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The Museum Device. Notes from the making of an exhibition

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ABSTRACT

This is an article about the making of an exhibition as a device*. "Connections: Objects in relation and context" was intended to be more as a tool of research rather than a well established museum exhibition. By selecting hundred and seven objects from all the collections, archives and stores of the museum, ir- respectively of their origin and status, this exhibition functioned as a fragment that reflects the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant as a whole, with its complicated institutional pasts, present tensions and curatorial crises.

Introduction

“Connections: Objects in relation and context” was a temporary exhibition held at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant (NMRP)¹ which aimed at displaying various and apparently disentangled objects from the museum’s stores, collections and archives in a participatory and critical way.

The one hundred and seven objects in the exhibition belong to almost all the museum’s collections which reflect the controversial past of the institution.² Visitors were asked to create their own association of objects, using image replicas of the ‘real’ objects, and consequently do their own small exhibitions. Therefore, the exhibition aimed at underlining the politics of aesthetics and the implications of collecting, selecting, documenting and exhibiting objects in a public institution.

By describing how the exhibition was staged by the curators and perceived by the visitors, this article discusses two facets of the making of an exhibition that normally go unexplored in the museographic and critical discourse: the behind-the-scenes issues of the exhibition making process and the visitors’ responses to a cultural event. By doing this exhibition exercise, visitors were implicated in a process of reflecting on and re-writing the history, as well as the use of the collections in their own understanding. Therefore, the official discourse of the mu-

KEYWORDS

archive, museum, deposit, exhibition design, visitors’ study



The opening of the exhibition in the temporary exhibition space “Irina Nicolau”

seum was challenged by the multiple social discourses of the participants.

Research and concept

The name of the exhibition “Connections: Objects in relation and context” was intended to express this act of viewing and engaging with objects while visiting an exhibition. The visitors themselves decided which of the objects on display interested them most and what connections to make. They also had the opportunity to explaining the reasons for their choices. In this way, not only they were free to make their own claims, but also, the curator was able to investigate the ways in which visitors placed the museum’s objects, and to a great extent their own lives, into the personal exhibitions.

*) The device according to Brian Holmes (2006) is “agencement”, or a tool that helps “for the articulation of collective speech”. (...) “The device, as Foucault says, is the system of relations between all its heterogeneous elements. But it is also the singular instance where those relations break down, reorganize themselves, turn to other purposes.” (Holmes, ... page 2) As I will show in this paper, the exhibition that I organized managed somehow to be an articulation of a collective speech and a voice for the visitors of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant.

1) The exhibition took place between 26th May and 12th June 2011 at the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant and was part of my PhD in Visual Anthropology at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

2) Some collections are official and the objects included here have registration numbers and documents attached to them. These collections include only folk objects from the previous museum institutions: Museum of Folk Art (Muzeul de Artă Populară) and The Museum of National Art. Contrary to the first mentioned category, there are some objects which are not considered to be proper collections, but more deposits/stores where items have received only partially numbers of registration. Usually these so called "stores" contain objects from museums of communism which previously inhabited this building.

3) The Museum of Folk Art is the translation of the Romanian "Muzeul de Artă Populară"; it opened in 1952 after the collections of the The National Museum of Art were moved to other institutions in Bucharest. The collection of ethnographic objects became the main focus of this museum. Despite ▶

My interest in exhibition making and museum design stems from the belief that the method employed in the research and collection of objects influences the way the objects are presented (there is a broad literature on this subject, see for example Fabian 2002 and Hann 2007).

