

MEDAILON/MEDALLION

ZBYNĚK ZBYSLAV STRÁNSKÝ (1926–2016), A BRNO
MUSEOLOGIST

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When we go through the history of crucial personalities in the 20th century Czech museums, we stumble upon several names. Do we remember them all? I think that if we go this way, we always meet Zbyněk Z. Stránský. I personally consider him the most significant figure in the development of museology, particularly in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Zbyněk Z. Stránský died on 21 January 2016, which became the saddest moment to not only the present-day Czech museums and museology.

The memories of the life and museological work of Zbyněk Z. Stránský were already several times published in the Czech Republic,¹ but of course also in Slovakia and we can also find them, for example, in German or French texts. Distinctive descriptions of his activity also began to occur

¹ Personálie. *Věstník Asociace muzeí a galerií ČR*, 2016, no. 1, pp. 21–28. The given section includes several papers: DOLÁK, Jan. Docent PhDr. Zbyněk Z. Stránský již zde není, pp. 21–22; SEITLOVÁ, Pavla. Vzpomínka na Z. Z. Stránského, pp. 23; TOMOLOVÁ, Věra. Vzpomínky..., pp. 24–25; LALKOVIČ, Marcel. Spomienka na kolegu a učiteľa, pp. 26; CHOVAŇČÍKOVÁ, Irena. Myslet muzeologicky, pp. 27; DOLÁK, Jan. Učitel a přítel ZZS, pp. 27–28. The *Museologica Brunensia* journal in 2012 published a portrait of Stránský, see RUTAR, Václav. Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský pětáosmdesátiletý. *Museologica Brunensia*, 2012, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 34–35, ISSN 1805-4722. The portrait was also published in English language on pp. 36–37. In this 2014 periodical we can find a detailed overview of how the museology tuition has been held in Brno, see RUTAR, Václav. Vznik, vývoj a práce externí katedry muzeologie v Brně v letech 1963–1969. *Museologica Brunensia*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 4–11; KIRSCH, Otakar. Vysokoškolská výuka muzeologie v Brně v době normalizace a nástupu demokratického režimu. *Museologica Brunensia*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 12–20; VALÁŠKOVÁ, Lucie. Brněnská muzeologie po roce 1990. *Museologica Brunensia*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 21–27; MRÁZOVÁ, Lenka and Lucie JAGOŠOVÁ. Obsahové proměny kurikula brněnské muzeologie v letech 1964–2014. *Museologica Brunensia*, 2014, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 28–42. ISSN 1805-4722.



Figure 1: Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský. Photo: Archive of Department of Archaeology and Museology – Centre of Museology, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

in the past decade of his life in our country or in Brazil. Since I completed my Brno museological studies without any direct contact with his teaching, my text is targeted at other goals. I believe that it is possible to describe in brief the developmental way of Stránský's museological concept on the basis of specialized materials available to students.

Zbyněk Z. Stránský is one of the persons to whom we can attribute, mainly in the context of the 2nd half of the 20th century, the creation of an original approach to museology. Whereas some recognised museologists of that period presented in their works museology as a discipline tightly linked with practice, Stránský from the beginning of his pedagogical work in Brno already searched and elaborated a way to understand museology as a science, and focused relatively narrowly on its theoretical description.

Even though his articles, mainly those associated with descriptions of the presentational activity of museums and with his activity in several Bohemian and Moravian museums,² have been presented in Czech museum periodicals since the mid-20th century already, the year 1963 can be associated with the beginning of the unforgettable development of museology at the Brno University. How the concept of museology by Zbyněk Z. Stránský has evolved, when we look into some most important publications which can be used with museological studies in Brno?

