

METODICKÉ A INFORMAČNÍ TEXTY/ METHODICAL AND INFORMATIVE TEXTS

GLORIA MUSAEALIS NATIONAL MUSEUM COMPETITION (CZECH REPUBLIC)

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Museums and galleries in the Czech Republic care for more than 65 million collection objects, annually prepare about 2000 exhibitions and are visited by more than 13 million visitors. Despite this all it might seem that they sometimes are on the periphery of interest of society who is glutted with easily accessible consumption lures. Museums and galleries (art museums) represent an important element in the tourist offer in all regions of our country, their collections bare witness of our identity and connect ourselves and our “now” with the “past” and the “future”.

Since 2002 already, Czech museum community and the public can compare the quality of museums all over the country through the medium of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition. This competition, which in 2018 already entered its **seventeenth year** of existence, was founded with the aim to enhance the prestige of museum institutions and to strengthen the general awareness of the purpose of their existence as guardians of a significant part of national cultural heritage. The initiators of this competition would like to offer space for wider publicity on the issue of Czech museums, regarding both their general problems and the importance of individual museums. The campaign is intended to contribute to public discussion about the role of museums in society, their usage for informal education of children and adults, and their cultural benefits



Fig. 1: Foyer of the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House (Obecní dům) in Prague, 17 May 2018 (Photo: Martin Čarek, Czech Association of Museums and Galleries).



Fig. 2: Gloria Musaealis logo, authoress: academy painter Lucie Seifertová

for the general public. Apart from this, the challenge generates healthy competition inside the discipline.

The Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition is announced according to the government order No. 5/2003 Coll. on culture awards given by the Czech Ministry of

Culture (hereinafter MC CR), as amended by later regulations. The main categories mentioned in article 2, subsection 3, letter a) are declared in compliance with provision § 19 subsection 2 of the above-mentioned government order. The competition is judged by a **commission of seven** (originally five) **independent experts**, who were appointed by the competition announcers; the substitutes also are named. The Czech Association of Museums and Galleries (hereinafter AMG) assumed the responsibility for realisation of the competition, and provides for its organisational and technical background throughout the whole competition year. The competition logo was designed by Lucie Seifertová, and Pavlína Šušová (mar. Čepičková Šušová) gave the “Museum Glory”



Fig. 3: The Gloria Musaealis trophy, authoress: Pavlína Čepičková Šušová (Photo: Martin Čarek, Czech Association of Museums and Galleries).

a female appearance. The trophy is cast every year in craft workrooms of the Technical Museum in Brno. The competition has since the beginning its own web pages on the address <http://www.gloriamusaealis.cz>, where all competition and project documents are available. The annual award ceremony of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition is always taking place in May, on the eve of the International Museum Day. Individual competition categories and evaluation criteria are defined by the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition Rules, the process and method of evaluation are determined by the Rules of Procedure of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition. In each category – **Museum Exhibition of the Year**, **Museum Publication of the Year** and **Museum Initiative of the Year** – the order of the three best projects or special awards are announced, where the most successful candidate holding the top spot receives an award certificate, the competition trophy and prize money in the amount of 70,000 CZK. A special category

is represented by the **ICOM Czech Republic Prize**,¹ awarded to projects which significantly contributed to international cooperation, development of educational activity of museums or equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in the access to cultural heritage. The competition is represented in media by the Honorary Board. The Honorary Board of the competition suggests the announcers to honour one of the projects with a special award – the **National Museum Competition Honorary Board Award**. The competition's Honorary Board is composed of prominent figures in public life and culture and it has at least four members, who are appointed by the announcers on 1 January of the current competition year. The Honorary Board participates in the award ceremony and assumes patronage over the competition throughout its duration.

¹ ICOM National Committee Czech Republic [online]. [accessed 2018-09-17]. Available from [www: <http://network.icom.museum/icom-czech/L/10/>](http://network.icom.museum/icom-czech/L/10/).