The curator's choice to make an exhibition to include certain objects and not others is, of course, a matter of selection and taste which, according to Bourdieu (1984) is the product of education and culture. But an exhibition making in a certain epoch can also be understood as a display of visual signs, what Rancière calls the "distribution of the sensible" that leads to a certain "form of visibility" with political implications. In his *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rancière states that:

"I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts. This apportionment of parts and positions is based on a distribution of spaces, times, and forms of activity that determines the very manner in which something in common lends itself to participation and in what way various individuals have a part in this distribution."
—Rancière, 2004: 12

In this quote, museum curators are the distributors of parts and positions of museum's collections. By selecting what to include or not in an exhibition and how to do this, they actually distribute their "sensible." Their way of allocating parts and positions comes from deciding which objects to include as well as if and how to disclose the objects' past in the exhibitions. These museum curators create certain "forms of visibility" and not others: by the objects included and the way these objects are arranged in the space and time, they in fact select what story to tell about the peasants. Moreover, museum's

objects have temporalities inscribed in them and speak of pasts as well as the memory of the past. For example, an iron alpaca spoon fabricated as mass production for commuting workers in the 50s, 60s and 70s tells a different story than a carved wooden spoon from the 19th century.

"The essence of politics consists in interrupting the distribution of the sensible by supplementing it with those who have no part in the perceptual coordinates of the community, thereby modifying the very aesthetic-political field of possibility."
—Rancière, 2004: 3

Consequently, what a community decides is also part of what the museum as a public institution and its forms of visibility decide to make visible. For example, if the objects in a Museum of Folk Art³ are displayed chronologically (from the Iron Age to present times) and thematically (according to materials and techniques, i.e. pottery, iron, glass, wood) in different rooms, the visitor will take from it a very particular message. On this chronological organization, one may see the continuation of crafts in a certain region and an evolutionary account whose explanatory scheme also includes the present-day rural Romania. Displaying objects following aesthetic associations has a different impact and message for the visitor. Clearly, this latter case does not lead to historical comparisons and explanations, but more to an emphasis on national motives and national mythologies.

Rooms, glass cases and labels are not only forms of visibility, but also tools that organize the mind and understanding of the visitor. In keeping with Pinney and his thoughts on archival material, I would say that objects in archives, collections and museum exhibitions function as a "vast linguistic grid" disciplining the multiplicity of meanings inscribed in those objects by providing them with a "structuring certainty" indicative of a particular world view (Weinrich, 2011).

How museums provide a grid through which to view the world is one of the major findings of my research into this museum's complicated history. Its collections were ac-

quired and exhibited differently from one period to the next, from 1906⁴ to the present day. Their location and content changed, and they were enriched or scattered in order for a new generation to accumulate new collections as the former Museum of Folk Art (Muzeul de Artă Populară) or as previous museums of communist party⁵ did, when inhabited the present building. The result is that the collections of the NMRP today not only contain ‘old’, ‘traditional’ ethnographic objects, but also ‘artisan’ objects made by artists and co-operatives, ethnographic objects from other socialist countries as well as objects previously exhibited in the Lenin-Stalin Museum and The Museum of the Communist Party. Its visual archives contain the works of many different photographers, including Iosif Ber- man. The collection of images by the latter features pictures of the royal family as well as images from various projects of Dimitrie Gusti’s school of sociology⁶. Consequently, given the richness and variety of these collections, deciding what and how to make an exhibition today is not only an aesthetic and curatorial process. It also affects the distribution of the sensible in the public sphere and the organization of certain forms of visibility that lead to political outcomes. In keeping with Rancière, I would say I am more interested in the politics of aesthetics, and less in the aestheticization of politics.

The status of curatorship as a political domain is also emphasized by the fact that the museum became a site of curatorial conflict following the deaths of the artist Horia Bernea in 2000 and Irina Nicolau three years later: some members of the museum staff wanted to change few of the rooms the museum’s permanent display, as had been done in the early 1990s, mainly by Horia Bernea himself and his team⁷, while others resisted the endeavour (Gheorghiu, 2010; Mihailescu, 2011). Since then the museum and its past have become an even more interesting place for research in the field of art and politics, as this curatorial conflict is yet to be resolved after so many years: the permanent exhibition is still on display, untouched but undergoing attempts to transform it.



Display

In the previous paragraphs I argued that the display function as a distribution of the curator’s sensible and as a form of visibility with political implications.

In the case of this exhibition project, each person involved in the selection of objects, their documentation and display were in fact proposing a specific “form of visibility”.

