smo se malce nasmejali natakariči, ki je zagotovila, da bodo kraški sendviči, ponujeni v ceniku na vsaki mizi, na voljo »jutri«, danes pa imajo le navadne toaste s šunko. Ko pa je prinesla igrače za otroke, smo bili zelo zadovoljni. Ugotovili smo, da smo videli veliko zanimivega, da pa so legende pomanjkljive in je splošni vtis nekako neurejen. Na zunajevropski razstavi so boljše. Pojasniti sem morala tudi, da je ta muzej samo eden od petih velikih v Ljubljani, da arheološke predmete lahko vidijo v Narodnem muzeju, slike pa v Narodni in Moderni galeriji.

## **Prednosti, priložnosti, pomanjkljivosti in slabosti sedanje stalne postavitve SEM**

### **Prednosti**

Zamisel, da »stalno postavitve sestavlja več celot, ki so vsaka razstava zase in ki jih je mogoče obiskati ločeno ali pa si jih ogledati po zamišljenem zaporedju«, pač v skladu s t. i. »ATP stilom« po G. H. Rivieru (Smerdel 1996: 34, 33), je prednost, ker obiskovalcem nudi možnost izbire. Obenem pa je dinamika komunikacije med obiskovalci in razstavo večja kot na eni sami obsežni razstavi, kjer je veliko možnosti, da si panoji in vitrine sledijo slabo pregledno in strukturirano kot jara kača. Poleg tega je muzej posvečen prostor, kjer iščemo umiritev in sprostitev, to pa lažje dosežemo z manjšimi zaključenimi razstavnimi enotami, kjer se ni potrebno naprezati, da dojamemo sporočilo.

Velika prednost je bogata in obsežna zbirka SEM; zastavljeni koncept jo skuša kar najbolje izkoristiti z razstavljanjem množice muzealij. Predmeti nas vodijo k ljudem, ki so živeli pred nami, zato ima razstava *Med naravo in kulturo* posebno mikavnost in draž. Lepo so združeni v smiselne celote, ki gledalcu omogočajo raziskovanje in učenje. Video gradivo dopolnjuje razstavljeno in opozarja na uporabo in izdelavo, česar pač v vitrinah ni mogoče prikazati. Zelo dobro zastavljeno!



Precejšnja prednost nove stalne postavitve vidim tudi v izbranem načelu razstavljanja »predmet v funkciji«, ki postavlja istovrstne predmete skupaj – lovni pripomočki skupaj, poljedelsko orodje, obrtni izdelki in orodje, pokrivala, nakit, krasilne tehnike itd. To omogoča razmišljanje o razmerju med obliko in namembnostjo nekdanj in danes. Prav zato so pri noši dodani predmeti s konca 20. stoletja. Ti imajo zelo zanimivo vlogo: obiskovalca pritegnejo, ker med množico starih takoj zazna novejši predmet, prepozna njegovo funkcijo in potem tudi druge poveže z enako namembnostjo. Lahko bi rekli, da vzbujajo pozornost in pomagajo povezati obiskovalca z razstavljenim gradivom prek izkušnje, ki jo ima s tem znanim predmetom. V izbranem načinu razstavljanja je to lepa, nevsiljiva interpretacija muzealij.

Zanimiva so tudi talna okna. Z razstavljenim gradivom vzbujajo radovednost, spodbujajo raziskovalnega duha in so igriva srečanja z naravo za otroke vseh starosti. 229

Tudi multivizija je za tistega, ki si vzame čas zanjo, zelo prijetna in bogata izkušnja. Tehnika igra neprecenljivo vlogo pri predstavitvi nematerialne kulturne dediščine slovenskega etničnega ozemlja. Ob koncu sem bila kar ponosna, da živim v Sloveniji.

Kot čudovita prednost razstave se izkazuje tudi Etno-Abecedaž. To je res kotiček za odkrivanje, raziskovanje in igro, kot ga SEM oglašuje; odklopi te od vsakdana, potegne te vase, v svoj svet. Bravo!

