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## STUDIE/ARTICLES

## ART MUSEUM COLLECTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF SOCIAL MEDIA. TYPOLOGY OF THE POSSIBILITIES OF PRESENTING ART COLLECTIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

VERONIKA VACKOVÁ

<https://doi.org/10.5817/MuB2024-1-2>**ABSTRACT/ABSTRAKT:**

The study provides an insight into the issue of presenting the collections of art museums on social media in the Czech Republic, which is based on the results of qualitative research conducted in 2023. The issue of social networking is placed in a theoretical frame, examples of working with collections on social media abroad are outlined and the research methodology is described in detail. The main goal of the article is to present a typology resulting from the research, which shows the possibilities by which the art museums under investigation approach the presentation of their collections. At the same time, a context is added that outlines the conditions which influence the social networking in museums and thereby also the presentation of collections.

**Sbírky muzeí umění ve světle sociálních sítí. Typologie možností prezentace uměleckých sbírek na sociálních sítích v České republice**

Studie přináší pohled na problematiku prezentace sbírek muzeí umění na sociálních sítích v České republice, která vychází z výsledků kvalitativního výzkumu, který proběhl v roce 2023. Problematika práce na sociálních sítích je zasazena do teoretického rámce, nastíněny jsou příklady práce se sbírkami

na sociálních sítích v zahraničí a podrobně je popsána metodologie výzkumu. Hlavním cílem článku je představit typologii vzešlou z výzkumu, která ukazuje možnosti, jakými zkoumaná muzea umění k prezentaci sbírek přistupují. To je zároveň obohaceno o kontext, který nastiňuje podmínky, které v muzeích práci na sociálních sítích ovlivňují a tím i prezentaci sbírek.

**KEYWORDS/KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA:**

*social media – Facebook – Instagram – museum – art museum – museum collections – art collections – digitization – presentation*  
*sociální sítě – Facebook – Instagram – muzeum – muzeum umění – muzejní sbírky – umělecké sbírky – digitalizace – prezentace*

**Introduction**

Today's art museums promote their activities through social media, and a natural part of this activity is also the presentation of collections across individual channels. Thanks to this, users can see the collection items without initiating the contact themselves. The objective of the research, which was designed for the purposes of a thesis,<sup>1</sup> was therefore to map out

<sup>1</sup> See VACKOVÁ, Veronika. *Možnosti prezentace sbírek muzeí umění na sociálních sítích*. Brno:

the ways in which collections are presented on social media, while the main attention was focused on the collections of art museums themselves and the way they are presented on the Facebook and Instagram social media. The study follows up and describes various positions and contexts in which collections are presented to users, but does neither assess the correctness of this practice nor compare individual institutions with each other. The institutions whose profiles on social media were examined for the purpose of the research are members of the *Council of Galleries of the Czech Republic*. The Council of Galleries is a professional union of Czech art museums which acts as an umbrella organisation for individual institutions. Its main mission is to coordinate activities in the creation, management, protection and publication of art collections as an inalienable part of the national cultural heritage.<sup>2</sup>

**Social media through the lens of marketing**

Even in the museum environment, social media are regarded mainly

Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta, 2023. Master thesis. The article was prepared as a part of the project of Specific Research MUNI/A/1497/2023.

<sup>2</sup> O Radě galerií ČR. In *Rada galerií České republiky* [online]. 2014 [accessed 2024-20-03]. Available from www: <<http://rgcr.cz/o-rade-galerii-cr/>>.

from the perspective of PR and marketing, as they are currently one of the most effective means of promoting the mission of the institution and its activities. Professional management of profiles on social media falls under the field of marketing. Posts that are published on Instagram and Facebook profiles of institutions are referred to as content, and their use for the purpose of promoting a product or service is called content marketing in marketing communication. The basis of a long-term sustainable and consistent communication is planning and systematic preparation of the content. It is recommended to keep an overview of prepared posts in the content plan. This can take a variety of forms, ICOM suggests creating a content calendar in which specific topics are entered for individual months and dates.<sup>3</sup> In the process of planning, it is common to use table editors that enable to accurately lay out all related information, and especially the text of the post itself.<sup>4</sup> It is recommended to equip the posts, especially on Instagram, with simple and relevant hashtags which can also be created for the purpose of promoting an institution, event or exhibition. They can be then also used by the visitors and participants themselves.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the content created and published by the institutions, we must not omit the digital footprint, the origin of which museums have no control over. In most cases, it

3 ICOM. *Social Media Guidelines for ICOM Committees* [online]. Paris: ICOM, 2019, p. 14 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Social-media-guidelinesEN-1.pdf>>.

4 LOSEKOOT, Michelle and Eliška VYHNÁNKOVÁ. *Jak na síť: ovládněte čtyři principy úspěchu na sociálních sítích*. Brno: Jan Melvil Publishing, 2019, pp. 237–238.

5 ICOM. *Social Media Guidelines for ICOM Committees* [online]. Paris: ICOM, 2019, p. 20 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Social-media-guidelinesEN-1.pdf>>.

involves the creation of posts by the visitors, who place the text and accompanying visual material on their personal profiles on social media. In marketing terminology, it is referred to as user-generated content (UGC). And it is defined as any content that is not created by the sponsor of the marketing communication, in our case a cultural institution.<sup>6</sup> A separate category of users who can actively collaborate with the museum and participate in its promotion and thus the presentation of museum collections are influencers.<sup>7</sup> The cooperation of cultural institutions with influencers is perceived as financially less costly and more effective than traditional forms of advertising communication.<sup>8</sup>

### Examples from abroad

In the world, it is possible to observe different approaches to working with museum collections through social media. A milestone in the presentation of collections on Instagram was the year 2013, when photographer Dave Krugman posted a photo of the empty Metropolitan Museum on his profile.<sup>9</sup> The museum followed this up in April 2015 with a regular event marked with the hashtag #emptymet, when photographers with a high number of followers visit the institution after closing hours and take photos, which they subsequently publish on their profile.<sup>10</sup> In 2014, the

6 PŘIKRYLOVÁ, Jana et al. *Moderní marketingová komunikace*. 2nd fully revised ed. Praha: Grada, 2019, p. 283.

7 Ibidem.

8 KUDĚLKOVÁ, Nikola. *Využití influencerů v komunikačních strategiích kulturní instituce Centra současného umění DOX*. Praha: Vysoká škola ekonomická, Fakulta podnikohospodářská, 2020, p. 11. Bachelor thesis.

9 JAT, S. C. Is Instagram the world's hottest museum? In *The Dyas* [online]. 28 April 2022 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://thedyas.com/blogs/the-dyas-magazine/instagram-world-hottest-museum>>.

10 DORNAN, Russel. Reflecting the Museum: How Instagram brings back seeing. In *Museum iD* [online]. 2016 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available

Wellcome Collection gallery in London decided to take a look at objects from its collections through the eyes of visitors who tagged the institution in photos from the visit.<sup>11</sup> Based on this, the regular section *Perspectives* was created on the museum blog.<sup>12</sup> In 2020, during the museum lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dan Hicks also worked with photos from visitors, coming up with a challenge called #MuseumsUnlocked, through which he asked museum visitors around the world to post their archival photos from a museum visit and tag them with the hashtag #MuseumsUnlocked.<sup>13</sup>

In 2016, Russel Dornan initiated the #MuseumInstaSwap event, in which a total of ten British museums and galleries were involved.<sup>14</sup> Employees of the participating institutions visited each other's collections and reported on the visit on social media through photos that they published during the pre-arranged week.<sup>15</sup> In 2020, the Getty Museum in Los Angeles announced the *Getty Museum Challenge*, through which it invited the followers to create their own versions of works of art based

from www: <<https://museum-id.com/reflecting-the-museum-how-instagram-brings-back-seeing-by-russell-dornan>>.