And since the objects included in the exhibition, were not only decided by me, but by researchers, curators and museographers in the museum, they were also generators of the possibilities from which the visitors could have chosen the objects.

Aware of the curatorial conflict in the institution from the last years and believing that “things” are usually better communicators than people (see, for example, Latour 2005), it was my hope that an exhibition focused on objects⁸ from the museum’s collections and their stories would function as a parliament of the objects’ and the peoples’ voices. The included objects were suggested by the people involved in researching the exhibition, people also belonging to most of the departments engaged in the storage and preservation of the objects themselves and exhibition design; on the top of that I added also some objects not mentioned by the museum employees, objects which are part of stores and collections not usually used for exhibitions at this museum.⁹ My attempt was to include at least one object from all the collections and the stores that this museum detains. I counted nine collections and three archives, all of which had researchers and curatorial staff at-

Associations of objects

3) ▶ this, I sometimes have the impression that the correct translation of the museum’s name should be the Museum of People’s Art or the Museum of Popular Art because it was opened in 1952 when Romania was a People’s Republic – Republica Populară România. The adjective “popular” in the expression “popular art” suggests something intended to be consumed by ordinary people. Its exhibits, in the first years after the instauration of the popular democratic regime contained also references to contemporary products made for popular use (see the for e.g. Bănăţeanu, 1957).

4) In 1906, Carol I, the first king of Romania, officially approved the building of the museum.

5) For a detailed genealogy of the successive names and institutions of The Party Museum and its predecessors, see Bădică, 2010.

6) Dimitrie Gusti had led the Bucharest School of Sociology which integrated many students and scholars from different social and humanistic fields. Between 1925 and 1948, teams of students and researchers did intense fieldwork of Romanian villages and published the ▶

A visitor searches for the text and the magnetic replica.



► Objects in the exhibition room. A long wooden dowry chest.



6) ► results as detailed monographs.

7) My research indicates that the rooms in the museum that nearly closed on several occasions were mainly curated by Irina Nicolau more or less under the supervision of Horia Bernea.

8) I will still refer to 'things' as objects because the people at the museum use this term. In Romanian the word for thing is "*lucru*", which always means "work".

9) the 'Various' collection (which in the past was known as the 'Artisan' collection and which contains objects collected in the 1950s and 60s by former employees of Museum of Folk Art (Interview with N.P. and D.C).

tached to them. Not all the collections were considered of equal status. Some contain heritage items, have records and files for each of the objects, while others simply contain objects with no inventory numbers: 1. Light Costumes and Heavy Costumes; 2. Textiles; 3. Tapestry; 4. Ceramics; 5. Wood, Iron and Glass; 6. Icons; 7. Various; 8. Examples; and, 9. *Furnica* ("The Ant") with the more recently added subtitle "The Archive of the Present Day". The three archives were: The Archive of the Party Museum; The Visual Archive and The Music Archive.

The temporary exhibition space called "Irina Nicolau" consists of two very high and large rooms. All the museum employees said that these rooms will need quite a number of objects. Every piece of cloth and every picture were counted, and the main argument was about the space: the rooms were so large that they would swallow up the few objects on display. The feeling of large space is also added by the fact the museum does not normally invest in exhibition furniture or other means of display that would occupy and organize the space (which sometimes is not a minus, but a provoking condition for innovative means of display). On the other hand, the status of the ethnographic object as meaningful only if exhibited in a series of other objects from the same category lends itself to an accumulation of objects.

"The exhibition should contain at least one hundred objects," said everybody who knew of the project. And this is how it really ended up having one hundred and seven objects, even if originally I planned for maximum fifty.

Many ideas of display were suggested, and I opted for what I considered the simplest and the most appropriate: the objects were exhibited aligned one after the other, against/ on the white walls of the two exhibition rooms.