### Priložnosti

Verjeti moramo, da je vsak kustos izbral najboljše iz zbirke, za katero skrbi. Pričakovala sem več gradiva, zlasti takšnega, ki ga jaz iz svoje zbirke prepoznavam za značilno gorenjskega, morda z mano delijo iste občutke tudi kolegi iz drugih delov Slovenije. Prvi vtis je torej – a samo to? Le kaj sem pričakovala? Galeeriiiije predmetov iz depojev, tako smo si predstavljali po napovedih, pa tudi razstavni prostor se je zdel velik. So ga oblikovalci pomanjšali? Res je, da polovico etaže zavzamejo zunajevropske zbirke in Etno-Abecedaž. Oboje pa je za uresničitev poslanstva muzeja prav tako nujno kot predstavitev slovenskih zbirk. Ob lastnih prenapoljenih depojih si včasih zastavim vprašanje, koliko kvadratnih metrov bi potrebovala, da bi bila večina muzealij dostopna ljudem in ne zaprta, zaplenjena. Ampak recimo, da je to dobra priložnost in vzpodbuda za prepotrebne pogovore o zbirkah, ki jih hranimo.

Predmetu je potrebno dodati množico informacij, ki jih strokovnjaki znamo prebrati iz njega. Urediti mu je potrebno okolje, v katerem lahko pripoveduje svojo zgodbo. To je najboljše organizirano pri predstavitvi noše, kjer napisi na vitrinah izzivajo razmišljanje o pomenu oblačenja, na mizici in stolu so zvezki, v katerih so predstavljeni vsi razstavljeni predmeti in posamezne zgodbe o oblačilnih videzih in sestavinah noše, na policah pa so posamezni listi s temi zgodbami, ki jih obiskovalci lahko odnesejo. Tudi predmeti so izbrani zelo premišljeno, da nas ponesejo na krilih domišljije Potrebnega in nepotrebnega. Priložnost za dodajanje informacij na tak ali še kakšen drug način izziva tudi avtorje drugih delov postavitve.

Dobra priložnost za obiskovalca so tudi zasloni z video kolaži, ki so zanimivo posneti in zmontirani kot okna v življenje razstavljenih predmetov. Pred njimi bodo obstali vsi tisti, ki jih tematika podrobneje zanima, zato je potrebno čim prej dodati



napise, da bodo obiskovalci seznanjeni, kaj se na posameznem zaslonu predvaja, in bodo lahko izbrali po svojem okusu. Zdaj jih je v množici informacij, ki jih stalna postavitve ponuja, vse prelahko preprosto prezreti.

### **Pomanjkljivosti**

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Največja pomanjkljivost razstave so nedokončane legende, pogrešam imena slovenskih krajev, časovne in razvojne zamejitve. Manjka precej angleških prevodov, vsebine video kolažev in pojasnila k razstavljenim predmetom (razen pri noši). Zgodba vsake muzealije – čeprav samo v nekaj besedah, ki povedo ime, kraj, čas, je izredno dragocena, kajti prednost postavitve SEM so prav številne in zanimive zbirke; te nas privlačijo, o njih bi radi izvedeli čim več. Zgodba muzealij teče pod zgodbo razstave, jo pojasnjuje, bogati, pogloblja, ker jo konkretizira v času in kraju. Obiskovalci jo doživljamo tudi brez legend, a bolj megleno in domišljjsko. Pri taki količini predmetov je dodajanje legend seveda težavna naloga, pa še estetsko se nam velikokrat ne izide, a ne smemo obupati.

Pomanjkljivosti povečujejo slabo dojetje zgodbe in sporočila, a jih je mogoče odpraviti z nekaj truda in stroškov. Besedila na razstavi *Med naravo in kulturo* so mestoma preveč akademska, potrebno se je zelo zbrati, da jih dojamemo, zato jih obiskovalci večinoma ne beremo. Modro bi jih bilo preizkusiti na osnovnošolcih, ali jih razumejo, potem jih bomo brez napora tudi drugi. Muzej naj bi bil kraj sprostitve, kjer razum deluje v službi čustev, domišljije, radovednosti, igre.