11 In their photos, users can tag other users (institutions), who will then see these images on their profile.

12 DORNAN, Russel and Charlie MORGAN. *Perspectives: I can't help the way I feel*. In *Wellcome Collection Blog* [online]. 2014 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://wellcomecollection.wordpress.com/category/more/perspectives-more/>>.

13 BURKE, Verity, Dolly JØRGENSEN and Finn Arne JØRGENSEN. *Museums at Home: Digital Initiatives in Response to COVID-19*. *Norsk Museumstidsskrift* [online]. 2020, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 117–123 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/issn.2464-2525-2020-02-05>>.

14 DORNAN, Russel. Reflecting the Museum: How Instagram brings back seeing. In *Museum iD* [online]. 2016 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://museum-id.com/reflecting-the-museum-how-instagram-brings-back-seeing-by-russell-dornan>>.

15 Ibidem.

on Getty's collections.<sup>16</sup> A separate specific feature is represented by exhibitions presented only in the Instagram environment. One of them was *Object women*, presenting photographs from the collections of the George Eastman Museum.<sup>17</sup> Another similar project was the exhibition *Prize Books and Politics: Rethinking Working-Class Life in Edwardian Britain, 1901–1914*, which Lauren O'Hagan from the University of Sheffield made available only on Instagram.<sup>18</sup>

### Definition and objectives of the research

The aim of the research itself was to create a typology of presenting art collections on social media, from which the principal research question arose – how art museums present their collections on social media. This involves not only the presentation of a particular institution's own collections, but collections in general, regardless of their owner. This primary question was followed by sub-questions regarding the extent to which the selected institutions try to systematically present their collections, what importance they attach to this type of presentation and which currently available forms of content sharing they use for this purpose. Equally important

16 BURKE, Verity, Dolly JØRGENSEN and Finn Arne JØRGENSEN. Museums at Home: Digital Initiatives in Response to COVID-19. *Norsk Museumstidsskrift* [online]. 2020, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 117–123 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://www.idunn.no/doi/10.18261/issn.2464-2525-2020-02-05>>.

17 BEESTON, Alix, Alexandra KINGSTON-REESE and Cadence KINSEY. On Instagram: An Intimate, Immediate, Conversation / Alix Beeston, Alexandra Kingston-Reese, and Cadence Kinsey. *ASAP Journal* [online]. 29 February 2020 [accessed 2022-05-06]. www:<<https://asapjournal.com/on-instagram-an-intimate-immediate-conversation-alix-beeston-alexandra-kingston-reese-and-cadence-kinsey>>.

18 O'HAGAN, Lauren. Instagram as an exhibition space: reflections on digital remediation in the time of COVID-19. *Museum Management and Curatorship* [online]. 2021, vol. 36, no. 6, pp. 610–631 [accessed 2022-05-06]. Available from www: <<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09647775.2021.2001362>>.

was the question of who carries out this agenda in art museums and how the given job position is formulated. Do the people taking care of the collections participate also in their virtual presentation? How do these workers approach the creation of content for social media? Are the institutions working with a strategy and content plan? Is the presentation of the collections explicitly included in these documents? And last but not least, there was a question whether the dynamics of social networking changes during the year and what impact any variability has on the resulting presentation.

The research was focused on art museums located in the Czech Republic. The selected research sample was further reduced to only the member institutions of the Council of Galleries of the Czech Republic, which brings together art museums located in different parts of the Czech Republic. An important condition for further selection, considering the focus of the research, was that all investigated institutions were collection-building. From among all member institutions, 13 larger institutions were selected for the examination: *Gallery of the Central Bohemian Region, South Bohemian Gallery of Mikoláš Aleš, Gallery of Fine Arts in Ostrava, Olomouc Museum of Art, Regional Gallery of Fine Arts in Zlín, Regional Gallery in Liberec, North Bohemian Gallery of Fine Arts in Litoměřice, West Bohemian Gallery in Pilsen, Gočár Gallery, Gallery of Fine Arts in Cheb, Vysočina Regional Gallery in Jihlava, Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové and Prague City Gallery*. The reason thereof was that only institutions of a similar size in terms of financial budget, number of employees and scope of curated collection items should be examined. In view of the fact that larger institutions currently mostly have their own PR department, or

employ a staff member specialized only in marketing, promotion or public relations, it was possible to follow up and assess only controlled and specialized work.

The research was divided into two parts, main and complementary, which are in accordance with the methods of research and data processing used. The survey in the first part of the research involved the posts shared on social media (Facebook and Instagram) managed by the selected institutions, published between 1 January and 31 March 2023. For research purposes, posts are understood as the content published by the institution on its own profile in the form of text, text with a link, text with a photo or text with a video. Stories, which disappear from the profile after 24 hours, were not included in the research due to their ephemeral nature.

### Research methods

Data (texts and visual material) for the first part of the inquiry were obtained from the social media of individual institutions and subsequently processed, interpreted and evaluated using the grounded theory method. Due to the nature of the data, which are fixed in advance (they were not obtained through an interview), it was not possible to apply the principles of the method in its entirety. However, as Renáta Sedláková mentions,<sup>19</sup> the method can also be used when processing documents and generally when working with texts that were not created by transcribing interviews. This method is not commonly used in museological research, it is most often applied mainly in social sciences. The foundation for the purposes of this research was

19 SEDLÁKOVÁ, Renáta. *Výzkum médií: nejuživanější metody a techniky*. Grada: Praha, 2014, p. 401.

a procedure described by Anselm Strauss and Julie Corbin, which is used in the Czech environment.<sup>20</sup>

### Research progress

The obtained data were analysed using the open coding method and then grouped into subcategories. Furthermore, the second phase of the methodology, which is axial coding, was partially used, when superior main categories were assigned to the defined subcategories. From these defined main categories, a typology was created that answers the main research question. The process of open and partial axial coding was applied both to the textual content of posts and separately to the accompanying visual material, which is an integral part of the conveyed message. If the content was duplicated on both social media, the data were only processed once. The analysed phenomenon was always one post, to which one or more codes were assigned according to the thematic focus or topic. In the second phase, posts that did not relate to the researched topic and it would not make sense to categorize them further were eliminated.

### Second part of the research

The second part of the research was carried out in order to answer the sub-questions, which helped to place the resulting typology in the context of the conditions that influence the work activity. The form of semi-structured interviews was chosen both for the preparation for an interview and as a basic guide for its evaluation. Analogous to the snowball sampling method, attention was focused on asking all the prepared key questions. In order to recruit respondents for the

interview, the PR departments of individual examined institutions or specific employees were directly contacted by email. The interviews took place between 20 September and 11 October 2023. Out of all 13 institutions approached, 7 institutions were interested in giving an interview, and a preview of the questions was subsequently sent to them. The interviews were conducted via video call in an online environment. Detailed field notes were taken from all conducted interviews to preserve the uniformity of source documents when processing the research results. An agreement was made with the respondents that, if necessary, their institution will be mentioned by name and that they will therefore not be kept anonymous. Nevertheless, in the part of the research that interprets the information obtained from the interviews, individual institutions are not named. This is because the aim of the work was not to compare individual art museums with each other or to evaluate the level and quality of their activities. For the interpretation of the final results, it is not important in which workplace the given approach is applied; the key is to make a record thereof, which helps to depict the current state or an insight into a particular issue in local conditions.