Two exceptions to this rule were accepted: two glass cases holding several small and fragile objects were installed in the entrance room, and a dowry chest was displayed in the second room. All the objects were carefully photographed and each individual photograph was cut to relevant shape and attached to a magnetic strip. These 'magnetic' replicas of the three-dimensional objects were placed together with a short description of the objects' history in a cupboard near each of the real objects on display.

In the middle of the large room we have placed a long wooden dowry chest from *Budureasa*, a region in northwest Romania famous for its many types of wooden chests in 19th and 20th centuries.

Accordingly, for each object chosen I searched among the data sheets and files, donation records and other visually complementary materials. All of these objects had smaller or larger texts displayed near them. These texts were then placed in files taken from a filing cabinet from an archive. I wanted to use the text to talk about the silent objects in the collections and about their past. Among wooden chairs, folk costumes, spoons, ceramics and shoes, I interspersed a few examples of objects which contrasted with the appearance of the permanent exhibition. I was guided by the suggestion of Georges Henri Riviere, who stated that "the

temporary exhibit has to potentate the plurality of the values that the permanent one has¹⁰ (-., 1989: 256). His observation also led me to avoid using objects from the Icons collection, mainly because most of the icons were already exhibited in the museum's permanent exhibition rooms, though also because of their fragile condition.

By associating the real object with a particular visual and affordable version (the printed image with the magnetic strip attached) and by placing them in cupboards I wanted to stress the relationship between this particular curatorial project and the idea of the archive. More than that, I also wanted to give the visitors the freedom to read and associate the objects as they wanted.

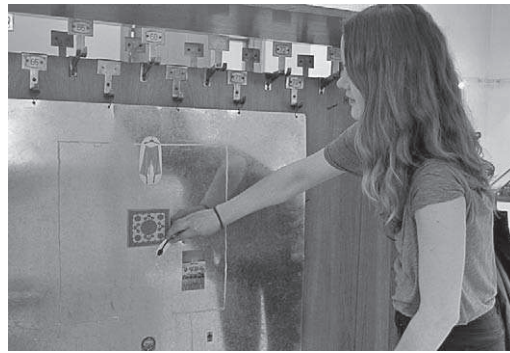
In order to create the intended form of participant exhibition, each visitor was asked to choose some of the objects/images (preferably at least three) and make their own small exhibition on two metal surfaces positioned at the entrance to the gallery. Then, if they wanted to participate further, I also asked them to explain the connections they made between the objects.

Visitors

From the total number of one hundred fifty visitors¹¹ who entered the exhibition, ninety wanted to make their own exhibition on the metal board and use the object replicas, while about seventy wanted to also write down an explanation for their choices.

I do not intend here to address the visits,¹² albeit in the future analysis of this subject could prove interesting. What I do want to focus on is the qualitative data I gathered from the people who participated in the exhibition.

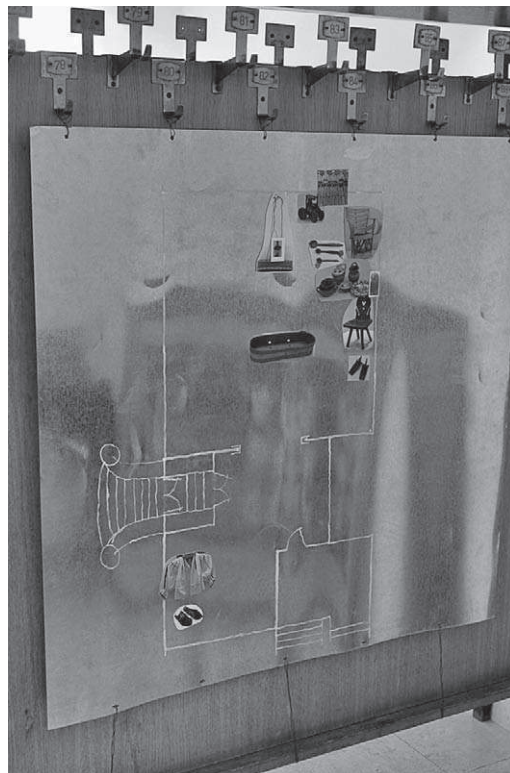
About one fifth of the participants created associations between the objects in a manner similar to the one found in the permanent exhibition rooms. For example, antique peasant objects, wooden spoons, ceramic plates and pots were placed on a table in an arrangement suggestive of eating practices. Fewer created connections according to the materiality of the objects chosen, bringing together baskets and iron structures, irre-



