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METHODICAL AND INFORMATIVE TEXTS/METODICKÉ A INFORMAČNÍ TEXTY

“ENGAGED, PROFESSIONAL – AND FEMALE?” A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON MUSEUM EDUCATION IN GERMANY

MARKUS WALZ

<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2021-2-6>**ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:**

The employees in German museum education are currently predominantly women. Since almost all professions in Central Europe were reserved for men in the past, what is interesting about museum education is when women took up this profession and how this gender imbalance was able to take shape. Two hypotheses suggest themselves: the argument of maternity gave rise to several educational job profiles for women, especially that of kindergarten teacher, but also that of elementary school teacher. The emancipation movement around 1900 fought for special women's academies and for the reservation of individual professions, supposedly particularly suitable for women, for women interested in them. The search for reflections in the history of the development of German museum education shows that neither of these phenomena explains the professional activities of women in museum education: guiding the visitors and other educational work in museums remained, even in the first half of the 20th century, firmly linked to the position of the collector or the scientific director of the museum. Men dominated both positions. The first full-time organiser of museum education, Frida Schottmüller, appeared late (1925–1934). As a woman, she remained an isolated case within this emerging profession. Men developed the separate

job of museum education in the 1960s (West and East Germany). The search for honorary staff to carry out museum pedagogy steered women into this field of activity. This article concludes with the thesis that the rise of individual women from precarious employment to permanent positions in museum education led to the current dominance of women in this field of activity.

„Angažovaná, profesionální – a žena?“ Muzejní edukace v Německu z pohledu gender

Muzejní edukace v Německu je v současnosti doménou žen. Vzhledem k tomu, že ve střední Evropě byla téměř všechna povolání v minulosti vyhrazena mužům, zajímá nás, kdy se ženy v oblasti muzejní edukace prosadily a jak k této genderové nevyváženosti mohlo dojít. Nabízejí se hned dvě hypotézy. Jednou z nich je, že předpokladem vzniku některých ženských výchovně vzdělávacích profesí, zejména učitelky v mateřské či základní škole, bylo mateřství. Druhá hypotéza tvrdí, že o vznik speciálních vzdělávacích ústavů pro ženy a etablování jednotlivých typicky ženských profesí se zasloužilo emancipační hnutí na přelomu 19. a 20. století. Při pohledu do historie muzejní edukace v Německu však zjišťujeme, že ani jeden z uvedených fenoménů nevysvětluje odborné působení žen v této oblasti: provádění návštěvníků

a jiné výchovně vzdělávací činnosti v muzeích byly i během první poloviny 20. století nadále úzce spojeny s funkcí kurátora sbírek či vědeckého ředitele muzea. Obě tyto pracovní pozice byly převážně obsazovány muži. První organizátorkou muzejního vzdělávání na plný úvazek se stala až v letech 1925–1934 Frida Schottmüller, která zůstala nadlouho ojedinělým příkladem působení ženy v této nově vznikající profesi. Samostatná pracovní pozice muzejního edukátora byla vytvořena muži v šedesátých letech 20. století (v Západním a Východním Německu). Následná potřeba zapojení dalšího neplaceného personálu do vykonávání výchovně vzdělávacích prací v muzeu přivedla pak k této oblasti činnosti také ženy. Článek končí konstatováním, že současná převaha žen v oblasti muzejní edukace je vyústěním vývoje jejich působení v tomto oboru činnosti, který směřoval od příležitostné práce až k stálému zaměstnání.

KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:

museum education – museum pedagogics – feminisation – museum history – Germany muzejní edukace – muzejní pedagogika – feminizace – dějiny muzejnictví – Německo

The headline of this article paraphrases the title of a handbook article on museum education in

Austria today. Its author stated: “The professional field is clearly female”; as evidence she cited that among the 34 museum educators certified in Austria, 32 are women.¹ Information concerning the (uncertified) majority of Austrian museum educators does not exist. Although Germany annually presents its museum statistics, gender-related data is also lacking there: since 1981, a single questionnaire asked for the gender of museum directors but only of directors. A clue is provided by the 64 board seats that exist in total in the German professional association “Bundesverband Museumspädagogik” and its six regional associations; eleven of them are occupied by men. The proportion of men on the individual boards varies from 50 per cent on the national board (2 out of 4) to zero on the regional association in Baden-Württemberg (0 out of 10).² Pointing in the same direction, less than five per cent of the applications for art education at the temporary exhibition “documenta 12”, 2007 in Kassel, were submitted by men.³

As a reason, one can reflect from the European modern history that almost all professional activities were initially reserved for men and that women had to fight for equal rights. Consequently, there should be a transition from a male-dominated to a museum education

1 STÖGER, Gabriele. Engagiert, professionell, serviceorientiert – weiblich: Kunst- und Kulturvermittlung in österreichischen Museen. In COMMANDEUR, Beatrix, Hannelore KUNZ-OTT and Karin SCHAD (eds.). *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*. München: Kopaed, 2016, pp. 383–390; here p. 383.

2 Bundesverband Museumspädagogik e.V. Karlsruhe [online]. [accessed 2021-08-20]. Available from www: <<https://www.museumspaedagogik.org>>.

3 MÖRSCH, Carmen. Am Kreuzungspunkt von vier Diskursen: Die documenta 12 Vermittlung zwischen Affirmation, Reproduktion, Dekonstruktion und Transformation. In MÖRSCH, Carmen (ed.). *Kunstvermittlung II. Zwischen kritischer Praxis und Dienstleistung auf der documenta 12*. Zürich; Berlin: Diaphanes, 2009, pp. 9–33; here p. 14.

characterised by a high proportion of women.