2 Worth mentioning are, for example, Budování nových muzejních expozic. *Musejní zprávy Pražského kraje*, 1956, no. 1-2, pp. 4-9; Přechodná expoziční forma. Příspěvek k výstavbě nových muzejních expozic. *Musejní práce*, 1957, no. 1, pp. 34-43; Budování depositářů vlastivědných muzeí. *Vlastivědný sborník Vysočiny: oddíl věd společenských*, 1958, vol. 2, pp. 5-13. At the end of the 1950s, Stránský also was co-author of a separate work WINKLER, Josef Rudolf and Zbyněk Zbyslav STRÁNSKÝ. *Pojďte s námi do muzea*. Praha: Kabinet muzejní a vlastivědné práce Krajského domu osvěty v Praze, 1959, unpagged.

The first two texts, presented so far indirectly in course books, are represented by two extensive articles in the *Collected Papers from the First Museological Symposium (Sborník materiálů prvního muzeologického sympozia)*,³ which has taken place in Brno 1965. Stránský is dealing here on a wide scale with the essentials of museology and its implementation into university studies, and with a direct description of the subject of museology. The fundament is based on interpretations of the importance to extend museological teaching as well by the theory associated with the initial effort to classify it as a science. Zbyněk Z. Stránský pays attention to a comprehensive description of the situation both in our land, and in several other countries based on citations from published works. The relatively striking differences in their attitudes made him develop his own concept. In the introduction to the symposium he already mentions basic areas, which should be worked out in detail when developing a theory – subject, essentials and system of museology. In connection with museology development in several countries he also mentions the division of Brno museology into the approach to general and special museology. But entirely fundamental is the concept of explanation of the problem with museological subject. The fact that it is linked with gnoseological, logical and generally philosophical moments exerted influence on all of his later approaches to museology – its meta-theoretical development. The Stránský's later term meta-museology should be mentioned in this regard.

3 Podstata muzeologie a její zařazení do vysokoškolského studia. In STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav (ed.). *Sborník materiálů prvního muzeologického sympozia*. Brno: Moravské muzeum, 1966, pp. 10-17; Předmět muzeologie. In STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav (ed.). *Sborník materiálů prvního muzeologického sympozia*. Brno: Moravské muzeum, 1966, pp. 30-33.

The first university textbook might be the *Introduction to Museology (Úvod do muzeologie)*,⁴ which was published by the then University of J. E. Purkyně in 1972. Zbyněk Z. Stránský addresses here in the introduction already the problems with museology tuition – he conceives it as a consolidating discipline, which is often criticised. The proper cognitive goal of this discipline is not clarified and Stránský tries directly in the textbook to eliminate this approach. He implements into museology the term museality, which is associated with the emergence of museum collection items, museum objects, “musealias”, and dynamizes in this way the cognitive process of their emergence. Even though Stránský in the textbook addresses the problems of museological studies, relation between museums and museology, and definition of museology as a science, the section dealing with the system of general museology is elaborated in a very innovative way. General museology, besides the genetic (history of museums) and practical (museography) aspects of museology, is conceived as a part of the theoretical aspect and comprises an in-depth study of selection, thesaurisation and communication theories. The textbook is dealing on 26 pages with many topics which remain fundamental in theoretical museology until today. Among them are: identification of museality, phenomenal totality, primary and accessory documentation, thesaural system or presentational and accompanying communication. Even though the publication is more than 40 years old, I recommend to read it.

Another significant work is the extensive *Introduction to Museological Studies (Úvod do*

4 STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Úvod do muzeologie*. Brno: Univerzita J. E. Purkyně, 1972, 120 p.