Visitor making her own exhibition on the metal board

spective of their country of origin. The majority connected objects in order to tell the story of their childhood or of what they considered to be the 'Romanian peasant.' People used the images without taking into consideration the actual provenience of the objects in the exhibition. What was important for them was what they wanted to represent.

The text accompanying the painting with the agricultural engineer in the crops did not appear to be of any interest to the people who used it in their exhibitions. The text (in Romanian) says:



10) The museum has two floors: The ground floor is named the "Christian Law" floor. With the exception of three rooms specifically dedicated to the theme/symbol of the cross, the ground floor also contains a room called Windows (initially called "The cross is everywhere"), a small space arranged as a monk's room in a monastery, and the Time, "Icons I" (wood painted icons) and "Icons II" (glass painted icons) rooms. The second floor is named "The Law of the Land". It hosts spaces that opened after 1995, such as the Triumph, House within a House, Earth, Water and Fire rooms containing a huge windmill and a room dedicated to spiritual and material nourishment. The basement contains two rooms hosting the Plague: Political Installation exhibition. This exhibition is supposed to describe the collectivization of the peasants. However, it does not do this properly and instead contains objects from the collection/the room of The Archive of The Party Museum at the NMRP.

11) The NMRP charges for entrance to the permanent exhibition, while the ▶

Exhibitions on metal board

11) ▶ temporary exhibitions are free. According to museum policy, people employed by or working with the museum do not enjoy free entrance, and as a result I decided to count them separately. Around 90 free entrance tickets were handed out at the entrance to the exhibition. To this number I would add all the museum staff, volunteers and regular partners of the museum, who came to the exhibition during the official opening (around 40) as well as over the following fifteen days (a further 20–30).

Painting of several men in the crops: collectivization. (photo by Alice Ionescu)



▶ Pair of trousers from Korea (photo by Alice Ionescu)

12) During the entire 16 days, the NMRP was visited by more than 1600 visitors (Interview RM). During the same period a fair was also held in the museum's rear courtyard. Of these visitors, only 10 visited the temporary exhibition after being invited by volunteers to join. Many of the museum's staff claimed that the museum's public relations were not well run, a fact also recognized by some of the museum directors. On reaching the museum's main entrance, visitors do not find a map of the museum and its exhibitions, ▶

“*Painting of an [agricultural] engineer among the crops. It comes from the unofficial store called “Room 45”, where it was kept until very recently together with other objects left over from the museums of communism which inhabited the building between 1952–1989. These objects still lack an inventory number, but after some of them featured in a number of foreign exhibitions and became the subject of research, they appear to have regained the status of unique items and museum objects among curators in the museum.*”

An object frequently chosen by visitors was a pair of pink silk trousers. Owing to their colour and the type of material from which they were made, they contrasted with the majority of other objects in the room.

However, those who chose the pair of trousers did not seem to be attracted in particular by their appearance, but rather by the story (or part thereof) attached to them:

“*Pair of trousers from Korea. This object is traditionally worn by a boy and comes from the Foreign Countries collection, which was set up by the director of the museum during the first decade of the communist regime. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Museum of Folk Art received and made donations of ethnographic objects to and from other, mainly socialist countries from all over the world. In this way, objects such as this found their way into museum's collections, but have never since been used.*”



Many young visitors, some of them artists, chose this object and placed it somehow centrally within the layout of the room on the board. The objects chosen to communicate with this pair of trousers were mostly a basket from Korea and a “Romanian” wooden stool made from a single branch of tree. People appeared to find the same type of simplicity and beauty in all three objects.