The first year of the competition was negatively affected by severe floods in 2002, which turned the attention of the museum community to existential matters, and by well-understandable initial embarrassment about a new, still untried activity. The announcers also had to solve initial ambiguities concerning the mission and status of the competition jury. While the competing projects in the first year were only judged on the basis of attached documentation, from the second year onwards the jurors get personally acquainted with every single project. This undoubtedly was a step in the right direction, particularly with regard to different quality of documentation provided by the competing subjects, which was given both by the possibilities of individual contestants and by the fact that not all the projects are equally photogenic. This naturally induces a larger temporal, financial and, last but not least, physical load of the jurors, which is also given by the fact that most of the outgoing visits are undertaken in February and March. The competition definitely draws attention to quality work of variously focused and sized museums from all regions of the Czech Republic. Moreover, it also enables a mutual comparison, which not only is beneficial but also moves the whole discipline forward. Through the medium of this competition we can follow up topical trends in exhibition making, from the selection of topics to the ways of their treatment and the implementation of suitable technologies. Another positive phenomenon of the annual competition is a visible improvement of self-presentation of individual museums towards the jury and the public. The yearly number of enrolled projects in all categories stabilised at about eighty. In the most recent XVI competition, 99 competing projects were evaluated. The competition is held in a purely positive



Fig. 4: Rejoicing winners from the Museum of Nový Jičín Region in the 2017 Museum Exhibition of the Year category, 17 May 2018 (Photo: Martin Čarek, Czech Association of Museums and Galleries).

atmosphere, accentuating the major qualities, not deficiencies. Regardless of the jury's decision, everybody who takes part in the competition is a winner.

On the basis of the government order No. 5/2003 Coll. on culture awards given by the MC CR, the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition – Gloria Musaealis Award – became an official award of the Ministry of Culture, which is organisationally secured by the AMG. This act made the competition legislatively stabilised. However, it turned out that more attention should be paid to marketing, in order to make the competition a true popularisation tool for the discipline, which would grant it a larger and more stable space in media. AMG at the same time became aware of the need for cooperation with other subjects, namely with Central Office of Tourism in the Czech Republic – the Czech Tourism Agency, with Czech National Committee of ICOM or with Czech Commission for UNESCO. From the II competition year onwards, the post of the Competition Director was

established – it is a representative of the announcers, who is competent to manage the course of individual years of the competition together with the Jury Chairman.

In the second competition year, the first annual report was published on the competition proceedings (catalogue of all enrolled projects). For the III Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition the AMG prepared a proposal for extension of the competition by another two categories, whose partners became the Central Office of Tourism in the Czech Republic – the Czech Tourism Agency, and the Czech National Committee of ICOM. In the same year also the first Honorary Board of the competition was constituted, in which many prominent figures from our cultural, scientific, ecclesiastic and social institutions accepted to participate. At suggestion of the Board, a special prize has been awarded in one of the categories since 2004. A total of 39 museums and galleries enrolled with their competing projects in three main competition categories and in a special category “Come

with us to the museum” under the auspices of the Czech Tourism Agency. While the category “Come with us to the museum” did not continue in the following years, the ICOM Czech Republic Prize is still annually awarded to projects, which significantly contributed to international cooperation, development of educational activity of museums or equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities in the access to cultural heritage. Since 2015, the Czech National Committee of ICOM became another official announcer of the competition.

The sixth year of the competition, unlike all the previous years, was already announced on 1 January and a novelty also was the possibility to enrol with an exhibition lasting one month. A general overview showed that the competition earned a great response in the professional museum community, it makes the museum work visible in a desirable way, generates a healthy competition and exerts a positive effect on the general public. Press reports, which are published on every year of the competition, are available on the web pages of the competition (and its announcers) and are sent out via electronic AMG Bulletin to all museums and galleries in the Czech Republic and to central and regional media. The attention paid to the competition by media was for a long time fluctuating, depending on many other parallel current topics. It came to light that the future inclusion of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition among prestigious culture awards will only be possible when all announcers will be dedicated and more involved. A qualitative shift and another conception were needed, mainly with regard to the effort to gain higher recognition of the competition in the eyes of media and non-professional public.