### Typology of presentation possibilities

The presented typology, which is the result of research, is based on an examination of the activities of 13 selected institutions, which were chosen among the members of the Council of Galleries of the Czech Republic. In view of the fact that the research data were posts that the institutions have published on profiles they manage, it was possible to obtain a complete set of data for the defined period from all the art museums under investigation. In the following text, individual

categories of the resulting typology will be presented, which can also be perceived as a general definition of the most common contexts in which works of art are presented on social media.

### 1. Invitation to an exhibition

Part of the mission of museum institutions is to make the managed cultural heritage accessible to the public. One of the most frequent forms of fulfilling this mission is the creation of exhibitions and exhibition projects. As a result, the topic of the **exhibition** in its various forms is one of the frequent subjects of posts in the examined institutions. The common goal is to inform about an existing, planned or ongoing exhibition project or a long-term exhibition. In some cases, the text is supplemented with operational information regarding the opening hours or the entrance fee. The purpose of this type of posts is obvious – to invite and motivate followers to visit the museum. In some posts, the invitation is explicitly stated in the text, while in others, the text introducing the exhibition, supplemented by visual material, is intended to indirectly motivate the visit. The starting point for such a post is often directly an annotation for the exhibition or its simplified description. The viewer's attention can also be attracted by interesting facts related to the exhibition. In the case of a Facebook profile, the post is usually equipped with a link to an Event created especially for a particular exhibition, where the visitor will find additional information. The opening photo of the event is usually a specific work of art presented in the exhibition or a graphic invitation to the exhibition, on which a reproduction of one of the presented artworks is used.

An attractive piece of information that is conveyed to followers via

<sup>20</sup> STRAUSS, Anselm L. and Juliet CORBIN. *Základy kvalitativního výzkumu: postupy a techniky metody zakotvené teorie*. Brno: Sdružení Podané ruce, 1999.

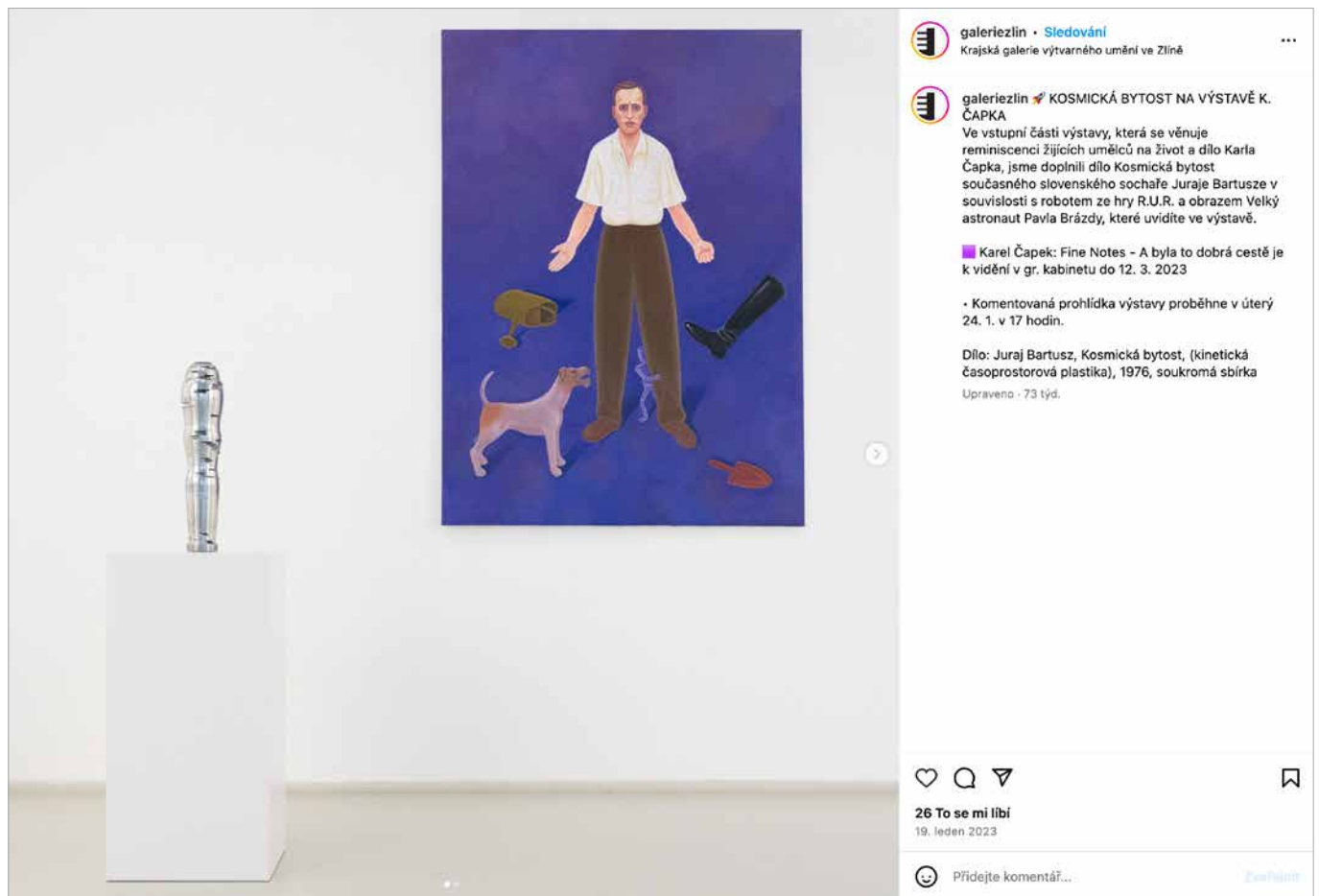


Fig. 1: Typology: Invitation to an exhibition (Source: Krajská galerie ve Zlíně. In *Instagram* [online]. 19. 1. 2023 [accessed 2023-11-14]. Available from [www. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CnmQJMwLVl4/?img\\_index=1 >](https://www.instagram.com/p/CnmQJMwLVl4/?img_index=1).)

social media is the possibility of **free entry** related to a specific day or event. It is often accompanied by a picture with a view of the exhibition without visitors, in which its architecture, atmosphere or overall impression are clearly visible. Photographs of visitors looking at the artworks are often used, or one specific artwork or its detail is chosen, which could attract attention and motivate a visit.

A separate phenomenon that spread especially during the COVID-19 pandemic is the creation of virtual tours of museums or specific temporary or permanent exhibitions. Some of the institutions allow their supporters to view the exhibition online even at the present time. A specific type of invitation in this case is an

**invitation to a virtual tour**, which has the same features as an invitation to visit a physical exhibition. For many visitors, it can also serve as an interactive motivation to visit the museum in person. In addition, it is possible to zoom in on the presented artworks and view them in detail or to read the accompanying information and captions. It is also possible to invite to an exhibition simply by sharing the **programme**, which some institutions do on a regular basis. The form of such a post then differs from one museum to another, in some of them the programme is communicated in text accompanied by a photograph, in others a graphic overview is published that is based on the uniform visual style of the institution. In both cases, we can find artworks from

the collection included somehow in the programme, either as part of a view into the exhibition or by using a specific work of art as an accompanying image. A common feature of this type of posts is the fact that the exhibition is communicated as a whole, and individual artworks from the collection are not in themselves the main subject of the message; the key is to generate awareness of the existence of the exhibition, its duration, theme and overall concept.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> VACKOVÁ, Veronika. *Možnosti prezentace sbírek muzeí umění na sociálních sítích*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Filozofická fakulta, 2023, pp. 63–65. Master thesis.

