ISSN 1339-2204
e-ISSN 2453-9759

MUZEOLÓGIA 2 2026
MUSEOLOGY
a kultúrne dedičstvo
and Cultural Heritage

VEDECKÝ RECENZOVANÝ ČASOPIS
PEER-REVIEWED SCHOLARLY JOURNAL

MUSEOLOGY *and Cultural Heritage* *vol. 14* **2**/2026
MUZEOLÓGIA *a kultúrne dedičstvo*

Z OBSAHU ČÍSLA
IN THIS ISSUE

ISSN 1339-2204
e-ISSN 2453-9759 - online version
EV 1/22/EPP
DOI: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.0

Volume 14 (2026)
No. 2

MUZEOLÓGIA
a kultúrne dedičstvo

VEDECKÝ RECENZOVANÝ ČASOPIS

MUZEOLÓGIA
A KULTÚRNE
DEDIČSTVO, o.z.

Published by:
Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, o.z.
Púpavová 22
841 04 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
IČO 42 360 528

Editorial Office:
e-mail: muzeologia.kd@gmail.com
www.muzeologia.sk

Frequency: Quarterly

ISSN 1339-2204
e-ISSN 2453-9759 - online version, http://www.muzeologia.sk/casopis_mkd_en.htm
EV 1/22/EPP
Summer 2026

Journal is indexed by:
Central and Easter European Online Library (CEEOL); Crossref; Elsevier SCOPUS; Historical Abstracts EBSCOhost; Sherpa Romeo; The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (CEJSH); The European Reference Index for the Humanities and the Social Sciences (ERIH PLUS); Directory of open access journals (DOAJ); Clarivate Analytics Web of Science Core Collection ESCI

CONTENTS

Articles

Visual Thinking Strategies in Museological Practice: Towards a Dialogical Model of Interpretation

Grzegorz Schnotale

Grzegorz Schnotale
Cracow University of Technology
Faculty of Architecture
Department of Drawing, Painting and Sculpture
Cracow, Poland
e-mail: grzegorz.schnotale@pk.edu.pl
ORCID: 0000-0002-3183-8258

Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2026, 2026,14:2:5–14
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.1

Visual Thinking Strategies in Museological Practice: Towards a Dialogical Model of Interpretation
This article examines the theoretical and practical implications of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in contemporary museological practice. Positioned against traditional models of curatorial authority, VTS introduces a dialogical and participatory approach to interpretation based on collective visual inquiry. By encouraging open-ended observation and discussion, VTS reshapes the relationship between visitors, objects, and institutional narratives. Drawing on international examples, the paper argues that VTS reflects a broader shift in museology toward inclusivity, co-creation, and the decentralization of expert authority.

Keywords: Visual Thinking Strategies, museums, art-viewing behaviours, cultural heritage

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant trend in museological practice towards a transformation of interpretive practices, moving away from traditional, authoritative models towards more inclusive and participatory approaches. While the traditional model privileged curatorial authority and the transmission of expert knowledge, contemporary museology increasingly emphasizes the active role of the visitor in meaning-making processes.[1] Within this context, Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) have emerged as a significant method, enabling dialogical and participatory interpretation of museum objects.[2] The theoretical foundations and practical applications of Visual Thinking Strategies in contemporary museum contexts are a current and multi-threaded topic. Originally developed as an educational method to enhance critical thinking and literacy in visual language, VTS has gained increasing importance in museums as a tool that facilitates dialogic engagement between visitors, objects and institutional narratives.

The Visual Thinking Strategies approach was developed by cognitive psychologist Abigail Housen and museum educator Phillip Yeanawine. VTS is a tool that deepens the user's ability to search for the meaning of images. Its genesis dates back to the 1970s and 1980s, when

[1] BURNHAM, R., KAI-KEE, E. *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2011.
[2] YENAWINE, P. *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2013.

Housen conducted numerous interviews with people viewing artwork to understand how their visual thinking process developed.[3] The results of this research led to the formulation of a theory of aesthetic development[4] which proposes that the ability to understand and interpret images is not innate but develops through systematic, guided practice.[5] Housen's collaboration with Yenawine in the 1990s transformed these theoretical findings into practical teaching tools that were quickly adopted in museums.[6]

Visual Thinking Strategies is a method that encourages people to observe, think, and articulate their thoughts about visual images. In museum studies, it is a visitor-centred approach that uses a given methodology to deepen knowledge about possible fields of interpretation and provides multi-threaded opportunities for perceiving cultural heritage.[7] In sharp contrast to conventional curatorial authority – where interpretation is often unidirectional and expert-led – VTS promotes a collaborative process based on collective visual inquiry. By inviting visitors to observe closely, express their own perspectives and engage in open discussions, VTS challenges the hierarchical dynamics traditionally embedded in museum interpretation. This dialogic model not only empowers audiences as active participants in meaning-making, but also encourages museums to reconsider the role of expertise and authority in shaping visitor experiences.[8]

Models of interpretation in museology

Traditional models of interpretation in museology focus on the top-down transmission of knowledge, with the museum acting as an authoritative entity that decides on the meaning and context of objects. This model, known as museum as authority, was dominant for many years, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Curators and experts were seen as the primary decision-makers regarding what and how to present, while audiences were treated as passive consumers of this information. This approach is based on the belief that the museum, as a cultural institution, has a monopoly on the interpretation of the past. A characteristic feature of traditional interpretation in museums is hierarchical – the power in the process of creating a narrative is concentrated in the hands of curators and institutions. Exhibits in a museum are presented in a way that aims to convey predetermined information, often through textual descriptions that rarely engage the viewer in deeper reflection. There is also a tendency for the narrative to be authoritative, which limits the possibilities for visitors to interact with objects. In this traditional model, the museum is seen primarily as a depository of objects rather than a place of interaction or reflection.[9]

---

[3] HOUSEN, A. *The Eye of the Beholder: Measuring Aesthetic Development.* EdD Thesis. Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Education, 1983.

[4] HOUSEN, A. Validating a Measure of Aesthetic Development for Museums and Schools. In: *ILVS (International Laboratory for Visitor Studies) Review: A Journal of Visitor Behavior*, 2 (2), 1992, pp. 213-237.

[5] HOUSEN, A. Voices of viewers: Iterative research, theory and practice. In: *Arts and Learning Research Journal*, 17(1), 2001, pp. 2-12.

[6] MAYER, M. M. Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide in Contemporary Art Museum Education. In: *Art Education*, 58(2), 2005, pp. 13–17.

[7] DEWEY, J. Imagination and Expression. In: *Teachers College Bulletin*, 10(10), 1919, pp. 7–15.

[8] RICE, D., YENAWINE P. A Conversation on Object-Centered Learning in Art Museums. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal,* 45(4), 2002, pp. 289–303.

[9] DAY, J. D., FRENCH, L., HALL, L.K. *Metacognition, cognition, and human performance.* New York: Academic Press, 1985.

The paradigm shift in museology that occurred under the influence of postmodernism and the critique of classical power hierarchies introduced new approaches to interpretation in museums. Postmodernism, through its critique of authority, objectivity and grand narratives, raises the question of the subjectivity of interpretation, challenging the traditional model in which the museum plays the role of unquestionable authority. According to postmodern theories, museum narratives should not be one-dimensional but rather allow for multiple perspectives and interpretations.[10] The concept of cultural relativism emphasizes that history and culture are not fixed objects to be acquired but changing and context-dependent constructs. In the context of museology, this shift has had an impact on the democratization of the museum space. Museums have begun to pay more attention to how they involve visitors in the process of creating meaning. Instead of treating visitors as passive recipients of information, museums have begun to see them as active participants in the process of interpretation. Participatory approaches to exhibitions emerged, promoting dialogue and the co-creation of meaning rather than just the one-way transfer of knowledge.

In this context, it is worth examining two key communication theories that have influenced the development of dialogical methods of interpretation in museums. The first is Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogical communication.[11] Bakhtin postulated that dialogue is a fundamental form of human interaction in which meaning is created through exchange, rather than through the imposition of a single, unchanging point of view. According to this concept, every conversation, as well as every encounter with a work of art, should be based on a shared construction of meaning, rather than a one-way transmission. The second key theorist who influenced the change in approach to museum interpretation was Paulo Freire. Freire, known for his work on liberation pedagogy, emphasized critical thinking and active participation in the educational process. For Freire, education should be a dialogical process in which the teacher and the student (or in the context of a museum, the curator and the visitor) co-create meaning. This approach assumes that true understanding occurs when those involved in the interpretation process can express their opinions and experiences, resulting in the joint creation of knowledge.[12]

These changes are leading to the development of a new approach in museology that places the visitor at the centre of the interpretive process. Visitor-centred museology is an approach that emphasises the experience and engagement of visitors, recognising them as co-creators of meaning.[13] The shift from an authoritarian museum to a participatory museum means that curators are no longer just custodians of knowledge but also facilitators of the interpretive process. In this context, visitors are not just passive observers but active participants who interpret objects based on their own experiences, knowledge and perspectives. The increased role of the visitor in the interpretive process has led to the growing importance of interactive museological practice and interpretive methods, such as Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS), which promote dialogue and collaboration, as well as creating space for a plurality of voices and experiences.

[10] BENNETT, T. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
[11] BAKHTIN, M. M. Holquist, M. (ed). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press, 1981.
[12] FREIRE, P. *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continum, 2000.
[13] HOOPER-GREENHILL, E. *Museums and Their Visitors*. Oxton: Routledge, 1994.

Visual Thinking Strategies in museology: theoretical background

The VTS method follows a process that unfolds in three main stages: observation, interpretation and argumentation. First, participants are invited to observe an artwork closely, focusing on specific details that might otherwise be overlooked. This initial careful observation forms the foundation for interpretation,[14] where participants share their personal insights and meanings derived from the visual evidence.[15] Finally, argumentation encourages participants to support their interpretations by pointing to concrete visual elements, fostering evidence-based reasoning and critical dialogue. This iterative cycle transforms passive viewing into an active collaborative inquiry that cultivates critical thinking and respects diverse perspectives.

Central to the VTS approach is the role of the moderator, who facilitates discussion by asking carefully crafted open-ended questions such as "What's going on in this picture?" and "What do you see that makes you say that?". These questions invite participants to engage deeply with the artwork and with each other's viewpoints, while the moderator remains neutral, avoiding imposition of authoritative interpretations. This creates a safe, judgment-free environment conducive to open dialogue and multiple interpretations (Table 1). The moderator's paraphrasing of participant responses further validates contributions and encourages ongoing participation, which contrasts with traditional museum mediation that often privileges expert narratives.[16] The cognitive foundations of VTS are based on the concept of visual thinking and the development of aesthetic sensitivity.[17] This method supports the development of visual competence, which is necessary in an increasingly visual world,[18] and also promotes the development of critical thinking and communication skills.

Table 1: *Table illustrating the main actions of Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) in museums, based on established VTS procedures and educational goals.*

Activity	Description	Goal and outcome
Observation	Participants quietly observe the artwork for 1–2 minutes without reading labels or descriptions.	Develop focus and independent visual analysis skills.
Open-ended questions	Facilitator asks three core questions: "What's going on in this picture?", "What do you see that makes you say that?", and "What more can we find?"	Stimulate critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning and detailed observation.
Active listening and paraphrasing	Facilitator listens carefully, paraphrases participants' comments and points to specific areas in the artwork as they speak.	Validate participants' contributions and foster a supportive dialogue.

[14] JOSEPHSON, S.; KELLY, J.; SMITH, K. *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge, 2020.

[15] RODRIGUES, J. Get More Eyes on Your Work: Visual Approaches for Dissemination and Translation of Education Research. In: *Educational Researcher*, 50(9), 2021. pp. 657–663.

[16] BACHMANN, C. Theory and Practice of Visual Thinking Strategies in Upper Secondary Education. *Forum Oświatowe*, 34(1), 2022. pp. 105-121.

[17] DEBES, J.; FRANSECKY, R. *Visual Literacy: A Way to Learn: A Way to Teach*. Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology, 1972.

[18] DEBES, J. L. The Loom of Visual Literacy: An Overview. In: *Audiovisual Instruction*, 14(8), 1969. pp. 25–27.

Connecting different views	Facilitator links related or contrasting comments to highlight multiple perspectives.	Encourage collaboration and multifaceted understanding.
Co-constructing meaning	Participants collectively build interpretations, feeling like co-authors of the meaning.	Democratize access to knowledge and increase engagement.
Reflection and skill development	Post-session reflection helps participants develop observation, argumentation, empathy and critical thinking skills.	Promote long-term growth in visual literacy and communication.

Visual Thinking Strategies in museology: practical implications

Visual Thinking Strategies was introduced into museum practice at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York in the 1990s by Abigail Housen and Philip Yenawine. The method was created as a response to the need to increase visitor engagement and develop visitors' critical thinking and observation skills through active dialogue around works of art. The implementation of VTS at MoMA marked a significant change in the approach to museum visits – a shift from the traditional, lecture-based model of knowledge transfer to a dialogical one based on open discussion. Instead of imposing an "objective" interpretation by the curator, participants in VTS sessions are encouraged to formulate observations themselves and argue them based on visual evidence contained in the work. The design of the process promotes not only the development of observation and argumentation skills but also empathy and cooperation in the group, because participants feel like co-authors of the interpretation, not just passive recipients of knowledge.[19] The implementation of VTS at MoMA was a breakthrough in museological practice, introducing a dialogical process that activates participants, develops their visual and critical competences, and builds a sense of co-creation of knowledge about art. Research conducted within the Visual Thinking Curriculum (VTC), based on the MoMA collection, has shown that students participating in the program achieve statistically significant increases in their ability to reason based on visual evidence.[20] The mean evidential reasoning score of the experimental group increased by approximately 20%.[21] The VTS programme at MoMA was designed to engage visitors in active discussion, which translates into the development of observation skills, argumentation and empathy.

Visual Thinking Strategies programs have been implemented at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona since 2012. The first research conclusions indicate that the VTS method is perceived as a valuable tool that promotes dialogue and critical thinking, but requires appropriate preparation by educators and adaptation to the museum context.[22] Research conducted on a

[19] HEILIG, J. V.; COLE, H.; AGUILAR, A. From Dewey to No Child Left Behind: The evolution and devolution of public arts education. In: *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(4), 2010, pp. 136–145.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] TISHMAN, S., MacGILLIVRAY, D., PALMER, P. *Investigating the educational impact and potential of the Museum of Modern Art's Visual Thinking Curriculum: Final report*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard Project Zero, 1999.
[22] GONZÁLEZ-SANZ, M., FELIU-TORRUELLA, M., CARDONA-GÓMEZ, M., G. Visual Thinking Strategies from the perspective of museum educators: A SWOT analysis of the practical implementation of the method. In: *Revista de Educacion*, 375, 2017, pp. 153-175.

group of 477 primary school students showed significant benefits associated with this method.[23] Students indicated increased engagement during their visit to the museum and a preference for learning based on dialogue and the observation of works of art. Moreover, most of them expressed a desire to use similar methods in the future, which indicates a positive reception and highlights the effectiveness of VTS as a tool in museology. Participants appreciated the opportunity to actively participate in the interpretation process and express their own opinions and observations, which helped develop critical thinking skills and independent visual analysis. At the same time, some students drew attention to the need to take into account more historical and artistic content during VTS sessions, which indicates the potential for further development and integration of the method with traditional elements of museum education. A study published in 2023, highlighted that students preferred teaching methods that were based on active participation and dialogue, although over 40% of them indicated that the optimal solution would be to combine a discussion-based approach with lecture elements. In conclusion, the implementation of Visual Thinking Strategies at the Museu Picasso in Barcelona effectively engaged young audiences and adapted the program to the expectations and needs of many visitors.[24]

The project *Pensa a voce alta* [Think out loud] implemented by VTSItalia in 2021 in the Lazio region in Italy, is another example of the successful implementation of Visual Thinking Strategies in museological practice.[25] The program involved three secondary schools and two national museums in the province of Rome, combining school classes with practical experience in the museum. As part of the project, students prepared for their visit to the museum through special classes at school aimed at developing their skills in observation and visual analysis. Then, during their visit to the museum, they led discussions based on the VTS method with selected works of art. This two-level structure allowed participants not only to actively engage in the interpretation of the works but also to deepen their understanding of the dialogical process that is key to VTS. One of the tangible effects of the project was the students' own descriptions of the works of art, which were shared with other museum visitors. This solution not only strengthens the sense of co-creation of knowledge, but also promotes the museum as a space for dialogue and community, where the voice of each participant matters. The research and observations carried out during the project showed a high level of student engagement and understanding of the goals and values of VTS. The project has had a positive impact on the perception of museums as places open to diverse interpretations and active participation, and as institutions which favor inclusiveness and education based on dialogue.[26] In conclusion, the *Pensa a voce alta* project represents a model implementation of Visual Thinking Strategies. It combines school education with museological practice, developing visual competences and critical thinking while building a culture of dialogue and cooperation in the museum environment.

---

[23] GONZÁLEZ-SANZ, M., WILSON-DAILY, A. E., FELIU-TORRUELLA, M., IBANEZ-ETXEBERRIA, A. What type of learning methods do pupils prefer in museums and at school? Elementary school pupils' perceptions of Visual Thinking Strategies as applied at the Barcelona Picasso Museum. In: *SAGE Open*, 13(4), 2023, pp. 1–13.

[24] Ibidem

[25] COLIZZI M.A., CECI F., MICELI F., TROIANO M., FERRARA V. Think out loud: A Visual Thinking Strategies experience for students in museums, In: *Proceedings of the 8th International Visual Methods Conference*, 2024, pp. 86-94.

[26] BADINO M. (ed). *Beyond the two cultures. Experiences from a POT project.* Trento: Erickson, University & Research, 2022.

As part of the research project Making Museum Collections Culturally Accessible: A Training Activity for Professionals at the National Roman Museum, which ran in 2024 and 2025, Museo Nazionale Romano museum educators received specialized training in Visual Thinking Strategies aimed at improving their competency in communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking.[27] This training enabled staff to engage visitors more effectively and design educational activities that were more inclusive and accessible to different audiences, including those at risk of social exclusion. The training cycle involved museum staff, who participated in workshops sessions conducted both in the museum space and online. After completing the training, participants showed improvement in their critical analysis skills when approaching works of art compared to the level before the training, which was confirmed by evaluations conducted using competency tests and self-assessment surveys.[28] In addition, most participants reported increased job satisfaction and a sense of meaningfulness at work, indicating the positive impact of VTS on their daily responsibilities. As a result of implementing VTS, the museum was able to develop new educational programs that better meet the needs of people with disabilities and other marginalized groups. These programs include elements of dialogue and participation which help build a sense of community and openness in the museum space. Qualitative research has shown that visitors are more willing to engage in discussions and feel more invited to actively participate in the interpretation of collections. To sum up, the Making Museum Collections Culturally Accessible project at the National Roman Museum is an example of the effective use of Visual Thinking Strategies to improve the quality of museum exhibitions, increase cultural accessibility and strengthen staff competences, which translates into more inclusive and engaging visitor experiences.

An interesting case proving that museums can play a key role in responding to real social needs is presented by the National Gallery of Canada. During the 2025 Museums, Health and Wellbeing Summit, Andrea Gumpert, an art educator from the National Gallery of Canada, and Jessica Remedios, a healthcare expert from Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), presented reflections from a collaborative project that used Visual Thinking Strategies as a tool to support teamwork and improve communication. For museums seeking to expand their influence, such collaborations are an inspiring model of action. In an era where institutions are constantly searching for new forms of community engagement, such projects remind us that museums are not only places to store heritage and art, but also active centres of learning, change and development. During The National Gallery of Canada's collaboration with Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO), VTS was used to strengthen soft skills and team building in the interdisciplinary neurodevelopmental health team. Over the course of six months, 15 VTS sessions were held with 101 participants, conducted in three formats: i) directly in the gallery with original works of art, ii) in hospital rooms using digital reproductions and iii) virtually via Zoom.[29] Each session was based on three VTS key questions: "What is happening in this picture?", "What do you see that makes you say that?" and "What else can we find?" Analysis of the results before and after the sessions revealed statistically significant improvements in observation skills, particularly in the use of reasoning based on visual evidence, objective

[27] TORRE, E. M. Making Museum Collections Culturally Accessible: A Training Activity for Professionals at the National Roman Museum. In: *International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning (iJAC)*, *18*(2), 2025, pp. 92–103.
[28] Ibidem, p. 96,97.
[29] RICHARDSON J. Visual Thinking Strategies for Healthcare Professionals at an Art Museum, In: *MuseumNext*, 2025. Accessed 9th June 2025, https://www.museumnext.com/article/visual-thinking-strategies-for-healthcare-professionals-at-an-art-museum/

observation and critical analysis. Although changes in communication attitudes and tolerance for uncertainty were not statistically significant, there was a tendency for participants working with original works in the gallery to appreciate the importance of effective communication more. Another significant effect of the VTS sessions was the "flattening" of professional hierarchies, which facilitated a freer exchange of ideas, listening to different perspectives and being open to different interpretations. These skills are crucial for effective collaboration in demanding medical environments. Participants emphasized that the VTS process encouraged them to slow down, listen actively and be open to different points of view, which translates into a better quality of patient care. This initiative shows that museums can play an important role in the development of competences, offering a neutral space for reflection, dialogue and team building. The VTS method used in National Gallery of Canada is an effective tool supporting the development of soft skills and cooperation in museological practice.

