

Rihter, Andreja

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Andreja Rihter, MA | Forum of Slavic Cultures, Slovenia

Educative – museological seminars of Forum of Slavic Culture

The Forum of Slavic Cultures is a non-profit and non-government organization that was founded in 2004 on the initiative of the Slavic cultural circles. The founding member states were Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, and Serbia and Montenegro. Soon they were joined by Belarus, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine, so that today the Forum unites thirteen Slavic countries.

The mission of the Forum of Slavic Cultures is to innerve creativity of Slavic cultures. The basic aim of the organization is to connect Slavic cultural milieu and actualize it in the modern global social context. The Forum of Slavic Cultures links and presents Slavic culture, science and arts, their creative charge and heritage, while it also actively cares for a recognizable contribution of Slavic cultures to global dialogue.

The main objective of the institution is to encourage throughput of information, implementation of common cultural, educative and research projects and mobility of artists and cultural workers of all the countries, whose populations speak Slavic languages.

The international foundation – The Forum of the Slavic Cultures as an institution, strives to start an implementation of seminars, which aim towards the professional specialization and change of the systematic work of the museums as institutions of cultural

and natural heritage. The strategic planning of the Project “Transition towards the new museum” shall be implemented in multiple years by including various programs by connecting the activities of the museum activity on a regional and international level.

The aim of this project, with all involved subprojects such as seminars is to exchange experiences and skills in museums, as well as to improve the knowledge and implementation of modern principles. Through debates and workshops one of the aims is to involve students and give them the means to enter in the practical world of museum profession.

Results are expected to be primarily related to increasing awareness of the importance of heritage and updating the presentation of the same, for a better and more responsible approach to the preservation. It is also expected to redefine the outdated strategic plans of regional museums and to increase the existing capacity of the museum.

The activities are designed to connect related museums in the region through the Forum of Slavic Cultures, which will facilitate the exchange of valuable experiences and provide opportunities for faster development of museums; identification of problems and assessment of the state of the museums in the region; tackling problems and trying to find solutions at the provided seminars; presentation and evaluation of effects.

The permanent partners are the ministries of culture, universities, museums, and other cultural and educational institutions.

With the advent of new technologies, new theories of science that deal with culture and new ways of presenting the same, and the changing attitude towards the past in contemporary society, the subject matter of heritage, is defined. Safeguarding of heritage, whether tangible or intangible, in all its limits and scope, is the main concern of museum as an institution. Due to rapid changes of the last decade, the museum now has to satisfy the primary needs of society.

Within the seminars – **Transition to the new Museum**, the International Foundation – Forum of Slavic Cultures as an institution wants to initiate implementation of seminars, which aim at professional specialization and to change the system operation in the museum as heritage institutions.

The project is divided into three phases. It is important to emphasize that each phase's goal is involvement of different regions and analysis of different areas, included in the museum profession. Each of the three phases of implementation leaves open the possibility of thematic complement and supplement.

Strategic planning of the project:

1. Transformations Museum (8/9 March 2012, Belgrade, Serbia)
2. Education in Museums (21/22 May 2012, Skopje, Macedonia)
3. Planning New Spaces for Heritage (4/7 June 2012, Piran, Slovenia)

The project is implemented on a multi-year level, and will include programs that connect science, education and presentation programs. Such integrated functions of museum institutions are the ground on which it can and must be created a new profile of museum practice, adequate to contemporary society. This cooperation could provide representatives of institutions and institutions with tools for systematic planning of development activities, as well as linking the activities of museum work on regional and international level.

The target groups of the project will not include only curators and museum management, but all the museum staff, students and wider stakeholders, who could potentially find their interest in change and transformation of museum practices.

Each seminar will be executed in three phases:

1. Introduction and theoretical lectures by eminent experts, who are university lecturers in the field of museums, as the centres of preserving heritage.
2. Presentation of completed projects as examples of a process of finding the most effective way to communicate and transfer messages and experiences, both positive and negative, within the target groups.
3. Workshop for prox. 25 participants from the region and beyond Slavic countries of Europe.

I. The first seminar took place in Novi Sad, the Gallery of Matica srbska being the organizer with the manager Ms. Tijana Paljkovljević.

The topic Transition to the New Museum was chosen in Serbia on the basis of the current situation in work of museums and their strategic planning for the future. Museums and their transformations are a necessity that is to be followed by professionals. The topic was chosen after several weeks of coordination and meetings in Belgrade, held already in 2011. For conducting the seminar, I involved an expert – my colleague Dirk Houtgraaf from the Netherlands, as well as colleagues from Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria and Macedonia.

“Throughout the exchange of professional experience and knowledge that we shared during this educative seminar, we managed to build many BRIDGES across the BOUNDARIES in Slavic countries in 2 days”, was one of the thinking.

II. Second Seminar was in Skopje

The Republic of Macedonia – The Ministry of Culture as a member of the Forum of Slavic Cultures in the annual program to realize the national interest in the culture for 2012, accepted the seminar “New practices- programs for visitors”. Upon the concluded agreement, the organization of the seminar as a task was given to the National Institution -Museum of Macedonia.

This seminar was organized with the assignment to approximate and transfer the knowledge, information, ideas and the heritage of the entire population.

In order to plan and realize its function as a source of information, the museums establish communication with the environment around them.