## 2. Invitation to the accompanying programme

Another type of posts, which is abundantly represented on the social media of the investigated institutions, is the content aimed at promoting the accompanying programme for a temporary or permanent exhibition. The common feature of these messages is the characteristics of the event being organized, combined with the invitation to participate, supplemented with information regarding the date and time of the event taking place and the entrance fee. Followers are often invited to the opening of an exhibition, or its finissage respectively. Invitations to the vernissage are usually in the form of a brief text, sometimes the invitation to the vernissage is connected with basic information about the exhibition and the author. We can also find posts with a more detailed presentation of the exhibition or the author, sometimes with a link to an Event created for the exhibition.

Some of the **educational programmes** offered by the museums are intended for children, whether in the form of didactic programmes for schools or workshops aimed at children or families. In most cases, the invitation to this type of events does neither directly mention the exhibited artworks nor show their photos. The social media of art museums also inform about art groups that the museums organize for children and publish operational information regarding individual events and registration. By default, such a text is mainly accompanied by an illustrative photo with children doing some creative activity, where a specific work or works of art may be visible in the background, if the pupils are working directly in the exhibition premises.

Many museums also organize **art workshops** open to the general public. In some cases, such events take place directly in the premises with a temporary or permanent exhibition according to the thematic focus. A view of the temporary or permanent exhibition related to the event can be attached to the written invitation as an illustrative image. In most cases, however, the mention of an upcoming didactic or creative workshop is included in the programme summary together with other events, which can be accompanied by a look at the exhibition, the artwork itself or the programme in the form of a graphic invitation, where the artwork is used as a background illustration.

**Guided tours** are a regular part of accompanying programmes for an exhibition and are often conducted directly by the curator or curators in person, or by the exhibiting artist. Due to their frequency, they are also one of the regular events to which followers are invited via social media. An invitation to a guided tour is often accompanied by a photograph showing a view of the exhibition's architecture. Photographs, which we could describe as snapshots, capturing visitors looking at the exhibition, can also motivate a visit. An invitation to a guided tour, as well as to the exhibition itself or to accompanying events, can also be made by displaying one specific artwork from the collection.

Lectures are another type of **side events** that the museums promote through social media and that also relate to artworks from the collections. These can be directly connected to an ongoing exhibition, present the collections or address any topic from the history of art or culture. In the examined sample, the text invitation was most often supplemented with a reproduction of a specific work of art. A specific group includes **invitations to**

**events that are not related to art**, which are still encountered on social media of institutions. They can take the form of a commercial message, when, for example, the museum premises are offered for rent for organizing private events. These offers usually include illustrative photos of the spaces, which the currently exhibited artworks can be a part of. Even in this category, the presentation of the collections themselves is not the main subject of the message. Nevertheless, the works of art are often present, completing the particular message or overall impression of the post.<sup>22</sup>

## 3. Behind the scenes

Giving the followers a behind-the-scenes look at a museum or at exhibition preparations is usually an engaging and attractive way to get the viewer's attention. The follower has an opportunity to observe the institution or the artworks themselves from a different point of view than during a normal exhibition. A common feature of this type of posts is a look behind the scenes of preparations of an exhibition project. A frequent topic is any handling of artworks or exhibits that the visitor does not have the opportunity to see or experience during normal operation.

There are various ways to inform followers that the museum is preparing a new project. A frequent and rewarding theme is the topic of **installation of an exhibition**. Through this type of photos or videos, followers see the exhibition halls in the middle of the installation process, when construction work related to the architecture of the project is often still in progress. The images usually feature various tools or construction and packaging

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, pp. 65–68.

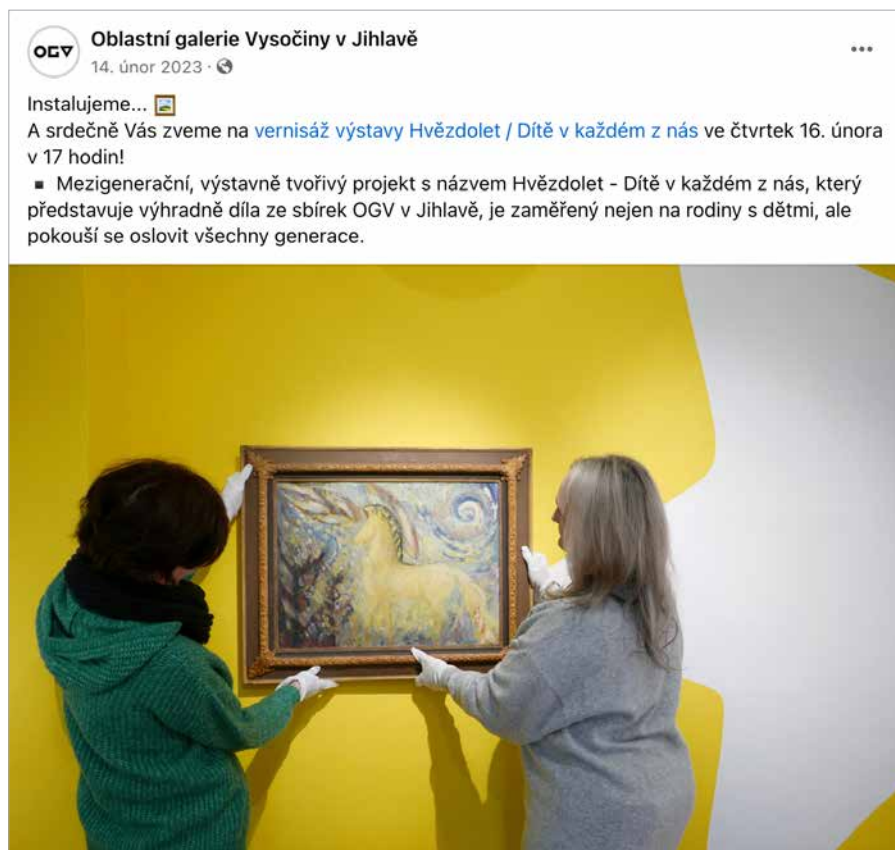


Fig. 2: Typology: Behind the scenes (Source: Oblastní galerie Vysočiny v Jihlavě. In Facebook [online]. 10. 1. 2023 [accessed 2023-11-14]. Available from www: <<https://www.facebook.com/OGVJihlava/posts/pfbid02tUp87paHSWnfKa15AP4bgzthpQrwcNVq42YcPb3kUVRBvo1t5XZoh6ZPqvk9ZRcHI>> .)