An additional explanatory model may be constructed by reflecting the history of schooling. Some German countries already knew female teachers in the 18th century (independent of nuns at convent schools). In all Western societies, since the 19th century, there has been a persistent increase in the proportion of women teachers in general, especially in elementary schools.⁴ The women’s school (“Frauensschule”), newly created in Germany in 1908, specifically qualified female teachers in home economics, needlework or gymnastics, as well as kindergarten teachers. As soon as school children were seen as a target group for museums, the participation of women in educational work would be conceivable.

Two other historical phenomena are not currently suitable for constructing further explanatory models. Firstly, the supervision of young children was already a matter for women in its beginnings around 1770 (Marie-Salomé Oberlin, Ban de la Roche/Alsace). Qualification programmes for early childhood education in Germany were initially aimed exclusively at women (first in the Kaiserswerth Deaconess House, founded in 1836). However, there are no indications that young children were considered a target group for museum work in earlier years. Secondly, one strand of the women’s emancipation movement established separate women’s academies around 1900. At the same time, museum professionals were discussing whether women were suitable for museum work. The focus

4 ESSEN, Mineke van and Rebecca ROGERS. Zur Geschichte der Lehrerinnen. Historiographische Herausforderungen und internationale Perspektiven. *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, 2006, vol. 52, pp. 319–337.

was on the “technical assistant” in collection management (cataloguing, photographing, drawing).⁵ The libraries took a faster development: Since 1907, an association of female library assistants existed in Germany (“Vereinigung bibliothekarisch arbeitender Frauen”).⁶ Educational tasks were not an issue in either context.

Since there is little data on this aspect of museum history, this article collects circumstantial evidence of women’s museum pedagogical work in Germany in chronological order to discover this kind of women’s activity in history and conceivable reasons for that. Because the historical outlines of museum education are unclear, all museum work in personal contact to visitors is taken into consideration. The search begins with any kind of imparting in a collection even as an unpaid activity.

Pre-modernity: museum education hidden in personal unions

Even if the clear break in museum history with the French Revolution is now disputed, reflections on the history of museum education have so far followed this dichotomy of pre-modernity and modernity. Eva Sturm, for example, claimed that the beginnings of museum education were genuinely interwoven with the beginnings of art museums (which she dated around 1800).⁷ Accordingly, it

5 GRÜTTEL, Else. Weibliche Museumsangestellte. *Museumskunde. Zeitschrift für Verwaltung und Technik öffentlicher und privater Sammlungen*, 1913, vol. 9, pp. 219–224.

6 LÜDTKE, Helga. Anspruchsvolle Arbeit für „bedürfnislose“ Frauen. Die ersten Bibliothekarinnen in Deutschland. In LÜDTKE, Helga (ed.). *Leidenschaft und Bildung. Zur Geschichte der Frauenarbeit in Bibliotheken*. Berlin: Orlanda, 1992, pp. 25–52; here pp. 37, 43.

7 STURM, Eva. Woher kommen die Kunst-Vermittlerinnen? Versuch einer Positionsbestimmung. In *Dürfen die das? Kunst*

is necessary to examine what happened to concepts prevalent in the Ancien Régime after the turn of the century around 1800.

Firstly, smaller presentations of collections were handled by the owner himself, who showed them to visitors and engaged in conversation with them. Consequently, there was no museum education that could be detached from the owner. In the bourgeois milieu, there were more natural history cabinets than art collections. This also applies to religious orders; unfortunately, there are no publications on conceivable collections in women's monasteries. The secularisation of the monasteries dispersed most of these collections; the princely collections changed smoothly with the increasing understanding of the collections as state instruments that were no longer part of the monarch's way of life and therefore did not require any personal commitment on the part of the prince. Only private collections created out of individual interest remained bound to the owner.

Secondly, many pre-modern collections had a direct didactic context. University professors collected illustrative material for their courses, which led to the creation of corresponding cabinets. Johann Daniel Major (1634–1693) already distinguished two room functions for this purpose, a hall with collection cabinets on the walls and a “conference hall”.⁸ In the 18th century, these cabinets increasingly became the responsibility of the universities, an early example being the Royal

Academic Museum at Göttingen University (1773). Even in the realia collections of higher schools, for example from 1698 at the Paedagogium in Halle (Saale), no museum pedagogy was detachable, because the person responsible for the didactics gathered, arranged and used the collections for the teaching purpose in question. This direct didactic connection of the teaching collections proves continuity up to the present in the university collections and museums.

Thirdly, the collections of fine art took a different development in that princely art collections in the 18th century were made practically usable for the founding of drawing schools (sculpture collection) and art academies (painting gallery), and in most cases the gallery director also headed the art academy. The period around 1800 marked an apparent caesura: the paths of the art museum and the art academy diverged, and the art academies established separate collections. Nevertheless, this special path of the fine arts was not lost: on the one hand, syntheses of art school and art museum were still founded after 1800 (e.g. at the “Pohlhof” in Altenburg/Thuringia in 1848), and on the other hand, the synthesis of schools of applied art with corresponding museums spread (following a precursor from 1844, the Minutoli Collection in Liegnitz/Silesia).

Fourthly, a special attitude of the public should not be forgotten, the sightseeing. As a combination of supervision and information for those interested, the guided tour emerged. It reached the field of action of the “pre-modern” museums via the visit to the castle: princely castles, but also the princely and municipal libraries, offered an option for leisure activities. Visitors were not only travellers with an interest

in learning, but also travelling merchants and their relatives, if any, who were travelling with them. Because of the limited demand, these tours were secondary tasks of castellans and other servants. In princely painting galleries, the court painter was usually commissioned as gallery director, who could possibly delegate to a gallery inspector; the situation was similar with librarians. Professors delegated tours of university collections to students; they called the professor in if a visitor asked very knowledgeable questions.