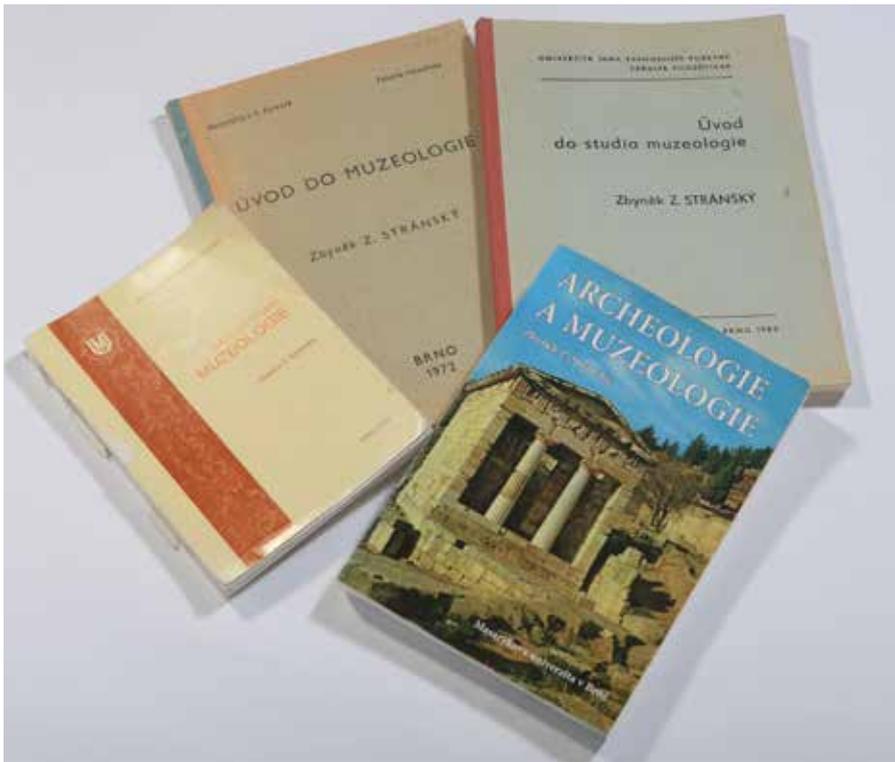


Figure 2: Publications of Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský. Photo: Patrik Sláma, National Technical Museum, Prague, Czech Republic.

studies muzeologie)⁵ published in 1979 (slightly modified in 1984). The textbook goes in its extent far beyond the scope of the previous work, it often attempts to address new topics. Stránský pays attention to, for example, information basis of the discipline, which is associated with the development of terminology, and to specifics of museology tuition. The chapter Basic Terms can be considered the first Brno museological vocabulary, bringing the explanation of thirty museological terms. During reading we can stumble upon many verbal changes. The interpretation, for example, defines the historical aspect (including historical museology), and practical aspect (museography or applied museology). In systemisation of museology, Stránský classes theoretical museology with the logical aspect and adheres to selection, thesaurisation and

5 STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Úvod do studia muzeologie*. Brno: Univerzita J. E. Purkyně, 1979, 167 p., small modification in 1984.

communication theories. In the interpretation of all the three terms he implements many expressions which are used in the field of museological theory until today. Museality is conceived as a value emerging on the basis of a subject/object relationship. It is a multidimensional perception of an object as an authentic document enabling the emergence of a musealia. In the analysis of thesaurisation, thesaural system is newly conceived as an approach targeted at consolidation of collections, scientific interpretation resulting in the emergence of musealias, and possible museum discarding associated with the problem of the preservation moment. The final part dedicated to communication theory is to a considerable extent similar to the approach in previous textbook. In its closing part titled Mutation, Stránský is dealing for the first time with the structure of using the museological approach in pedagogy, sociology and psychology. Although

it is only a brief overview, this topic becomes one of the most frequently treated problems in present-day museology as well.

When I began to study museology at the Masaryk University in 2001, I came from Prague and until then I learned about museology rather marginally through the medium of many museum visits. One of the first interests associated with my studies was a visit in the textbook shop, which could be entered from the courtyard of the Faculty of Arts. When I think about it today, I consider the purchase of the *Introduction to Museological Studies (Úvod do studia muzeologie)*⁶ from 2000 (an extended version of the 1995 edition) entirely logical. The textbook was intended directly for ISSOM students,⁷ but I personally consider it one of the fundamental works to all those who study museology at the university. Stránský logically removed from the text many references to museology tuition at foreign universities and paid attention solely to the description of the discipline. In comparison with the above-mentioned previous textbooks, the content is set up more clearly, many pictorial models are added, and texts are shorter, whereby the number of selected topics presented is increased. Which problems were addressed by Zbyněk Z. Stránský in this publication? After presentation

6 STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Úvod do studia muzeologie: určeno pro posluchače muzeologie, International Summer School of Museology – ISSOM a zájemce o studium*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita and ISSOM, 2000, 171 p. ISBN 80-210-1272-2. It is an extended 1995 version.