material. Information about the installation can be linked to an invitation to visit the vernissage. As part of the behind-the-scenes look, we can also see **photos of technical staff** who participate in the physical realization of the exhibition. Thanks to this, the viewer has the opportunity to see people whose participation is of key importance for the creation of the exhibition, but who are not present at the exhibition during a normal visit. Part of the realization of an exhibition is the **handling of artworks**, the transport, moving, unpacking and installation of which is an inherent part of the final preparation of the exhibition, which normally takes place out of sight of the audience. A view that would otherwise be available only to the museum staff is in this way also conveyed to followers and visitors via social media. A photo

of an **artwork covered with a protective fabric** or foil can be visually attractive and shrouded in mystery. Part of the life cycle of a temporary exhibition is its **termination and subsequent deinstallation**. This is again a process that happens behind the closed doors of the museum and remains hidden from the visitors. The topic of **loaned artworks** and their migration from the home institution to the collaborating institution and vice versa is also one of the possible motives for posts that let the audience take a look behind the scenes. Even in this category, the identity of the artworks themselves is more of a background interest, they appear here mainly as an illustrative element of some other message; the name, date or author are in most cases not mentioned. At the same time, the artworks can be

shown from an unusual viewing angle, as in the case of a painting from the Olomouc Art Museum when assembled, in other cases it is also possible to see the backside of the artworks or their unusual appearance when veiled.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4. Cooperation

The cooperation between museum institutions or a museum and a specific person is, for various purposes, a common part of today's museum operation. This fact is also reflected in the content that is shared by institutions on social media. A common feature of the posts that have been placed in this category based on research are topics related to **interaction with another person or institution** in connection with an exhibition project or collection items. The intention of such type of content can also be the targeted promotion of an institution, an exhibition project, a collection-building activity or a specific work of art.

One of the most common types of cooperation, which is presented on the social media of art museums, is the **artwork loan** or loans for the purpose of exhibiting at a partner institution. In connection with the presentation of museum collections, we can also encounter the topic of **special visits**. This is a situation where a museum or gallery welcomes an important person or group, who may be of a certain social or professional utility for the gallery. Mutual visits of friendly or cooperating institutions can have a positive impact on both of them, as they can bring to each other new visitors and thereby also followers of their social media. Another type are **VIP visits**, whose presence adds importance to a gallery or a specific exhibition project. The currently ever-developing **influencer marketing** is slowly starting to find

<sup>23</sup> Ibidem, pp. 68-71.



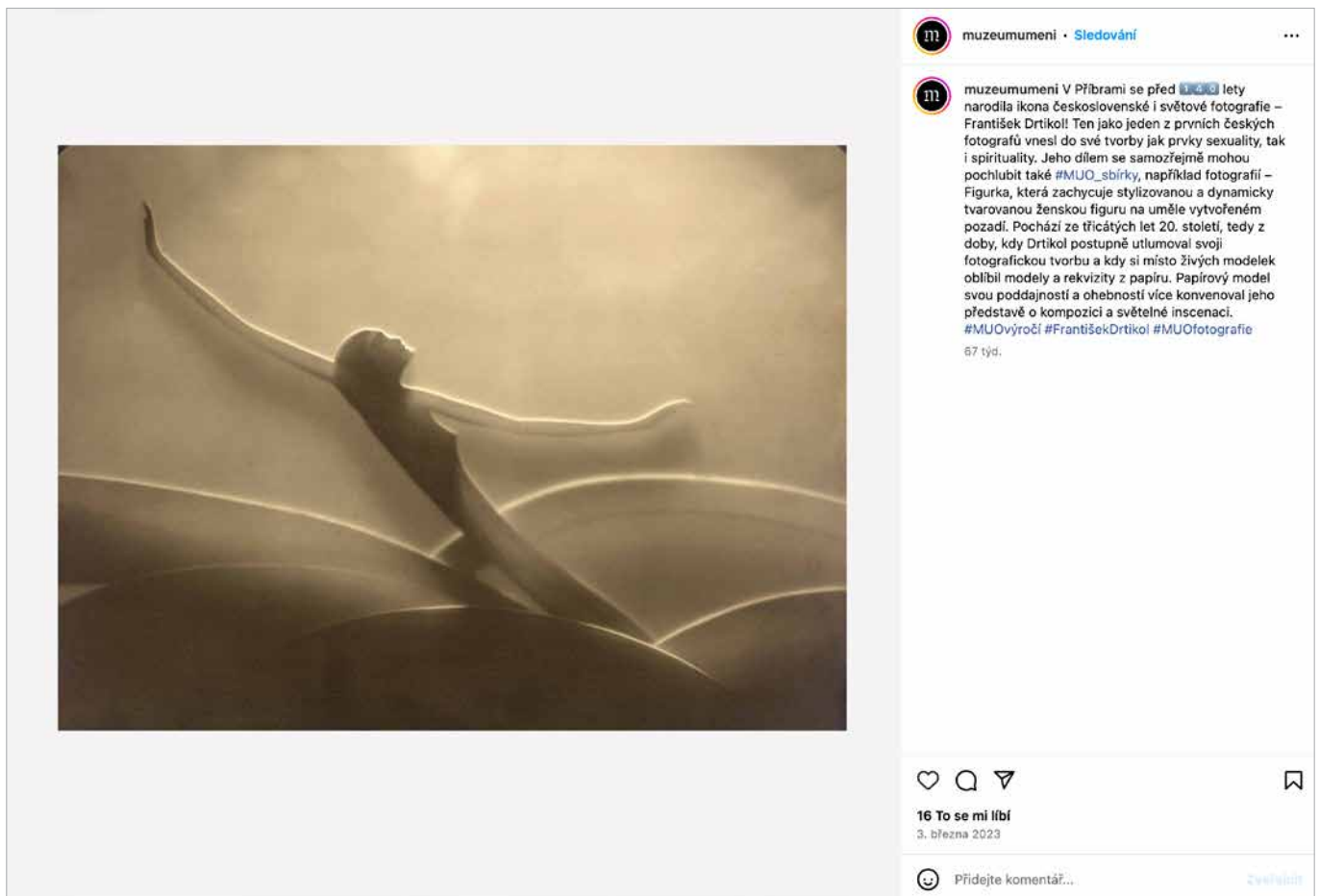


Fig. 3: Typology: Artist (Source: Muzeum umění Olomouc. In *Instagram* [online]. 3. 3. 2023. [accessed 2023-11-14]. Available from [www: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CpUU5oiSk\\_X>](https://www.instagram.com/p/CpUU5oiSk_X).)

its use in the museum environment as well. The personal initiative of an influencer, who visits a museum or gallery out of his/her own interest and reports on it on his/her profile, even though no official cooperation with the institution has been agreed, can also be of great benefit.<sup>24</sup>

## 5. Artist

A specific feature of collections managed by art museums, compared to other collection-building institutions, is the fact that in most cases their author is known, i.e. the person who created them and whose name also influences the significance and value of the given collection item. This is

also why the personality of the author of the exhibited or curated artworks is reflected in the content on the social media of most of the institutions under investigation. The common topic in this category is always a specific artist whose work the museum is currently presenting or has in its collection.

The first type of posts that we can encounter within the category is the **introduction of the author**. In this way, museums mostly introduce their followers to the artist whose work is presented in an upcoming or ongoing exhibition, whether they are living artists or names that have gone down in art history. In the portrait, the author is usually placed in the context of the period in which he/she creates or created, there is usually a description of his/

her work and method of work, and an outline of historical significance or contribution. Contemporary artists are sometimes photographed alone. The author's person can be also commemorated in connection with **life events** such as birthdays, jubilees, the birth anniversary of a deceased author, the author's death anniversary or in the form of a current obituary of an artist. A rewarding subject is the birthday of an artist whose works are stored in the museum's collections.