The gender relations in these four pre-modern schemes depend on external factors. The personal union of owner and mediator could only be female-determined to the extent that there were female collectors; in the case of the princesses, it must be remembered that in most German countries women are only conceivable as wives of the monarch or as guardians of the future monarch. Among the wives, Karoline Luise, Margravine of Baden-Durlach, stands out, who showed her painting cabinet to external guests and was intensively involved in the princely natural history cabinet. In German universities, there were no female professors before the 20th century and no female students (with extremely rare exceptions). The situation in the art academies was slightly better. Katharina Treu (1743–1811) taught at the Electoral Academy of Art in Düsseldorf from 1776. She could be described as the first German professor to teach from exhibits, but she remains an isolated case. Management duties depended on the main profession; if light caretaker duties in residential palaces were readily given to war invalids, the staff was recruited from men. In short, if there was a “pre-modern museum education” at all, women had a place in it only as isolated cases.

als sozialer Raum. Art, education, cultural work, communities. Wien: Turia + Kant, 2002, pp. 198–211; here p. 199.

⁸ JEKSTIES, Angela and Gaetano OEHMICHEN. *Das Museum Cimbricum.* In *Museum Cimbricum. Aspekte des öffentlichen Museumswesens in Schleswig-Holstein 1689–1980.* Kiel: Christian-Albrechts-Universität, 1989, pp. 77–97.

19th century: new pedagogical event formats, new actors

The literature suggests the Senckenberg Nature Museum in Frankfurt on the Main as a starting point for museum education in Germany. Frankfurt was one of the “free cities” in the German Confederation, so it was not ruled by a monarchy but by a bourgeois oligarchy. The Nature Museum, founded in 1817, functioned in a similar way: the members of the Senckenberg Natural Research Society committed themselves to the museum in their free time. One of the 17 founding members was the master tailor Johann Christoph Fritz (1781–1835), who used his professional skills in the museum as a taxidermist. In 1826, the general meeting commended him for using the permanent exhibition of the Nature Museum as a classroom on Sunday mornings, before the public hours, to “give lessons in natural history to a number of boys and awaken a love for it”.⁹

In the same year, 1826, the city of Frankfurt granted an annual subsidy of 1,500 guilders to found a natural history teaching institute. The Natural Research Society developed half-year courses with three lessons per week covering the three fields of knowledge: botany, zoology and comparative anatomy. The target group was now adults and high school students. Responsibility for this teaching was taken over by another founding member, the physician Dr. Philipp Jakob Cretzschmar, until 1845.¹⁰ The logic of the university museums was thus reversed: no collections to support teaching, but teaching

events to make better use of the collections.

Additional budget from a funding foundation made an expansion possible in 1854: now external experts could receive fees for lectures. Every three years, later every two years, the Natural Research Society held a public lecture cycle with a fixed curriculum, and mineralogy was added as a new field of knowledge. The group of participants comprised 20–30 people each time, mainly teachers and secondary school pupils, students, doctors and pharmacists. The new building of the Nature Museum in 1908 contained separate classrooms for the now one-year courses. The facility also allowed microscopy and dissection exercises.¹¹ The model of university lectures and seminars is unmistakable. Nothing is known about teaching contributions by women for the entire period.

An argument from the history of museum education reminds us that many German museums came into being through civic engagement and that among these initiators, teachers were a prominent group. However, this still does not clarify whether it was a matter of teachers’ historical or scientific leisure interests or school pedagogical interests. The high level of involvement of teachers in history associations rather points to private inclinations. As positive evidence, only one museum director and drawing teacher is currently known who used museum objects as models for his drawing lessons.¹² The museum history has not shown any evidence of female teachers interested in museums, so the early feminisation of the teaching

profession is irrelevant for the history of museum education.

The format of guided museum tours continued. A series of lectures by Dr. Eduard Gerhard on representations of Greek mythology in sculpture and vase painting, which this museum official gave in 1834/35 in the Royal Museum (today: “Altes Museum”), is considered to be the beginning of guided tours of museums in Berlin. Around 1900, the Royal Museums in Berlin established public Sunday tours: The respective museum directors or curators realised this offer as a service task. In addition, a semi-governmental organisation (“Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen”) had been organising free guided tours in various Berlin museums since 1896.¹³

This external organisation planned and marketed museum tours on Sunday afternoons, especially for workers. Initially, the museum directors held these tours themselves, but due to demand, interested high school teachers were recruited as guides.¹⁴ The same organisation organised a conference on popular art education in Berlin in 1900. The keynote address was given by the Hamburg museum director Alfred Lichtwark, although he himself admitted that he was skilled in lecturing but had never conducted a guided tour of an art exhibition. He identified as particular problems the lack of training of the guiding staff and the tendency of the scientific staff to offer too much historical knowledge.¹⁵

⁹ KRAMER, Waldemar. *Chronik der Senckenbergischen Naturforschenden Gesellschaft 1817–1966*. Frankfurt a. M.: SNG, 1967, pp. 193, 239.

¹⁰ SCHÄFER, Wilhelm. *Geschichte des Senckenberg-Museums im Grundriß*. Frankfurt a. M.: SNG, 1967, pp. 134–135.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² WEIB, Gisela. *Sinnstiftung in der Provinz. Westfälische Museen im Kaiserreich*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005, p. 266.

¹³ SCHOTTMÜLLER, Frida. *Berliner Museumsführungen seit 100 Jahren. Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1935, vol. 56, pp. 39–40.

¹⁴ ALBRECHT, Heinrich. *Fünf Jahre praktischer sozialer Tätigkeit. Aus der Versuchssituation der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen*. Berlin: Heymann, 1898, pp. 34, 36.