Conclusion

Visual Thinking Strategies represent a significant step towards the democratization of museum spaces. This method shifts the emphasis from the traditional hierarchical role of the curator as the sole interpreter of works of art to the active participation of visitors in the process of creating meaning. When using VTS, each recipient, regardless of their level of knowledge or experience, has the opportunity to express their own interpretation, which promotes inclusiveness and diversity of perspectives. In this way, the museum ceases to be a mere depository of knowledge, instead becoming a place of dialogue and co-creation of culture. The implementation of VTS requires redefining the role of curators and museum guides. From the position of authority and transmitter of "objective" knowledge, they move to the role of moderators and facilitators of discussions who support the process of dialogue and exploration of works by visitors.

Multiple case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of VTS in diverse museum contexts. Research from the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, where VTS was first implemented in the 1990s, showed statistically significant improvements in visitor engagement. Similar positive outcomes have been observed at Museu Picasso in Barcelona, where students reported higher engagement and a preference for dialogue-based learning. The Italian project *Pensa a voce alta* integrated VTS with school curricula, fostering deep visitor engagement and a culture of dialogue within museum spaces. The National Roman Museum and National Gallery of Canada used Visual Thinking Strategies to improve staff skills and foster teamwork, showing museums' role in promoting inclusion and collaboration. Of course, the introduction of this strategy to museum practice is associated with significant organizational and personal challenges. Specialist training is needed for educators and curators to prepare them to conduct dialogue based on this method. In addition, VTS sessions are time-consuming and require appropriate planning, which may conflict with traditional tour formats. This method has great potential as a tool supporting the inclusiveness of museum narratives. By enabling diverse social groups to actively participate in the interpretation of works, this method helps to break the dominant, often one-dimensional cultural narratives. VTS also helps to increase access to museum education for people from different backgrounds, including those with limited access to traditional art education, which is in line with the broader goals of democratization and openness of cultural institutions. It is worth continuing to do researches on the effectiveness of VTS in various cultural and social contexts to better understand how this method can

be adapted to the specificity of local audiences. Although VTS opens up new possibilities for museums, a question remains as to whether every institution is ready and able to fully implement the dialogical model. This requires not only resources and training, but also a change in organizational culture and openness to diversity of interpretations. Nevertheless, striving for a dialogical model of interpretation in museum practice seems to be a valuable approach, especially for museums that strive for lively social interactions and an extensive educational role.

References

BACHMANN, C. (2022). Theory and Practice of Visual Thinking Strategies in Upper Secondary Education. In: *Forum Oświatowe*, 34(1), pp. 105–123. ISSN 0867-0323.

BADINO M.(ed). (2022). *Beyond the two cultures: Experiences from a POT project*. Trento: Erickson, University & Research. ISBN 9788859032182.

BAKHTIN, M. M., Holquist, M. (ed). (1981). *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press. ISBN 029271534X.

BENNETT, T. (1995). *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. New York: Routledge. ISBN 9780415053884.

BURNHAM, R., KAI-KEE, E. (2011). *Teaching in the Art Museum: Interpretation as Experience*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications. ISBN 9781606061281.

COLIZZI M.A., CECI F., MICELI F., TROIANO M., FERRARA V. (2024). Think out loud: A Visual Thinking Strategies experience for students in museums, In: *Proceedings of the 8th International Visual Methods Conference*, pp. 86-94. ISSN 2582-3922.

DAY, J. D., FRENCH, L., HALL, L.K. (1985). *Metacognition, cognition, and human performance*. New York: Academic Press. ISBN: 0122623010.

DEBES, J. L. (1969). The Loom of Visual Literacy: An Overview. In: *Audiovisual Instruction*, 14(8), pp. 25–27. ISSN 0004-7635.

DEBES, J., FRANSECKY, R. (1972). *Visual Literacy: A Way to Learn: A Way to Teach*. Washington, DC: Association for Educational Communications and Technology.

DEWEY, J. (1919). Imagination and Expression. In: *Teachers College Bulletin*, 10(10), pp. 7–15. ISSN 0040-0475.

FREIRE, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum. ISBN 0826412769.

GONZÁLEZ-SANZ, M., FELIU-TORRUELLA, M., CARDONA-GÓMEZ, M., G. (2017). Visual Thinking Strategies from the perspective of museum educators: a SWOT analysis of the practical implementation of the method. In: *Revista de Educacion*, 375. pp. 153-175. ISSN 0034-8082.

GONZÁLEZ-SANZ, M., WILSON-DAILY, A. E., FELIU-TORRUELLA, M., IBANEZ-ETXEBERRIA, A. (2023). What type of learning methods do pupils prefer in museums and at school? Elementary school pupils' perceptions of Visual Thinking Strategies as applied at the Barcelona Picasso Museum. In: *SAGE Open*, 13(4), pp. 1–13. ISSN 2158-2440.

HEILIG, J. V., COLE, H., AGUILAR, A. (2010). From Dewey to No Child Left Behind: The Evolution and Devolution of Public Arts Education. In: *Arts Education Policy Review*, 111(4), pp. 136–145.

HOOPER-GREENHILL, E. (1994). *Museums and Their Visitors*. Oxton: Routledge, ISBN 9780415513326.

HOUSEN, A. (1983). *The Eye of the Beholder: Measuring Aesthetic Development*. Ed.D Thesis. Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Education.

HOUSEN, A. (1992). Validating a Measure of Aesthetic Development for Museums and Schools. In: *ILVS (International Laboratory for Visitor Studies) Review: A Journal of Visitor Behavior*, 2 (2), pp. 213–237. ISSN 1043-3023.

HOUSEN, A. (2001). Voices of viewers: Iterative research, theory and practice. In: *Arts and Learning Research Journal*, 17(1), pp. 2–12.

JOSEPHSON, S., KELLY, J., SMITH, K. (2020). *Handbook of Visual Communication: Theory, Methods, and Media* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge. ISBN 9781138283223.

MAYER, M. M. (2005). Bridging the Theory-Practice Divide in Contemporary Art Museum Education. In: *Art Education*, 58(2), pp. 13–17. ISSN: 0004-3125.

TISHMAN, S., MACGILLIVRAY, D., PALMER, P. (1999) *Investigating the educational impact and potential of the Museum of Modern Art's Visual Thinking Curriculum: Final report*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard Project Zero.

TISHMAN, S., PERKINS, D. (2010). *Visible Thinking: Cultivating Understanding in the Museum*. Cambridge: Harvard Project Zero. ISBN 9781935704040.

TORRE, E. M. (2025). Making Museum Collections Culturally Accessible: A Training Activity for Professionals at the National Roman Museum. In: *International Journal of Advanced Corporate Learning (iJAC)*, *18*(2), pp. 92–103.

RICE, D., YENAWINE P. (2002). A Conversation on Object-Centered Learning in Art Museums. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal,* 45(4), pp. 289–303. ISSN 0011-3069.

RICHARDSON J. Visual Thinking Strategies for Healthcare Professionals at an Art Museum, In: *MuseumNext*, 2025. Accessed 9 June 2025, https://www.museumnext.com/article/visual-thinking-strategies-for-healthcare-professionals-at-an-art-museum/

RODRIGUES, J. (2021). Get More Eyes on Your Work: Visual Approaches for Dissemination and Translation of Education Research. In: *Educational Researcher*, 50(9), pp. 657–663. ISSN 0013-189X.

YENAWINE, P. (2013). *Visual Thinking Strategies: Using Art to Deepen Learning Across School Disciplines*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. ISBN 9781612503303.

Interpreting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Practice: Krakow's Centre as a Model of Educational Innovation

Justyna Łukaszewska-Haberkowa

Justyna Łukaszewska-Haberkowa
Independent researcher
Kraków, Poland
e-mail: justyna.haberkowa@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-0939-5566

Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2026, 2026,14:2:15–28
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.2

Interpreting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Practice: Krakow's Centre as a Model of Educational Innovation
This article explores the role of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow (CINDK) as a model institution for the protection, education and dissemination of intangible heritage in Poland. Established as a branch of the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow, the Centre reflects contemporary museological trends by adopting participatory, inclusive and interdisciplinary methods. It operates at the intersection of research, education and community engagement, emphasizing the co-creation and living nature of heritage. The article presents the Centre's key objectives and activities, including its documentation projects, educational programs and cooperation with UNESCO. Special attention is given to flagship initiatives such as the Krakow Nativity Scene and the Lajkonik procession, which are presented as successful cases of safeguarding local traditions within global heritage frameworks. The analysis also identifies challenges – such as folklorisation, generational change, and the need for digital innovation – and discusses how the Centre addresses them through educational outreach and international collaboration. The case of Krakow illustrates how a local institution can function as a laboratory of heritage interpretation, connecting academic knowledge with civic practice and contributing to the broader field of intangible heritage studies.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, museum, tradition bearers

Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) encompasses practices, representations, knowledge, and skills that communities recognise as part of their cultural heritage and continuously recreate in response to their environment and history.[1] Since the adoption of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* in 2003, increasing attention has been devoted not only to identifying and documenting such practices but also to developing sustainable mechanisms of safeguarding that support their transmission in changing social contexts. [2]

The implementation of the Convention has generated an extensive international debate concerning the role of institutions, the ethics of safeguarding, and the impact of heritage policies on communities.[3] In heritage theory, this discussion has been accompanied by a critique of the "authorised heritage discourse", which questions the neutrality of cultural institutions and emphasises the social construction of heritage through power relations and community

[1] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.
[2] KURIN, Richard. *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004a.
[3] UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, 2003

agency.[4] Within this framework, safeguarding is increasingly understood not as the preservation of static forms but as a negotiated and participatory process.

In Poland, following the ratification of the Convention in 2011, safeguarding policies have gradually developed within a national institutional system coordinated by the National Heritage Board of Poland. Against this broader background, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow (Centrum Interpretacji Niematerialnego Dziedzictwa Krakowa; CINDK), established in 2018 as a branch of the Museum of Krakow, represents a distinctive municipal initiative focused on urban intangible heritage.

Rather than functioning primarily as a collection-based exhibition unit, the Centre operates as a research-oriented and participatory platform dedicated to documenting, interpreting and co-creating intangible heritage together with local communities. This article examines CINDK as a case study of process-oriented museology within a municipal institutional framework. The analysis explores how the Centre negotiates the relationship between institutional structures and community agency, and how it positions itself within both national safeguarding policies and contemporary debates in heritage studies.

The study adopts a qualitative case study approach based on the analysis of institutional statutes, project documentation, educational materials, digital platforms and public communication channels. The author's long-term professional involvement in the field of intangible heritage in Krakow – both as President of the Association of Lacemakers of the Krakow Region and as a researcher collaborating with the Centre on the "Atlas of the Intangible Heritage of Krakow" – provides additional insight into the practical and institutional dimensions of safeguarding while maintaining a reflexive analytical perspective. The study combines institutional analysis with elements of engaged scholarship but keeps a critical distance through reflexive positioning.

History of the Centre's establishment and mission

The establishment of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow (CINDK) should be understood within the broader framework of heritage protection policies in Poland, which have historically been shaped by a strong emphasis on the safeguarding of material monuments and historic sites.[5] The gradual incorporation of intangible cultural heritage into this system required not only legislative adjustments, but also institutional innovation at the local level.

CINDK's primary objective is not the preservation of objects, but the safeguarding of practices, skills and social rituals that constitute the living heritage of Krakow. In this respect, the Centre aligns with contemporary understandings of intangible heritage as a dynamic and socially embedded process rather than a fixed cultural resource.[6] Its activities focus on documentation, research, interpretation and the facilitation of intergenerational transmission, carried out in cooperation with communities recognised as heritage bearers.

Unlike traditional museum departments structured around collections, CINDK operates through project-based methodologies that respond to specific cultural phenomena and community initiatives. Exhibitions such as *Od wielkiego dzwonu* (2024/2025), devoted to festive practices in Krakow, and the planned 2026 exhibition on the sounds of the city, exemplify this

[4] BORTOLOTTO, Chiara; LÁZARO RAÑA, María Xosé (eds.). *Intangible Heritage: Conservation, Ethics and Impact*. Cham: Springer, 2020.

[5] KLEKOT, Ewa. *Protection of Cultural Heritage in Poland*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2017.

[6] KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

approach. Rather than presenting objects as autonomous artefacts, these projects foreground narratives, performative dimensions and social contexts, thereby positioning the museum as a space of interpretation and encounter.

This orientation reflects a broader shift in museology in which museums are increasingly perceived not merely as repositories of heritage but as active agents in its production and mediation.[7] At the same time, as emphasised in scholarship on intangible heritage, safeguarding must carefully negotiate the tension between institutional frameworks and community agency. CINDK's declared goals therefore include not only documentation and promotion but also the strengthening of heritage bearers' competencies, support for networking among depositary groups and the development of sustainable forms of cooperation beyond the museum space.

Legal and organisational significance

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow (CINDK) operates within the legal and institutional framework established for the protection of cultural heritage in Poland. Since the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, municipal institutions such as the Historical Museum of the City of Krakow have been mandated to implement guidelines for the identification, documentation and promotion of intangible practices.[8]

The Krakow City Council's approval of a new statute in 2022 further defined the Centre's role, specifying its responsibilities within the municipal system of heritage protection.[9] This formal recognition enables CINDK to integrate research, documentation, education and community engagement in a coordinated manner. By operating as part of a larger museum structure, the Centre gains both administrative legitimacy and access to professional expertise while remaining oriented toward participatory practices.[10]

From an organisational perspective, CINDK exemplifies a model in which heritage institutions act not merely as custodians of material objects but as platforms for the co-production of cultural meaning.[11] The Centre's work emphasises the documentation of living practices, the facilitation of community participation, and mediation between local knowledge and institutional resources. This approach underscores the dual function of the museum as both a legal entity responsible for safeguarding heritage and an active agent in the social and cultural processes that constitute intangible heritage.

Educational and popularisation projects

The Centre implements a wide range of educational and outreach activities aimed at promoting Krakow's intangible heritage to diverse audiences, including residents, students and tourists. A central component of this work is the organisation of handicraft workshops, often conducted in collaboration with the Association of Lacemakers of the Krakow Region

[7] SMITH, Laurajane; AKAGAWA, Natsuko (eds.). *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2009.
[8] BOGUCKA, Maria. *Cultural Heritage and Education*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2015.
[9] KOWALSKA, Anna. *Museums and the Protection of Intangible Heritage*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ, 2021.
[10] KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
[11] KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production. In: *Museum International*, 2004, vol. 56, no. 1–2, pp. 52–65.

(*Stowarzyszenie Koronczarek Ziemi Krakowskiej*), which allow participants to engage directly with traditional skills such as bobbin lace-making.[12]

Digital platforms also play a crucial role in the Centre's strategies. The "Tell Me the City" (*Opowiedz mi miasto*) portal functions as an interactive repository, enabling residents to contribute local stories, customs and memories, thereby co-creating the documentation of Krakow's intangible heritage.[13] This approach exemplifies participatory museology principles, emphasising community agency in heritage creation and interpretation.[14]

Temporary and permanent exhibitions complement workshops and digital projects by offering immersive, multi-sensory experiences. Examples include presentations on the Krakow Nativity Scene, the Lajkonik procession, and local lace-making traditions, which combine historical context with contemporary participatory methods. Through these initiatives, the Centre mediates between traditional cultural practices and modern educational techniques, highlighting the dynamic, processual nature of heritage.[15]

Educational programming extends to school-based initiatives – such as "From Folklore to Intangible Heritage" and "Intergenerational Connections: Cultural Observation of Intangible Heritage" – which introduce students to UNESCO frameworks for intangible heritage safeguarding while fostering active engagement and reflection.[16]

These projects collectively illustrate the Centre's model of integrating research, documentation and public engagement. By combining scholarly insight with participatory methodologies, the Centre demonstrates how municipal museums can serve both as educational infrastructure and as facilitators of living heritage, enabling community members to contribute actively to the interpretation, transmission and revitalisation of local traditions.

Integrating the centre's activities into contemporary museology and heritage studies

The activities of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow reflect contemporary developments in critical museology and participatory heritage studies. Moving beyond the traditional model of the museum as a repository of objects, the Centre operates as an interactive space where local communities actively participate in documenting, interpreting and transmitting heritage. This approach aligns with Laurajane Smith's concept of heritage as a social practice, emphasising that heritage is co-created by communities rather than imposed by institutional authorities.[17]

By employing participatory formats such as workshops, digital platforms and collaborative exhibitions, the Centre enables residents to become co-authors of heritage narratives. In this sense, the museum functions as infrastructure supporting living traditions, rather than as an exclusive custodian of cultural authority. The Centre's approach exemplifies how urban

[12] KOWALCZYK, Joanna. *Artisanal Craft in Cultural Education*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ, 2019.
[13] "Tell Me the City" Portal. https://opowiedzmimiasto.mhk.pl/
[14] HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF KRAKÓW. Temporary and Permanent Exhibitions. https://muzeumkrakowa.pl/. DĄBEK, Tomasz. *Museology and New Technologies*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018.
[15] DĄBEK, Tomasz. *Museology and New Technologies*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018.
[16] "Tell Me the City" Portal. https://opowiedzmimiasto.mhk.pl/
[17] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.

museums can facilitate dialogue, foster inclusivity and bridge diverse perspectives within the city's cultural landscape.[18]

Catalina González's analysis complements this framework by highlighting the active role of museums in shaping discourses about memory, identity and social representation. By integrating multiple voices and promoting reflection on cultural diversity, the Centre contributes to a more democratic and socially engaged understanding of heritage, positioning itself as a laboratory for participatory museology within a municipal context.

Challenges, institutional tensions and international frameworks of safeguarding

Safeguarding intangible heritage in a contemporary urban context entails navigating dynamic social, cultural and institutional transformations.[19] Rapid urbanisation, globalisation and changing patterns of participation can disrupt traditional modes of intergenerational transmission, risking either the gradual disappearance of practices or their transformation into staged cultural performances detached from everyday life.[20] The Centre therefore operates within a constant tension between continuity and adaptation.

One recurring challenge is the phenomenon described as "national post-folklorism", in which living traditions are simplified, aestheticized or strategically reshaped to function as emblematic national symbols. Such processes may enhance visibility but can also weaken social embeddedness and reduce complex cultural practices to touristic representations. In response, the Centre emphasises dialogue with heritage bearers, careful historical contextualisation and the reinforcement of community agency in decision-making processes related to representation and promotion.

Education and intergenerational engagement remain central mechanisms for addressing these risks. Workshops, school programs and digital initiatives are designed not merely to popularise heritage but to sustain embodied forms of knowledge transmission.[21] The use of multimedia tools, interactive exhibitions and digital archives enhances accessibility while supporting continuity of practice within community networks.[22]

At the same time, the Centre's activities are embedded in broader international safeguarding frameworks shaped by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Poland's ratification of the Convention in 2011 positioned municipal institutions within a multi-level governance structure linking local initiatives to national and

[18] GONZÁLEZ, Catalina. Heritage and the Politics of Identity: Museums, Memory, and the Politics of Representation. In: SANDELL, Richard (ed.). *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*. London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 119–134.

[19] HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA, Janina. Heritage Protection or National Post-folklorism? In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013, pp. 65–74.

[20] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.

[21] SCHREIBER, Hanna. Intangible Cultural Heritage – The Missing Link in the Cultural Heritage Protection System in Poland. In: FATYGA, Barbara; MICHALSKI, Rafał (eds.). *Folk Culture: Theories, Practices, Policies*. Warsaw: National Centre for Culture, 2014, pp. 375–406.

[22] BORTOLOTTO, Chiara. From Objects to Processes: UNESCO's "Intangible Cultural Heritage". In: *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 2007, 19, pp. 21–33. DĄBEK, Tomasz. *Museology and New Technologies*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2018.

global policies. Cooperation with UNESCO enables the international visibility of Krakow's traditions and facilitates the exchange of safeguarding strategies across cultural contexts.[23]

A significant example is the inscription of the Krakow Nativity Scene on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2018. The Centre functions as a coordinating and interpretive hub for activities related to this recognition at the municipal level, mediating between community practitioners, city authorities and international heritage standards. Such mediation illustrates the dual role of the institution: it must simultaneously support local agency and comply with transnational regulatory frameworks.[24]

Beyond UNESCO-related activities, Krakow participates in broader urban heritage governance structures, including the City's Intangible Heritage Team, which integrates municipal officials, museum experts and community representatives.[25] Transnational cooperation is further developed through initiatives such as the Living Heritage Journeys project, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union, which explores innovative models for integrating intangible heritage into sustainable tourism while maintaining community participation.

These multi-scalar engagements highlight both opportunities and constraints. International recognition enhances prestige, funding opportunities and comparative learning, yet it may also introduce formalisation pressures and standardised safeguarding models. The Centre's ongoing challenge lies in maintaining a balance between institutional accountability within global heritage regimes and the preservation of local autonomy, flexibility and community-driven practice.[26]

International cooperation and the importance of UNESCO

The Intangible Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow operates within the broader context of global safeguarding of intangible heritage, closely cooperating with UNESCO and implementing the standards of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, to which Poland has been a signatory since 2011.[27] This collaboration allows for the international promotion of local traditions and enables the exchange of experiences and best practices with museums and cultural institutions worldwide. Given that intangible phenomena often transcend national borders, their protection requires an intercultural and transnational approach.[28]

A key example of such cooperation is the joint documentation and promotion of Krakow's nativity scene (*szopka krakowska*), inscribed on the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural

[23] HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA, Janina. Heritage Protection or National Post-folklorism? In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013, pp. 65–74.