Another heavily used image was that of a carpet with a portrait of the national poet, Mihai Eminescu, weaved into it. This portrait, probably weaved into the carpet at a communist production cooperative, was not used by visitors as if it were just a carpet featuring a portrait of Eminescu, but as Eminescu himself. This use of the object leads to understanding that people working with these



◀ Tapestry with the portrait of Mihai Eminescu and three young visitors (photo by Ana-Maria Iuga)

12) ▶ neither in Romanian nor any other language. Those there for the first time are unaware of the existence of the museum shop, restaurant and temporary exhibition rooms.

two-dimensional images (representations of the objects) worked in a totally different manner than they would have done had they been working with the objects themselves.

This object comes from a collection initially labelled “Artisan” and which, after 1989, was re-named Miscellaneous/Various. Before the official opening of the exhibition, the new director of the museum told me disapprovingly that he considered this a kitsch object and was not very comfortable with it being part of the exhibition.

This portrait was the subject of a long and passionate discussion between two visitors. Both were artists and specialists in textiles. We discussed what was authentic and what was kitsch in the composition of the carpet. Based on the techniques used, the conclusion was that these kinds of textiles were the work of artists and not peasants at a production cooperative.

A small ceramic statue of a ballerina dressed in green also proved quite a popular item, especially in terms of notions of childhood.

This was one of the objects with a long label attached, saying:

“*This object comes from a collection of objects called The Archive of the Present Time, which was established in the 1990s by Irina Nicolau, an ethnologist who worked at the museum at the time. In much of her work at the museum she showed a desire to collect and introduce into the museum’s collection and its permanent exhibition a greater number of present-day peasant objects that originated somewhere between rural and urban space and some of which she herself also considered to be too kitsch. The ballerina came with a very long and*

interesting story from the person who collected and donated it. “This special collection is not deposited in proper storage conditions alongside the other traditional ethnographic objects and the life history of some of these objects probably intertwines with that of the conventional museum object in its singularity.”

It seems most people did not bother to read the labels. In contrast, they seemed to prefer the magnetic replicas in order to exhibit their ideas or passions. For example, a lady asked me if she could take a few magnets to use on her refrigerator door at home. As an anthropologist who envisaged the exhibition with a certain type of consumption in mind, I was more than happy to allow this. She said she very much enjoys playing with magnets on her fridge, and that she would find it even more interesting and ironic to have some magnets featuring ethnographic objects from the museum where she spent most of her childhood as the daughter of a museum curator.



Ceramic ballerina (photo by Alice Ionescu)

13) Alpaca is a very soft and cheap metal from which forks and knives used to be made, especially in the rural areas of Romania, before 1989. I remember attending a wedding in the early 1990s near the Romanian city of Buzău. The cutlery was so soft the forks would bend. People used to eat the first dish with these alpaca spoons and forks, and before starting the next dish the cutlery was 'washed' in corn flour and bent back into shape.

14) More recent objects and kitsch objects are exhibited in the permanent exhibition rooms called "Windows" and "Time" rooms curated by Irina Nicolau and subject of the curatorial debate: to be closed or to be left as they were made initially. In this room I often heard visitors saying the objects resemble the ones they used to have in their homes.

15) Over the last six years a number of conferences on the 'recent peasant' were held at the museum by the former director, Vintila Mihailescu. However, this trend was not also followed by acquisitions of 'recent objects' from 'recent peasants'.

The list of examples continues. Some who visited the exhibition corrected me on different information. They argued they knew that the costume adorning the mannequin with the flag of Romania was from Târnave and not from Sibiu, while the apron on display was from Oaş and not from Maramureş. Some were glad to see a photo by Iosif Ber- man of two important right wing political leaders from the interwar period (Antonescu and Horia Sima), and congratulated me for displaying it. They offered personal reasons for choosing this particular picture from the exhibition, pointing out the cultural and educational measures taken in the 1940s that had an effect on rural life.

In all the feedback received, it seemed that neither the ethnic identity of the objects (Romanian, Gipsy/ Roma, Hungarian or Turkish) nor their actual provenience or value (for example, two glasses containing the portrait of King Carol II) was of any importance for the visitors. What was important instead was the possibility to integrate these objects into personal stories.