¹⁵ *Die Erziehung des Volkes auf den Gebieten der Kunst und Wissenschaft. Vorberichte*

At the first ever nationwide museum conference in Germany, in Mannheim in 1903, guided tours were a major topic. Two speakers who both had the title of professor and a doctorate embodied the conflict already addressed by Lichtwark. The high school director Trendelenburg recited:

“Yes, if there were a choice between a guide with a high level of expertise and one with pedagogical experience, I would unhesitatingly give preference to the latter even if his expertise were not entirely impeccable. For it seems to me that what matters more than this in these tours is the pedagogical tact, which does not place the emphasis on what attracts the scientific researcher, but allows the guide to confine himself to what is the main thing and is self-evident to the simple mind.”¹⁶

The opposite position was taken by Felix von Luschan, director’s assistant at the Royal Museum of Ethnology, Berlin:

“I attach the greatest importance to guided tours by real experts and consider them to be one of the most important means of education. [...] On the other hand, I consider tours by non-experts to be completely useless. I very often see large school classes being rushed through the entire Museum of Ethnology in one or two hours. I think that’s quite nonsensical, and I’m sure it would be much more useful for the children if they spent that time walking around.”¹⁷

In addition to the contrast between educators and subject scholars, it

und Verhandlungen der 11. Konferenz [der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen], 23.–24. 4. 1900. Berlin: Heymann, 1900, pp. 120–121.

¹⁶ Die Museen als Volksbildungsstätten. Ergebnisse der 12. Tagung der Centralstelle für Arbeiter-Wohlfahrtseinrichtungen. Berlin: Heymann, 1904, p. 168.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 184.

seems noteworthy that the focus was on teaching school children. The children may have been female, but the actors were not: the corresponding section in the Mannheim conference proceedings was entitled “Judgments of the guiding gentlemen on the guided tours” and 30 men contributed.

The background to this fact is that in Germany only the nature museums have a long tradition of university-educated directors. The other types of museums were academised in Germany in the last third of the 19th and early 20th centuries: Many museums were given their first full-time museum directors, and in the painting galleries, visual artists were displaced as museum directors. New humanities disciplines emerged. Some of them began with the personal union of university professor and museum director (e.g. ethnology), others successfully claimed museums as their workplace (e.g. art history). Since women were only admitted to regular university studies in Germany between 1900 and 1908, there could only be “guiding gentlemen”. In the first decade of the 20th century, the first female academics worked in German museums in unpaid trainee positions.¹⁸

First half of the 20th century: new terminology, but no full-time professional staff

The German term ‘museum education’ (“Museumspädagogik”) marginally appeared in a voluminous manual on German culture published in 1912.¹⁹ The first multiple use of the term

¹⁸ GRÜTTEL, Else. Weibliche Museumsangestellte. *Museumskunde. Zeitschrift für Verwaltung und Technik öffentlicher und privater Sammlungen*, 1913, vol. 9, pp. 219–224; here p. 223.

¹⁹ DIELS, Hermann. Die Organisation der Wissenschaft. In HINNEBERG, Paul (ed.). *Die Kultur der Gegenwart. Ihre Entwicklung und*

occurred in Leipzig in the circle of elementary school teachers, who at that time had no academic qualifications but were trained in special teacher seminars. The central figure was Richard Buch (1871–1959), who had been working as an elementary school teacher since 1892 and at the same time undertook zoological research as an amateur. He was one of the initiators of the Leipzig Museum of Natural History, which the Leipzig Teachers’ Association decided to found in 1906 and which opened in 1912 under Buch’s direction. In 1916, Buch wrote: “It was clear from the outset that the focus of the new institute was to be its educational, i.e. its task of teaching and educating the people.”²⁰ Buch used the term museum education extensively, but he understood it to mean the selection of exhibits, their arrangement and labelling; he called it a “presentation which was worked out in the manner of museum education”.²¹ In the Leipzig Teachers’ Association, personal forms of mediation were called “popular education” (“Volksbildung”). Teachers were provided with preparatory material for school classes, and group visits by clubs or youth organisations received an introductory lecture by Buch or another teacher. For a teachers’ association, it was far-fetched to think of special educational staff in the museum.

The focus on school education solidified in the 20th century. The first conference on museum education in Germany was organised in 1929 by the “Central

ihre Ziele. Vol. 1, part 1. Berlin: Teubner, 1912, pp. 632–692; here p. 678.

²⁰ BUCH, Richard. Ein naturkundliches Volksmuseum. *Museumskunde. Zeitschrift für Verwaltung und Technik öffentlicher und privater Sammlungen*, 1916, vol. 12, pp. 68–90; here p. 69.

²¹ BUCH, Richard. Das Leipziger Naturkundliche Heimatmuseum. In SCHOENICHEN, Walter (ed.). *Heimatismuseen. Wesen und Gestaltung*. Berlin-Lichterfelde: Bermühler, 1928, pp. 111–150; here p. 118.

Institute for Education and Teaching”, financed by the Prussian state. Franz Hilker, a retired school inspector from Berlin, propagated two innovations, the “working and teaching room” in the museum and the “museum teacher”, a “pedagogically qualified museum expert”. Hilker strove to avoid controversy, with the opinion that art teachers could manage without the help of the “museum teacher”, while teachers of other subjects would be grateful for support. In Hilker’s opinion, subject scholars and teachers of all types of schools and subjects were suitable for employment as “museum teachers”.²² The first “classrooms” in German museums are mentioned for Clausthal-Zellerfeld (1934) and the State Folklore Museum (Volkskundemuseum) in Berlin (1935).²³