[24] SMITH, Laurajane; AKAGAWA, Natsuko (eds.). *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2009.

[25] BORTOLOTTO, Chiara; LÁZARO RAÑA, María Xosé (eds.). *Intangible Heritage: Conservation, Ethics and Impact*. Cham: Springer, 2020. KOCKEL, Ullrich. *Intangible Heritage and Social Change*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2013.

[26] KURIN, Richard. Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive? In: *ICOM News*, 2004b, no. 4, pp. 7–9.

[27] UNESCO. *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris: UNESCO, 2003.

[28] BARTMIŃSKI, Jan. The Specificity of Intangible Cultural Heritage – Issues of Protection, Documentation and "Revitalization". In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013, pp. 35–49.

Heritage of Humanity in 2018.[29] The Centre functions as the main coordinating hub for activities related to this project in Krakow.

Beyond museum networks, Krakow engages in urban heritage governance through formal bodies such as the City's Intangible Heritage Team, which brings together municipal officials, museum experts and community representatives to plan and implement safeguarding measures aligned with the 2003 UNESCO Convention.[30]

The Centre also participates in transnational initiatives such as the *Living Heritage Journeys* project, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union. This collaborative initiative involves partners from Belgium, Croatia, Italy, Sweden and Poland, including the Museum of Krakow. Its aim is to explore innovative approaches for integrating intangible heritage into sustainable tourism experiences across Europe.[31] By adopting co-creation among heritage practitioners, local communities, researchers and tourism stakeholders, the project translates research findings into guidelines and training materials that enhance the social, cultural and economic benefits of heritage safeguarding. The inclusion of the Krakow nativity scene as a pilot case demonstrates the broader applicability of the Centre's methods and highlights the alignment of Krakow's experience with international trends in participatory and community-focused heritage practices.[32]

The Potential for Comparative Research and International Networks

Although the Centre cooperates with UNESCO, its engagement with comparative research and international museum and academic networks remains limited. Active participation in platforms such as ICHCAP (International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region) or Horizon Europe projects could strengthen Krakow's international visibility and provide insights from other countries' experiences in safeguarding intangible heritage.

Such international cooperation would also facilitate the adoption of innovative approaches to the documentation, digitisation and dissemination of heritage, addressing contemporary challenges posed by digital society. By situating Krakow's practices within a global comparative framework, the Centre can foster cross-cultural dialogue and scholarly exchange.

Existing participatory practices, such as collaboration with women's handicraft groups, illustrate how local knowledge can be integrated into research while supporting both hobbyists and professionals. Regional initiatives, including the National Lace School in Zakopane, highlight how local craft heritage can connect to broader national and international educational and cultural networks.

The role of the centre in documentation and research

A central task of the Intangible Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow is the systematic collection and analysis of materials documenting local traditions and customs. The Centre

[29] HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF KRAKÓW. *Intangible Heritage Interpretation Center*. https://muzeumkrakowa.pl/oddzialy/centrum-interpretacji-niematerialnego-dziedzictwa-krakowa

[30] SZAŁAPAK, Anna. *The Kraków Nativity Scene as a Phenomenon of Kraków Folklore Against the Background of the European Nativity Scene Tradition*. Kraków: Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 2012, pp. 203–211.

[31] BARTKOWIAK, Ewa. *Ethnography of Kraków*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2017.

[32] KOWALSKA, Anna. *Museums and the Protection of Intangible Heritage*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ, 2021.

cooperates with researchers, ethnographers and local communities, creating a comprehensive database of source materials and documentary knowledge.[33]

A primary instrument in this work is the "Tell Me the City" portal, which continues earlier research initiatives implemented since 2013.[34] The portal gathers narratives from residents about Krakow's intangible heritage, encompassing both traditional and contemporary practices. This ensures diverse voices are represented, supporting an authentic dialogue between past and present.

The Centre also employs social media to promote events and engage broader audiences. For example, its official Facebook page advertises community workshops and related programs, reflecting a commitment to accessible public engagement.

Educational and popularisation activities, including artistic handicraft workshops, enable participants to learn traditional techniques such as embroidery or lace-making.[35] These initiatives contribute to the continuity of folk crafts and support local artisans and enthusiasts.

The Centre has conducted documented research on urban rituals, such as the Lajkonik procession, through sound recordings and ethnographic interviews with participants and local tradition bearers, mapping intangible heritage practices to specific urban spaces.[36]

Diversifying forms of heritage and applying an intersectional approach

While the Centre primarily focuses on well-known examples of Krakow's intangible heritage, such as nativity scenes and the Lajkonik procession, incorporating lesser-known or marginalised practices could enrich the representation of the city's heritage landscape. Considering the heritage of ethnic minorities, religious communities and migrant groups would broaden the Centre's scope and align its activities with contemporary inclusive approaches to heritage.

Targeted initiatives for youths, seniors and groups with limited access to cultural resources could further reinforce the Centre's social mission. Additionally, although the primary focus is on intangible heritage, the Centre engages with material collections as interpretive tools. Objects are not treated merely as autonomous exhibits; rather, they serve as entry points to narrate social practices, skills and knowledge transmitted across generations. Material heritage thus functions as a medium through which intangible heritage is interpreted, contextualised and communicated, bridging conventional museum practices with process-oriented approaches to heritage interpretation.

Examples of project implementation: Krakow Nativity Scene and Lajkonik

The Centre serves as a guardian institution for numerous traditions listed in the register of Krakow's intangible heritage. A prominent example is the Krakow Nativity Scene, a unique phenomenon of local folklore with a rich history and deep ties to the identity of the city's inhabitants.[37]

---

[33] KOWALSKA, Anna. *Museums* ....

[34] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.

[35] SZNAJDER, Anna. Women's Handicraft Groups: Role and Importance for Hobbyists, Professionals, and Researchers. In: BRZEZIŃSKA, Anna W.; PAPROT, Anna; TYMCHOWICZ, Maria (eds.). *Contemporary Issues in Folk Costume Studies*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, 2018, p. 166.

[36] KOWALSKA, Joanna R. Laces Inspired by Podhale Folk Art. The National Lace School in Zakopane and Its Impact on Fashion during the First Half-century of Its Existence. In: *Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Seria Nowa*, 2014, 7, pp. 27–48.

[37] SZAŁAPAK, Anna. *The Kraków Nativity Scene as a Phenomenon of Kraków Folklore Against the Background of the European Nativity Scene Tradition*. Kraków: Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 2012, pp. 203–211.

This urban tradition dates back to the nineteenth century and was initially practiced by craftsmen from the suburbs of Krowodrza and Zwierzyniec. Over time it evolved into an artistic form, combining depictions of the Christmas scene with elements of Krakow's historic architecture. The oldest preserved nativity scene, created by Michał Ezenekier in the second half of the nineteenth century, is housed in the collection of the Seweryn Udziela Ethnographic Museum in Krakow. Known as the "mother nativity scene", it established the canonical multi-level, tower-like, symmetrical structure characteristic of later Krakow nativity scenes.

The first Competition for the Most Beautiful Krakow Nativity Scene took place in 1937, aimed at maintaining and promoting this tradition.[38] Except for a hiatus during World War II, the competition has continued annually, bringing together artists who present their works at the Main Market Square. In 2014, the Kraków nativity scene was included on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and in 2018, it became the first Polish element to be inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.[39]

The Centre, in collaboration with UNESCO, supports not only protection but also the promotion of nativity scene-making as a living tradition integrated into the city's cultural life. Activities include research, collection inventorying and documentation of workshops dedicated to the craft.

Another significant tradition is the Lajkonik, or "Zwierzyniecki Horse", a distinctive Krakow ritual rooted in both urban and folk culture.[40] The Centre organises lectures, exhibitions, and events highlighting the Lajkonik's significance within the city's collective memory.[41] The parade occurs annually on the octave (eighth day) of Corpus Christi, beginning at the Municipal Water and Sewage Company headquarters on Senatorska Street and proceeding through the historic centre, including Na Stawach Square and the Main Market Square. Participants dressed as Lajkonik riders and Tatars, accompanied by musicians, perform traditional symbolic acts such as lightly touching passers-by with a ceremonial mace made of wood and adorned with ribbons, which according to local belief brings good luck.

The ritual originates from a legend celebrating the victory of Krakow raftsmen (*włóczkowie*) over invading Tatars. A victorious raftsman dressed as a khan rode into the city, inspiring joy among residents. Since then, the Lajkonik figure and procession have become enduring symbols of the event. The parade's costumes, combining stylised Tatar and bourgeois attire, were established in the nineteenth century and later incorporated into official city celebrations. In 2014, the Lajkonik procession was inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage as one of the first five Polish traditions to receive this distinction. While Krakow nativity scenes were the first Polish elements inscribed on the UNESCO list in 2019, the event also highlighted the cultural significance of other city traditions, including Lajkonik.

In addition to exhibitions and documentation activities, the Centre implements structured educational programs that support intergenerational transmission of skills. Particularly significant are the regular nativity scene-making courses addressed to three age categories:

---

[38] UNESCO. *The Kraków Nativity Scene*. UNESCO Intangible Heritage Lists, 2018.

[39] BARTKOWIAK, Ewa. *Ethnography of Kraków*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ, 2017.

[40] SZOKA, Andrzej Iwo. *Lajkonik – the Zwierzyniec Hobby Horse. The History of an Intangible Museum Exhibit*. In: KLIMEK, Łukasz (ed.). *The World of Lajkonik. The Hobby Horse Around the World*. Kraków: Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, 2014, pp. 31–73.

[41] KWIECIŃSKA, Magdalena. The Zwierzyniec Hobby Horse as a Local and Universal Rite. Social Memory, Folk Beliefs and Urban Rituals. In: KLIMEK, Łukasz (ed.). *The World of Lajkonik*. Kraków: Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, 2014, pp. 178–188.

children, youth and families. Each workshop group consists of approximately six to eight participants, ensuring direct and intensive contact with an experienced Krakow nativity scene-maker. This small-group format enables close interaction, practical guidance and the gradual acquisition of complex techniques. More importantly, it facilitates what heritage scholars describe as *transmission in situ* – the passing on of knowledge within the social and material context in which it is practiced, rather than through abstract instruction or detached institutional mediation.

The workshops operate according to a master–apprentice model characteristic of many forms of intangible cultural heritage. In this sense, they can also be interpreted through the lens of the concept of "communities of practice" developed by Etienne Wenger, understood as groups that sustain knowledge through shared activity, repetition and social engagement. Participants do not merely learn technical skills; they gradually become embedded in a network of practitioners, absorbing aesthetic conventions, workshop ethics and narratives connected to the history of the tradition. The Centre thus functions less as a traditional museum space and more as a platform enabling the formation and continuity of such communities of practice.[42]

Similarly, the Centre supports traditional bobbin lace-making through workshops organised twice a month by experienced lace makers. Each two-hour session gathers up to twelve participants – the maximum number determined by the availability of lace pillows provided by the Centre – as well as additional participants who bring their own materials. The cyclical and regular character of these meetings fosters continuity and stabilises a community of practitioners. As in the case of nativity scene making, the workshops exceed the framework of technical instruction: they create a social space for mutual support, informal exchange of knowledge and collective reflection on tradition.

By maintaining limited group sizes and regular schedules, the Centre prioritises depth of engagement and relational transmission over mass participation. In doing so, it implicitly challenges what Laurajane Smith has termed the "Authorised Heritage Discourse", which privileges expert-driven narratives, monumental heritage and top-down forms of interpretation. Instead, the Centre's practice aligns with contemporary critical heritage studies, understanding intangible heritage as a dynamic social process sustained through embodied learning, repetition and community participation rather than institutional authority alone.[43]

Cooperation and development of projects within the Centre

Rather than functioning as an isolated institution, the Centre operates within an extensive network of municipal, regional and international partners. This cooperation enables the exchange of knowledge, the development of research projects and the implementation of joint initiatives aimed at documenting,[44] archiving and promoting Krakow's intangible heritage.[45] By recording local histories, legends, rituals and customs, the Centre not only preserves cultural

[42] WENGER, Etienne. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

[43] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.

[44] "Tell Me the City" Portal. https://opowiedzmimiasto.mhk.pl/

[45] HISTORICAL MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF KRAKÓW. Activity Report of the Intangible Heritage Interpretation Center. Kraków: MHKK, 2022. KOWALSKA, Anna. *Museums and the Protection of Intangible Heritage*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ, 2021.

memory but also fosters social engagement and strengthens awareness of the significance of local traditions within contemporary urban life.[46]

The Centre combines ethnographic research with educational and exhibition activities. It organises handicraft workshops, offers instruction in folk art and prepares both temporary and permanent exhibitions devoted to practices such as Krakow nativity scene making,[47] the Lajkonik procession and regional lace-making.[48] A notable example of revitalising historical customs is the Babski Comber initiative, traditionally celebrated during the carnival period, when women symbolically assumed authority through ritualised festivities. Reinterpreted today in a participatory format – including workshops, lectures and a public procession – the event enables contemporary audiences to engage with the historical meaning and social dimensions of this living tradition.

Beyond the local context, the Centre situates its activities within broader regional and international frameworks of heritage practice. Comparative examples such as the community-centred safeguarding model developed by the Serfenta Association in Cieszyn – recognised with the European Heritage Award / Europa Nostra Award in 2024 – demonstrate the potential of combining craft documentation, intergenerational skill transmission and civic engagement.[49] Such parallels provide inspiration for methodological development and create opportunities for professional exchange, comparative research and the strengthening of transnational heritage networks.

The Polish institutional context and scholarly reflection

The activities of the Centre are situated within the broader Polish system of intangible heritage safeguarding. Since Poland's ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention in 2011, national safeguarding policies have been linked to the implementation of the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, coordinated by the National Heritage Board of Poland. The inclusion of Krakow bobbin lace (2016), the Krakow Nativity Scene (2014) and the Lajkonik procession (2014) highlights growing institutional recognition of community-based traditions.

The Centre functions not only as a municipal institution but also as a site of scholarly reflection. Through cooperation with researchers, projects such as the "Atlas of the Intangible Heritage of Krakow" and publications devoted to intangible heritage, the Centre contributes to national discourse on participatory heritage governance. Its activities thus bridge institutional practice and academic inquiry, reinforcing the role of urban museums in contemporary heritage studies.

The significance of the Centre for the protection of intangible cultural heritage

The Centre plays documentary, educational and social roles. In conditions of rapid social and cultural change, it contributes to maintaining the continuity and adaptation of traditions,

[46] NOWAK, Piotr. *Local Culture and Digital Media*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2020.

[47] SZAŁAPAK, Anna. *The Kraków Nativity Scene as a Phenomenon of Kraków Folklore Against the Background of the European Nativity Scene Tradition*. Kraków: Wydawnictwa Naukowe, 2012, pp. 203–211.

[48] BORTOLOTTO, Chiara; LÁZARO RAÑA, María Xosé (eds.). *Intangible Heritage: Conservation, Ethics and Impact*. Cham: Springer, 2020.

[49] KARNET KRAKÓW. Kraków Women's Comber Festival 2025: Woman – the River. https://karnet.krakowculture.pl/58147-krakow-krakowski-babski-comber-2025

which is crucial for local identity.[50] It operates within Poland's broader heritage protection policy framework, shaped by the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention and its incorporation into the Polish legal order in 2011, which reinforced the understanding of heritage as a factor of social cohesion and community building.[51]

Safeguarding intangible heritage requires interdisciplinary methods combining museum practice, ethnology, education, and digital technologies. Through its projects, the Centre demonstrates effective local implementation of these approaches.[52]

Capacity-building and institutional challenges

Sustainable heritage safeguarding depends on both institutional mediation and strengthening the capacities of heritage bearers. Community-based practices often rely on project-based funding, requiring skills in grant writing, organisational management and public communication. Capacity-building efforts can empower communities to act as autonomous partners, complementing institutional support and fostering agency in heritage projects.

Networking among depositaries of diverse traditions promotes experience exchange, intergenerational knowledge transmission and collaborative innovation. The Centre thus functions as both a facilitator and mediator, supporting sustainable intangible heritage ecosystems within the urban context.

At the same time, critical reflection on institutional framing remains necessary. While municipal support enhances visibility and legitimacy, over-formalisation risks reducing living cultural practices to events or performances. Maintaining balance between institutional guidance and community autonomy is essential to preserve the authenticity of traditions.

The Centre as a laboratory of participation

The Centre exemplifies a participatory model within a municipal museum. Rather than asserting authority over cultural practices, it provides infrastructure for heritage bearers to articulate, transmit and negotiate their traditions. The museum functions as an enabling platform, supporting documentation, networks and visibility, while primary agency remains with communities.

This approach positions heritage as a dynamic, collaborative process rather than an object of institutional control. Krakow's case illustrates how municipal institutions can foster sustainable intangible heritage ecosystems without fully institutionalising living traditions, contributing to contemporary debates in participatory museology and urban cultural governance.

Conclusions

The Intangible Heritage Interpretation Centre of Krakow demonstrates a modern approach to heritage protection, integrating documentation, education and community participation. Its work preserves and revitalises Krakow traditions, enhances local identity and strengthens cultural education and tourism.[53] Cooperation with local communities, researchers and national

[50] HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA, Janina. Heritage Protection or National Post-folklorism? In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013, pp. 65–74.

[51] UNESCO. Ratification of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by Poland: *Journal of Laws of Republic of Poland*, 2011, No. 172, item 1018.

[52] KOWALSKA, Anna. *Museums and the Protection of Intangible Heritage*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ, 2021.

[53] SMITH, Laurajane. *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge, 2006.

and international institutions allows the Centre to function as a laboratory for participatory, reflexive and socially engaged heritage safeguarding.

Its activities resonate with international museology and heritage trends, illustrating that intangible heritage can be maintained as a living, evolving process in conditions of globalisation and digital transformation. The Centre thus provides valuable insights for scholars, cultural practitioners and policymakers seeking to implement community-based, participatory approaches to heritage management.[54] Krakow's case suggests that municipal museums can act not only as implementers of UNESCO frameworks but as experimental sites redefining the governance of living heritage in contemporary urban Europe.

References

ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.) (2013). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, pp. 65–74.

BARTKOWIAK, Ewa. (2017). *Ethnography of Kraków*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.

BARTMIŃSKI, Jan. (2013). The Specificity of Intangible Cultural Heritage – Issues of Protection, Documentation and "Revitalization". In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, pp. 35–49.

BOGUCKA, Maria. (2015). *Cultural Heritage and Education*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS.

BORTOLOTTO, Chiara. (2007). From Objects to Processes: UNESCO's "Intangible Cultural Heritage". In: *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, 19: 21–33.

BORTOLOTTO, Chiara; LÁZARO RAÑA, María Xosé (eds.). (2020). *Intangible Heritage: Conservation, Ethics and Impact*. Cham: Springer.

DĄBEK, Tomasz. (2018). *Museology and New Technologies*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

GONZÁLEZ, Catalina. (2008). *Heritage and the Politics of Identity: Museums, Memory, and the Politics of Representation*. In: SANDELL, Richard (ed.). *Museums, Prejudice and the Reframing of Difference*. London: Routledge, pp. 119–134.

HAJDUK-NIJAKOWSKA, Janina. (2013). Heritage Protection or National Post-folklorism? In: In: ADAMOWSKI, Jan; SMYK, Katarzyna (eds.). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Poland and its Protection*. Lublin–Warsaw: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2013, pp. 65–74.

KARNET KRAKÓW. Kraków Women's Comber Festival 2025: Woman – the River. Accessed 21 May 2025 at https://karnet.krakowculture.pl/58147-krakow-krakowski-babski-comber-2025

KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. (1998). *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. (2004). Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production. In: *Museum International*, 56(1–2): 52–65.

KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, Barbara. (2006). Intangible Heritage and the Contemporary Museum. In: KARP, Ivan et al. (eds.). (2006). *Museum Frictions*. Durham: Duke University Press.

KLEKOT, Ewa. (2017). *Protection of Cultural Heritage in Poland*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

[54] SEIFERT, Nena. *Cultural Heritage Education in a Globalized World*. Cham: Springer, 2014.

KOCKEL, Ullrich. (2013). *Intangible Heritage and Social Change*. New York: Berghahn Books.

KOWALSKA, Anna. (2021). *Museums and the Protection of Intangible Heritage*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ.

KOWALSKA, Joanna. (2014). Laces Inspired by Podhale Folk Art. The National Lace School in Zakopane and Its Impact on Fashion during the First Half-century of Its Existence. In: *Rozprawy Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Seria Nowa*, 7: 27–48.

KOWALCZYK, Joanna. (2019). *Artisanal Craft in Cultural Education*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UJ.

KURIN, Richard. (2004a). *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.

KURIN, Richard. (2004b). Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive? In: *ICOM News*, 4: 7–9.

KWIECIŃSKA, Magdalena. (2014). The Zwierzyniec Hobby Horse as a Local and Universal Rite. Social Memory, Folk Beliefs and Urban Rituals. In: KLIMEK, Łukasz (ed.). *The World of Lajkonik*. Kraków: Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, pp. 178–188.

NOWAK, Piotr. (2020). *Local Culture and Digital Media*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

SCHREIBER, Hanna. (2014). Intangible Cultural Heritage – The Missing Link in the Cultural Heritage Protection System in Poland. In: FATYGA, Barbara; MICHALSKI, Rafał (eds.). *Folk Culture: Theories, Practices, Policies*. Warsaw: National Centre for Culture, pp. 375–406.

SEIFERT, Nena. (2014). *Cultural Heritage Education in a Globalized World*. Cham: Springer.

