

MUSEUM ACTIVITY ON THE COAST

The four hundred year-old palace of the Belgramoni-Tacco family which has been housing our museum from World War I, is currently undergoing a complete renovation. The old-fashioned rooms were inadequate and the lack of space has hindered any normal work. (the Regional Archive fund had to be moved elsewhere).

The decision for the adaptation of the museum is based on two points:

- first monument conservation should preserve and accentuate basic qualities of the building which represents a historical object*
- second, collections, depots and working space should be logically and clearly arranged in a way which is necessary for a modern museum activity and which enables normal working conditions and also the necessary protection of all the artifacts*

As a result of this renovation the museum will acquire showrooms for permanent collections. At last it will be possible to present and arrange our collection in a new way which – for the first time in the history of this museum – systematically and consistently deals with the past of the Slovene part of Istria. This concept takes into account all of the ethnical, economical, cultural and political particularities which have been preserved in this most western part of Slovenia. Above all we will in detail present local history dating from the "Meeting at Rižana" assembly of Istrian towns in 804), prewar revolutionary movement, Liberation war and post-war socialist construction.

First of all we are trying to reorganize our museum so it could finally attain its specific function as a special medium representing the demonstration of various museum activities.

Simultaneously with the above-mentioned renovation we will also try to solve the problems of the ethnological collection which will acquire adequate rooms – concerning the environment as well – in a renovated Gothic house at Gramscijev trg in Koper. The building is being restored by the Institute For Monument Conservation in Piran.

As far as ethnology is concerned, the museum has been existing without an adequate professional representation for a long time. The artefacts of Istrian culture are being stored in depots or warehouses without any conservation or even in situ. Rarely we succeed in exhibiting them publicly.

The new concept of exhibiting various ethnological material includes rural as well as urban culture (way of life) in the Slovene part of Istria from the beginning of the 19th century up to the present time. The ground floor will house a permanent exhibit with the historical and geographical description of the territory which is under our supervision. On other floors we will prepare periodical exhibits, events and lectures.

I have to stress the fact that this is going to be the first independent local ethnological department in Slovenia. Therefore the Slovene Ethnological Society elected a special committee which will supervise the arrangement of the collection.

The pedagogical program will enable the cooperation of pupils as well as other citizens, especially regarding the demonstration of various trades. In such a way we will try to achieve two things: first to present these trades directly, together with visitors, and second to encourage the interest for Istrian spiritual culture which is reflected also through the exhibited artifacts.

In order to bring our cultural heritage closer to our society, we will have to strongly reinforce the relations with the public which would undoubtedly cooperate during concrete actions. Therefore we will sometimes have to, of course, abandon our exceptionally incomprehensible "professional language" and express our meaning in a more general and understandable manner. Thus we will also make use of various visual media, the living picture being much more clear than tedious articles.

In such a way we will try to break the traditional reserve of museums.

The program of our museum also includes an organization of a local museum collection in Dekani. This idea was first expressed in 1979 when Dekani celebrated their five hundred-year anniversary and prepared a local publication. This village has a very interesting past which was expressed especially in the second half of the 19th century through an extraordinary rise of national awareness and awakening. During that time a reading society opened in Dekani and an elaborate educational system was introduced. To present Dekani and the surrounding country in the best possible way, we will exhibit the material which represents the last decades of the 19th century and enrich it with various ethnical characteristics of the village.

An extensive ethnological program has been planned also in Pomorski muzej in Piran which specializes in nautics, fishing and salt-making. Last year the collaborators of the museum – alongside with various changes within the museum itself – restored and rearranged the dislocated department of Splošna plovba in Portorož. The exhibit shows various ship models owned by the Splošna plovba Company which are named after Slovene towns. The exhibited models are supplemented by historical and geographical descriptions and ethnological objects which are significant for that particular town.

The exhibit also includes various objects which were donated to the Splošna plovba Company by its business partners. These objects reflect particularities of numerous national, ethnic and social groups from almost the whole world. Most of them came from Africa, Asia and North America.

In the hall various sport awards, diplomas, memorial tablets and emblems of Splošna plovba are exhibited, dating from the time of its foundation up to the present.

The program of Pomorski muzej also includes the arrangement of a fishing exhibit in Isola till 1985. The development of the sea fishing will be presented chronologically and thematically, starting with the use of the simplest implements and tools, then continuing with the start and development of industrial fishing up to today's modern technology of fishing and industrial processing of fish. Along with this technical inventory the museum will try to present the way of life of local fishermen.

Geographically this collection will include the whole Slovene coastal ethnic territory and will also include the territory up to the town of Gradež which is now in Italy.

The Institute for Monument Conservation in Piran has finished the adaptation and restoration of a country house in Raven – Gorela. The building is now under the supervision of Pomorski muzej and is currently the only independent object in the Slovene part of Istria. Next year it will be opened for public.

The ground floor will house a reconstruction of a torklja (an olive mill). This rare device will be supplemented by photographic material. Visitors will become acquainted with the way this mill operated with the aid of various drawings.

On the upper floor the life of an Istrian oljar or oljkar (oilman) will be presented as authentically as possible. The room in which people at one time lived during the day will have an open hearth with all the necessary belongings and kitchen implements. In the bedroom the country furniture from the end of the 19th century will be exhibited.

The courtyard and the surroundings of the house will acquire their final form later.

Thus we hope that a brighter future is awaiting the Slovene coastal museums as well as all the professionals who protect our cultural heritage.

*ZVONA CIGLIČ
The Koper Museum*