

Report from the Conference "Museum and community/outreach work"

The conference "**Museums and community/outreach work**" was held on September 16th 2011 from 9.30 till 17.00 at the Cultural center *Rex* in Belgrade.

At the conference, three museum professionals from Sweden – **Lena Malm** from the Modern Museum in Stockholm, **Anna Fredholm** from the Army Museum in Stockholm and **Ebbe Westergren** together with **Emma Angelin-Holmen** from the Kalmar County Museum, presented their outreach work that involves different target groups from local communities. The conference was organized in cooperation between B92 Funds, Cultural centre *Rex*, C31 - Centre for Developing Children's Rights Culture and the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade.

After the short introduction by the organizers of the conference, Dusica Parezanovic from Cultural centre *Rex* and Helene Larsson from the Embassy of Sweden, the first speaker, **Lena Malm**, presented **Zon Moderna**, a long-term educational program which actively engages high school students. The Zon Moderna project's main goal is to deepen the understanding of contemporary art among young people through art experience and encountering the creative process.

Starting point for every Zon Moderna project is an art exhibition at the museum. One artist, whose work and interests are connected to this exhibition, is invited to work with a group of about 16 students from different schools and with different backgrounds. The students ("kids") are involved in the project for three months during school time, since there are established and functioning cooperation's between the museum and schools.

Through creative workshops in a specific venue in the museum, the "kids" encounter the artistic process from the idea to its realization. This specific experience is of significant importance to them as they through art can get a wider perspective of life. Within the project the students have different possibilities to present their work they have done in the process. These young people also develop a special relationship to the museum, and the museum develop specific relation to its audience, which also leads to a change in the institution.

As this idea appealed to most of the conference participants, discussions arose about the possibility of realizing this method in the Serbian context. It seems that the main challenge in Serbia would be at the policy level. Contrary to Serbia, it already exists close collaboration between museums and schools in Sweden.

After a short presentation of the Army Museum, where **Anna Fredholm** stressed that the museum "has many objects in its collection but very little context", she emphasized recent shift were the museum is now more pro active to initiate contemporary collecting and to contextualize objects. She also talked about the shift of both management and the role of this museum. This new approach reach

a deeper context and highlight different kinds of stories. The desire to capture contemporary society, habits, relations and environment also leads to the question: which objects materialize memory and illustrate life most?

Anna Fredholm presented two projects that represent this new perspective on contemporary collecting and active communication with a community – *Camp Victoria*, a Swedish military camp in Kosovo and *Camp Northern Lights*, a Swedish military camp in Afghanistan. By observation and interviews with soldiers, the museum documented personal stories of soldiers, social inter-play, environment and activities in the camp. The soldiers' stories were about feelings and expectations, experiences, reflection and personal development related to the decision to serve the military and do the mission.

Finally, by stressing the power of social networks, Anna Fredholm presented a blog *Soldiers of peace*, a unique collection of personal stories on the internet, a "time document", but also a forum for on-going discussions on various topics concerning civil rights, ethics and personal experiences of soldiers etc.

Thomas Klementson, the Military Attaché at the Embassy of Sweden in Belgrade, participated in the conference and an interesting discussion were held on the fragile security issue of such open and transparent approach in military matters and challenges of the open democratic society. The audience at the conference also discussed the difference between Serbian and Swedish approach in the issue. Clear was that the Swedish approach is just one of many possible approaches and perspectives.

The last two guest speakers, **Ebbe Westergren** and **Emma Angelin-Holmen**, from the Heritage education department in the Kalmar County Museum, introduced the ***Time Travel*** method based on using historical environments and history as resource for learning. Key principles of this method are: focus on local history, sites and stories, including different perspectives on history, raising key questions relevant for the past and today, interaction with local community and encouraging social cohesion. Kalmar County Museum cooperates with schools to use this method implementation of the school curriculum.

By involving local community and connecting different institutions (museums, schools, university, local inhabitants...) the Time Travel method creates learning platforms for discussion about important issues of today. By exploring history, revealing stories from individual, human perspective (often excluded from the official history), a role-play approach and experiencing the past by all senses - this method facilitates discussion on contemporary social issues such as social differences, gender issues, violence, wars etc.

Implementation of this method results in a deeper insight, understanding and knowledge about the past. To find "the roots" through *Time Travels* can be a fun experience. Besides that it can contribute to the community development and reconciliation.

The conference participants, showing a significant interest in this method, had the chance to experience its implementation in a workshop session on Saturday, September 17th outside the cultural centre on the site of Belgrade 15th century fortress.

As the conference was ending, all participants gave their opinion about topics addressed at the conference. They discussed challenges that they see in their own working context and gave their general impressions of the conference.