7 Within the scope of ISSOM, Stránský also elaborated many introductions in English, e.g. STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Introduction to the study of Theory of Selection and the Theory of Thesaurisation, ISSOM-Course: B*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1995, 116 p. or STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Introduction to the study of Theory of Presentation, ISSOM-Course: C*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1995, 19 p. One of the fundamental texts written in English was STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Introduction to the study of museology: for the students of the International Summer School of Museology – ISSOM*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1995. 116 p. ISBN 80-210-0704-4.

of the information basis he offers in the next chapter an outline of meta-museology – a theory which is dealing with museology itself. Museology is further structured into five parts. The cognitive core seems to be theoretical museology, connected i. a. with another new specialised term introduced in the 1980s – musealization. The chapter includes clearly elaborated selection and thesaurisation theories; the former communication theory is replaced by a better comprehensible presentation theory. The second part is dealing with the content of historical museology, which is the most important issue with regard to periodisation of development of the musealization phenomenon. A relatively innovative approach seems to be the effort to study contemporary museology that is a view of the system of museum culture as a whole. In definition of the structure of museography, Stránský addresses the topics of museum management, environment, conservation, documentation, exhibition and public relations. The last part gives only a brief presentation of several possible interpretations in the field of specialised museology which, however, is to a certain extent out of the scope of the discipline in question. I still consider this textbook the basic holder of the principles of museology which has already been established by Stránský for more than thirty years at that time. At the end of the millennium, Zbyněk Z. Stránský transferred his activities to Slovakia but his relation to Brno, whether in the form of lectures or conference papers, did not come to an end. The Masaryk University published in 2005 his last work associated with museology tuition, which is also tightly linked with archaeology. The work is titled *Archaeology and Museology (Archeologie*

*a muzeologie*⁸). In 2006, the book *Museologist Z. Z. Stránský – the life and work (Muzeolog Z. Z. Stránský – život a dílo)*⁹ offers a description of his activities inclusive of bibliography. Also important are the collected papers from the symposium *Musealization in Contemporary Society and the Mission of Museology (Muzealizace v soudobé společnosti a poslání muzeologie)*,¹⁰ which has taken place in Brno in November of the same year (the collected papers were published in 2008) and was connected with Stránský's life's anniversary. The Brno University appreciated with these publications the activity of this recognised museologist. It is to remember that in 2012 Stránský still published an article in the newly established periodical *Museologica Brunensia*, in which he appreciates the emergence of this journal.

I took the liberty of calling Zbyněk Zbyslav Stránský in the title of this article a Brno museologist and I mainly paid attention to basic textbooks for museology tuition at the Faculty of Arts in Brno. I believe that within the development of Czech museology in the following years they remain the crucial starting points to its understanding. And what is my attitude to their author? I express my gratitude to him.

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8 STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Zbyslav. *Archeologie a muzeologie*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2005, 315 p. ISBN 80-210-3861-6.

9 DOLÁK, Jan and Jana VAVŘÍKOVÁ. *Muzeolog Z. Z. Stránský – život a dílo*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2006, 60 p. ISBN 80-210-4139-0.

10 *Muzealizace v soudobé společnosti a poslání muzeologie*. Sborník příspěvků ze symposia s mezinárodní účastí pořádaného při příležitosti životního jubilea tvůrce brněnské muzeologické školy Zbyňka Z. Stránského, Brno – Technické muzeum v Brně, 8. –10. listopadu 2006. Praha: Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky, 2008, 226 p. ISBN 978-80-86611-28-0.