Grafika ni zadosti opazna. Za angleški prevod so marsikje, na primer pri panoju Družbene skupine, izbrane občutno premajhne črke. Morda bi tudi pri slovenski zbirki veljalo uvesti enostavne misli, reke, pregovore, ki jih obiskovalec hitro prebere, tako kot so jih izpostavili na zunajevropski postavitvi.

### **Slabosti**

Zgornje poročilo o obisku s kanadskimi prijatelji sem napisala zato, da prikažem, kako stalna postavitve deluje, ko si jo ogledamo bolj na hitro. Zgodba razstave postane nepomembna, zanimivi so razstavljeni predmeti. Zato vprašujem avtorje: Ali smemo zgodbo spregledati? Če prav razumem, je cilj razstave pripovedovanje zgodb o bogastvu namenov, za katere so naši predniki izdelovali predmete, jih uporabljali, kako so se predmeti skozi čas in prostor razlikovali in spreminjali oblike. To je zgodba o človeku kot delu narave in kot civiliziranem bitju, ki izdeluje predmete za preživetje in za boljše življenje. Uvodnemu poglavju Predmeti življenja, predmeti poželenja sledijo Voda in zemlja (viri in načini preživljanja), Potrebno in nepotrebno (o porabi), Družbeno in duhovno (družbene skupine, šege, ljudska umetnost). Ta zgodba je zelo intelektualno zastavljena, njen jezik spominja na šolski učbenik. Zato, kot že omenjeno, besedila ne dojamemo, če ga ne beremo zelo zbrano, z logičnim preudarkom. Ali bi bilo mogoče to zgodbo povedati bolj preprosto, morda bolj čustveno? To bi nam obiskovalcem omogočilo, da si z veseljem preberemo besedila, se počutimo na razstavi bolj udobno, se odpremo radovednosti, igrivosti, smo se pripravljeno naučiti kaj novega. Pogrešam poudarke, ki bi osredotočali pozornost; kajti celotna razstava teče enakomerno, brez



napetosti. Vsaka dobra zgodba je nekje proti koncu vedno napeta; ko se izteče, čutimo olajšanje in osvobojenost.

Podobno velja tudi za razstavo Odsev daljnih svetov, ki sicer ima svoje sporočilo tolerance drugosti, tujosti, drugačnosti. Lepo je postavljena, velike barvne fotografije nas predstavijo v tuje okolje, legende so strukturirane, predmeti zanimivi, utemeljeni z njihovimi zbiratelji. Pa vendar me pušča hladno, preveč lahkotno zdrsnem skozi, nič me ne vznemiri, ne preseneti.

## Sklepne misli

Praznino čutim še na enem pomembnem področju: kakšne vrednote ponuja stalna postavitev svojim obiskovalcem? Zapisano je bilo, da želi z razstavljanjem muzealij iz svojih zbirk SEM ustvariti »muzej idej bivanja« oziroma »muzej o ljudeh za ljudi« (Smerdel 1996: 31). To se sliši zelo privlačno. Kot slovenski muzej bi moral govoriti o slovenskih ljudeh, biti prepojen s slovenskimi kraji, značilnostmi in posebnostmi. Pokojni dr. Ivan Sedej je izrazil upanje, »da bomo pomagali oblikovati skupno zavest, ki bo upoštevala in spoštovala vse regionalne in nacionalne specifične, obenem pa odkrivala vse tisto v zgodovini in kulturi, kar nam je skupnega (z drugimi evropskimi narodi – optde)« (Slovenski etnografski muzej 1993: 3).

Kolegi v SEM so strokovnjaki specialisti in kot takšne jih zaposleni po drugih slovenskih muzejih gledamo s pričakovanjem novega, zanimivega, posebnega, prav tistega, do česar se mi v svoji razdrobljenosti na številne dejavnosti nimamo časa in energije dokopati. Z zaupanjem se veselim nadaljevanja stalne postavitve. Za opravljeno delo pa kličem: Čestitam!