Surprisingly, the 1929 conference included two women. Both had an academic background, both spoke about museum tours for children. Edel Noth (1895–1984) was trained as a teacher of home economics, needlework and gymnastics, also attended courses at art schools and worked mainly as a teacher at girls’ schools from 1919. She presented her own programmes for ten to sixteen-year-olds at different art exhibitions or at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (today: “Bode-Museum”), Berlin. The legal framework of the events remains unclear: different exhibitions were the target, the participants visited different types of schools and schools, Noth worked as a teacher. The timing on Saturday afternoons indicated a leisure activity. Noth was not at all concerned with teaching factual knowledge: the

eyes of the young people were to “walk” in the picture, she wanted to help them “get into the scene” in order to understand the composition and to be able to trace it summarily on paper.²⁴

Prof. Dr. Frida Schottmüller (1872–1936) represented the perspective of the academic staff, but accepted that in an art museum whose collections were no longer being expanded, a “pedagogue with an understanding of art and good taste” could be imagined as director. As a rule, she rejected this solution, since the new acquisitions required art-historical expertise. Obviously, Schottmüller saw her topic “museum and guided tours for schoolchildren” as a matter for the director. For the Prussian State Museums in Berlin, however, she conceded that because of the large number of schools in Berlin, museum specialists could not lead class tours. Instead, the Prussian State Museums offered further training in art history for teachers; seminars on art viewing with different age groups were planned as a new offering. Schottmüller presented London museums as exemplary because specially trained staff offered guided tours for the general public as well as for school classes.²⁵

Schottmüller is the main forerunner of professional museum education in Germany. She was a qualified drawing teacher, attended the University of Berlin from 1899 to 1903 as a guest student (women were not yet admitted to regular studies in Prussia), and in 1903 she obtained a doctorate in art history at the University of Zurich. In November 1905, a long series of work contracts for the Painting

Gallery and the Collection of Sculptures of the Royal Museums in Berlin (later: State Museums) began: she researched, wrote scholarly publications and catalogues of holdings, negotiated with art dealers in Italy; along the way, she wrote some fifty articles for the dictionary of artists “Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon” edited by Thieme and Becker. She continued to earn her living as a drawing teacher and also taught at the socialist adult education centre (“Volkshochschule”) in Berlin. In 1919, the Prussian government honoured the academic achievements of the ‘auxiliary worker’ by awarding her the title of professor.

It was not until 1920 that she received a permanent position as curator at the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum. Official conflicts were inevitable: Schottmüller was used to speaking directly to the Director General Wilhelm von Bode. With her regular employment, the department director Dr. Theodor Demmler became her superior; he reprimanded Schottmüller for maintaining direct contact with Bode. One may speculate that the employee’s professional reputation and her professorial title were part of the problem. As the result in 1925, Schottmüller kept the title of curator of the sculpture collection, but she was given another workspace outside the museum and a new task: she had to organise the guided tours and lectures in the State Museums. Schottmüller organised her work as coordinator, programme director and publicity department. Her involvement ranged from procuring folding chairs for seminars in the permanent exhibition to developing art-historical evening courses, from posters for advertising pillars to guidelines for guided tours.²⁶

22 HILKER, Franz. Schule und Museum. In Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht (ed.). *Museum und Schule*. Berlin: Hobbing, 1930, pp. 98–110; here pp. 100–101.

23 HOLST, Niels von. Das Führungswesen in den Berliner Museen. *Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1936, vol. 57, pp. 43–50, here p. 46.

24 NOTH, Edel. Mit Kindern im Museum. In Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht (ed.). *Museum und Schule*. Berlin: Hobbing, 1930, pp. 120–127.

25 SCHOTTMÜLLER, Frida. Museum und Schülerführungen. In Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht (ed.). *Museum und Schule*. Berlin: Hobbing, 1930, pp. 111–119.

26 NÜTZMANN, Hannelore. Ein Berufsleben. Frida Schottmüller. *Mitteilungen des*

Schottmüller apparently did not have a budget. Her main achievement was to increase the number of tours offered at no cost. Before she took up her post, there were 24 public guided tours by museum directors and curators per quarter, in 1932 there were 58. Since 1932, there was a new service called “tours by scientific auxiliary workers”, which was also declared as a qualification: ‘auxiliary workers’ referred on the one hand to people with a specific work task for a meagre fee (like Schottmüller herself for a long time) and on the other hand to young university graduates who were involved in museum work for several months without pay. The demand from external groups for guided tours on desired dates was satisfied by charging a fee for this and passing it on to the ‘auxiliary worker’ who did the tour. In museums that did not employ ‘auxiliary workers’, tours with students were offered. Full-time museum staff were responsible for checking the students’ level of knowledge.²⁷ Financial possibilities controlled this system; promotion of women was only possible in individual cases, basically the low proportion of women among students and graduates dictates the gender ratio.

These tasks were taken away from Schottmüller in April 1934 and assigned, along with press relations, to Prof. Dr. Alexander Langsdorff, curator of the prehistoric department who, as a member of the SS, seemed more trustworthy to the Nazi regime. In the same year, this secondary activity was made independent as the “External Office of the Berlin Museums”, and Langsdorff thus became the apparently first head of a museum

²⁷ HOLST, Niels von. Das Führungswesen in den Berliner Museen. *Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1936, vol. 57, pp. 43–50.