The seminar was realized through professional lectures and workshops, with a few goals:

- To point out to the meaning of the museum education;
- The affirmation of the museum professionals which realize the educational programs;
- Creating a basis to share the professional experiences;
- Developing of the cooperation and network of the museums from the member countries of the Forum of Slavic Cultures through the education programs.

Eighty five participants were present in the seminar. Eleven presentations were realized, one professional lecture and one workshop. There was active participation from the colleagues of the member countries of the Foundation: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia.

The program unfolded quite dynamically with an exchange of knowledge, scientific and professional results, with various positive and negative experiences, and a lot of contacts were established between the colleagues, initiatives for the common projects were proposed, a positive basis for further cooperation was established, the professional friendships were extended among the colleagues etc.

Conclusions of the seminar “New Practices – Programs for visitors”:

- An initiative was shown to form a network of museums with specific connection and cooperation through educational activity;
- The initiative in the Republic of Macedonia was unanimously supported to continue with the organizing of seminars on the topic – Education for the cultural and natural heritage;
- Seminars with a program – a project which will be under work, i.e. detailed elaboration of the issues – Who? Why? How? In the educational activity in the cultural institutions and
- Support of the presented works, to be published entirely in one common Collection of seminars realized in 2012.

III. The third seminar took place in Piran, Slovenia.

The University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, Heritage Department, and the Science and Research Centre, Institute for Mediterranean Heritage, as well as the International Museology School of Celje organized the annual summer school of museology for the seventh time in row. The Forum of Slavic Cultures joined the event with its own project, which was enthusiastically endorsed by all the partners.

Through its heritage programmes, the University implements a modular programme of education and training of various target groups that deal with heritage or are preparing to work with it. The programmes unites the lectures of experts in education and practical work, discussions, debates, presentations of good practices, workshops and analyses, while primarily it makes an effort to provide enough space for one's own active creative work with constant proofing in practice and field work. The summer school courses are aimed at Slovenian and foreign students who want to deepen the knowledge they acquired in regular student programmes. The contents of the school's programme is connected with student courses at the 1st, 2nd and 3rd levels of university studies (Heritage, Archaeology, History, Ethnology, Museology...), as well as with the contents of professional exams for curators – conservators, which are defined by the regulations of Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. The University follows its own strategies and pursues various aims: to develop and implement educative training programmes, with the emphasis on practical usability and stimulation of museology theoretic discourse.

In Piran we focused on two topics:

- **New Spaces for Heritage and Local Communities**
- **Museums new world**

The biggest challenge for the museum institutions of our time is fulfilling the demands for the creation of new spaces, both physical and theoretical, for preserving tangible and intangible heritage. Handling of heritage and its value is and must be the absolute imperative for museum professionals. This segment of museum work is secure due to technological updating. Technology, which comes as a product of the

rapid change, makes the transition from one safeguarding tool to another easier.

With this well-defined direction in the domain of care of collections we must take a better look into the issue of professionalism and ethics.

With organizing of the academic courses and professional development workshops we can meet the need for constant investigation of the ethic framework of museology and museum and heritage institutions.

The seminars should give room for analyzing of the existing educational programs that have an aim of creating museum professionals in broadest sense – from the theory to practice with emphasis on the ethical core values. Through debate and questions about existing programs we should gain a better insight of strengths and weaknesses of the professional building of future experts in museum and heritage field.

The active participants of the seminar were lecturers from the Netherlands, Italy, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia. Besides the students of the Primorska University, the seminars were attended by the students of the Technical Sciences Faculty from Novi Sad, museologists from Croatia, and a colleague from the Reinwardt Academy, Amsterdam.

The outline and realization of the seminar in Piran was an upgrade of the design offered by the FSC. An important part of the seminar was a visit to new-founded museums. Slovenia's rich heritage of several thousand years produced a variegated heritage. The coastal region of Primorska has got a taste of Mediterranean culture, which continues into Italian regions. Therefore, the contents of the museum collections and their collecting politics differ from the work in the centre or other Slovenian regions. Visits with guided tours and conversations were mutually useful and provided an opportunity for establishing some new projects. The evaluation that was carried out among the students proved successfulness of the preparation and execution of the seminar, which is going to continue in the next couple of years.

Each FSC seminar has its own peculiarities (topic it covers, heterogeneity of lecturers, participants, financiers, locations, partners...). Every seminar has also its own patterns, agreement about work and implementation, which is reached in the project

coordination group, charged with preparation of the overall plan. It is always left to an individual organizer to choose a topic, make a list of invitees, and define its target public. The participants, among others, are also experts and lecturers from the countries covered by the FSC. The expert collaboration in choosing the lecturers is done together by the FSC and EMA. We would also like to develop our work in terms of contents with the ICTOP members. All the participants are given a certificate of participation, and are subsequently regularly informed about all the events we organize in their particular country.

The seminars are a part of the integral cultural programme carried out by the FCS. They are a part of a linking system, with a special kind of work and providing an opportunity to get to know each other and our cultural heritages. We started in 2012, and the preparation of our programme for 2013 is well under way. You are kindly invited to join us in Piran next June and in Novi Sad in October 2013. We can hardly wait to involve our members and experts from various fields, expanding the membership and active work all around our region.