SMITH, Laurajane. (2006). *Uses of Heritage*. London: Routledge.

SMITH, Laurajane; AKAGAWA, Natsuko (eds.). (2009). *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge.

SZAŁAPAK, Anna. (2012). *The Kraków Nativity Scene as a Phenomenon of Kraków Folklore Against the Background of the European Nativity Scene Tradition*. Kraków: Wydawnictwa Naukowe.

SZNAJDER, Anna. (2018). Women's Handicraft Groups: Role and Importance for Hobbyists, Professionals, and Researchers. In: BRZEZIŃSKA, Anna W., PAPROT, Anna, TYMCHOWICZ, Maria (eds.). *Contemporary Issues in Folk Costume Studies*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo UWr, p. 166.

SZOKA, Andrzej Iwo. (2014). *Lajkonik – the Zwierzyniec Hobby Horse. The History of an Intangible Museum Exhibit*. In: KLIMEK, Łukasz (ed.). *The World of Lajkonik. The Hobby Horse Around the World*. Kraków: Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, pp. 31–73.

"Tell Me the City" Portal. Accessed 21 May 2025 at https://opowiedzmimiasto.mhk.pl/

UNESCO. (2003). *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2011). Ratification of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by Poland. *Journal of Laws of Republic of Poland*, No. 172, item 1018.

UNESCO. (2018). The Kraków Nativity Scene. UNESCO Intangible Heritage Lists.

WENGER, Etienne. (1998). *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Museums as Catalysts for Sustainable Cultural Tourism: Insights from Hungary[1]

Tekla Balogh Bodor – Melinda Jászberényi – Krisztina Keller

Tekla Balogh Bodor
Hungarian National Museum
Múzeum krt. 14–16.
1088 Budapest
Hungary
&
Corvinus University of Budapest
8 Fővám Square
1093 Budapest
Hungary
e-mail: tekla.balogh-bodor@stud.uni-corvinus.hu
ORCID: 0009-0009-4131-3824

Melinda Jászberényi, Professor
Corvinus University of Budapest
Department of Tourism
8 Fővám Square
1093 Budapest
Hungary
e-mail: jaszberenyi@uni-corvinus.hu
ORCID: 0000-0002-7839-5036

Krisztina Keller, PhD, Habil.
Corvinus University of Budapest
Department of Tourism
8 Fővám Square
1093 Budapest
Hungary
e-mail: krisztina.keller@uni-corvinus.hu
ORCID: 0000-0002-4408-7940

Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2026, 2026,14:2:29–49
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.3

Museums as Catalysts for Sustainable Cultural Tourism: Insights from Hungary
This article applies a four-pillar sustainability framework comprising cultural, environmental, social and economic dimensions, to assess 46 museums in the less-developed Hungarian counties of Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg and Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén, thereby addressing a research gap, as previous studies have tended to focus on more developed regions. The results show that half the institutions do not have formal sustainability strategies, but many are implementing practical initiatives. Environmental actions are largely low-cost, while social and cultural contributions are strong, with museums acting as community hubs, educators and custodians of heritage. Economically, museums support sustainability through local employment and procurement. The study highlights museums' under-recognised potential in sustainable tourism and calls for clearer strategies, investment and professional training.

Keywords: museums, sustainability, sustainable cultural tourism, four pillars

[1] The project identified by EKOP-CORVINUS-24-3-027 was realised with the support of the National Research, Development, and Innovation Fund provided by the Ministry of Culture and Innovation, as part of the University Research Scholarship Program announced for the 2024/2025 academic year.

Introduction

Sustainable cultural tourism has increasingly gained attention as a vital component in harmonising tourism development with cultural preservation, environmental conservation and socio-economic growth. As tourism continues to expand globally, the integration of sustainability principles into cultural tourism practices has become crucial to mitigating negative impacts and ensuring long-term benefits for local communities and future generations.[2]

In the context of cultural tourism, museums are uniquely positioned. In Hungary, as in other European countries, museums have traditionally served as guardians of cultural heritage. Over the past century, museums have gained increasing popularity both as cultural tourism attractions and as leisure destinations. According to the 2024 European museum report, numerous European countries reported record-breaking visitor numbers,[3] a trend that is likewise evident in Hungary. Between 2012 and 2019, the number of visitors to Hungarian museums grew by an average of 38%, with museums welcoming over 11.5 million visitors in 2019.[4] Although this upward trend was temporarily disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, visitor numbers in 2023 had nearly returned to the record levels achieved in 2019.

Beyond their capacity to attract large audiences, museums can be understood as key actors in advancing sustainable tourism. Their contribution extends not only to environmental performance[5] but also to the promotion of social cohesion, diversity[6] and the equitable distribution of economic benefits across the local tourism industry.[7]

However, despite their potential, empirical knowledge on how museums integrate sustainability into practice in relation to cultural tourism, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, remains limited. The literature on sustainability, cultural tourism and museums has increasingly examined the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development,[8] or more specifically in the sustainable development of the tourism sector,[9] but museums have been studied only in terms of their role as a catalyst for local development and sustainability, rather than as a catalyst for sustainable cultural tourism.[10] Moreover, the majority of the current literature emphasises urban and developed regions, while small and medium-sized cities are rarely the subject of investigation.[11]

Addressing the aforementioned gaps, the present study investigates the extent to which museums integrate sustainability across four pillars (economic, environmental, social and

[2] UNEP. *Making tourism more sustainable: A guide for policy makers.* Paris: UNEP, 2005.

[3] EMA. *EMA Situation for Museums in Europe Report,* 2024, p. 3.

[4] Muzeumstat: Summary, accessed August 21, 2025, https://muzeumstat.hu/hu/summary?

[5] MCGHIE, Henry. *Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals: A How-to Guide for Museums, Galleries, the Cultural Sector and Their Partners*. UK: Curating Tomorrow, 2019, p. 56.

[6] WIKTOR-MACH, Dobrosława. What role for culture in the age of sustainable development? UNESCO's advocacy in the 2030 Agenda negotiations. In: *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 26(3), 2020, pp. 312–313; 315.

[7] MAVRAGANI, Eleni. Museum Services in the Era of Tourism. In: BAST, Gerald, CARAYANNIS, Elias G., CAMPBELL, David F. J. (eds.), *The Future of Museums*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018, pp. 37–47.

[8] NOCCA, Francesca. The Role of Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Development: Multidimensional Indicators as Decision-Making Tool. In: *Sustainability* 9(10), 2017.

[9] PRIPORAS, Constantinos-Vasilios et al. Cultural Heritage as an Engine of Sustainable Development in the Tourism Sector. In: INCE-YENILMEZ, Meltem, DARICI, Burak (eds.) *Engines of Economic Prosperity*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021, pp. 193–208.

[10] BROWN, Karen. Museums and Local Development: An Introduction to Museums, Sustainability and Well-being. In: *Museum International* 71(3–4), 2019, pp. 1–13.

[11] SELADA, Catarina, VILHENA DA CUNHA, Inês, TOMAZ, Elisabete. Creative-Based Strategies in Small and Medium-Sized Cities: Key Dimensions of Analysis. In: *Quaestiones Geographicae* 31(4), 2012, pp. 43–51.

cultural), using empirical data collected through a questionnaire survey of museums in two rural counties of Hungary, Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg.

The study has three main objectives. Firstly, to assess the depth and nature of sustainability-related practices within museums; secondly, to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for enhancing museums' role as actors in sustainable tourism; and finally, to examine undeveloped parts of Hungary, specifically small and medium-sized cities, in contrast to the expanding literature on developed areas. By situating the findings within both international and national contexts, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the intersection of museums and sustainable cultural tourism, offering practical insights for policymakers, museum managers and tourism stakeholders.

In the sections that follow, we first provide an overview of the theoretical framework underpinning our research, accompanied by a brief account of existing knowledge on sustainability practices within Hungarian museums. Then we present the case study and research methodology, followed by an analysis of the empirical findings and their interpretation within a broader contextual framework.

Literature review

The following section reviews existing knowledge on cultural tourism, museology and sustainability in order to situate this study within the broader academic conversation.

Tourism is inseparably linked with culture: human curiosity and the desire to learn about the world and other cultures are often the main motivators for tourists.[12] The practice of visiting cultural heritage sites, primarily in European cities (e.g., Italy, Greece, France), has a long history dating back to the eighteenth century. For many years, cultural heritage was largely accessible only to the wealthy. During the so-called Grand Tour of the eighteenth century, a cultural journey undertaken by young men as part of their education, the upper classes travelled to Europe's major cultural destinations.[13] The popularity of tourism grew significantly in the second half of the twentieth century, while the phenomenon of the so-called "heritage production boom" and museum-boom were noticeable all over the world.[14]

Since the emergence of mass tourism in the 1980s, cultural tourism has been acknowledged as a noticeable market niche where culture, and thus museums, play a prominent role.[15] Over the past few decades, the role of museums has been questioned and reconceptualised globally. As museums are increasingly recognised as mediators of social and economic change, they are expected to offer more than just aesthetic pleasure or education.[16] Museums today serve as both temples of knowledge[17] where experts guide discussions, and contemporary forums which can actively advance discussions on a range of topics, including memory, identity, sustainable development, and life and death. They can boost civic engagement, revitalise the local economy, foster cultural diversity and strengthen identities.[18]

[12] HERREMAN, Yani. Museums and Tourism: Culture and Consumption. In: *Museum International* 50(3), 1998, pp. 4–6.

[13] RICHARDS, Greg. *Rethinking Cultural Tourism*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021, p. 22.

[14] MAVRAGANI, Museum Services…, pp. 37–47; RICHARDS, Rethinking…

[15] RICHARDS, Greg. *Cultural Tourism in Europe*, Wallingford: CAB International, 1996, p. 13.

[16] BROWN, Karen, MAIRESSE, François. The definition of the museum through its social role. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal* 61(4), 2018, p. 5.

[17] CAMERON, Duncan F. The Museum, a Temple or the Forum. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal.* 14(1), 1971, pp. 11–24.

[18] VERGO, Peter (ed). *The new museology*. London: Reaktion Books, 2009, p. 3.

The rise of urban tourism prompted cities to recognise the potential of museums and cultural capital as drivers of development, leading to increased investment in cultural institutions.[19] Early successes, such as New York's Lincoln Center (1962–1968) and the Pompidou Centre in Paris (1977), demonstrated the potential of such initiatives. However, the true breakthrough occurred with the revitalisation of Bilbao, Spain, giving rise to what is now commonly referred to as the "Bilbao Effect", inspired by the culture-led revitalisation of the formerly industrial city. While it is now widely recognised that the transformation of the city resulted from a comprehensive, large-scale investment strategy rather than solely from the opening of a contemporary art museum, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has emerged as an iconic symbol of cultural regeneration initiatives worldwide.[20]

As a result of the aforementioned shifts in museology, cultural heritage and museums are increasingly recognised not only for their role in regional development but also as strategic assets within tourism policies, particularly within the growing competition among tourist destinations striving to maintain and enhance their status in an expanding global sector.[21] In the following years, various materialisations of local culture and heritage became attractive elements of tourism (cultural attractions), especially in the European cities.[22] It is now widely recognised that cultural attractions play a crucial role in enhancing the appeal of tourist destinations. In 2021, cultural tourism represented nearly 40% of all tourism in Europe.[23]

Museums are uniquely positioned at this intersection, serving as guardians of cultural heritage while also functioning as tourism attractions and community institutions. Through exhibitions, educational programs and partnerships, they can promote environmentally responsible behaviour, strengthen local economies and preserve intangible heritage, aligning with the principles of both sustainable development and responsible tourism.[24]

Sustainable Cultural Tourism

Sustainable cultural tourism has emerged as a subfield within tourism studies, representing the intersection of cultural heritage preservation, community development and environmental responsibility.[25] As global tourism increases in scale and complexity, scholars and practitioners alike recognise the need for models that both celebrate cultural diversity and mitigate negative impacts on host communities and ecosystems.[26]

Creating a comprehensive definition of cultural tourism is difficult due to its complexity, and it has been problematic for experts since the term first emerged.[27] Among the number of definitions that have been proposed for cultural tourism, there are a huge group of motivation-

[19] LAK, Azadeh, GHEITASI, Mahdi, TIMOTHY, Dallen J. Urban regeneration through heritage tourism: cultural policies and strategic management. In: *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 18(4), 2020, pp. 389–390.
[20] HEIDENREICH, Martin, PLAZA, Beatriz. Renewal through Culture? The Role of Museums in the Renewal of Industrial Regions in Europe. In: *European Planning Studies* 23(8), 2015, pp. 1442–1443.
[21] RICHARDS, Cultural…, pp. 10–11.
[22] NOONAN, Lisa. The role of culture as a determinant of tourism demand: evidence from European cities. In: *International Journal of Tourism Cities* 9(1), 2023, pp. 13–14.
[23] *Cultural heritage in regional policy,* accessed August 21, 2025, https://culture.ec.europa.eu/cultural-heritage/cultural-heritage-in-eu-policies/cultural-heritage-in-regional-policy
[24] HEIDENREICH and PLAZA, Renewal…, p. 1449.
[25] UNEP, Making tourism…
[26] DU CROS, Hilary, and MCKERCHER, Bob. *Cultural tourism.* 3rd ed. Abingdon: Routledge, 2020, pp. 13–18.
[27] Ibidem p. 3.

related ones,[28] while a few researchers have defined cultural tourism as a component of a product, which is a somewhat marketing-oriented explanation.[29] The definitions can also be grouped both conceptually, focusing on the meaning of cultural tourism (in connection with motivation and the desire to learn and experience authenticity), and technically, focusing on the different kinds of sites and attractions.[30]

Sustainable cultural tourism, however, is about bringing cultural heritage to the fore without damaging it and promoting its conservation and authenticity. Crucially, it involves local communities in ways that do not compromise their daily lives. Sustainable cultural tourism also emphasises the contribution to the local economy.[31] While sustainable cultural tourism emphasises positive development outcomes, increasing attention has been given to the concept of carrying capacity, particularly in fragile rural destinations. Carrying capacity refers to the maximum number of visitors that a site can accommodate without causing degradation to the physical environment, cultural heritage, or the quality of life of local communities. In the context of small rural museums, excessive visitor growth may lead to pressures on limited infrastructure, erosion of authenticity, and conflicts with local residents. Therefore, sustainable tourism development must balance visitor increase with preservation objectives, especially in regions where institutional and environmental resilience is limited.[32]

The heritage sector plays an important role in tourism worldwide, which can significantly affect the environment, local economies and communities. Although the impact of tourism can often be negative, all three aspects of sustainability can benefit greatly from a well-managed tourism sector that can also create jobs and generate income for local communities, while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.[33] It is important to separate well-managed sustainable cultural tourism from growing tourism and increased visitor numbers as positive instruments for rural development.

Museums and Sustainability

The conventional and most broadly recognised notion of the museum, together with its implementation in museum practice, emphasises the methodology of work. In general, institutions direct their attention inwards and the work is controlled by museum experts and professionals.[34] For decades, the primary functions of museums were the preservation, maintenance, interpretation and exhibition of collections, although the social role of the museum and its educational tasks had already been formulated.[35]

The ideas behind the so-called New Museology emerged in the second half of the twentieth century. In contrast to the classical concept of museums, New Museology aims

[28] TOWSE, Ruth. ed. *A handbook of cultural economics*. 2nd ed. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011, pp. 166–171; WORLD TOURISM ORGANIZATION. *Tourism and culture synergies.* Madrid, Spain: UNWTO, 2018.

[29] MCKERCHER, Bob, HO, Pamela S. Y., DU CROS, Hilary. Relationship between tourism and cultural heritage management: Evidence from Hong Kong. In: *Tourism Management* 26(4), 2005, pp. 539–548.

[30] TOWSE, A handbook…

[31] Sustainable cultural tourism. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019, p. 25.

[32] SAVERIADES, Alex. Establishing the social tourism carrying capacity for the tourist resorts of the east coast of the Republic of Cyprus. In: *Tourism Management* 21(2), 2000, p. 148; KOANS, Ko, POSTMA, Albert, PAPP, Bernadett. Is overtourism overused? Understanding the impact of tourism in a city context. In: *Sustainability* 10(12), 2018.

[33] MCGHIE, *Museums and* the Sustainable Development Goals… p. 56.

[34] VERGO, New museology…, p. 3.

[35] *224 Years of Defining the Museum*, accessed August 21, 2025, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/2020_ICOM-Czech-Republic_224-years-of-defining-the-museum.pdf

to make museums active and meaningful places within the local community. In the field of museology, novel topics have arisen from the concept of inclusion, with the development of new techniques.[36] The most important concepts behind New Museology are community engagement, dialogue, inclusivity and diversity, sustainability and social responsibility, digital innovation and critical reflection. The movement has prompted museums around the world to reconsider their roles and responsibilities within society, leading to innovative practices and the transformation of museums into forums and places of dialogue. [37]

While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by all the United Nations Member States in 2015, a few years later, the museum sector also started to recognise and implement sustainable development goals. Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were hot topics in the 2019 Kyoto conference of the International Council of Museums, where the sessions acknowledged the roles of museums in working towards sustainable development.

In response to the growing international discourse on museums and sustainable development, scholars and practitioners in the cultural sector have increasingly emphasised the alignment of museum practices with the SDGs. This literature highlights that museums, through their diverse functions and activities, can contribute meaningfully to sustainability agendas, even though the SDGs were not specifically designed with cultural institutions in mind. Within this context, frameworks have been proposed to guide museums in embedding sustainable thinking into their operations, outlining concrete steps and activities through which they can advance the SDGs. Supporting sustainable tourism is among the activities.[38]

The concept of sustainability is traditionally framed around three pillars – environmental, social and economic – but in heritage and cultural contexts scholars increasingly advocate for a fourth cultural pillar, acknowledging that cultural continuity and identity are fundamental to sustainable development.[39] The Australian researcher, Jon Hawkes argued that culture should be regarded as the fourth pillar of sustainability, given its essential role in society, and that it should have a role especially in public planning, in order to understand and draw conclusions about the patterns of human activities. As noted by Worts, culture acts as the basis of societies, encompassing the values and frameworks that govern societal functioning. Humanity cannot progress without culture.[40]

Social sustainability

All three pillars of sustainability are important to museums, although perhaps the most obvious is social sustainability. Social sustainability for museums entails developing into devoted and socially conscious organisations.[41] As part of this, organisations must become transparent, participatory, and actively involve communities in their work, creating long-term strategies for developing their relationships with their audiences. Social sustainability can also include

[36] New Museology, accessed August 21, 2025, http://tranzit.org/curatorialdictionary/index.php/dictionary/new-museology/

[37] BROWN and MAIRESSE, The definition…, pp. 5–7.

[38] MCGHIE, *Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals*…, p. 56.

[39] HAWKES, Jon. *The fourth pillar of sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning*. Melbourne: Cultural Development Network, 2001, p. 25.

[40] WORTS, Douglas. Culture and Museums in the Winds of Change: The Need for Cultural Indicators. In: *Culture and Local Governance* 3(1–2) 2011, p. 124.

[41] KI CULTURE, *Social Sustainability: A Step-by-Step Guide for Sustainable Action*. pp. 7–8.

ensuring human rights, such as gender equality and diversity, are met. These goals overlap with the community role of museums as set out in the International Council of Museum's Code of Ethics.[42] Socially and culturally, sustainable museums promote accessibility, equity and the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible heritage. They serve as community hubs that facilitate dialogue, lifelong learning and collective memory, thereby contributing to social sustainability and cultural resilience.[43]

Environmental sustainability

Environmental sustainability refers to reducing carbon emissions, minimising waste and designing energy-efficient buildings and exhibitions.[44] Museums have a unique capacity to raise awareness about environmental issues and inspire behavioural change through exhibitions and public programming. As communicators of knowledge and values, museums are well positioned to engage the public with topics such as climate change, biodiversity loss and cultural sustainability.[45] In this way, museums can serve as platforms for transformative learning and agents of systemic change.[46] Museums are specifically mentioned in the Workplan for the Paris Agreement, acknowledging the important role they can play in "enhancing the implementation of education, training, public awareness, public participation and public access to information so as to enhance actions under the Paris Agreement"[47]

Economic sustainability

In terms of economic sustainability, museums must also consider their financial viability. Typically, museums consume substantial resources, such as energy and water, and generate significant waste. By measuring these environmental effects, museums can identify areas for improvement in reducing their ecological footprint.[48] Implementing measures to mitigate these negative impacts can ideally also result in cost savings for the institution. However, museums can also contribute to job creation and support local economy. With the increasing importance of cultural tourism, cultural activities and institutions have become integral components of urban development strategies.[49] Tourism has been recognised as a valuable development tool: directly, it stimulates economic growth and generates employment opportunities; indirectly, it supports a range of related sectors such as hospitality, retail and transportation. From a community perspective, tourism, but more precisely culture and cultural institutions, can foster a sense of pride and belonging among residents.[50] The recognition of culture as a potential

[42] INTERNATIONALER MUSEUMSRAT. ed. *ICOM code of ethics for museums*. Paris: ICOM, 2017.
[43] BROWN and MAIRESSE, The definition…, pp. 6–8.
[44] GARTHE, Christopher J. *The Sustainable Museum: How Museums Contribute to the Great Transformation*, London: Routledge, 2022
[45] CAMERON, Fiona, HODGE, Bob, SALAZAR, Juan Francisco. Representing climate change in museum space and places. In: *WIREs Climate Change* 4(1), 2013, pp. 11–20.
[46] HANSSON, Petra, ÖHMAN, Johan. Museum education and sustainable development: A public pedagogy. In: *European Educational Research Journal* 21(3), 2022, pp. 470–472
[47] *Paris Agreement*, accessed August 21, 2025, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp24_auv_L.3_edu.pdf
[48] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Zsófia. *Museums for Sustainability: an Exploration of Hungarian Approaches*. Master's thesis, Central European University, 2020, pp. 46.
[49] FERILLI, Guido et al. Power to the people: When culture works as a social catalyst in urban regeneration processes (and when it does not). In: *European Planning Studies* 25(2), 2017, p. 241.
[50] HEIDENREICH and PLAZA, Renewal…, pp. 1445–1446.

driver of development initiatives began to emerge in the 1970s.[51] It was especially used for the regeneration of post-industrial urban areas. The establishment of the European Capital of Culture initiative in 1985 has further enhanced the role of culture in urban regeneration projects, for example, in the case of Glasgow in 1990.[52]

Cultural sustainability

With regard to the cultural pillar of sustainability, interpretations of cultural sustainability within museology and heritage studies vary. Broadly, it refers to the preservation and safeguarding of collections, ensuring their accessibility and integrity for future generations.[53] This encompasses not only the balanced management of collections but also the responsibility to maintain the quality, relevance and authenticity of artistic and cultural content. Moreover, museums play a crucial role in fulfilling their institutional missions, which extend beyond preservation to include education, visitor engagement and the promotion of local culture.[54]

The Hungarian Case

In Hungary, the concept of sustainability within the museum sector was first introduced on a national level in 2010.[55] In the following years, mention of sustainability remained sparse, appearing only in isolated instances and primarily through the initiatives of a limited number of museum professionals in diverse contexts (for example, at events like Pollinator Day, established in 2018).[56] A significant shift occurred following the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Conference in Kyoto in 2019, after which sustainability emerged as a prominent and widely discussed theme in the Hungarian museum community. Since then, numerous workshops, conferences and professional education programs have placed sustainable thinking at the centre of professional discourse and practice (Table 1).