²⁸ NÜTZMANN, Hannelore. Ein Berufsleben. Frida Schottmüller. *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Instituts in Florenz*, 1996, vol. 40, pp. 236–244; here pp. 240–241.

education department in Germany. Frida Schottmüller retired a year later, allegedly at her own request.²⁸

Langsdorff’s successor in the External Office published a misogynist text in 1936 that held up Berlin tours by “young researchers and museum professionals” as an advantage over the offerings of special museum education departments abroad (he wrote the department denomination in English and French); he merely conceded that the “incidentally mostly ‘female’ [sic!] museum instructors” in the US had “a certain even practice in guiding” that the ‘auxiliary workers’ lacked.²⁹

The educational activity repertoire of the time was clear: guided tours and slide lectures were the important formats. Edel Noth alone presented new forms. School classes were an important target group, but not the only one. Pedagogical knowledge or even routine were not the focus, although the term “museum teacher” was formulated at the same time: Compared to pedagogical professionalism, the audience’s contact with a young researcher “who has a living relationship with his subject” received a higher rating.³⁰ The usefulness of a special qualification was disputed: “Guiding in a museum can only be learned to a limited extent”, Schottmüller wrote.³¹ The Düsseldorf museum director Karl Koetschau explained in 1918 that only “museum

²⁹ HOLST, Niels von. Das Führungswesen in den Berliner Museen. *Berliner Museen. Berichte aus den preußischen Kunstsammlungen*, 1936, vol. 57, pp. 43–50; here p. 50.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ SCHOTTMÜLLER, Frida. Museum und Schülerführungen. In Zentralinstitut für Erziehung und Unterricht (ed.). *Museum und Schule*. Berlin: Hobbings, 1930, pp. 111–119; here p. 116.

technology in its entire scope” could be taught at university.³² Everything else should be learned through professional practice. Museum education thus remained within the official duties of the academic staff (or served as extra income for their junior generation).

The professional reality in these years became precisely comprehensible for the first time through the “Yearbook of German Museums”, which provided detailed personnel data. For 1929, various professions were indicated in 1,504 museums, but no museum education. The Goethe Museum in Frankfurt am Main listed three guides, the German Museum on Health and Safety at Work in Berlin four “guides and craftsmen”.³³ Obviously, mediation tasks were fulfilled alongside other activities.

Only a few women can have been given this secondary task of museum education, because in 1929 a total of 57 women were listed among the museum staff. The real number was higher, as the information provided by the museums varied in detail: the Hamburg Ethnological Museum alone listed ten cleaning women (included here), while most museums listed no cleaning staff at all. In addition, abbreviations made the gender invisible in the numerical data of persons with simple jobs. Apart from administrative staff and cleaners, the following were named as female: seven museum directors (including two part-time directors, one museum benefactress and two unpaid directors), six civil servants, four assistants, one “art caretaker”, one draughtswoman,

³² KOETSCHAU, Karl. *Die Vorbildung der Museumsbeamten. Vortrag, gehalten auf der Würzburger Tagung, 29. Mai 1918*. Hamburg: Lüdtcke & Wulff, 1918, p. 6.

³³ SCHRAMM, Albert (ed.). *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Museen. Vol. 2*. Wolfenbüttel: Heckner, 1929.

one museum assistant and one “Fräulein” (unmarried woman) without specifying her occupation. Furthermore, two “technical assistants” and ten academic trainees (with a temporary, presumably unpaid job) were listed. In the full-time museum staff of the Berlin museums, the number of women decreased from three to one between 1932 and 1935 (one ‘auxiliary worker’ in the National Gallery); however, the published names of the ‘auxiliary workers’ are incomplete.³⁴

Second half of 20th century: local establishment, nationwide organisation and the beginning of the female precariat

In the reconstruction phase after the Second World War, the two German states experienced the establishment of museum education as an administrative concept, as a field of action of museum practice, as an organisational unit and as a professional profile. In keeping with the centralist thinking of the GDR, in the 1950s two museums (Museum for German History, East Berlin; State Art Collections, Dresden) that were considered pioneering were initially equipped with departments for educational work and guided tours. After uniform methods for “cultural mass work” were ordered in the “Principles on the Socialist Transformation of Local History Museums” (1960), museum education departments or specialised workplaces were also established in other museums in the country. In 1963, a national advisory body was created, first under the name “Working Group School and Museum”, 1970–1990 as “Working Group Museum Education”, which published an annual

periodical “School and Museum” 1966–1990 and a practical manual in 1966 and 1976 respectively.³⁵ Nothing is known about gender relations. Men fulfilled all leadership positions and editorial tasks.

In the Federal Republic of Germany, the locations of several important museums set the tone for full-time museum education work. Central institutions that created educational offers for the various museums were deemed suitable: in 1961 for the State Museums in West Berlin (without mentioning the predecessor from 1934 or 1925), in 1965 for the museums of the city of Cologne, and in 1969 for the Germanic National Museum together with the municipal museums in Nuremberg. Other metropolises followed the example. In 1965, the buzzword of the comprehensive German “education catastrophe”, from kindergarten to schools or vocational training to universities, generated political attention, so that museum education also came into view on the sidelines. The museum boom that began at the same time was based more on historical culture and the competition for appreciation of museum locations, not least on tourist hopes, but also opened up opportunities for new museum education jobs in the general expansion. In 1973, there were the first informal meetings of museum educators, in 1982 the first, still thin, issue of the professional journal “Standbein Spielbein”, which is still published today, was available, and in 1981 the first edition of the manual “Handbuch Museumspädagogik” was published.³⁶

³⁵ SCHNEE, Ines. Museumspädagogik in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) bis 1990. In COMMANDEUR, Beatrix, Hannelore KUNZ-OTT and Karin SCHAD (eds.). *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*. München: Kopaed, 2016, pp. 66–75.