The posts focused on the personality of an author are in most cases closely related to the mention of his work and often at the same time to artworks from the collections of the given institution. The particular work of art is usually

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, pp. 71–73.



Fig. 4: Calendar (Source: Muzeum umění Olomouc. In *Instagram* [online]. 7. 2. 2023 [accessed 2023-11-14]. Available from [www: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CoXQY0TL9la >](https://www.instagram.com/p/CoXQY0TL9la).)

either recalled here in the form of textual description or is present through attached photographs or reproductions, in which it is the main subject.<sup>25</sup>

## 6. Calendar

The common denominator of the type of posts that we place in this category is the fact that they are related to a specific date, holiday, anniversary, event, period or happening in society. Given that the range of data and situations to which the subjects can relate is very diverse, we can find here works of art in various levels and contexts.

A very common subcategory is the subject of posts directly

related to the **current date in the calendar**. Profiles on social media often respond to international or world days, which, in this context, museum institutions connect with artworks from their collections or with the institution itself. Specific holidays are a rewarding topic as well. The St. Valentine's Day, to which some of the institutions referred in various forms, fell into the defined research period. Some **events** that apply to the entire society are planned and can be taken into account by social network administrators when preparing a content plan, while others are inherently unexpected and unpredictable. Political events such as elections are, for example, fixed events for which the date is known sufficiently in advance. At the beginning of 2023, the election

of the new president of the Czech Republic resonated with Czech society, which, in connection with the collections, was also reflected on the social media of some of the examined institutions. **Greetings** related to specific holidays and the new year are a common part of the content that cultural institutions traditionally publish on their profiles. At the end of the year, we can regularly meet with greetings related to the Christmas and the New Year, in the spring season with greetings related to Easter. Due to the temporal limitation of the investigated sample, only a fraction of the posted greetings was recorded.

Typical feature of posts included in this category is that external events are rather a source of

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, pp. 73–75.

inspiration or a bridge to the actual presentation of specific artworks from the collection. The works of art themselves are given enough space to be introduced in the text, in some cases they serve as an invitation to visit a permanent exhibition, in others the follower is presented with an artwork that is otherwise stored in a depot. As for the accompanying visual material, attached are either high-quality reproductions of the artworks or photographs in which the captured artworks are the central motif.<sup>26</sup>

## 7. Looking back

Taking photos from vernissages and other accompanying events related to the life cycle of an exhibition and institution is nowadays a standard practice in most institutions. The captured materials are then presented via social media in the form of a glance back at the event. The common feature of this category is the topic of the **past event**.

This type of posts is very frequent on the social media of the investigated institutions. In this way, galleries report on what is happening in the institution, inform about started and ongoing projects and potentially motivate followers to visit. At the same time, the photos also serve as a memory for visitors who attended the event in person and can find themselves in the photos. Photographs are usually taken in the form of a documentary, where the photographer tries to capture the atmosphere of the event and convey the impression of it to the viewer. In the accompanying text, we usually find acknowledgement for participation and additional information regarding the duration of the exhibition. In some cases, the event is also documented in a video; videos are usually edited and published in the form of Reels, especially on Instagram. In addition

to the **glance back at the past event**, we can also encounter the **glance back at a certain period**, for example a month. Although in many cases the event taking place is directly related to the ongoing exhibition or is even part of it, individual artworks from the collection are not the main thing that the institution wants to communicate through the post. As already mentioned, the main purpose is to report on the event and convey its atmosphere to the followers.

## 8. In the media

The common feature of the posts that we place in this category is that they refer to media that have published the output related to a given institution or a specific exhibition project. Sharing such media output on the institution's social media can increase the significance of the project in the eyes of the public, but also offer the followers a third-person view of the exhibition, or open a discussion.

The media space in which information about a gallery or an exhibition can resonate is wide today. During the investigated time period, the social media of the examined institutions presented a television report, a radio commentary (interview), a newspaper article, or a review in a periodical. The text of the posts commenting on the attached link or photo or scan of an article usually directs the viewer to read or play the given media output, indicates what information can be learned, and in the end invites to visit the exhibition and adds its duration. In most cases, the aim of this type of posts is not to present one specific artwork, unless it is a highlight, on which the promotion of the exhibition is based. An art museum or an exhibition is usually presented and assessed as a whole,

sometimes the main attention is focused on the exhibiting artist. In most cases, a view into the exhibition is chosen as an illustrative image.<sup>27</sup>

## 9. In literature

Museums and galleries issue catalogues for exhibitions, some institutions publish their own periodicals, and books dedicated to art are also written by authors or other institutions independent of the gallery. Artworks appear in all the mentioned types of publications, and the institutions subsequently report on them on their social media. The common feature of posts falling into this category is a mention of an artwork or its depiction in a periodical or book.

For the majority of larger exhibitions, an **exhibition catalogue** is published, which is based on the theme of the exhibition, consists of a larger volume of text than is placed in the exhibition, contains reproductions of exhibited artworks and sometimes also other artworks that were not installed in the exhibition for various reasons. It provides the visitor with a more detailed insight into the issue, and even after the end of the exhibition, it remains a permanent output in which the results of the research work associated with the preparation of the exhibition project are saved. It is in the interest of the institution that published the catalogue to inform followers and visitors about the creation of the publication, and social media serve this purpose well. If artworks that are owned by another museum are printed in the publication, the post can even be shared with cooperating institutions in this context.

Some of the examined institutions regularly publish their own

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem, pp. 75–77.

<sup>27</sup> Ibidem, pp. 77–79.