Tab. 1: *Sustainability-related programs involving museums, 2019–2025*

Events, Conferences and Milestones	**Year**	**Topic**	**Location and relevance**
41st International Conference of Hungarian Restorers	2020	Heritage and climate change	Hungarian National Museum, Budapest; international
2nd National Museum Andragogy Workshop	2020	Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals; Establishment of the Pulszky Society's Working Group on Sustainability	Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs; national

[51] LAK, GHEITASI and TIMOTHY, Urban regeneration…, p. 389.
[52] GARCIA, Beatriz. Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990. In: *Urban Studies* 42(5–6), 2005, p. 842.
[53] JÄRVELÄ, Marja. Social and cultural sustainability. In: KOHL, Johanna. *Dialogues on sustainable paths for the future: Ethics, welfare and responsibility*, 2008, pp. 46–65.
[54] ÁSVÁNYI, Katalin, FEHÉR, Zsuzsanna. Generation Z perspectives on museum sustainability using Q methodology. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 11(1), 2023, 26.
[55] VÁSÁRHELYI, Tamás. Projektmódszer a múzeumban [Project methods in museums]. In: *Múzeumi Iránytű*, 8, 2010, pp. 137–146.
[56] ZÁDORI, István. Museums and Sustainability in the 21st Century. In: *Tudás Menedzsment*, 12(1), 2020, pp. 328–333.

Museums for Sustainability – Sustainability in Museums, workshops	2021–2022	Case studies and plans for the institutions; Henry McGhie: Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals, Hungarian translation	15 museums and 27 professionals; national, with participation across Hungary
Museums for Environmental Sustainability, workshop	2022	Popularising sustainability among young generations	Szentendre Hungarian Open Air Museum, Museum Education Centre; national
Green Museum – Ecological Approach	2022	MúzeumCafé magazine issue 89: museums and sustainability	National
You Can Bee (do) More – Buzzing in the museum	2022	Importance and work of the pollinators	Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest; local
10th National and 6th International Museum Andragogy Conference	2023	Museum Reflection: Society and Environment; case studies	Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Regional Committee Miskolc; national, international
International Museum Day	2023	Sustainability and wellbeing	National, international
Workshop, Pulszky Society's Working Group on Sustainability	2023	Improving environmental awareness among adults through case studies	Hungarian Natural History Museum, Budapest; national
Sustainability and museums in practice	2024	International and national case studies to inspire Hungarian museums	Kuny Domokos Museum, Tata; national
Sustainable Culture and Community, workshop	2024	Sustainable culture and community: Tradition and Modernity and Museums	Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs; national
Szentendre Hungarian Open Air Museum, Museum Education Centre and the Pulszky Society – Hungarian Museum Association	2024	Quantitative survey on green museum management	National
Green Museums – Challenges and Opportunities in the Museum Green Transition	2024	Conference about the results of the national survey	Szentendre Hungarian Open Air Museum, Museum Education Centre; national

In 2024, the Szentendre Hungarian Open Air Museum, Museum Education Centre and the Pulszky Society – Hungarian Museum Association jointly launched a quantitative survey to determine the competence of green museum management.[57] The survey aimed to map the practices, motivations and opportunities of Hungarian museums in the field of environmental sustainability. A total of 116 museums (out of 855) responded to the questionnaire, of which 10 are located in the two counties under study. While the survey primarily focused on the environmental aspect of sustainability, it also included questions addressing the sustainable operation of museums, as well as their communication and educational activities related to sustainability. One of the most important results was that a large majority of institutions (84.3%) reported efforts to achieve the efficient use of water and energy. Nearly all museums

[57] Elérhető a "Zöld Múzeum" kutatási jelentés [The "Green Museum" research report is available], accessed August 21, 2025, https://magyarmuzeumok.hu/cikk/elerheto-a-zold-muzeum-kutatasi-jelentes

indicated that they engage in sustainable waste management and apply sustainability principles in the organisation of exhibitions and programs. By contrast, fewer museums incorporated sustainability into their educational and interpretive activities: only 44% reported implementing museum pedagogical programs centred on environmental sustainability, and just 25% organised exhibitions explicitly addressing this theme.

Building on the findings of the nationwide survey, the present study narrows its focus to examine the contribution of museums to sustainable cultural tourism in two specific counties: Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg. To ensure comparability with the national results, the research employed a selection of questions from the nationwide survey addressing the environmental sustainability, social sustainability and communication practices of museums. The remaining questions have been added to address the lasting pillars of sustainability: economic and cultural.

Research methodology

This article aims to answer the following research question: How do museums in Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg counties support and promote sustainable cultural tourism in their regions? In order to answer the research question, an online questionnaire was conducted focusing on two out of the 19 counties of Hungary. The two counties were selected for this study on sustainable cultural tourism due to a combination of strategic geographic location, cultural significance and development potential, rather than current tourism performance alone. According to the 2023 data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén County ranked 8th, and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg ranked 17th out of 19 counties in terms of guest nights in tourist accommodations.[58] Museums in the Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén region attracted about 400,000 people annually, while those in the Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg region recorded 87,000 visitors in 2023.[59] In comparison, the museums in Budapest received a little over 5 million visitors that year.

This presents a valuable opportunity to understand the barriers and prospects for tourism development in less-established regions. Investigating these counties allows the research to focus on how sustainable cultural tourism can be a tool for rural revitalisation and more sustainable local development. However, it is important to understand that sustainable cultural tourism can serve as a revitalising instrument, rather than merely boosting tourist numbers, which frequently results in overtourism and the degradation of vulnerable rural regions.

There are 85 museums in the two counties, of which 58% (49 institutions) are public exhibition sites (small institutions, with no collections) and 19% (16) public collections (Fig. 1). By contrast, only a limited number belong to the other three recognised categories of Hungarian museums: 13% (11) are territorial museums, which encompass multiple collection types within a defined geographical scope; 8% (7) are thematic museums, which focus on a single subject area but hold diverse types of collections; and 2% (2) are city museums, which maintain collections of various types with relevance to a specific county. Notably, national museums (with outstanding collection value) and specialised museums (defined as "museums

[58] A turisztikai szálláshelyeken eltöltött vendégéjszakák száma vármegye és régió szerint [Number of guest nights spent in tourist accommodation by county and region], accessed August 21, 2025, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/tur/hu/tur0079.html

[59] KultStat, Kulturális Statisztikai Adatgyűjtő Rendszer [Cultural Statistical Data Collection System], accessed April 2, 2026, https://kultstat.oszk.hu/#/home/public

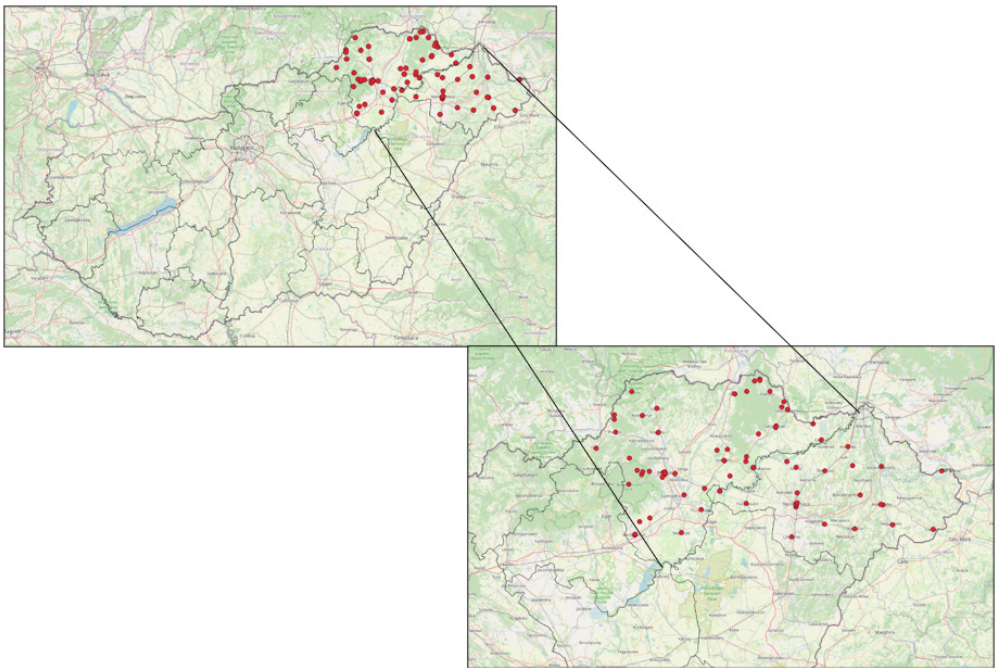

Fig. 1: *Location of museums in both counties* (source: made by the authors).

of different disciplines with a national sphere and scope"[60]) are absent from both counties. The distribution of museum types mirrors that in Hungary, where small institutions predominate and large institutions with significant collections constitute a minority.

Data collecting was conducted online, between January and June 2025, using several outreach methods, including email, social media and telephone. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary, and we utilised the responses solely in an aggregated manner, without specific attribution. Ultimately, 46 museums filled out our questionnaire. The collections of the participating museums mostly focus on ethnography, local history and the lives of notable Hungarian families and individuals from the region, representing the smallest segment of the Hungarian museum network: public exhibition sites and public collections. The sample included numerous regional houses storing collections of local history in both counties and districts, as well as two art galleries, seven regional museums, and four thematic museums, with the latter two categories being medium-sized institutions in terms of their collections. Overall, the sample was strongly characterised by small-scale, often resource-constrained institutions, many of which can be classified as micro-museums in terms of their size, staffing and operational capacity.

This composition reflects the evolution of the traditional structure of the Hungarian museum network. The establishment of the rural museum network began in the twentieth century as the middle classes started to create local cultural organisations within the regions. The objective of these group members was to gather, conserve and investigate local natural and artistic heritage, along with historical artefacts.[61] Subsequently, these private collections

[60] KÁLNOKY-GYÖNGYÖSSY, Márton. *Nation and Museum. Hungarian Museums and Legislation (1777–2010).* Budapest: MIRIO.

[61] KOREK, György. *Gyűjtemények, múzeumok, muzeológia*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.

established the foundation of rural museums when owners donated their collections to the community or founded museums derived from them. Therefore, in terms of institutional maintenance, the majority of museums within the two counties are administered by local municipalities. The second most common type of governing body is ecclesiastical institutions and the state, while a smaller proportion of museums are operated by foundations and private business organisations.

The survey consisted of 21 questions, designed around the three pillars of sustainability, completed with a fourth pillar: culture. As noted in the previous section, several of the questions related to environmental and social sustainability were adapted from the "Green Museum" research project. In addition, in the formulation of the survey questions, the researchers took into consideration the Standards of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), an organisation that aims to establish a common framework for sustainability in tourism.[62] The GSTC has developed a certification system applicable to all types of tourism organisations, structured around the four pillars, which destinations are expected to meet in order to advance sustainable development.

Within the social pillar, the questions focused on the extent to which museums contribute to strengthening local communities, their integration into the social fabric of the settlement and the ways in which they engage in communication with diverse audiences. Questions relating to the economic pillar examined the role of museums in supporting the local economy, including job creation and broader economic development. In relation to the environmental pillar, attention was given to how museums address environmental protection, mitigate negative impacts and adopt green practices in their daily operations. Finally, the cultural pillar explored the degree to which museums are grounded in local values and cultural traditions, their efforts in safeguarding cultural heritage, and their initiatives to promote local culture (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: *The focus of the questions* (source: made by the authors).

The survey results were analysed with qualitative thematic and content analysis methods without the use of software.[63] During coding, emphasis was placed on the sustainability pillars, designated focus areas and major practices adopted by museums, as well as the prevalence of these activities.

Results

The results, similar to the questions, are structured around the three traditional pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic, supplemented by a cultural dimension (Table 2). Fifty percent of the museums surveyed did not have a formal written sustainability strategy. However, this absence should not be understood as a lack of awareness; rather, sustainability had not yet been formally integrated into their institutional planning. Additionally, some museums are part of larger institutional networks; while the parent institution may have a formal sustainability strategy, individual museums within the network often do not maintain separate strategies of their own.

[62] Global Sustainable Tourism Council, accessed August 21, 2025, https://www.gstc.org/

[63] KUCKARTZ, Udo, RÄDIKER, Stefan. *Qualitative content analysis: methods, practice and software*. 2nd edition. Melbourne: SAGE, 2023.

In contrast, museums that have incorporated sustainability into their strategic documents tend to revise these plans regularly in order to reflect emerging developments and practices.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental measures were present to varying degrees across museums. The majority (78%) implemented basic energy efficiency practices, particularly the use of LED or energy-saving lighting. However, more significant measures, such as upgrading insulation, windows and doors, were less commonly reported (33%), indicating possible resource or budget limitations. The use of renewable energy was infrequent (26%), with only one museum entirely powered by solar energy. Waste management was a more widely adopted area of practice: 76% of the surveyed museums reported using selective waste collection systems and 33% had installed outdoor compost bins. Electronic waste collection points were also reported by several institutions (33%).

In terms of sustainable transportation infrastructure, most respondent museums provide on-site bicycle storage (43%) and many are located in proximity to designated bicycle routes (65%). In 11% of the museums, the facilities also include electric vehicle charging stations, indicating a progressive diversification of environmentally friendly transportation alternatives.

Sustainable thinking is often at the heart of the design of new exhibitions, with some institutions reporting on the use of recycled (15%) or environmentally friendly materials (31%), reducing paper content by digital solutions such as QR guides (29%), and consciously avoiding energy-intensive components (49%). However, these procedures have not yet been applied consistently.

Social Sustainability

The museums demonstrated a strong commitment to sustainability education and public awareness. Their educational programs frequently integrate themes of environmental responsibility and resource-conscious behaviour. Craft workshops using recycled materials or natural resources were commonly referenced, often drawing on local traditions and ecological knowledge. Due to the character of their exhibitions that frequently emphasise folk art, traditions and local crafts, numerous museums incorporate sustainability into their educational and public programs.

Community engagement was also a notable strength. Many museums host programs in collaboration with local schools, NGOs and civil organisations. Activities range from co-organised events to providing venues for external groups, reflecting the institutions' openness to serving as community hubs.

Economic Sustainability

Support for the local economy was evident in several ways. Where present (30%), museum gift shops typically feature the work of local artists and creators. Furthermore, all responding museums consistently reported efforts to use local ingredients and products during their events. These practices help channel tourism spending back into the host communities, aligning with principles of sustainable economic development.

Employment patterns further highlighted museums' local development: 97% of employees live within the two counties examined, and 90% reside within the same municipality as the

museum they worked for. This local employment not only supports the regional economy but also strengthens social cohesion and institutional accountability.

Cultural Sustainability

Cultural sustainability was fundamentally integrated into the majority of museums – unsurprisingly, given their missions and collections. Folk art, traditional crafts and regional heritage are extensively showcased in both permanent and temporary exhibitions, offering a natural platform for sustainability-related narratives. Among the museums surveyed, 50% exhibit local artists' works. These content selections demonstrate an implicit but strong alignment with sustainable principles, especially regarding the preservation of both intangible and tangible local heritage.

Furthermore, most of the museums actively promote regional cultural identity through their public programs and events. By emphasising artisanal expertise and local narratives, these initiatives foster a deeper sense of place and community identity, which are crucial elements of sustainable tourism development.

Tab. 2: *Practical implementations of the sustainability pillars in the surveyed mu***seums**

Sustainability Pillar	Focus Area	Key Practices / Findings	Observation / Frequency
Environmental	Energy efficiency	LED/energy-saving lights; upgrading insulation, windows or doors	Most museums; upgrades in fewer cases
	Renewable energy	One museum fully solar-powered; few museums using renewable sources like solar panels	Rare
	Waste management	Selective collection, outdoor compost bins	Common practice
	Green exhibitions	Use of eco/recycled materials, QR codes to reduce paper, low-energy design	Occasionally applied
Social	Education and awareness	Craft workshops using natural/ recycled materials; sustainability-themed programs	Common practice
	Community engagement	Local schools, NGOs, civil society involvement; venue sharing, joint events	Widespread
Economic	Local economy support	Gift shops feature local products; use of local ingredients at events	Widespread
	Local economy support (employees)	97% staff from the counties; 90% in host city	Widespread
Cultural	Heritage-based sustainability content	Folk art, craft traditions integrated into programs and exhibitions (naturally present due to the museums' collections)	Strong presence
	Cultural identity promotion	Programs and events reflect regional culture and artisanal knowledge	Strong presence

Discussion

This research aimed to investigate the role of museums in Borsod–Abaúj–Zemplén and Szabolcs–Szatmár–Bereg counties in promoting sustainable cultural tourism, focusing specifically on the four pillars of sustainability. The results provide a multifaceted perspective on the role of museums in promoting sustainable tourism, highlighting both optimistic practices and substantial gaps.

The survey revealed that 50% of the museums do not have a written sustainability-related strategy. Consistent with other Hungarian research on sustainability in the museum sector, the importance of sustainability is not regarded as crucial for incorporation into the museums' strategic framework. The lack of defined sustainability objectives in institutional policy can be regarded as a barrier to systematic implementation.[64] In other European countries, the significance of sustainability in museums is increasingly recognised; however, museums in Central and Eastern Europe face difficulties in comprehensively integrating all three pillars of sustainability into their strategic frameworks.[65] In this geographical environment, museums predominantly shine in functions associated with the social pillar, similarly to our research findings.[66]

Environmental pillar

A clear pattern emerged in environmental practices. The majority of examined museums have adopted cost-effective, high-impact measures such as LED lighting and targeted garbage collection. These actions indicate a preliminary commitment but involve minimal structural investment. In contrast, resource-intensive projects such as adopting renewable energy or building renovations are infrequent, indicating financial and infrastructural obstacles, especially for smaller regional organisations.

Insufficient financial resources can impede the execution of sustainability projects in museums. This constraint is frequently attributed to the limited financial resources of the governing entities, as well as the intrinsic unpredictability of the tender- and grant-based funding mechanisms upon which numerous museums in Hungary depend. In light of financial instability, prior research has shown that insufficient human resources pose a considerable barrier, further obstructing museums' capacity to implement sustainable solutions.[67]

Social pillar

The social dimension appears to be a particular strength. The surveyed museums regularly engage local schools, NGOs and civil society in joint programming, and educational activities frequently incorporate sustainability themes through arts and crafts workshops and exhibitions. Most of the museums rely on collaborations within their direct geographic region, though such partnerships occasionally extend across regional borders.

Many museums curate and interpret aspects of traditional folk life, positioning them well to link these cultural expressions to the concepts of sustainability. The exhibited items and activities are often defined by their enduring design, resilience and dependence on natural

[64] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability… pp. 97–99; Elérhető a "Zöld Múzeum"… p. 3.

[65] FEHÉR, Zsuzsanna, ÁSVÁNYI, Katalin. Differences in sustainability approaches from the mission statements of museums – the case of CEE and other European contemporary art museums. In: *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 31(3), 2023, p. 696.

[66] Ibidem.

[67] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability…, pp. 100–102.

resources, thus reflecting principles of resource efficiency and sustainability. While it is evident that museums cannot resolve all global challenges, they can aid in the advancement of an ideal future.[68] This is consistent with the role of museums as trusted cultural intermediaries,[69] capable of influencing public attitudes and behaviours in ways that extend beyond the tourism encounter.