³⁶ WEIß, Gisela. *Museumspädagogik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland bis 1990*. In

In the West, too, little was learned about gender relations. Among the published practical reports, there were reports by women, but men held the leading positions, were the editors of the manual. At the Nuremberg Art Education Centre, there was a male director and a permanently employed male museum educator in the early years; for the rest, educational staff worked on a fee basis – predominantly women who saw little opportunity to work alongside their families. In retrospect, the museum educator there spoke of the “type of housewife interested in art”.³⁷

A female-accentuated niche developed in the children’s museums. The second of these, the Children’s Museum in the Historical Museum of Frankfurt on the Main, established in 1972, reported exclusively women for its entire existence in 2003, both among the employees and among the numerous freelancers.³⁸ In Nuremberg, a freelance employee of the Art Education Centre was involved in a new mobile offer.³⁹ The second wave of founding children’s museums in the 1990s was carried out “almost everywhere” by women, mostly in private initiatives and therefore hardly under personal profit motives.⁴⁰

COMMANDEUR, Beatrix, Hannelore KUNZ-OTT and Karin SCHAD (eds.). *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*. München: Kopaed, 2016, pp. 76–83.

³⁷ ROOS, Julia. *Ausstellungen als öffentliches Ärgernis? Die bundesdeutsche Museumskontroverse der 1970er-Jahre um das Präsentieren von Vergangenheiten*. Berlin: Bibspider, 2018, pp. 133–134.

³⁸ GESSNER, Susanne. *Dokumentation zum 30. Jubiläum des Kindermuseums. Ein Museum für Kinder im Museum*. Frankfurt a. M.: Kindermuseum des Historischen Museums, 2003.

³⁹ ROOS, Julia. *Ausstellungen als öffentliches Ärgernis? Die bundesdeutsche Museumskontroverse der 1970er-Jahre um das Präsentieren von Vergangenheiten*. Berlin: Bibspider, 2018, pp. 549.

⁴⁰ KÖNIG, Gabriele. *Kinder- und Jugendmuseen und Museen als Orte für alle Generationen*. In BOCKHORST, Hildegard, Vanessa-Isabelle

³⁴ SCHRAMM, Albert (ed.). *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Museen*. Vol. 5. Wolfenbüttel: Heckner, 1932; Vol. 6, 1934.

Up to the present: quantitative growth in the boom crisis

Since German unification in 1990, museums have gone through an ongoing boom crisis: the number of museums grew faster than demand, the national average of visitor numbers per museum declined by 6.3 % (1993–2013). Apart from spectacular new buildings for some bigger institutions, it was a period of founding small museums: between 1993 and 2013, Germany got 814 new museums run by private associations. On the former territory of the GDR, museums lost 40 % of their staff. Unlike the western museum boom of the 1970s–1980s, the sum of public funds increased slowly and disproportionately to the museum numbers.⁴¹

In 1992, the German museum statistics counted 358 museums among 3,002 responding museums with at least one regularly employed museum educator and a total of 505 persons (plus 3,565 freelancers). In 2007, there were already 682 of 3,613 responding museums with a total of 991 regularly employed educators and 6,923 freelancers. In 2017, there were 823 out of 4,237 responding museums with a total of 1,437 regularly employed educators and 7,205 freelancers.⁴² This quantitative increase as well included a boom crisis. Because capital investment as

a whole did not increase so much, employment did not necessarily mean a permanent job or a full-time position – 698 of the 1,437 regularly employed educators had only a half-time position in 2017. The largest group among the 10,899 people who worked for pay in museum education in 2017 was made up of freelancers who only worked (and were paid) on demand. Since selective offers played a major role (action days, museum festivals, programmes during school holidays), many freelancers received income from the museum only occasionally or seasonally. The second largest group in 2017, 2,257 people, consisted of low-income earners (student assistants and “mini-jobs” limited to a maximum income of €400 per month).⁴³

Guided museum tours show a multidirectional development. They are criticised today (“frontal teaching on the move”), their ready-made presentation of information contradicts basic pedagogical principles. The professional museum education elaborated a variety of alternative formats. Nevertheless, guided tours are still the most common form of presentation: 82.1 % of the 4.237 German museums responding in 2017 offered guided tours; programmes for school classes got the second rank with 49.5 %.⁴⁴ Large museums draw a conceptual line between “museum education” and “visitor service” (standard guided tours that can be called up). On the other hand, it is still common for the museum management and those responsible for temporary exhibitions to offer guided tours. But the character of these “official tours” changed in the last decades. Some of them got

an exclusive touch (“guided tour by the director” at a higher fee). “Curator’s tours” approximate art and research; the actual discourse accentuates the artistic practice of curators and distances these tours from “pedagogy” and museum education.

Conclusion: instead of women’s emancipation in museums, causal chains in the labour market

The field of museum education in Germany did not show any emancipatory striving for jobs for women (about 1900) nor an echo effect of early women teachers (18th, 19th centuries) or the feminisation of the different teaching professions (20th century). Men introduced the technical term museum education in Germany, men were the first to discuss the right qualifications for museum guides. The first full-time head of a museum education department in Germany (1925) came about rather accidentally when internal quarrels with a woman were ended by removing Frida Schottmüller from her original tasks. The formal establishment of the department led to male staffing. The factually educational work was fulfilled by the existing academic (largely male) staff.

Apart from isolated cases, women did not appear in German museum education until it had received its first local structures and the first explicit full-time positions (for men). The parallel development in East and West and the GDR’s lead in time refute that the second phase of the women’s emancipation movement (in the 1960s of West Germany) would have affected the establishment of museum education.

Obviously, neither a longer perspective of museum history nor general theses on the increasing participation of women in the

REINWAND and Wolfgang ZACHARIAS (eds.). *Handbuch Kulturelle Bildung*. München: Kopaed, 2012, pp. 669–671.

41 WALZ, Markus. Von der deutschen Vereinigung zur Boomkrise der Gegenwart. In WALZ, Markus (ed.). *Handbuch Museum. Geschichte – Aufgaben – Perspektiven*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2016, pp. 69–75.

42 HAGEDORN-SAUPE, Monika. Museumspädagogik in Zahlen. In COMMANDEUR, Beatrix, Hannelore KUNZ-OTT and Karin SCHAD (eds.). *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*. München: Kopaed, 2016, pp. 362–368; *Statistische Gesamterhebung an den Museen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für das Jahr 2017*. Berlin: Institut für Museumsforschung, 2018, pp. 53–54.