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Stalna razstava SEM *Med naravo in kulturo*, foto: N. Žgank, 2006

## BETWEEN BEGINNING AND CONTINUATION

### The first section of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum's permanent exhibition

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*The Slovene Ethnographic Museum is our link between the past and present, traditional and modern culture, our own culture and foreign cultures; it is a venue where we meet our heritage, experience it, reflect about it, enjoy it, and never stop learning about ourselves and others, a place of coexistence with differences, where we wonder about the wisdom of living in harmony with nature. The SEM is our treasure. These are more or less the words used in the publication "The SEM between reality and vision" published in 2001 and well chosen they are. In 2006, we can at last feel relieved and say: Thank God that the SEM can finally start to fulfil its mission not only with a variety of events, but also with a permanent exhibition.*

Of the planned contents, the Ethno-ABC and the Encyclopaedia of Things have been realized with two "Top" objects – the *čupa* (chupa) and *čanca* (chantsa), but in the past five years the concept has been partly changed, because these titles no longer appear, except the Ethno-ABC. The new title *Between Nature and Culture* is, at least at first sight, less appropriate than *Encyclopaedia of Things*, because it is somewhat undefined, set in an intermediate space, and associated with a void. The *Top* objects, which were to attract the visitors' immediate attention, are now included in the Slovene and Non-European installations. The first and second floors are complemented with very interesting occasional exhibitions.

#### **Report of a visit to the exhibition**

*I invited friends from Canada to visit the SEM. As we had a baby in a buggy with us, we went to the third floor by elevator. Although the receptionist had clearly explained in English what was on view, and although I had been in the museum many times before, but had always preferred to take the stairs, we were confused when we arrived at the third floor: should we go left or right? We noticed the posters indicating the viewing direction and the white captions on glass only after exploring both sides. The corners with the *čanca* and Chinese women's shoes were not marked attractively enough to make us enter them, so I had to call attention to them. Only then did we start to read the texts. But as we had two little girls with us, we had to hurry before they got bored.*





*When we reached the end of the exhibition “Between Nature and Culture” and the beginning of the Ethno-ABC, our three-year old and her mother were drawn into it right away. Though the texts are only in Slovene, it was fun to open drawers and peek into showcases, but we failed to grasp how to use the computer demonstration of the sounds of folk instruments. Coming to the parlour games in the centre of the room, the one-year old demanded to be let out of the buggy to play, pushing wooden tokens in the holes of the ludo board. We did not care the absence of English texts.*

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*We then continued quite happily among the showcases with objects of folk art; we admired products made of the most different materials – including curd! We quickly passed through the rest of the exhibition because of the overall lack of English translations, but stopped at the floor “windows” to explore the variety of natural materials. In the costume section my friends were enticed by the extensible drawers illustrating decorating techniques. Another interesting section was that of jewellery and the collection of headwear. Being descendants of immigrants to the New World, my friends carefully examined the exhibited old passports. The čupa made one of them wonder if it was really seaworthy as it looked so unstable. But he understood when I showed him the photograph of a čupa at sea. We finished our tour of the exhibition at its beginning but that did not bother us. Because of the little girls we could not view the multivision presentation. We recognized the Ribnica toy horses – whistles they were given last year and walked the stairs down to the second floor carrying the buggy.*

*The painted chests were highly interesting and the two girls ran to and fro constantly asking questions, and we also compared the furniture of the Old World and the New World. We managed to remain focused throughout the exhibition of domestic craft products, but quite selectively. After one hour and 45 minutes we were glad to drop into the chairs under the sycamores of the museum’s restaurant. We had a bit of fun, when the waitress ensured us that the “Karst sandwiches” featuring on the men, would be available “tomorrow”, and that she could offer us only ordinary ham toast. But when she brought the children toys, we were quite satisfied. Reviewing our impressions, we concluded that we had seen quite a lot of interesting things, but that the legends were not always adequate and that our general impression was a bit confused. The legends were however better in the Non-European exhibition. I also had to explain that the SEM is only one of five big museums in Ljubljana, that they could view archaeological finds in the National Museum, and paintings in the National and Modern galleries.*

## **Strength, opportunities, wicknesses, and threats of the present permanent exhibition of the SEM**

### **Strength**

The idea that “the permanent installation consists of several units which are each a separate exhibition and can be viewed either individually or in the intended order” is in line with G.H. Riviere’s “ATP style” (*Arts et traditions populaires*) (Smerdel 1996: 34, 33), and is a plus point of the exhibition as it lets the visitors choose what they want to view. At the same time, the dynamics of the communication between the visitors and





the exhibition is greater than in a single vast exhibition, which risks that the panels and showcases are not well arranged but structured like a never-ending thread. Moreover, a museum is a consecrated space where we look for tranquillity and relaxation and this is best achieved by smaller exhibition units, which do not require major efforts to understand the message(s).