Fig. 5: Gustav Brom Czech Radio Big Band and dancer J. K. Sanchez, 17 May 2018 (Photo: Martin Čarek, Czech Association of Museums and Galleries).

To achieve this goal, it was, and still is, necessary to make the competition more attractive and to get it out of the closed museum world. In September 2013, in connection with a memorandum between the MC CR and Czech Television (hereinafter CT), the AMG Executive appealed to Czech Television for promotion of the competition and possible transmission of a recorded or live broadcast from the award ceremony of the XII competition. Negotiations were also opened with Three Brothers Production company about cooperation in giving publicity to the competition. After having analysed the existing state of affairs in the fall of 2013, the AMG Executive came to an agreement on several fundamental changes, which were subsequently presented in the negotiations with the then Deputy Minister of Culture and Director of the Department of Museums and Galleries at the Ministry of Culture (hereinafter DMG MC CR). These changes included the making of a new, more attractive, form of the Gloria Musaealis award ceremony which would be well understandable to

general public, the making of spots promoting the competition and the museums in general, a more intensive involvement of non-professional public through the medium of a visitors contest, and reconstitution of the competition's Honorary Board. This was also connected with provisions realised to support these intents, among them mainly an adequate funding of the event as well as a proposal for an amendment of the government order, in order to implement the new Civil Code and to rationalize the course of the competition year (by shortening the deadline for submitting the applications of competing projects, which in turn produced more time for preparation of the award ceremony). In the new conception, the venue of the award ceremony changed over to the Smetana Hall of the Municipal House (Obecní dům) in Prague.

In cooperation with the National Museum then a new visitors contest named **Museum of the Year** was prepared on the portal **do-muzea.cz**, which is operated by the National Museum and originated

in cooperation with AMG. The Museum of the Year visitors contest has been announced since 2015 as a part of the media campaign of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition. Participants in this contest can be all museums which own or curate a museum collection entered in the Central Register of Collections according to the law No. 122/2000 Coll. on the protection of museum collections. In compliance with valid rules, the contest is always announced in May of the given calendar year during the award ceremony of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition. In the Museum of the Year Contest, the first three museums are awarded which receive the highest numbers of votes from their visitors on the portal **do-muzea.cz**, and three winners from among the visitors are chosen by lot and receive prizes of value (publications honoured in the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition). Moreover, AMG lends them a one-year membership card. The first year of the contest started officially on 14 May 2015 in the Municipal House in Prague, and the results were announced on 18 May 2016 at the same place.

The pilot year of the Museum of the Year Contest enabled to test the operation qualities of the portal **do-muzea.cz**, with the aim to achieve an as pleasant as possible ambience for the contestants, so that the voting results have an adequate informational value useful for museums. At the same time, staff members of the AMG Secretariat and the Centre for Presentation of Cultural Heritage at the National Museum took individual steps to support the portal within the scope of media campaign of the contest and evaluated the response of visitors or portal users to its somewhat complicated operability. Particularly essential in this regard is the involvement

of individual museums and galleries which mainly consists in continuous updating of their profiles on the portal. At the same time, it is necessary that the museums involved also participate in promotion of the contest by applying on their own initiative for the votes of visitors. The portal *do-muzea.cz* currently runs the fourth year of the Museum of the Year Contest.