Economical pillar

Economic sustainability is also well represented. The strong reliance on local employment, with 97% of staff residing within the counties studied, supports regional livelihoods and enhances institutional accountability. Gift shops featuring local artisans and catering that uses locally sourced ingredients further demonstrate the economic embeddedness of museums. As far as economic sustainability is concerned, museums need to strive for greater sustainability due to their potential negative environmental impact. Typically, museums consume substantial resources, such as energy and water, and generate significant waste. By measuring these environmental effects, museums can identify areas for improvement in reducing their ecological footprint.[70] Ideally, the institution can save money by putting policies in place to decrease these environmentally negative effects.[71]

Cultural pillar

The cultural pillar is also a strength of the examined museums. By conserving and showcasing folk art, crafts and intangible heritage, museums not only protect cultural traditions but also augment the authenticity and uniqueness of tourism experiences, attributes that are increasingly esteemed in destination competitiveness.[72] Although culture-driven regeneration efforts mostly focus on major cities and urban areas, local folk culture and traditions in rural settings significantly contribute to economic development, social cohesion and community pride.[73] Today, museums are recognised as catalysts for the social and economic advancement of a city or region. Cultural heritage, together with museums, is acknowledged as a catalyst for sustainable development and economic progress, especially through its impact on tourism and place branding.[74]

Overall, the results indicate that although museums do not formally engage with sustainable thinking, the practical examples and responses demonstrate their active involvement in sustainability on a daily basis. Prior literature in Hungary suggests that museums have challenges in incorporating sustainability into their strategic documents; nonetheless, sustainable thinking has now become a fundamental aspect of their concerns, contrary to past findings.[75]

The insufficiency of human and financial resources in the Central and Eastern European region constitutes a significant obstacle to implementing high-volume sustainable solutions,

[68] ZIĘBIŃSKA-WITEK, Anna. Can the Museum Be an Agent of Social Change? A New Model of the Functioning of the Museum in the Twenty-First Century. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 11(3), 2023, p. 25.
[69] MCGHIE, *Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals*…, p. 33.
[70] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability…, p. 46.
[71] MCGHIE, *Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals*…, pp. 34–35.
[72] RICHARDS, Greg. Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. In: *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 36, 2018, p. 15.
[73] ŚRODA-MURAWSKA, Stefania et al. Culture-led regeneration as a vital instrument for preserving the cultural heritage of historical parks in Poland. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 9(1), 2021, pp. 45–46.
[74] HEIDENREICH and PLAZA, Renewal…, p. 1450.
[75] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability… p. 97.

a conclusion corroborated by our research.[76] A significant number of sustainability-related practices are contingent upon the financial capabilities of the institution, particularly concerning the environmental pillar, which necessitates greater funding.

As regards the economic pillar, museums can make a significant contribution to local and regional economic development. The museums studied engage in various ways to advance sustainable cultural tourism. This finding aligns with the well-documented economic contributions of cultural and creative industries globally.[77]

The museums surveyed perform particularly in relation to the social and cultural pillar, aligning with their broader vision and goals. Museums are embedded within the local community, engaging with its representatives and drawing upon local traditions, heritage and values. Previous studies have emphasised the social responsibilities of museums, indicating that outside of Central Europe they also serve as agents of change and social transformation.[78] The social pillar is particularly crucial in rural and small urban regions, where population decline and urban–rural disparities can lead to substantial challenges.[79]

The findings indicate that museums are under-recognised, but significant, contributors to sustainable tourism. They currently provide substantial contributions across the environmental, social, economic and cultural spheres; however, more formalisation of strategy, investment in high-impact infrastructure, and professional education might markedly augment their influence. With their educational authority, community integration and cultural resources, museums are ideally positioned to act as catalysts for sustainable tourism growth.

An important consideration emerging from the findings is the question of limits to tourism growth. While museums are often interpreted as drivers of regional development, particularly in underdeveloped areas, an uncritical increase in visitor numbers may pose risks. Given the small-scale and resource-constrained nature of many surveyed institutions, their capacity to accommodate increased tourist flows remains limited. This highlights the importance of aligning tourism development strategies with local carrying capacities, in order to avoid potential negative impacts on cultural heritage and community life.

Conclusions

This study has analysed the role of museums in promoting sustainable tourism, utilising a framework grounded in the three traditional pillars of sustainability – environmental, social and economic – enhanced by a cultural dimension that underscores its critical importance beyond museums.

The results indicate that although half of the assessed institutions lack explicit sustainability strategies, numerous museums are actively implementing sustainable practices. These acts encompass energy efficiency initiatives, waste management, community-focused educational programs, local economic support and the enhancement of the area's cultural identity.

---

[76] POP, Izabela, BORZA, Anca. Factors Influencing Museum Sustainability and Indicators for Museum Sustainability Measurement. In: *Sustainability* 8(1), 2016, p. 8; NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability…, pp. 97–104; FEHÉR and ÁSVÁNYI, Differences in…, p. 689.

[77] HEIDENREICH and PLAZA, Renewal…; GUSTAFSSON, Christer and IJLA, Akram, Museums – A Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Development in Sweden. In: *International Journal of Innovative Development & Policy Studies*, 5(2), 2017, pp. 1–14.

[78] NAGY-SÁNDOR, Museums for Sustainability…, p. 74; FEHÉR and ÁSVÁNYI, Differences in…, pp. 696–697.

[79] ROBERTS, Elisabeth, TOWNSEND, Leanne. The Contribution of the Creative Economy to the Resilience of Rural Communities: Exploring Cultural and Digital Capital. In: *Sociologia Ruralis* 56(2), 2016, p. 199.

The investigation highlights an inconsistent integration of sustainability. Environmental campaigns frequently focus on low-cost, easily executable steps, whereas more resource-intensive measures, such as the use of renewable energy, are infrequently pursued.

Museums have significant power in social and cultural aspects, serving as community centres, educators, and guardians of heritage. Their economic contributions, such as local employment and assistance for regional producers, underscore their integration into local development processes.

The results are significant from three crucial points. Firstly, it is evident that, despite being situated in underdeveloped rural parts of Hungary, these museums contribute significantly to the development of their regions. Consequently, subsequent research should concentrate on rural areas and smaller cities, where sustainable development is more essential than in well-developed regions. Secondly, the study emphasises that museums may serve as a valuable resource for promoting sustainable cultural tourism, particularly in Europe, where they possess a vast network and play a significant role in the cultural tourism sector. Thirdly, the cultural pillar must be scrutinised not just in the context of museum-related studies but also in relation to the pillars of sustainability, as the existence of the other three pillars is contingent upon culture.

Museums should improve their impact on sustainable tourism through three strategic transformations:

1. Formally incorporating sustainability objectives into institutional plans would establish a cohesive framework for action. This approach would define how museums might achieve sustainability internally, through operations and programming, as well as externally, by promoting sustainable behaviours within the broader community.
2. Focused investment and policy assistance are essential to overcome financial and infrastructural obstacles to high-impact environmental efforts.
3. A more comprehensive understanding of sustainability practices is required, alongside an enhancement of current efforts and best practices regarding the pillars of sustainability.

Further to these points, the advancement of collaboration and dissemination of best practice, already underway in Hungary, will facilitate the professional growth and knowledge exchange among museum professionals.

By leveraging their existing strengths, particularly in education, community engagement and cultural preservation while addressing gaps in strategy, infrastructure and communication, museums can consolidate their position as vital actors in sustainable tourism. Overall, it is evident that museums are actively contributing to sustainable cultural tourism, despite facing various challenges. Museums are sensitive to and reflect on the changing world, highlighting the need to provide them with greater support and formal recognition for their efforts.

The primary limitation of this study lies in its geographically restricted sample, as the analysis draws only on Hungarian museums, thereby limiting the generalisability of the findings. Moreover, of the 85 museums contacted across the two counties, only 46 completed the questionnaire. Despite multiple outreach attempts via email, social media and telephone, several institutions could not be reached. In some cases, very small museums – usually public exhibition sites and public collections – lacked permanent staff and the maintaining bodies did not consider themselves sufficiently competent to complete the survey. Another significant

limitation is the reliance on self-reported data, which may also have introduced bias, as museums could overstate or underreport their sustainability practices.

Future research should further explore the potential and everyday practices of museums. As long-standing institutions with histories extending back centuries, museums possess a remarkable capacity to adapt to evolving societal expectations. Their longevity has enabled the development of extensive and well-recognised networks. Leveraging and fully understanding this potential is not only the responsibility of museologists but also of professionals in the tourism sector and representatives of the public sector.

Additionally, further research should be conducted to investigate disadvantaged regions, along with medium-sized and small cities, to obtain a full understanding of the operations and capacities of museums. The sustainability pillars are crucial not just due to worldwide trends but also because of the environmentally harmful practices of museums and the tourism industry. Consequently, enhanced efforts are required to guarantee sustainable operations within both sectors.

References

ÁSVÁNYI, Katalin, FEHÉR, Zsuzsanna (2023). Generation Z perspectives on museum sustainability using Q methodology. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 11(1), pp. 19–35.

BROWN, Karen (2019). Museums and Local Development: An Introduction to Museums, Sustainability and Well-being. In: *Museum International* 71(3–4), pp. 1–13.

BROWN, Karen, and MAIRESSE, François (2018). The definition of the museum through its social role. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 61(4), pp. 525–539.

CAMERON, Duncan F. (1971). The Museum, a Temple or the Forum. In: *Curator: The Museum Journal*. 14(1), pp. 11–24.

CAMERON, Fiona, HODGE, Bob, and SALAZAR, Juan Francisco (2013). Representing climate change in museum space and places. In: *WIREs Climate Change*, 4(1), pp. 9–21.

CANAVAN, Brendan (2016). Tourism culture: Nexus, characteristics, context and sustainability. *Tourism Management*, 53, pp. 229–243.

DU CROS, Hilary, and McKERCHER, Bob (2020). Cultural tourism. 3rd ed. Abingdon: Routledge.

EMA Report (2024). EMA Situation for Museums in Europe Report. Accessed August 21, 2025, https://europeanmuseumacademy.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/250217-EMA-European-Museum-Report-2024-final.pdf

FEHÉR, Zsuzsanna, and ÁSVÁNYI, Katalin (2023). Differences in sustainability approaches from the mission statements of museums – the case of CEE and other European contemporary art museums. In: *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 31(3), pp. 683–701.

FERILLI, Guido, SACCO, Pier Luigi, TAVANO BLESSI, Giorgo, and FORBICI, Stefano (2017). Power to the people: When culture works as a social catalyst in urban regeneration processes (and when it does not). In: *European Planning Studies*, 25(2), pp. 241–258.

GARCIA, Beatriz (2005). Deconstructing the City of Culture: The Long-term Cultural Legacies of Glasgow 1990. In: *Urban Studies*, 42(5–6), pp. 841–868.

GARTHE, Christopher. J. (2022). *The Sustainable Museum: How Museums Contribute to the Great Transformation* (1st ed.) London: Routledge.

GSTC (2025). Global Sustainable Tourism Council, accessed August 21, 2025, https://www.gstc.org/

GUSTAFSSON, Christer and IJLA, Akram (2017). Museums – A Catalyst for Sustainable Economic Development in Sweden. In: *International Journal of Innovative Development & Policy Studies*, 5(2), pp. 1–14.

HANSSON, Per, and ÖHMAN, Johan (2022). Museum education and sustainable development: A public pedagogy. In: *European Educational Research Journal*, 21(3), pp. 469–483.

HAWKES, Jon. (2001). *The fourth pillar of sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning.* Melbourne: Cultural Development Network

HEIDENREICH, Martin, and PLAZA, Beatriz (2015). Renewal through Culture? The Role of Museums in the Renewal of Industrial Regions in Europe. In: *European Planning Studies*, 23(8), pp. 1441–1455.

HERREMAN, Yani, (1998). Museums and Tourism: Culture and Consumption. *Museum International.* 50(3), pp. 4–12.

JÄRVELÄ, Marja (2008). Social and cultural sustainability. In: KOHL, Johanna. *Dialogues on sustainable paths for the future: Ethics, welfare and responsibility*, pp. 46–65.

KÁLNOKY-GYÖNGYÖSSY, Márton (2021). *Nation and Museum. Hungarian Museums and Legislation (1777–2010).* Translated by B. Basics. Budapest: MIRIO.

KOREK, György (1988). *A muzeológia alapjai (egyetemi segédkönyv).* Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó.

KI CULTURE (2021a). *Energy: A Step-by-Step Guide for Sustainable Action. Volume 1,* Accessed May 31, 2025, https://www.kiculture.org/ki-books/

KI CULTURE (2021b). *Social Sustainability: A Step-by-Step Guide for Sustainable Action. Volume 1*, Accessed May 31, 2025, https://www.kiculture.org/ki-books/

KOANS, Ko, POSTMA, Albert, and PAPP, Bernadett (2018) Is Overtourism Overused? Understanding the Impact of Tourism in a City Context. In: *Sustainability* 10(12), pp. 1–15. Accessed April 13, 2026, https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124384

KSH (2023). A turisztikai szálláshelyeken eltöltött vendégéjszakák száma vármegye és régió szerint [Number of guest nights spent in tourist accommodation by county and region], Accessed August 21, 2025, https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/tur/hu/tur0079.html

KUCKARTZ, Udo, and RÄDIKER, Stephanie (2023). *Qualitative content analysis: Methods, practice and software.* 2nd ed. London: SAGE.

KULTSTAT (2023). KultStat, Kulturális Statisztikai Adatgyűjtő Rendszer [Cultural Statistical Data Collection System]. Accessed April 2, 2026, https://kultstat.oszk.hu/#/home/public

LAK, Azadeh, GHEITASI, Mahdi, and TIMOTHY, Dallen J. (2020). Urban regeneration through heritage tourism: Cultural policies and strategic management. In: *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 18(4), pp. 386–403.

MAGYAR MUZEUMOK (2025). Elérhető a "Zöld Múzeum" kutatási jelentés [The "Green Museum" research report is available], accessed August 21, 2025, https://magyarmuzeumok.hu/cikk/elerheto-a-zold-muzeum-kutatasi-jelentes

MAVRAGANI, Eleni (2018). Museum Services in the Era of Tourism. In: BAST, Gerald, CARAYANNIS, Elias G. and CAMPBELL, David F. J. (eds.), *The Future of Museums*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 37–47.

MCGHIE, Henry. (2019). *Museums and the Sustainable Development Goals: A how-to guide for museums, galleries, the cultural sector and their partners.* UK: Curating Tomorrow.

MUZEUMSTAT (2025). Summary, Accessed August 21, 2025, https://muzeumstat.hu/hu/summary?

NAGY-SÁNDOR, Zsófia (2020). Museums for Sustainability: an Exploration of Hungarian Approaches. [Master's thesis, Central European University]

NOCCA, Francesca (2017). The Role of Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Development: Multidimensional Indicators as Decision-Making Tool. In: *Sustainability*, 9(10), pp, 1–28.

NOONAN, Lisa (2023). The role of culture as a determinant of tourism demand: Evidence from European cities. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 9(1), pp. 13–34.

POP, Izabela, BORZA, Anca (2016). Factors Influencing Museum Sustainability and Indicators for Museum Sustainability Measurement. In: *Sustainability* 8(1), pp. 1–22.

PRIPORAS, Constantinos-Vasilios et al. (2021). Cultural Heritage as an Engine of Sustainable Development in the Tourism Sector. In: INCE-YENILMEZ, Meltem, DARICI, Burak. (eds.), *Engines of Economic Prosperity*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 193–208

RICHARDS, Greg (1996). *Cultural Tourism in Europe*. Wallingford: CAB International.

RICHARDS, Greg (2018). Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends. In: *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, pp. 12–21.

RICHARDS, Greg (2021). *Rethinking Cultural Tourism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

ROBERTS, Elisabeth, TOWNSEND, Leanne. The Contribution of the Creative Economy to the Resilience of Rural Communities: Exploring Cultural and Digital Capital. In: *Sociologia Ruralis* 56(2), pp. 197–219.

SAVERIADES, Alex (2000). Establishing the social tourism carrying capacity for the tourist resorts of the east coast of the Republic of Cyprus. In: *Tourism Management* 21(2), pp. 147–156. Accessed April 2, 2026, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(99)00044-8

SELADA, Catarina, VILHENA DA CUNHA, Inês, TOMAZ, Elisabete (2012). Creative-Based Strategies in Small and Medium-Sized Cities: Key Dimensions of Analysis. In: *Quaestiones Geographicae* 31(4), pp. 43–51.

ŚRODA-MURAWSKA, Stefania, GRZELAK-KOSTULSKA, Elżbieta, S. DĄBROWSKI, Leszek, BIEGAŃSKA, Jadwiga and SMOLIŃSKI, Paweł (2021). Culture-led regeneration as a vital instrument for preserving the cultural heritage of historical parks in Poland. *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo*, 9(1), pp. 41–61.

TAM, Sara (2012). *In museums we trust: Analyzing the mission of museums, deaccessioning policies, and the public trust*. Fordham Urban Law Journal, 39(3), 849–901.

UNEP (2005). ed. *Making tourism more sustainable: a guide for policy makers*. Paris: UNEP

VÁSÁRHELYI, Tamás (2010). Projektmódszer a múzeumban. [Project methods in museums] In: *Múzeumi Iránytű*, 8, pp. 137–146.

VERGO, Peter. (Ed.). (2009). *The new museology* (Repr). London: Reaktion Books.

WISE, Nicholas, and JIMURA, Takamitsu (2020). Changing Spaces in Historical Places. In: WISE, Nicholas, and JIMURA, Takamitsu, eds. *Tourism, Cultural Heritage and Urban Regeneration*, pp. 1–19. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

ZÁDORI, István (2020). Museums and Sustainability in the 21st Century. In: *Tudás Menedzsment*, 12(1), pp. 328–333.

ZIĘBIŃSKA-WITEK, Anna (2023). Can the Museum Be an Agent of Social Change? A New Model of the Functioning of the Museum in the Twenty-First Century. In: *Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo* 11(3), pp. 23–35.

An ostrich egg depicting a scene of an enema, as an example of a curiosité and a manifestation of a certain era

Małgorzata Żak-Kulesza

Małgorzata Żak-Kulesza, PhD
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin
Department of Art History,
Al. Racławickie 14, 20-950, Lublin, Poland
e-mail: malzak@kul.pl
ORCID : 0000-0002-3601-4709

Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2026, 2026,14:2:51–69
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.4

An ostrich egg depicting a scene of an enema, as an example of a curiosité and a manifestation of a certain era
This article presents an interdisciplinary analysis of a rare and intriguing artefact, a decorated ostrich egg held in the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka, Poland, setting it within the tradition of curiosités and early modern European material culture. The object, engraved with figural scenes, including a notably explicit depiction of an enema procedure, is interpreted through the lenses of iconography, the history of medicine and the social conventions of seventeenth-century Dutch culture. The study explores how the enema, beyond its medical function, operated as a metaphor for sexual desire, moral correction and corporeal control, reflecting the period's complex attitudes toward gender, the body and propriety. The egg is also considered in relation to the broader phenomenon of luxury ostrich eggs as objets croisés – cross-cultural artefacts that blend exotic material origins with European craftsmanship and emblematic content. Through visual and literary analysis, the article demonstrates how this single object embodies multilayered narratives of curiosity, discipline, eroticism and social satire, while becoming a compelling testament to the symbolic richness and ambiguity characteristic of early modern visual culture.

Keywords: Dutch material culture, medical imagery in art, iconography, engraved ostrich eggs

Introduction

Situated within the collection of Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka, Poland[1] is a unique object in the category of *curiosités* that filled Kunstkammern or Wunderkammern (Cabinets of Curiosity) – namely, an ostrich egg with engraved depictions (Fig. 1, Fig. 2).[2] Unfortunately, the artefact crumbled into pieces in unknown circumstances. The remaining loose fragments of eggshell were transferred to the Department of Conservation of Architectural Elements and Details at the Institute of Art Conservation Science at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, where the object was reconstructed. The fragments were glued onto an artificial egg model and returned to Kozłówka. The provenance of the object is unknown, as are the circumstances surrounding its addition to the Kozłówka museum. The object is most probably an exhibit from the former Central Museum Repository which operated in Kozłówka from

[1] KORNACKI, Krzysztof (ed.). *Muzea rezydencje w Polsce: materiały sesji naukowej zorganizowanej w Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce 14-16 października 2004 r.* Kozłówka 2004.

[2] For interpretation and explanation of the term curiosité (sing.), curiosités (pl.) in the culture of the seventeenth century, based on contemporary dictionary entries, see POMIAN, Krzysztof. *Zbieracze i osobliwości: Paryż-Wenecja XVI-XVIII wiek*; translated by Andrzej PIEŃKOS. Lublin 2001, pp. 77–82.

1954 to 1977. Cultural assets were transferred to Kozłówka from Żelazno in Silesia.[3]

Fig. 1: *Ostrich egg from the collection of the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka* (photo by author).
Fig. 2: *Ostrich egg from the collection of the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka (detail)* (photo by author).

The goal of this article is to attempt to interpret the decorations of the egg, as well as to present the sociocultural meaning of this artefact in the context of customs and social reception in seventeenth-century Holland. In what context did it function? Was it supposed to instil curiosity, to amaze, or perhaps – due to its decoration and inscriptions – act as a type of morality play or satirical commentary about the contemporary socio-cultural situation? Does it hide other content pertaining to medical procedures and their allegorical perception in the context of life and health? It is also vital to ask why an ostrich egg was chosen as a medium for such depictions. Does this exotic object correlate with the content of the displayed motifs? Are they mutually dependent and influencing each other?