I will end this paper with what a 20-year-old man and his girlfriend told me after visiting the exhibition. He entered the exhibition and quickly picked up the replica of a tractor and asked: 'Where is the alpacca spoon?'¹³ while looking confused and angry. I told

him there was no metal cutlery or any such spoons in the museum's stores; there were only wooden spoons, and some more recent plates¹⁴. Then he insisted: "How can you exhibit a peasant without including a pair of rubber boots, an iron plate or the basic alpaca spoon?"

I told him about the radio (speaker) and about the ceramic tractor (in fact this was the only object he chose for his own exhibition), but he was still unconvinced. He stood there with the image of this tractor in his hands and seemed genuinely upset that a national museum exhibiting peasant culture does not own recent objects and peasant figures. In other words, how could a museum like this represent peasants without also showing the essential tools and everyday objects peasants used over the last seventy years?

This young man was a builder by trade and originally from a town in northeast Romania. He acknowledged that this was his very first visit to the museum. As I told him, the exhibition was made using only the objects from the museum's collections and archives. And this museum, like most other ethnographic and anthropological museums, at some point ceased in being interested in collecting more recent or present-day items that reflected rural life. Peasants in Romania never looked like those on display¹⁵.

Conclusion

I started this article by drawing attention to the eclectic array of objects found in the collections, stores and archives of The National Museum of the Romanian Peasant. Some were part of the 'permanent' display or official well cared collections, while others were stores objects, kept silenced by not having an inventory number or by being kept in stores considered of lower importance.

I have argued that exhibitions are a distribution of the sensible and lead to certain forms of visibility. As this particular exhibition showed, the selection and display of objects (as part of the process of exhibition

making) becomes a political means of communication. Different people selected different kinds of (ethnographic) objects and with them made their own exhibitions. Some were more attracted by archaic objects, others more inclined towards a more everyday and contemporary perspective; others valued the heritage objects, others the kitsch or objects coming from other cultures all over the world.

What a museum chooses to display determines the sensible which will be distributed in the present and the future of the community surrounding the museum.

In opposition to the majority of exhibitions, where visitors are simply expected to

absorb the museum's message, this exhibition left it to the visitors themselves to decide which objects they thought represented their versions of the Romanian peasant and which connections were important for them. By doing that, very often the participants to this exhibition were expressing intimate thoughts and ideas about themselves as individuals while representing their different social uses of the past.

In choosing this rather performative and relational type of research, I attempted to give each visitor the opportunity to have an active voice in the museum and be a discourse maker. That is why the exhibition worked as a device. If an exhibition or individual aesthetics is a form of politics, I allowed the visitors to articulate their own ideas on these matters.

This article and the exhibition on which it is based also showed the importance of the collection within a museum institution. The collections seem to be the most important tool a museum has at its disposal today. They propel museums into the future, and not the other way around. Consequently, what the NMRP tried to do in the 1990s, by bringing together so many different collections of objects, people and archives, is to be welcomed. This melting pot is still visible today.

On the other hand, the absence of the alpaca spoon reflects the limits and the coercive role of the museum as an institution which imposes a 'grid' and disciplines the multitude of meanings that an (ethnographic) object can have. As this exhibition prompted out, the collection of ethnographic objects collected by all the present and past institutions do not actually involve a either modern or contemporary peasant. This fact leads for example to the impossibility of a present curator to talk about recent peasants during communist times.

This lack is compensated I argue by the fact that the objects from the Museum of the Communist Party were used to shove for the absence of important contemporary and modern "peasant" objects.

I will conclude by saying that all the objects, irrespectively of their historical provenience, proved to have a multitude of meanings and interpretations according to each visitor. This multiplicity leads to the idea that objects are read by each individual differently, but also that they cannot be read totally and sometimes not even partially by themselves. Objects need interpretation and translation. How this could be done without destroying the aura and the richness of them is not the subject of this essay.



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