The 2015 ceremony was thus held in a sort of “test mode” of the new conception, which moves the contest towards a more modern but at the same time dignified concept accessible to general public. The representatives of AMG and MC CR subsequently came to an agreement that the started way is the right one and that it shifts the presentation of the contest to a higher quality level. Even though the first negotiations between the representatives of AMG, DMG MC CR and CT in July 2015 on a proposal of media cooperation had positive results, this issue is not yet finished. The cooperation and media partnership with Czech Radio (hereinafter CRO), on the other hand, were successfully concluded. The cooperation with Czech Radio on the award ceremony was roofed by a common date on which CRO and museums celebrate their anniversary – 18 May not only is the International Museum Day, but on the same day in 1923 also began regular radio broadcasting from a tent in Prague-Kbely. Czech Radio then directly participated in the programme of the award ceremony and gave publicity to the XIII year of the competition; this cooperation still continues with only small changes. Similarly, the negotiations with the Czech Tourism Agency also led to still successfully running conceptual cooperation with AMG in the field of cultural tourism, to cooperation on the programme of the award ceremony, cooperation

on the portal *Kudyznudy.cz*, and on other activities which are mainly targeted at promotion of museums and galleries and of the whole museum sphere in our country and abroad. Within the scope of preparation of the XV award ceremony, a presentation of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition started on the portal **Kudyznudy.cz** in the subsection **Kultura – Muzea a galerie** (only in Czech). A special logo draw the attention of visitors to museum institutions which were awarded in previous years of the competition – each museum and gallery is displayed with a list of earned prizes. AMG also strived (and still strives) for incomes from other sources and tried to engage another significant partners. One of them became since 2015 the Capital of Prague. The media partner of the competition also became the internet portal *PROPAMÁTKY*. Similarly as in 2015 (within the pilot year of the new conception of competition award ceremonies), the ceremony was held in spirit of a new spectator-attractive concept, which is based on the intent to present every year a different type of museum institutions. The attention in 2015 was paid to museums of local history, whereas in 2016 it was focused on presentation of technical museums. Patrons of the award ceremony thus became the two largest technical museums in the Czech Republic – National Technical Museum in Prague and Technical Museum in Brno. The ceremony in the next year took place in premises of the Czech Technical University in Prague. In association with the announced 310th anniversary of this oldest Czech technical university, the scenario of the event was focused on the connection between museums and science. The most recent ceremony was dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the independent Czechoslovak Republic.

In this year a tripartite agreement was concluded on cooperation between the competition announcers. Future development of the competition also is being discussed, above all the proposal by the Czech National Committee of ICOM for a distinct extension of competition categories following the model of, for example, the Polish Museum Award.² AMG accentuated in this regard the necessity of securing stable proceedings of the competition in its newly defined concept, as well through the engagement of a general partner. Any major changes in the existing concept of the competition would require additional expenses and mainly the reinforcement of staff. After calculation of the hourly subsidy and the sum of project work in all three employees of the AMG Secretariat it turns out that the entire agenda connected with the competition all over the year would be covered by one full-time job. For the following period it is also necessary to resolve the update in the government order on culture awards, according to which the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition has been announced. This change will subsequently be reflected in the Competition Rules and Rules of Procedure of the Competition Commission. At this moment thus a discussion is being held on the competition

² Sybilla is an award given by the Polish Ministry of Culture. For more details see *Sybilla* [online]. [accessed 2018-09-18]. Available from [www: <http://konkurssybilla.nimoz.pl/2017/>](http://konkurssybilla.nimoz.pl/2017/). Awarding the museums with prizes also takes place in a wider international context. For example the European Museum Forum gives since 1977 the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) with the aim to support and appreciate innovative initiatives in European museums, which might show the other institutions possible new ways in their own work. In the 2014 shortlist of nominees also appeared a representative of the Czech Republic, namely the Silesian Museum in Opava with a project of reconstruction and reopening of the Historical Exhibition Building. For more details on EMYA see *European Museum Forum* [online]. [accessed 2018-09-18]. Available from [www: <http://www.europeanmuseumforum.info/>](http://www.europeanmuseumforum.info/).

concept, which should take into consideration the experiences from the past fifteen years and whose result must be an agreement of all three announcers.

The main categories of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition:³

I Museum Exhibition of the Year

The competition project can be a long-term exhibition (permanent display) or a temporary exhibition using a museum collection, lasting at least one month, with regular opening hours on four days a week or opened at least 128 hours to the public – provided that it was first opened to the public between 1 January of the given competition year and 28 February of the next year.