43 *Statistische Gesamterhebung an den Museen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland für das Jahr 2017*. Berlin: Institut für Museumsforschung, 2018, pp. 53–54.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

labour market are able to explain the gender-unbalanced situation of German museum education. Therefore, a causal chain will be sketched here as an explanatory model. It is based on plausible arguments not on empirical facts.

As a caveat, it should be noted that there are undoubtedly people who are only willing or able to engage in limited gainful employment, and that it is entirely possible to earn a good income from freelance museum education work. Nevertheless, it is a well-known phenomenon of German labour market research that especially in the cultural industries, many people work in solitary self-employment and earn significantly below-average incomes. This part of the cultural industries is considered a characteristic case of precarious living conditions, where it is assumed that the individual's old-age provision is not sufficient and therefore poverty in old age is likely later on.⁴⁵

The basis of this explanatory model is the labour market. There is a quantitatively insufficient demand for graduates of several museum-relevant subjects (e.g. art history for decades). The teaching diplomas in (West) Germany experienced striking cyclical changes, which, if negative, provided more people interested in museum education. As a result, there is a constant supply of young people who, due to a lack of alternatives in the desired field of museum work, see a limited option as an opportunity. An indication of the willingness to take risks involved is that several qualification programmes for museum education activities are constantly offered in Germany, with participation fees

amounting to several thousand euros.

Due to the numerical ratio of people working in museum education, it is most likely to get a freelance job for a few hours or a mini-job. Instead of the “art-interested housewives” of the 1970s, we probably find mainly career starters who continue the tight financial framework from their studies in order to gain initial experience in the museum with the hope of getting a full-time job later (in or also outside of museum education). In addition, there are people in difficult labour market situations who are prepared in the longer term to combine a small amount of time at their desired museum job with other gainful employment.

Most of those who have found their first job in this way face the next eye of the needle: there are six times as many people in freelance contracts or marginal employment as there are full-time professionals, so that when vacancies arise employers can choose from an oversupply (besides conceivable lateral entrants). Since every second museum education position is only a half-time job, many who are looking for a full-time position will settle for part-time in the hope that the contract will be increased later or a full-time job will become available elsewhere.

Because employers have mastered these labour market tiers, the coveted full-time museum education positions can be offered and filled at the lower end of the pay scale. Indications of this are the pay offers in German job advertisements for museum educators, which often remain at the bachelor's level (data from 2005–2014),⁴⁶ and those

15 people who completed a museum education dissertation between 1987 and 2011, none of whom were employed in a museum.⁴⁷ In 1992, it was reported from south-west Germany that many museum education jobs were temporary and many job holders had not worked towards this career goal but had taken up the position to escape unemployment.⁴⁸

This structure receives its female accent from the outside. Hidden power issues and influences on decision-makers could make it difficult or impossible to recruit women. Today, this is unlikely, at least in state and municipal museums in Germany, due to the monitored equality of women. Consequently, women do not meet any obstacle if they are interested in a museum job. As long as family work is predominantly fulfilled by women, women will be more willing to take on occupations with a small amount of time. For decades, cultural studies, humanities and education have had a strong appeal for young women, and some of the disciplines relevant to museums are studied almost exclusively by women (e.g. textile science). Regardless of the level of qualification, a majority of women opt for pedagogical professions: in 2020, 73.1 per cent of teachers at German schools are female, in primary schools their share is highest at 89.4 per cent; with a female quota of 92.9 per cent (2020),⁴⁹ kindergarten education is

45 KOLLAR, Elke. Museumspädagogische Praxisprofile und Berufsbilder. In COMMANDEUR, Beatrix, Hannelore KUNZ-OTT and Karin SCHAD (eds.). *Handbuch Museumspädagogik. Kulturelle Bildung in Museen*. München: Kopaed, 2016, pp. 307–314; here p. 311.

46 BREDEMANN, Antje. Das Tätigkeitsfeld der Museumspädagogik im Spiegel von Stellenanzeigen – Anforderungen und Arbeitgeberleistungen. In BREDEMANN, Antje und Claudia RÜTSCHKE. *Aspekte museumspädagogischer Arbeit. Zwei Studien zu Personalanforderungen und psychologischen*

Gesprächssituationen. Berlin: Bibspider, 2018, pp. 11–118; here p. 65.

47 WALZ, Markus. Museologische Kenntnisstände in der Hochschullehre. In WALZ, Markus (ed.). *Handbuch Museum. Geschichte – Aufgaben – Perspektiven*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2016, pp. 382–384; here p. 384.

48 DÜRR, Christiane. *Biologieunterricht im Museum. Ökologie und Umwelterziehung in Museen im deutschsprachigen Raum*. Frankfurt a. M.: Haag & Herchen, 1992, p. 206.

49 *Anteil der weiblichen Lehrkräfte an allgemeinbildenden Schulen in Deutschland im Schuljahr 2019/20 nach Schulart* [online]. [accessed 2021-08-20]. Available from [www.<https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/](https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/)

one of the most gender-unbalanced professions on the German labour market.⁵⁰ This female majority within specific study programmes and professional trainings and the socioeconomic situation of young families are the main factors controlling the labour market for German museum educators or at least its precarious part over the last decades.

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- studie/1129852/umfrage/frauenanteil-unter-den-lehrkraeften-in-deutschland-nach-schulart/>.
- 50 *Fachkräftebarometer Frühe Bildung* [online]. Zahl des Monats: Februar 2020 [accessed 2021-08-20]. Available from www: <<https://www.fachkraeftebarometer.de/zahl-des-monats/>>.
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