Another strength are the rich and extensive collections of the SEM, and the chosen concept endeavours to make full use of them by exhibiting a great variety of objects. The objects take us to the people who lived before us and this makes the exhibition *Between Nature and Culture* particularly attractive and enticing. The objects are arranged in meaningful units, enabling the visitor to explore and learn. The video material complements the exhibits and draws attention to their use and production, something the showcases, of course, cannot present. Excellent concept!

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Another major strength of the new permanent exhibition is the selected principle of exhibiting “objects as they function”, putting similar objects together – hunting accessories, agricultural tools, craft products and tools, headwear, jewellery, decorating techniques, etc. This arrangement makes the visitor reflect on the relationship between form and purpose in the past and present. For this very reason, objects from the late 20<sup>th</sup> century are added to the costumes. They play a very interesting role: they attract the visitor because he immediately notices the modern object among the numerous old ones, recognizes its function, and then associates the other objects with the same purpose. One might say that they attract attention and help to connect the visitor to the exhibited material through the experience he has with a particular known object. The chosen manner of exhibiting them is a fine, unobtrusive interpretation of museum objects.

Quite interesting are the floor “*windows*”. The exhibited material provokes curiosity, stimulates the exploring spirit, and provides playful encounters with nature to children of all ages.

The multivision, too, is a very pleasant and enriching experience for everyone who takes the time for it. Technology plays an invaluable role in the presentation of the intangible culture heritage from the Slovene ethnic territory. At the end of the exhibition I was quite proud to live in Slovenia.

A wonderful plus point of the exhibition is the Ethno-ABC. This really is a corner meant for exploration, discovering, and playing as it is advertised by the SEM; it makes you forget completely about everyday life as it draws you into its own world. Bravo!

### Opportunities

We do believe, of course, that every curator selected the best objects from the collection in his or her care. Nevertheless, I did expect more material, especially of the kind which I know to be typical of Gorenjska from the collection in my own care, and colleagues from other parts of Slovenia may share the same feeling. My first impression thus was: Is this all? But what did I really expect? Galleries full of objects from the depots as we imagined from the announcements, considering the exhibition spaces seemed quite vast. Were they reduced by the designers? To be fair it must be said that half of one floor is occupied by the Non-European collections and the Ethno-ABC. To



honour the museum's mission both are equally necessary as is the presentation of the Slovene collections. When I think of the crammed depots in my own museum, I often ask myself how many square metres would be needed to put most of the objects on view to the public instead of being locked up, "confiscated" as it were. However, these reflections may be a good opportunity and incentive for a more than overdue discussion on the collections in our care.

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Objects need a lot of accompanying information, because only experts can *read* it from them directly. They also require a suitable environment to tell their story. The best solution was adopted in the presentation of costumes, where the texts on the showcases generate reflections on the meaning of dressing; brochures are laid out on the table and chair, presenting all the exhibited items and individual stories on dressing images and the components of costumes; individual sheets with these stories, which the visitor can take home, are available on the shelves. The selection of objects is well thought-out and takes us on the wings of imagination in *Necessary and Unnecessary*. The opportunity to add information in one or another way is also a challenge to the curators of the other sections of the installation.

Another welcome opportunity for the visitor are the screens with video collages, recorded and put together in interesting ways and functioning as windows to the life of the exhibited objects. Everyone who has a deeper interest in an individual theme will stop in front of them and this requires legends to inform the visitors what is shown on individual screens and to let them chose contents to their liking. In the wealth of information provided by the permanent exhibition it is easy to overlook them.