When deciphering, analysing and interpreting artefacts from past epochs, one should set them in the iconological context of influences and dependencies shaped by the artistic and economical situation of those times, connecting them with contemporaneous customs, conventions, social rules and moral categories propagated in the repertoire of secular and religious values. Among the enlightened Dutch elites of the seventeenth century, a vital role may have been played by the literary tradition of allegorical, moralistical or humorous works which provided commentaries about the world and human behaviours in contemporary reality. All such displays of ideological content found their reflection in art, especially in Dutch genre painting, where everyday motifs rose to the rank of allegorical treaties – in disguised symbolism[4]

[3] The object probably came from the museal collection of a private Polish or German estate owner. KAMIŃSKA, Lidia M. Powojenne Składnice Przemieszczanych Dóbr Kultury w Polsce. Przyczynek do Szerszego Opracowania. In: *Muzealnictwo*, 57, 2016, pp. 74–80, esp. 77.
[4] PANOFSKY, Erwin. *Early Netherlandish Painting, its Origin and Character*. Vol. I. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1966, pp. 131-148.

about culture, ethics and social roles of their characters.[5] What is more, the meaning of naturalia – including ostrich eggs, their artistic quality and their contemporaneous quantifiable (i.e. financial) value – speaks volumes about the rank of their creator, as well as the aspirations of their recipients. All of these dependencies, particular reactions and social attitudes, were preserved in literary works and transferred into paintings. Thus, the analysed natural object—that is, the egg from Kozłówka, its form, decorations and inscriptions—contribute to inquiries into the series of dependencies and motifs which combine in this object, like in a lens. In what historical, artistic and social context did such objects function? How strongly do they designate their epoch – the epoch of Wunderkammern filled with rare, exotic and artistic objects?[6]

Presentation of the object and engraved decoration

The remaining fragments consist of the shell of an ostrich egg covered with shallow, linear engraved decoration, with grooves filled with dark paste or ink.[7] The presented scenes were composed in the form of oval areas, initially three, separated by wide floral bordures with a motif of leafy volutes. Each scene is rimmed with a narrow strip of engraved inscriptions in Old Dutch. Only one depiction area is legible – the scene set in a domestic interior, presenting

Fig. 3: *Enema scene* (photo by author).
Fig. 4: *Enema scene (detail)* (photo by author).

[5] It is impossible to reference all of the abundant literature dedicated to symbolism and ideological content in Dutch genre painting of the seventeenth century. Among Polish scholars this subject is also of great interest; see OCZKO, Piotr, Bezem en kruis. De Hollandse schoonmaakcultuur of de geschiedenis van een obsessive. Leiden 2020; FRANTIS, Wayne E. *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1993, pp. 1–17.

[6] POMIAN, Zbieracze i …, pp. 67–108; 138-147; STRUŻYŃSKA, Katarzyna. Curiositas jako kategoria kultury barokowej (XVI-XVII wieku). In: *Meluzyna*, 1(4), 2016, pp. 35–51, esp. 43–44.

[7] KOYAMA, Tomiyasu, TENNYSON, Alan J. D., Respiratory Pores on Ostrich Struthio camelus (Aves: Struthionidae) Eggshells. In: *Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology*, 923, 2016, pp. 51–55.

an enema being administered (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4). This fragment is legible enough to distinguish the participants of the scene, a woman and two men. The woman, reclining, is holding her thigh up with her hand, while a considerable portion of her dress is cast aside, exhibiting her naked buttocks. The first man – wearing glasses and a hat, possibly a doctor overseeing the act – is holding a candle near the patient. The second man, probably an apothecary or an unprofessional barber, can be seen performing an enema using an unspecified, elongated fusiform tool (Fig. 4). The female figure clearly dominates the scene; her scale visibly surpasses the size of male figures who seem unnaturally small, almost purposely miniaturised.

Fig. 5: *Legs, (detail)* (photo by author).

Only one fragment remains of the second scene, bearing the motif of a raised tree crown. In the third area, in the bottom section of the fragment one can discern naked legs of an unknown figure, probably sitting. Under the feet lies a pitcher or unspecified oval dish, with water flowing out of it (Fig. 5). The scenes are separated by a decoration of tendrils and leaves, as well as floral volutes, painstakingly precise, with clearly visible regularity and symmetry of weave layout. The plants are unidentifiable, as they are merely highly stylised floral decorations.

In the upper section of the egg are three separate depictions, each assigned to the scenes below them. Above the shell fragment depicting a section of a leafy tree crown is a figure of an angel with wings spread wide, wearing a long-sleeved robe fastened at the waist (Fig. 6). The angel, smiling slightly, is spreading their arms, which can be interpreted as a gesture of benevolence or a presentation of the image below. Above the image with the procedure is a man holding a long spear, blade pointed upwards.

Fig. 6: *Angel (detail)* (photo by author).

Fig. 7: *Man holding a spear (detail)* (photo by author).

His clothing and attributes suggest he might be a guard or a nobleman (Fig. 7).[8] Does this figure symbolically signify a "Guardian of the Anus", as doctors overseeing enemas were called by Egyptians? What is his connection with the enema scene?

Above the third area, of which only a fragment depicting legs remains, there is a vessel stylised as a Greek krater (Fig. 8). Separating these three motives are ornamental volutes. The manner of engraving of figural depictions is simplified, with heavy burin operations and numerous parallel lines, whereas the motif of tendrils, leaves and volutes was created using significantly less force, more finesse and softness of seamlessly performed engraving. There is a round opening in the top section of the egg, which might have held an ornamental finial or an element used to hang the egg.

Fig. 8: *Greek krater (detail)* (photo by author).

Inscriptions

The narrow strips surrounding the depictions are covered with inscriptions. Unfortunately, due to the loss of parts of the eggshell, they are only partially legible (Fig. 9):

Surrounding the enema scene is:

(…)PYN * HET IS VERKEERT SOO GEKLISTEERT * HET KLISTEREN

Below the angel:
(…) KE V SOET GE(…) (…TA)AL DOEN MY MYN (I…) (…)KE

[8] ZIMMERMAN, Michael R. Practicing Medicine in Ancient Egypt. In: *Juniata Voices* 17, 2017, pp. 144–152, esp. 145.

According to Marcin Polkowski,[9] the adverb *verkeerd* (*verkeert* in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century orthography) translates as "incorrectly, improperly, backwards". One can thus attempt to translate the text as: "[This] enema is incorrect" or "backwards" (?). Polkowski highlights that this translation is just a hypothesis since the rest of the text is unknown, making it difficult to precisely determine the sense of this inscription, or explain why performing this enema was deemed erroneous.

The remaining phrases are single words. The verb *klisteeren* meant to perform an enema (Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal dictionary), and this form is considered an archaism. The word comes from the Greek κλυστήρ, or Latin *clyster*. Without a longer section of text it is difficult to translate the last fragment, presumably transliterated as: "...[*t*?]*aal doen my myn*". Grammatically, *doen* could be a conjunction (=> *toen*) or an auxiliary verb, *my*, *myn* – eg. "when I am (…) by my". However, this version is highly questionable.[10]

Kamila Tomaka[11] suggests that PYN might be read as *pijn* [pain]. However, there is no certainty whether this word can be linked to the DOEN inscription on the banderole (a strip with inscriptions). Assuming that it can, it would result in *pijn doen* [to cause pain].[12] With the transcription of SOET as *zoet* [sweet], the line below the angel would read: *sweet… (…) when I am (…) by my …* (?)

Fig. 9: *Inscriptions and ornamentation* (photo by author).

[9] Personal comment, 8 September 2021.
[10] Linguistic consultation with Professor Marcin Polkowski from The Department of Dutch Literature of the Catholic University of Lublin, https://gtb.ivdnt.org/iWDB/search?actie=article&wdb=WNT&id=M033877.re.1&lemma=klisteeren&domein=0&conc=true
[11] Personal comment, 8 September 2021.
[12] Linguistic consultation with Kamila Tomaka from The Department of Dutch Language of the Catholic University Of Lublin

The meaning and function of ostrich eggs in tradition

For millennia ostrich eggs were highly desirable and valued objects in many cultures of the world. They possessed a unique cultural and ritual meaning; ostrich eggshells have been found in prehistoric burials, some dating back to Bronze and Iron Ages. They served as bowls, beakers, containers for cosmetic and medicinal substances, and bottles for carrying wine and other liquids.[13] One such example of a decorated ostrich-shell vessel is a Phoenician vessel dating from the seventh century BCE and housed at The British Museum, London.[14] Beads, pendants and bracelets were also made from ostrich eggshells. We also find examples of ancient vessels made from stone that imitate ostrich eggs, used for storing perfume, fragrances and balms (such as the vessel made from travertine, Egypt, circa 1540–1296 BCE, Cleveland Museum of Art, US[15]).

Live birds and their eggs were traded and shipped to South Europe from Egypt and countries of the Levant in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. They yielded eggs, feathers, skins and fat used for medicinal purposes.[16] Ostrich eggs were often decorated, engraved or carved, bringing out a low relief from the shell surface, and subsequently polychromed, polished and smoothed out. Many were set in metal rings or leather strips, while some received additional applications, gilded bases and spouts, thus transforming them into valuable vessels, cups and pitchers.[17] In Greek and Roman Antiquity, as well as the first centuries of Christianity, ostrich eggs were hung in temples as lamps or as decorative symbolic objects dedicated to the gods. This sacral and symbolic meaning of ostrich eggs was adopted by both Muslim and Christian cultures. Eggs were used to decorate mosques, Coptic churches and Jewish synagogues; such decorations hang in churches and monasteries to this day.[18] Their symbolic role in prayers in the temple is also discussed in written works. Among others, Guilemus Durantis (d. 1296), in his *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, connected the description from ancient *Phisiologus* regarding

[13] TEXIER, Pierre-Jean et al. A Howiesons Poort Tradition of Engraving Ostrich Eggshell Containers Dated to 60,000 Years Ago at Diepkloof Rockshelter, South Africa. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, 107(14), 2010, pp. 6180–6185.

[14] https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1850-0227-9

[15] https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1914.620)

[16] HERLES, Michael, Der Vogel Strauß in den Kulturen Altvorderasiens. In: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, no. 139, 2007, pp. 173–212, esp. 203–204.

[17] LAUFER, Berthold, Ostrich Egg-Shell Cups of Mesopotamia and the Ostrich in Ancient and Modern Times. In: *Anthropology leaflet*, 23. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History. Laufer, 1926; RATHJE, Anette, Five Ostrich Eggs from Vulci. In: SWADDLING Judith (ed). *Italian Iron Age Artefacts in the British Museum. Papers of the Sixth British Museum Classical Colloquium 1982*. London 1986, pp. 397–404; POTTS, Daniel T., Ostrich Distribution and Exploitation in the Arabian Peninsula. In: *Antiquity*, 75(287), 2001, pp. 182–190; EZZ EL-DIN, Dina M. (2020). Ostrich Eggs of Predynastic Egypt. In: *Journal of the General Association of the Arab Archeologists*, 11(11), pp. 40–56; HERLES, Der Vogel Strauß…, pp. 173–212; HODOS, Tamar et al., The Origins of Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean and Middle East. In: Antiquity, 94(374), 2020, pp. 381–400. Photograph of the rhyton: https://www.worldhistory.org/image/12783/ostrich-egg-rhyton/_

[18] GREEN, Nile, Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam. In: *Al-Masāq*, 18(1), 2006, pp. 27–78. cf. SAYED, Kitat S.E., Ostrich Egg and Its Symbolic Meaning in the Ancient Egyptian Monastery Churches. In: *Journal of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists*, 15(1), 2014, pp. 23–41; JURKOWLANIEC, Tadeusz, Strusie jaja w Prusach. Z badań nad średniowieczną ikonografią maryjną. In: *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 71(1–2), 2009, pp. 5–33; GOŁGOWSKI, Tadeusz, De lucernis et de ovis struthiocamelinis – symbolika jaj strusich w kościołach wschodniochrześcijańskich. In: Zbigniew KOBYLIŃSKI Zbigniew and Wojciech BRZEZIŃSKI (eds). *Hereditatem cognoscere. Studia i szkice dedykowane Profesor Marii Miśkiewicz*. Warszawa: Letter Quality, 2004, pp. 21–26.

the strength of ostrich eyesight with the strength of Christian prayer.[19] The ostrich does not incubate its eggs, but it was thought that its gaze, along with sunrays, helped the young chicks to hatch. This description was allegorically compared to the power of prayer and the engrossment of the faithful, especially those who turned their back on God and looked upon Him again. In this context, the egg is a symbol of new life, resurrection, determination and faith. In temples, ostrich egg artefacts were also used to ignite curiosity and draw attention to God with strength analogical to that of the gaze of an ostrich. In Medieval symbolism, ostrich eggs were interpreted as a symbol of the Immaculate Conception; for this reason, artistic images of the Madonna are often accompanied by the motif of an egg. Bernard of Clairvaux, as well as Konrad von Würzburg, in *Goldene Schmiede* (after 1277), compare the gaze of an ostrich to the benevolent gaze of Mary and her protection of people.[20] Ostrich eggs also abound in paintings of saints.[21]

In the Middle Ages and the Early Modern era, ostrich eggs were hung in the interiors of private castles and estates belonging to the nobility as lamps and exotic decorations. Especially valuable specimens were those encased by jewellers in metal baskets and set on intricate bases, fastened by rings and straps. In this way, eggs were transformed into cups, pitchers and ornamental table decorations as well as reliquaries (vessels for sacral purposes; see, for example, the egg from the Schatzkammer of the Munich Residenz, thought to have originated in a workshop from France or Southern Germany, circa 1400).[22] Exceptionally decorated specimens could be found from cathedral vaults to cabinets of curiosities.[23] Depending on the object, the fittings might depict sacral motifs (biblical figures, symbolic animals, sentences) or secular ones (coats of arms, medallions). Sometimes, ostrich eggs were used to form part of a larger ensemble, incorporating miniature figurines such as ostriches, pelicans, crest holders or crosses, with the eggs themselves framed in gold, silver and other precious substances such as coral, with finishing elements in the form of a Gothic pinnacle or a crown. Often, they were set on huge bases and bodies.[24] Ostrich eggs were also incorporated into naturalistic sculptures,

[19] KOBIELUS, Stanisław, *Fizjologi i Aviarium: Średniowieczne traktaty o symbolice zwierząt*. Kraków 2005, pp. 67–68.

[20] BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX. *Kazania o Najświętszej Maryi Pannie*, translated by Ildefons Bobicz. Warszawa 2000, pp. 44-45, 48-49.

[21] See, for example, the scene of the Circumcision of Baby Jesus, one of the oldest depictions of an ostrich egg motif in a sacral scene: BNF Latin 757 Missale et horae ad usum Fratrum Minorum, 1385–1390, Milan, Italy, f.291v., Vittore Carpaccio, Appearance of the crucifixes of Mount Arrarat in the church Saint Antonio di Castello, 1512–1513, Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice. Regarding the complex meaning of the egg in the Montefeltro altar, see. BOCK, S., *The 'Egg' of the Pala Montefeltro by Piero della Francesca and Its Symbolic Meaning*, Freiburg am Br.-Heidelberg 2002, pp. 1–20. MEISS, Millard, Addendum Ovologicum. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 36(3), 1954, pp. 221–222; RAGUSA, Isa, The Egg Reopened. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 53(4), 1971, pp. 435–443; GILBERT, Creighton E., The Egg Reopened Again. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 56(2), 1974, pp. 252–258; MEISS, Millard, Not an Ostrich Egg? In: *The Art Bulletin*, 57(1), 1975, p. 116; BRISSON, Dawid W., Piero della Francesca's Egg Again. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 62(2), 1980, pp. 284–286.

[22] https://www.residenz-muenchen.de/englisch/treasury/pic15.htm THOMA, Hans, Schatzkammer der Residenz München: Katalog. München 1958, pp. 25, 59.

[23] See, for example, the reliquary made from an ostrich egg from a workshop in Tournai, fifteenth century, held at the Musees royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels; an object from the vault of the Basilica of St Servatius in Maastricht; and a fifteenth-century reliquary of the Duchess Elisabeth Matsch from the vault of the city church in Rapperswil, held by the Stadtmuseum in Rapperswil.

[24] See, for example, the ostrich egg framed in gilded silver with elements made from natural precious coral, created by Clement Klicklinger, 1570–75, Augsburh workshop, held by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer, inv. no 897, Vienna. http://www.alaintruong.com/2024/06/lidded-cup-with-ostrich-egg-augsburg-ca.1570/75-clement-kicklinger-meister-1561-1617-augsburg.html; a silver, standing cup, The British Museum, no. AF.3050 https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_AF-3050

for example, as the torso of an ostrich figurine.[25] These vessels were examples of exquisite jewellery craftsmanship and a sign of an unfaltering interest in exoticism. It is known that from the sixteenth century in London and many European cities there were merchants specialising in trade in exotic materials and naturalia; such objects were bought by jewellers and goldsmiths as well as collectors for their Wunderkammern.[26]

Decorating ostrich eggshells

In numerous ancient products the eggshell remains unprocessed; other eggs, however, present various types of decoration, such as polychrome or simple engraving. Engraving was carried out with a sharp tool known as a burin, and could take a range of forms, from stripes and simplified forms to more elaborate depictions of gods, animals and scenes, for example hunting. Reliefs were also carved into eggshells and external elements (both ornamental and functional, such as handles) added separately. Engraved decorations or shallow relief on eggshells, created by scraping the background layer, is known from as early as 3000 BCE, with works from Assyrian and Phoenician workshops. Numerous engraved and polychromed ostrich eggs found in different parts of the world offer evidence of the transportation of these objects along trade routes leading west to various Mediterranean regions, as well as east to Asia Minor and China. To this day scientists strive to discover and understand the origins of these objects and their decorations.[27]

An egg selected to be sculpted and/or engraved required extensive preparation involving emptying and drying the egg in order to harden the shell. Obtaining ostrich eggs was a challenge, due to the ostriches themselves. In ancient sources and iconography ostriches are characterised as dangerous birds, able to kill their opponent with one kick, hence hunting ostriches demanded courage and a proper technique. Shipping to Europe presumably involved only eggs or pre-prepared empty shells which were then given a decorative jewellery setting.[28]

The Kozłówka egg presents decorations made by engraving with a sharp tool, with the resulting cuts filled with a paste or dark ink. There is a degree of finesse in both the

[25] See, for example, the cup dating from 1576 made for Christopher Bathory, Voivode of Transylvania, held at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, inv. no WA2013.1.128. WINTERBOTTOM, Matthew, *Treasures of the Goldsmith's Art: The Michael Wellby Bequest to the Ashmolean Museum*, Oxford 2015. https://jekely.blogspot.com/2015/10/ostrich-egg-cup-of-christopher-bathory.html
Elias Geyer, a goldsmith from Leipzig, made a few vessels from ostrich eggs, including one in the form of a bird which served as a cup; see Grüne Gewölbe, inv. no III 115, Dresden, 1589–1595. https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/117217 MENZHAUSEN, Joachim, Das Grüne Gewölbe. In: Erich STEINGRÄBER (ed), *Schatzkammern Europas. Weltliche Schatzkammern*. München 1968, pp. 59–66, il. 81–96.

[26] WOŹNIAK, Michał, O naturaliach w sztuce złotniczej. In: CHOJECKA, Ewa (ed). *Sztuka a natura. Materiały XXXVIII Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki, Katowice 23–25 listopada 1989*, Katowice 1991, pp.191–206, esp. 192.

[27] Researchers have examined whether decorated ostrich eggs found in Europe were brought there as finished products, decorated by Assyrian or Egyptian artists, or whether only smooth, natural shells (or eggs instead of empty shells) were traded, then engraved at their destination copying the style of artists from the Levant or North Africa. It is possible that the artists skilled in decorating these eggs moved to European lands from the Levant or from Africa and decorated the eggs there. HODOS, The Origins of …, pp. 392–393.

[28] In princes' gardens in Pavia and Milan (Italy), as early as the fourteenth century, as well as in Florence in the sixteenth century, there were places called Struzzeria where ostriches were kept and bred. MISSINNE, Stefaan, The Da Vinci Globe. Cambridge 2020, pp. 4–6.

ornamentation and depictions.[29] The following analysis aims to answer the questions: 1) to what extent do the inscriptions correspond with the depictions; and 2) how are they connected with the context of secular customs of the period?

Ostrich eggs in museums and private collections are predominantly natural specimens in jewellery settings, while only a small number resemble the egg from Kozłówka – engraved empty egg shells with decorations that constitute a deliberate, coherent program. One great example is a specimen from the Dresden Grünes Gewölbe. The surface of the egg is taken up with images of two men hunting an animal resembling a reptile, a lion under a palm tree, and modest floral motifs (seventeenth century, inv. no III 213[30]). Another specimen depicts a hunter and exotic animals such as a lion, an ostrich and a panther. The third example, also dating back to the seventeenth century, was acquired in 2024 by the German Historical Museum in Berlin (Deutsches Historisches Museum). This ostrich egg is covered with intricate depictions of colonial bounties and crops, including a coconut-picker and a worker planting tobacco.[31] The pictorial archetypes used by the engraver come from the travel journal of Dutch explorer Jan Huygen van Linschoten, from his 1596 expedition to India. These two objects from German collections display a fascination with the discovery and colonisation of new lands, as well as exotic plants and animals, and the character of the depictions are highly consistent with the contemporaneous subject of colonial conquests. Such objects often became part of Wunderkammern as curiosités: unique, rare and luxurious objects of artificialia.[32] This type of artefact – naturalia transformed by goldsmithing – were not only objects of awe but also media for conveying metaphorical meanings, with short stories woven into their decorations.[33]

Ostrich eggs – or vessels imitating their shape – can often be seen in paintings of the interiors of doctors' surgeries or apothecary shops, where vessels resembling ostrich eggs can be identified on the shelves (see, for example, Isaak Koedijck's painting, *The Barber-Surgeon*, 1649–50, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston).[34] In the collections of apothecary museums one can find large collections of this type of vessel – which are in fact not eggshells but albarello pottery from Spain. There are also Mauritian–Italian examples (such as an albarello showing an the enema scene from Deruta, Umbria, eighteenth century) and French products. A Spanish apothecary pitcher presents a scene of administering an enema, with an inscription bearing the words of the owner of the pitcher instructing his servant to perform the procedure on him (circa 1600, The British Museum, Sir Henry Wellcome's Museum Collection, London).