II Museum Publication of the Year

The competition project can be any original publication, including those published on an electronic medium, thematically based on a museum collection or on the scientific and research activity of the museum, intended for the public and published between 1 January of the given competition year and 28 February of the next year.

III Museum Initiative of the Year

³ The definition of competition categories and evaluation criteria is contained in the Competition Rules of the Gloria Musaealis National Museum Competition. Particular dates were removed for the needs of this article. (Soutěžní řád Národní soutěže muzeí Gloria musaealis 2018. In *Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky* [online]. [accessed 2018-09-18]. Available from www: <http://www.cz-museums.cz/web/gloria_musaealis/zakladni-dokumenty/soutezni-rad>.) The Rules of Procedure regulate the way of how the Competition Commission makes decisions and assigns point weight to individual evaluation criteria. (Jednací řád komise Národní soutěže muzeí Gloria musaealis 2018. In *Asociace muzeí a galerií České republiky* [online]. [accessed 2018-09-18]. Available from www: <http://www.cz-museums.cz/web/gloria_musaealis/zakladni-dokumenty/jednaci-rad-poroty>.)

The competition project can be any museum activity which results in a significant and long-term increase in quality of collection making, care for collections, or public services, provided that this activity was accomplished between 1 January of the given competition year and 28 February of the next year.

It can be, for example, the development of a new technology in the care for museum collections or its practical application; some particularly significant addition to the collections; preservation of a locality important for nature and landscape conservation or heritage protection, or facilitation of its public use.

The competition project in this category cannot be a project whose characteristics meet the criteria of the main categories I Museum Exhibition of the Year and II Museum Publication of the Year.

Evaluation criteria of the competition

1. The jury in the competition category I Museum Exhibition of the Year evaluates:

- a) selection of the topic for a temporary or permanent exhibition, particularly with regard to how timeless or, vice versa, topical is the knowledge which the exhibition presents to the public;
- b) the way of interpretation of the knowledge about nature or society with regard to how attractive it is for the public or for a group of visitors for whom the exhibition is intended;
- c) the extent and way of how the authentic evidence (collection objects) was used;
- d) the extent and way of how the iconographic elements, texts and

other exhibition tools were used for interpretation of the knowledge about nature or society;

- e) the level of visual artistic, scenic, architectonic and graphic design;
- f) the extent and duration of public display of the exhibition;
- g) the way of how the exhibition was promoted;
- h) the existence and level of accompanying programmes and services of the exhibition;
- i) the conditions in the building where the exhibition is installed, the level of visitor services provided by the museum in general.

2. The jury in the competition category II Museum Publication of the Year evaluates:

- a) selection of the topic for a publication, particularly with regard to how timeless or, vice versa, topical is the knowledge which the publication presents to the public;
- b) the way of interpretation of the knowledge about nature or society with regard to how attractive it is for the readers or for a group of readers for whom the publication is intended;
- c) the extent and way of how the authentic evidence (collection objects) was used, or the extent of original scientific and research activity of the museum;
- d) the level of visual artistic and graphic design of the publication;
- e) the way of public dissemination and price accessibility of the publication.

3. The jury in the competition category III Museum Initiative of the Year evaluates:

a) the benefit for preservation and/or public use of authentic evidence of natural or social development, or the benefit for preservation and/or public use of unique localities and findspots;

b) the innovative benefit for the existing practice of collections care in general, or with regard to previous practice of the applicant, or the benefit of the project for an extraordinary increase in quality of public services;

c) the way of elaboration of professional documentation of the initiative and the extent of abidance to professional standards in the museum practice.

4. In the competition category IV ICOM Czech Republic Prize, the jury for the main categories recommends to award the prize with regard to following criteria:

a) the extent of involvement of international partners in the project realisation, i.e. to what extent the project is a result of cooperation between participants from various countries; or

b) extraordinary benefit for the development of culture-educational work of museums; or

c) extraordinary activity making the museum accessible to physically and mentally disabled persons.

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