### **Wicknesses**

The biggest wicknesses of the exhibition are the uncompleted legends, where I would like to see the names of the places in Slovenia, and divisions referring to periods and development stages. Quite a lot of English translations are still missing, as well as the contents of the video collages and explanations accompanying the exhibited objects (except with the costumes). The story of every museum object, even if only in a few words, telling its name, place and time of origin, is invaluable, because the plus point of the SEM's installation lies precisely in it numerous interesting collections; these do attract us and it is about them that we would like to learn as much as possible. The story of the objects runs below the story of the exhibition, explains, enriches and widens it, because it places the objects in time and space. The visitor can, of course, experience the exhibition without legends, but rather vaguely and using his imagination. With such a vast number of objects, adding legends is, of course, a very demanding task, which often conflicts with the exhibition's aesthetics, but we should not despair in searching for solutions.

This shortcoming is made worse by the poor level of understanding of the stories and messages, but this can be improved with reasonable efforts and expenses. The texts in the exhibition *Between Nature and Culture* are too academic in places and require high concentration to understand them; most visitors therefore ignore them. It would be a good idea to test them on primary school pupils to see if they understand them.



If they do, then so will adults. A museum should be a place of relaxation, where the mind operates in support of feelings, imagination, curiosity, and play.

The graphics in the exhibition do not stand out well enough. The chosen font for the English translations is often much too small, for instance in the panel *Social Groups*. It might be a good idea to introduce single-sentence thoughts, proverbs, and the like to the Slovene collections, of the kind the visitor can read quickly as in the Non-European installation.

### Threats

I wrote the above report on my visit with Canadian friends to illustrate how effective the permanent exhibition is when it is viewed fairly quickly. The story of the exhibition becomes meaningless and only the exhibited objects are interesting. I would there put 237 it to the curators: Should we neglect the story? If I understand correctly, the aim of the exhibition is to tell stories about the rich varieties of purposes for which our ancestors made objects and used them, how these objects differed in time and space, and how their forms changed. It is a story about man as part of nature and as a civilised being, who makes objects to survive and for a better life. The introductory chapter *Objects of Life, Objects of Longing* is followed by *Water and Earth* (sources and ways of making a living), *Necessary and Unnecessary* (on consumption), *Social and Spiritual Life* (social groups, customs, folk art). The story's concept is quite intellectual and its language reminds of a text-book. It is therefore difficult to understand the texts if we do not read them fully focused and with a logical approach. Would it not be possible to tell this story in simpler terms, and perhaps with a little emotion added? That would make the visitors enjoy reading the texts, make them feel more at home at the exhibition, open up to curiosity, playfulness, willing to learn something new. I also miss certain emphasises which would draw one's attention, because the entire exhibition runs evenly and without any tension. Every good story turns tense towards the end; and when it ends we feel relieved, liberated.

Things are similar with the exhibition *Reflections of Faraway Worlds* and its message of tolerance towards what is different or foreign. It is installed very well, the big colour photographs easily take us to foreign environments, the legends are well structured, the objects interesting and explained in reference to their collectors. Nevertheless, the exhibition fails to excite any emotion, it is viewed far too easily, without any excitement or surprise.

### Conclusions

I also felt a void in another important area: what are the values the permanent exhibition offers its visitors? It has been written that SEM would like to create - by exhibiting the objects from its collections - a "museum of ideas about dwelling" or "a museum about people and for people" (Smerdel 1996: 31). This sounds very attractive. As a Slovene museum, it should tell us about Slovene people, be full of names of Slovene places, characteristics, and specifics. The late Dr. Ivan Sedej expressed his wishes about the future permanent exhibition in these words: "... to help create a common awareness



*observing and respecting all regional and national specific features, and at the same time reveal everything in history and culture which we have in common (with other European nations, author's note)" (Slovenski etnografski muzej 1993: 3).*

Our colleagues in the SEM are experts and specialists and as such the curators ethnologists from other Slovene museums expect from them novelties, interesting, special approaches, in fact everything we, torn between so many diverse activities, never have the time nor energy to achieve. It is with confidence and joyful expectations that I await the continuation of the permanent exhibition. For everything that has been achieved by now I have only one word: Congratulations!

#### BESEDA O AVTORICI

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