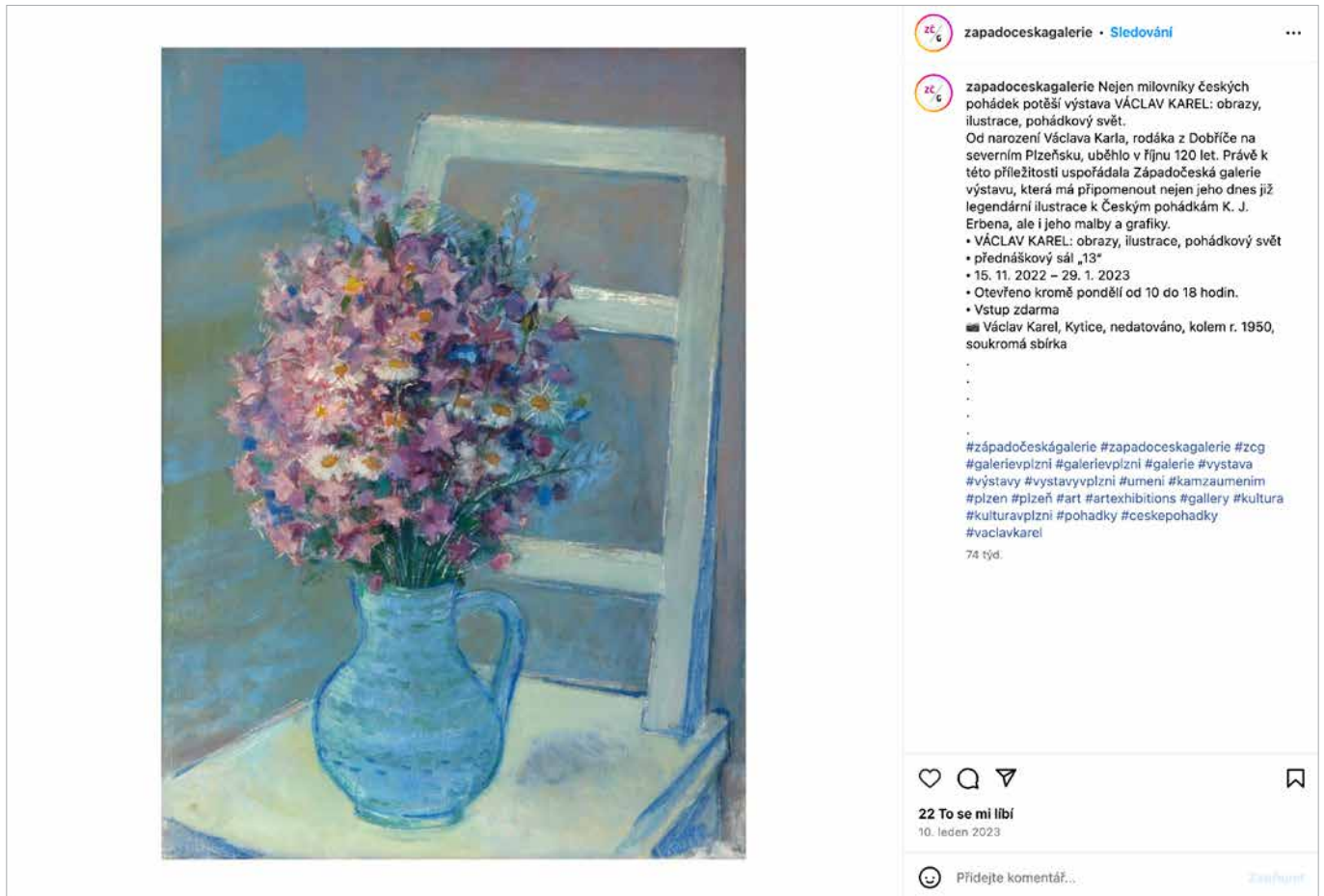


Fig. 5: Typology: Artwork as the main subject (Source: Západočeská galerie v Plzni. In *Instagram* [online]. 10. 1. 2023 [accessed 2023-11-14]. Available from [www: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CnPPcfhofqd/>](https://www.instagram.com/p/CnPPcfhofqd/).)

**periodical.** In the period under investigation, for example, information about a new issue of the journal was posted by the Prague City Gallery, the Regional Gallery of Fine Arts in Zlín and the Olomouc Art Museum. The journal is usually presented directly by publishing the front page together with an accompanying text informing about its content. If directly an artwork from the collections was chosen for the front page, followers can familiarize themselves with the work thanks to this form as well. In addition, the post is usually supplemented with a URL linking to the PDF version of the journal, so it is available in electronic form to almost anyone.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, pp. 79–80.

## 10. Artwork as the main subject

The previous chapters introduced types of posts, in which, depending on the nature of the message, an artwork was often present in a secondary role in connection with another topic. However, museums are aware of the importance of presenting their collections and regularly give them more or less space on social media. The common denominator of posts that we place in this category is that here the artworks are the main subject of the message.

Museum collections in themselves carry **educational** potential, which institutions use when creating posts, through which they introduce the followers to important facts about particular works of art, their

authors, the exhibition as such or, for example, immovable heritage managed by the institution or related to it in any way. At the same time, the educational type of posts blends with the Artist and Calendar categories, which also carry educational potential and convey factual information or interesting facts to the followers.

One of the possibilities of how to regularly include a direct **presentation of the collections** in the content plan is a section such as “artwork of the month”, which some of the institutions have and fill in on a regular base, often in connection with a specific day of the month. The impulse to introduce an artwork may be its new placement in the ongoing exhibition. The significance of the

artworks that an institution has in its collection is well demonstrated by their **loan abroad**, so they can be presented in the light of the institution to which they were loaned and the exhibition in which they are installed. Artworks from the collection are often used as a **theme on printed materials** produced by the institutions; the depiction of artworks on leaflets, exhibition posters or promotional products suggests itself. The reproduction of an artwork can also be used for the New Year's greeting, which is published on the museum's social media.

Some institutions strive to make their collections accessible through **online portals** where they publish digitized works of art. The visitor gets to the portal most often from the museum's website, where the local menu usually includes a tab linking to the given site. It is possible to support the traffic of the portal by sharing the URL link on social media. All the mentioned posts have in common that the artworks take the centre stage and are the main subject here.<sup>29</sup>

### Typology of accompanying visual material

In the research part, open coding was used to examine the accompanying visual material of the posts, which was also divided into categories based on the results. We will now present three resulting categories that divide the visual material according to the position in which the artwork is captured in a photo or video.

#### 1. Artwork at the centre stage

The common feature of this category is the fact that the depicted work or works of art are the main subject of the image. It is obvious that the photo or video

was purposefully created in order to capture a specific object. An example, which was marked in the research with the code **Artwork as the main subject of the photograph**, is a photograph from the Olomouc Art Museum, which depicts the sculpture "A Woman and a Star" by Eva Kmentová. The photograph is composed in such a way that the artwork installed on a pedestal is placed almost in the centre of the composition and is clearly in focus. In the background is an obvious exhibition space with other installed artworks that are out of focus, so that they do not distract attention and at the same time complete the atmosphere of the exhibition environment. The interior of the exhibition is completely empty, without human figures. Another subcategory is artwork in the foreground of the composition; this type of image differs from the previous one in that other artworks or figures are clearly captured in the photo, but the atmosphere of the shot reveals that the artwork in the foreground was the main subject of the photographer. An example can be a photo shared on Instagram by the Vysočina Regional Gallery in Jihlava, which shows two female busts placed on a pedestal in the foreground; behind them is a view into the exhibition with paintings installed on the wall, and in the background are figures of visitors observing the artworks. Moreover, well and sensitively taken photographs of artworks are a creative act in themselves.

A specific category includes **historical photographs** depicting a work of art or an exhibit, as the photographs themselves may have their own historical value due to their age. Such an example can be a photo shared on Facebook by the Gallery of Fine Arts in Cheb, the main purpose of which is to accompany an invitation to a lecture on textile

design and art in Czechoslovakia. The picture shows a view of the interior of a hotel, and the attention is mainly focused on the massive furniture made of bent veneer. There is a prominent lamp clearly visible on the table and an abstract colourful artwork on the wall, which is probably textile, given the subject of the lecture. In addition to capturing works of applied art, which can today with great probability be stored in the collections of museums of applied art, the photograph also authentically documents the period appearance of a specific hotel interior, the period taste and the possibilities of the photographic technique of its time. At the same time, it places the given artwork in the context in which it was originally installed, in the case of applied art in the interior for which it was intended.

A common way to present a **reproduction of an artwork** is with a scan or photograph in which the artwork completely fills the image format and no surrounding background is visible. Nothing else disturbs the viewer while looking at the artwork, and at the same time, this method of depiction probably simulates seeing the artwork live. A high-quality scan or photograph can convey even the smallest details of the work, which may not be visible during a normal visit, for example for security reasons.

In the previous part of the text, in the "Behind the scenes" chapter, **handling of artworks** was mentioned, most often during their installation, deinstallation or any other relocation. This method of depiction shows the artworks in a different position, viewing angle and light than how they are normally presented. The look behind the scenes is also related to the **depiction of veiled or covered artworks**, which can be visually very attractive, as the viewer can

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, pp. 81–83.

only guess what is hidden under the cover. A space that itself remains hidden from the public and inaccessible is the **museum depot**. Some of the institutions guard these spaces for security reasons and do not publish them on the Internet. The Gočár Gallery shared a staged video on its Instagram, which invites the followers to take a virtual look at the depot.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Artwork out of the centre

The work or works of art included in this category are in the background or foreground of the composition, but are not the central point of interest. They are often out of focus or captured only partly. The main aim of a photo or video is not a targeted presentation of specific artworks, but rather drawing attention to the exhibition in general.

In connection with this category, we will probably most often encounter a **view of a temporary or permanent exhibition**. This type of photography accentuates the architecture of the exhibition and the way the artworks are installed. The Gallery of Modern Art in Hradec Králové shared a view of the permanent exhibition showing the layout of the exhibition and three walls on its Instagram. Due to the shooting angle, the lateral pictures are seen from the side and perspective-distorted, the paintings installed on the wall opposite the photographer are visible in the front view. The photograph is easy to read and especially the artworks located closer to the viewer of the image are clearly recognizable. The exhibition space is empty, without visitors or any movement in the exhibition.

The **presence of visitors in the photographs** makes the images of exhibition spaces vivid and

dynamic. The Regional Gallery of Fine Arts in Zlín published a photo on its Instagram, in the foreground of which a young woman in dark clothes is standing with her back to the photographer while reading a panel with accompanying text placed on the ground; in front of her, there is a panel with three installed paintings in distinctive frames, and two other figures are standing in the right upper corner. The photograph conveys both a clear idea of the exhibited artworks and the atmosphere that the viewer can experience during the visit. Another photo shared on the Instagram of the Zlín gallery depicts three sitting girls from behind, in front of whom stands a man with a paper in his hand; in the background there are clearly recognizable paintings on the wall and in the left part of the photo there is a bronze statue placed on a pedestal. It is clear from the photo that it was probably taken during an educational programme for pupils or students in the exhibition dedicated to surrealism. The text of the post also invites the public to visit a workshop for adults focused on surrealism. Also common are photos from vernissages, in which a large number of people can be seen in the exhibition, and the primary purpose of such photos is to document interest in the exhibition. We can also find pictures showing people strolling through an exhibition, where the artworks are hardly visible and the main documentation purpose is directed at the moving visitors.<sup>31</sup>

## 3. Artwork in a supporting role

Posts that fall into this category have in common that they contain a reproduction of a work of art, which plays a supporting role within the communicated message. While in the previous category the artworks are presented in a part

of the photograph that is out of the main focus, in this category the artwork is used to complement a certain message – usually it is part of graphic or printed material. Although the artwork is perceived here as a complementary element, it significantly influences the overall impression of the matter.

The use of a reproduction of an artwork is more than appropriate in the case of an invitation to an exhibition and other accompanying promotional material. The graphic rendering of the **invitation** is based on a uniform visual style created for a specific exhibition or the overall visual style of the museum. Within the examined sample, it was also possible to register the placement of reproductions on other **exhibition materials**, such as accompanying printed materials. Other example is a photo of a membership card published on the social media of one of the museums, on which the reproduced artwork was placed as a background under the text. If an exhibition catalogue was published, it usually has the same visual identity as the exhibition itself and its title page shows one of the exhibited artworks, which is also often chosen as the main motif on the invitation or leaflet for the exhibition. Some of the art museums also regularly publish their own journal, the front pages of which are thematically related to ongoing exhibitions or collection-building activities. Moreover, the journal is another object that can also be photographed well and attractively. Reproductions of artworks illustrating the text can be often seen as accompanying visual material in the **press**, whether it is literature, periodicals or newspapers. All these outputs can be photographed or scanned and shared with followers via social media. A specific situation that could be observed on the social media of the Gallery of Fine Arts in Cheb was the **presentation**

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, pp. 84–87.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem, pp. 87–89.

**of an artwork that includes another artwork.** This was due to the nature of the exhibition *Obrazy v obrazech* (Pictures in pictures), which took place in Cheb during the examined period. Posts on social media of the museum at the given time have shared reproductions of artworks from the collection, in which another artwork is reproduced, in most cases located in some other collection. In the accompanying texts of the posts, curators of the Gallery of Fine Arts in Cheb discuss the art-historical term “picture in picture” as well as the individual artworks presented. Anyway, this way of presenting the artworks from the collection is specific in that it does not present only one artwork, but two at the same time.<sup>32</sup>

### Social networking

Complementary research through interviews conducted with respondents showed that the final form of presentation is significantly influenced by the human factor, in terms of the time limitations, skills and experience of the staff. At the same time, it was found out that art museum workers perceive it as important to present the collections, some institutions even have a targeted presentation of artworks included in their marketing strategy, but they do not create separate campaigns for the presentation of collections on social media, as the presentation of collections is naturally present in almost all communication towards the public. The investigated art museums (with the exception of one institution) have in their organizational structure a department focused on PR or marketing, whose employees have the creation and publication of content on social media in their job description. Network management is handled by specialists in the

department of promotion and public relations within accumulated positions. As the inquiry showed, there is a cooperation between PR workers and experts taking care of the collections during the preparation of the content, especially if it is a topic related to the history of art. Some collection administrators or curators write their texts by themselves, others supply source materials or provide consultations.<sup>33</sup> In most cases, the published content depends on the exhibition schedule which is reflected in the strategy for social media, on the basis of which the posts are prepared and planned in advance based on the content plan. The presentation of artworks from the collection on social media is included in these strategies and plans. The dynamics of content sharing is most influenced by the exhibition schedule, in the sense that a different frequency of promotion is required before the opening of an exhibition than during it or in between the installation of new exhibitions. The current time limitations of the staff also have an influence on the frequency of content creation.<sup>34</sup> It is clear from the findings that the presentation on social media is based on a specialized systematic activity in which several experts from different fields participate. In addition to answering the research questions, the inquiry also provided information regarding the marketing cooperation. In this regard, art museums keep up with the current trends that can be observed in the commercial sector, and are open to new possibilities of promotion, in this case the cooperation with influencers (influencer marketing), which some of the examined institutions establish for the promotion of individual exhibition projects.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, pp. 93–95.

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem, pp. 98–101.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 102.

### Conclusion

It is clear from the research that Czech art museums present their collections on social media and, as can be seen from the resulting typology, the artworks appear here in different contexts and receive different attention depending on the communicated message. The typology outlined ten categories, which can be also perceived as a general designation of topics or themes with which the artworks from the collection can be connected. The posts are not only made up of the text itself, but also an appendix in the form of visual material that captures the artworks. This is why a typology of accompanying visual material was also created, which showed in which three positions relative to the surrounding environment the artworks are most often displayed. Since the presentation on social media is significantly influenced by the human factor, the conditions that prevailed at the time of the research in the investigated institutions were outlined. Professionalization in the field of PR and marketing was at a very good level at the time of the investigation, the work here was in most cases carried out by staff specialized in marketing in cooperation with professional workers taking care of collections or educators. However, it can be assumed that the situation described for Czech art museums is not the standard for other museums as well, especially for smaller institutions where the options will be different. Although the trends in the creation of content for social media are constantly changing, the resulting typology appears to be viable in the long term, regardless of the form in which its content will be communicated. It can serve as a guide for creating the content for social media even for smaller museums that cannot afford a specialized worker.

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem, pp. 89–92.

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