---

[29] Engraved decorations highlighted with dark pigment observed on a phenician egg depicting hoplites, seventh century BCE, British Museum 1850, 0227.9. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1850-0227-9

[30] https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/219349

[31] https://www.museumsfernsehen.de/neuerwerbung-ein-graviertes-straussenei-aus-dem-fruehen-17-jahrhundert-deutsches-historisches-museum/

Primarily, the egg belonged to the collection of Oettinger princes. The ostrich egg and the travelling book were presented at the Was ist Aufklärung? Fragen an das 18. Jahrhundert exhibition (opened 18 October 2024 in Pei-Bau Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin)

[32] PHILIPPOVICH, Eugen von. *Kuriositäten, Antiquitäten. Ein Handbuch für Sammler und Liebhaber*. Braunschweig, 1966.

[33] See, for example, the early eighteenth-century nautilus from the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, which is covered in inscriptions and scenes of an erotic nature; E. Zuroski, Nautilus Cups and Unstill Life, *Journal 18*, 3 (2017) DOI: 10.30610/3.2017.3 https://www.journal18.org/issue3/nautilus-cups-and-unstill-life/#_edn38

[34] https://collections.mfa.org/objects/333601/the-barbersurgeon?ctx=a3815175-91fa-4931-a96d-31099bd72c3d&idx=0

Enema as not only a medical procedure

An enema is a form of treatment described in medical sources, but has also been present in art and literature since Antiquity, presented not only as a medical treatment but from a satirical point of view. The scene from Kozłówka can be interpreted in the context of the customs and morals of its era. This procedure – known and used for millennia in various civilisations – earned the rank of a vital, not only medical, but also ritual ceremony, bringing health both physically and spiritually.[35] Enemas are listed in historical medical documents such as the Papyrus of Edwin Smith and the Papyrus of Ebers (sixteenth century BCE), as well as in the works of Galen, Hippocrates, Herodotus and Celsus. It was believed that cleansing facilitated the emptying of the bowels, thereby evacuating toxic accretions which caused illnesses. Beliefs assuming a connection between the presence of stool in the organism and illness lingered for centuries. In the second century CE, Galen wrote that humours of the organism turn into human faeces which require regular defecation in order to dispose of illnesses. Enemas were used to ease headaches, colds, suppuration, kidney inflammation and stones, gout, hepatitis and even help with sexual dysfunctions and in maintaining or regaining clarity of mind. They were also used as a method of administering medications (Egypt, Greece) and nutrients. In antiquity it was advised to use enemas quite often. In Mesopotamia there was a special type of doctor called the "Guardian of the Royal Anus". In Egypt, the ibis-headed god Thot was said by Pilny the Elder to have discovered the enema.[36] The act of cleansing had an almost religious meaning, hence its importance in the cultures of Egypt, Mesopotamia, China and Mayan civilisation.[37] In Greek–Roman culture enemas were used to cleanse and to administer astringent agents, relaxants, softening agents and nutrients, as well as dewormers. Enemas were also used to introduce cleansing and medicinal substances into the vagina and the bladder. In his *De medicina*, Aulus Cornelius Celsus (first century CE), who discovered the nourishing function of enemas, warned against overusing these procedures, especially by women who used them as beauty treatments for a better complexion and weight loss.[38] In the fourteenth century, Master Henri de Mondeville (d. 1316), surgeon of Philip IV of France, as well as Guy de Chauliac practiced such treatments among their patients.[39]

At the end of the sixteenth century, the surgeon Ambroise Paré (1510–1590) stated that only barbers and apothecaries should administer enemas, since the procedure was too unclean and undignified to be performed by a doctor. Quite the opposite rule was implemented in France in 1774 and soon after in Holland, allowing only doctors to administer enemas.[40]

In the Early Modern period, in European medical universities including Leiden, scientific works were written regarding the manner of performing enemas and their medical importance, especially in the cases of "uterine hysteria". One such author was Regnier de Graaf (dec. 1673), a Dutch doctor, author of *De virorum organis generationi inservientibus, de clijsteribus et de usu*

[35] FRIEDENWALD, Julius and MORRISON, Samuel, The History of the Enema with Some Notes on Related Procedures. Part I. In: *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 8(1), 1940, pp. 68–114.
[36] FRIEDENWALD and MORRISON, The History of …, pp. 69–71. DOYLE, Derek, Per Rectum: A History of Enemata. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 35(4), 2005, pp. 367–370.
[37] DE SMET, Peter A.G.M., HELLMUTH, Nicholas M., A multidisciplinary approach to ritual enema scenes on ancient Maya pottery, *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 16, 1986, pp. 213–262. DOYLE, Per Rectum…, pp. 367–370.
[38] SPIVACK, Barney S., A. C. Celsus: Roman Medicus. In: *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 46, 1991, pp. 144.
[39] FRIEDENWALD and MORRISON, The History of …, p. 79.
[40] DOYLE, Per Rectum…, p. 368.

siphonis in anatomia (1668).[41] He invented a simplified syringe to make the procedure safer and possible for individuals to perform on their own.[42] The position of the body the patient was to adopt was also considered important. Some doctors advised lying flat on one's back, some lying on the left side, while others – on the right. As to who administered the infusions, it was predominantly the task of apothecaries or barbers, under the strict supervision of medics. Before the invention of the syringe, enemas were applied using a tool made from leather or a pig bladder with a tube made from a reed or a hollowed-out plant stem. However, this brought discomfort to the patients and required two people to administer. De Graaf's invention of a syringe with a soft, flexible tube in the late seventeenth century brought an effective solution. One of the risks involved in the procedure involved patient moving, causing the tube to fall out or be improperly introduced, which could lead to laceration or even perforation of the anus. Thanks to the syringe, patients could now introduce the tube by themselves, entailing less pain and risk and removing the need to expose oneself to others. De Graaf decided that apothecaries' duty was now only to provide the equipment and substances for the decoctions and infusions, not to assist with or indeed administer enemas. He also prepared a classification of enemas: softening, purgative, relaxant, astringing, nourishing.[43]

The seventeenth century – the probable period of origin of the Kozłówka egg – was called the century of the enema.[44] Irrigations of the vagina, the uterus and the bladder were also popular. Enemas were used to treat uterine hysteria, an affliction assumed to be associated with so-called lovesickness (love melancholy).[45] It was the beginning of a trend for enemas, especially among the aristocracy. They were used by women as beauty treatments, and numerous French monarchs tried to improve their health in this manner, including Louis XIII and Louis XIV. In France enemas were used to improve one's beauty using infusions with aromatic decoctions, and even smoke. The same was practiced by medics such as John Gerard, who mentions the favourable effects of enemas in his work *Herball* (1633).[46]

The procedure is also mentioned in Renaissance and Baroque literature (e.g., in Dutch stories concerning social relations among families, married couples and young women). An anonymous Dutch story characterised by humour and irony tells of two sisters, Neeltje and Tryntje, who claimed to have a stomach ache joyfully accepted enemas conducted by their neighbour Knelis.[47] Lovesickness and its remedies – in this case, an enema – are discussed in one of Thomas Asselyn's plays, *Jan Klaasz of gewaande dienstmaagt* (1682).

Lovesickness and enema as a countermeasure

Decorating such a bizarre, unique object as an ostrich egg with a scene of an enema suggests that the importance of this subject went beyond the presentation of a mere treatment. The

[41] De GRAAF, Regnerus; De virorum organis generationi inservientibus, de clijsteribus et de usu siphonis in anatomia, Lugd. Batav. et Roterod. Leiden and Rotterdam: Officina Hackiana, 1668.
[42] LORIAUX, Regnier de Graaf…, pp. 61–68.
[43] FRIEDENWALD and MORRISON, The History of …, pp. 84–95.
[44] DIXON, Some Penetrating…, p. 28; LIEBERMAN, William, The Enema. In: *The Revue of Gastroenterology*, 13, 1946, pp. 215–229.
[45] MARCZUK-SZWED, Barbara, Miłość i medycyna we francuskiej literaturze renesansowej. In: ŚNIEŻYŃSKA-STOLOT Ewa (ed), *Spotkania Klubu Historii Idei 2004–2007*. T. 2, Kraków 2009, pp. 97–98.
[46] LIEBERMAN, The Enema....
[47] Het Vermakelyk Bagyn-Hof, Amsterdam 1739, pp. 90–91 Available at: https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ver046verm02_01/_ver046verm02_01_0051.php?q=GEKLISTEERT%20%20*%20HET%20KLISTEREN#hl1 (accessed: 8 May 2025).

Kozłówka artefact corresponds with an array of works of art in which enemas are a recurring motif.[48] Many offered a metaphorical depiction of a sexual intercourse of an illegal, socially and morally improper nature, usually with a young woman at its centre.

In painting, the lovesick individual is typically a young woman brought by her guardians or parents, attended by a medic or apothecary bearing a uroscopy flask and an enema syringe.[49] Lovesickness manifested in sadness, paleness and apathy was thought to be caused by excess "black bile" which gathers and affects the lower organs of the abdominal cavity. Female maladies were labelled "hysteria", blaming the uterus not the other organs of the abdominal cavity. The Greek word *ustera* (uterus) was used to call the affliction *uterine hysteria*. This condition was believed to take place if the uterus was separated or inflamed due to movement inside the organism,[50] causing discomfort by warming and suddenly squeezing other internal organs, interpreted as an "attack" or a "paroxysm". The symptoms were treated using vaginal irrigations, which were also performed to prevent unplanned pregnancy. Ancient Egyptians attributed numerous symptoms suffered by women to the "hunger" of the uterus. Similarly, in the Early Modern era, the affliction was present most often in widows, lonely young women and nuns – those without means to fulfil their feelings, also in a strictly physical, sexual manner. Remedies included enemas and also marriage (advised to young women). Avoiding marriage also led to imbalances in the body's humours. The sensations experienced during these procedures, as well as the decoctions (usually herbal), were to have a healing effect. Fumigations were used to regulate the balance of fluids in the organism by treating the lower part of the body with sweet-scented fumes. There are even records of attempts to fumigate a prolapsed uterus in order to return it to its place. From the times of Trota of Salerno (eleventh century CE) it was believed that vaginal infusions cooled down and hydrated a hot uterus.-

Enemas thus became a metaphor for the sexual desires of young women, growing to the rank of a remedy that helped improve the condition of their bodies and minds. This motif is abundantly present in paintings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries presenting alcoves and bedrooms where young ladies recline, taking pleasure in receiving an enema.[51] In the context of the period, the Kozłówka egg decoration can thus be perceived as a social commentary, full of irony, humour and a critical way of looking at social behaviours. Doctors warned against unjustified use of enemas, understanding the danger to patients' health. What is more, in the social sense enemas were also considered to cause abortions, or to serve as a metaphor for the sexual act – both raising objections in Dutch society. In multiple paintings, a sneer on the face of the doctor or of a background figure pointing to the syringe suggests that the young lady is not suffering from any serious illness and the enema is likely (a) a countermeasure against an unwanted pregnancy (Godefridus Schalcken, *The Doctor's Examination*, 1680–85, Hague, Mauritshuis[52]); (b) a remedy apparently much desired by patients (Abraham Bosse, *Woman About to Receive a Clyster*, ca. 1632–34, etching, The British Museum,

[48] DIXON, Laurinda S., Some Penetrating Insights: The Imagery of Enemas in Art. In: *Art Journal*, 52(3), 1993, pp. 28–35

[49] PETTERSON, Einar, Amans Amanti Medicus: Das Genremotiv "Der ärztliche Besuch" in seinem kulturhistorischen Kontext. Berlin 2001, pp. 390– 403.

[50] DIXON, Some Penetrating…, p. 29. TOOHEY, Peter, Love, Lovesickness, and Melancholia. In: *Illinois Classical Studies*, 17(2), 1992, pp. 265–286, esp. 265–275.

[51] Aliamet, François-Germain (1734–1790) according to the drawing by Jeaurat, Etienne (1699–1789), La Remede, copperplate, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig. http://www.virtuelles-kupferstichkabinett.de/de/detail-view

[52] SEVCIK, Die ärztliche Konsultation…, pp. 128–131.

London;[53] Jan Steen, *Doctor's Visit*, 1665; Jan Steen, *The Sick Woman*, 1660, Rotterdam, Boijmans van Beuningen); or (c) a medium for sexual inuendo, as in the work by Abraham Bosse, with the erotic undertone of the words spoken by the young man holding the syringe, who reassures the patient that she will be "lively" as a result of his medical treatment, since she is "in heat" and his tool is designed to enter her delicately.[54] The estimated time of origin of the Kozłówka artefact overlaps with the period when using enemas for pleasure, as well as plain hygiene, was popular, confirming that this scene fits the recurring painting topos in the European graphic arts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[55]

The meaning of the candle held by one of the figures assisting in the enema procedure casts an interesting light upon the way this scene can be interpreted. Is it only typical assistance, or could it be an allusion to the contemporaneous saying, "Gone is the flame, gone is the shame", which means that if there are no witnesses, it is easier for the woman to act inappropriately (*Sentit adagium mulieres plerasque esse impudicas si detur facultas sine teste peccandis*).[56] In a scene involving the administration of an enema, a candle held too close to the body could reveal too much, illuminating what should remain hidden, unseen, modestly covered. A contrary report can be found in the medical treaty by doctor Ambrose Pare (1634): "there are many who shall not be persuaded to show their buttocks to the person that should administer the enema, and stupid bashfulness is to their inconvenience."[57]

The legible fragments on the Kozłówka egg suggest that the inscriptions concern the enema procedure and the pain it may cause when administered incorrectly. The text could be interpreted more metaphorically, meaning that administering the enema is erroneous and unnecessary, since the real cure is love, fulfilled both emotionally and physically. Maybe its goal lies not in improving the patient's health but in highlighting very personal reasons unrelated to any somatic discomfort? This would have been especially likely in the eighteenth century, when enemas were officially criticised due to their excessive use for reasons resembling entertainment, due to the health risks involved, and because they challenged social norms.[58] Marriage, on the other hand, was determined to be the best cure for uteral hysteria.

A bold way to interpret the object would be to juxtapose the egg as a symbol of life, with the abortive character of the enema, since the inscription around the scene clearly states that the enema is "erroneous". Perhaps the two missing scenes represented a quite contrary meaning? The lack of analogous examples of artefacts presenting similar scenes, the fragmented condition of the Kozłówka egg, and the incomplete remnants of the inscriptions do not allow an unequivocal assessment of such interpretations.

It is important to consider the cultural background of this artefact, the context in which it was created, its origin and the meaning of the inscriptions. These lines of study map out the directions of research to find connections between images, texts and the psychological and social trends of the epoch. It is also vital to inquire about the goal behind the creation of such

[53] https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1866-0407-805

[54] DIXON, Some Penetrating…, p. 32

[55] Frivolous Rococco engravings Pierre Maleuvre after Pierre-Antoine Baudouin (1740–1803), Le curieux and Niclas Lafrensen.

[56] DE JONGH, Eddy, Erotica in vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinnigheid van een reeks 17de eeuwse genrevoorstellingen [Double Entendre in some Seventeenth-Century Genre Subjects]. In: *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 3(1), 1968/1969, pp. 22–74, esp. 47.

[57] DIXON, Some Penetrating…, p. 29.

[58] A French engraving by Dicuelt, presenting a man holding an enema syringe, intending to apply it to an elegant woman, refers to the enema in its inscription as L'Agrdement aux dames [the ladies' amusement].

an object and its function from the viewpoint of the contemporaneous recipient, the customer. Was it supposed to be a humorous trinket with social commentary on the times? Or was it intended to amaze, intrigue or even embarrass?

The Early Modern period was filled with popular emblems presenting universal truths and cautionary tales, often shown in a social context through realistic scenes, depictions and attributes with relevant text.[59] The message provided a lesson, sometimes in the form of a humorous maxim, other times in a serious and universal way. In this regard, the Kozłówka egg can be considered a medium for the educational art of emblems. This suggestion can be supported by the three depictions set in the upper section of the egg: the angel, the guardian and the vessel.[60]

Conclusions: Decorated ostrich eggs in modern Europe, as objets croisés and "*cultural migrators*"

The unique character of the Kozłówka artefact is highlighted by its extraordinary, exotic medium as ostrich eggs were difficult to obtain and there was a limited supply in Europe. The egg is an example of artificialia, objects valued for their quality and for the craftsmanship needed to create such decorations.

It is important to take into account the combination of its extravagance, unique form, and the character and subject matter of the decorations, as well as the content of the inscription. Only then one can attempt to understand the function and sense of this object to a contemporary recipient. Its luxurious character should also be contemplated in relation to the people for whom it was created. The egg from Kozłówka represents not only a type of *curiosité*, it can also be described as an *objet croisés*[61] or, as proposed by Martin Kemp, a *cultural migrator*.[62] These terms indicate objects which travelled through and into new cultural areas, relocating their primary meaning and gaining more intertwined meanings in new contexts. This was certainly true of the egg from Kozłówka, which was not a mere trinket but, from the moment of its creation in the European cultural sphere, acted as a medium for contemporary social content. It represents an entanglement of different and distant cultural traditions, expressing fascination regarding anything Far Eastern; it belongs to the ancient tradition of decorating ostrich eggs and expresses the transference of these objects into the cultural context of European cabinets of naturalia, or Wunderkammern. Such objects were admired, since they represented an intertwining of the marvellous variety of cabinets of curiosities – of all that is beautiful, artistically intricate and surprising – with what is natural, real, rare, distant and exotic. Moreover, the social context of the enema motif adds a new level of interpretation, encouraging the researcher to search for

[59] One of the most popular works regarding marriage, full of maxims, love codes and moral symbols regarding the culture and society of the Netherlands of the beginning of the seventeenth century, is by Jacob Cats, Houwelyck, Middelburg 1625. Another example is the genre iconography in De BRUNES, J., *Emblemata, of Zinne-werck: vorghestelt, in beelden, ghedichten, en breeder uijt-legginghen, tot uijt-druckinghe, en verbeteringhe van verscheijden feijlen onser eeuwe*, Amsterdam 1661: Bij Abraham Latham boeckverkoper op't Rockin, op't hoeckje van de Lange brug steegh. https://archive.org/details/iohannisdebrunes00brune/page/n10/mode/1up

[60] The meaning of vessels, pots in the context of female corporeality and morality. DE JONGH, Eddy, Erotica in…, p. 47.

[61] CLARK, Leah R., Objets croisés: Albarelli as Vessels of Mediation Within and Beyond the Spezieria. In: *Études Épistémè Revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe–XVIIIe siècles)*, 36, 2019, pp. 1–4.

[62] KEMP, Martin, Wrought by No Artist's Hand': The Natural, the Artificial, the Exotic, and the Scientific in Some Artifacts from the Renaissance. In: FARAGO, Claire (ed). *Reframing the Renaissance Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450–1650*. New Haven and London 1995, pp. 177–196.

analogies in works of art in which this motif was present. The transcultural flux of meanings in this type of artefact shows how an ostrich egg can become a "cultural migrator", a *croisés* object, combining multi-layered analyses and interpretations from the histories of medicine, art, emblems, literature, social culture and customs.

In the case of the Kozłówka egg, its decorations represent an intriguing exhibit typical of the culture of the seventeenth century. It should be kept in mind that underlying the origin of such unique objects, as well as the creation of cabinets of curiosities, is an ideal–intellectual concept that unites elements belonging to different scientific fields and spheres of interest, and analyses them in the context of a network of various, sometimes distant, sciences and disciplines. It is not possible to decide whether the Kozłówka egg was an object of humour, a toy or a curiosity in a medical–social context – or even a moralistic lecture in a unique form. Certainly, decorated ostrich eggs expressed Baroque culture and educated those who saw them, inculcating a sense of curiosity towards the world, combined with a sense of play, imagination and open-mindedness regarding such artefacts.

Acknowledgments

I would like to wholeheartedly thank the employees of the Zamoyski Museum in Kozłówka for allowing me to photograph, analyse and interpret this object.

I am also grateful to Professor Marcin Polkowski from the Department of Netherlandish Literature, as well as Dr Kamila Tomaka (The Department of Dutch Language of the Catholic University of Lublin, Institute of Linguistics) for their kindness, consultations and invaluable advice.

References

BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX (2000). *Kazania o Najświętszej Maryi Pannie*, translated by Ildefons Bobicz. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo AA. ISBN 978-83-7864-002-8

BOCK, Sebastian (2002). *The 'Egg' of the Pala Montefeltro by Piero della Francesca and Its Symbolic Meaning*. Freiburg am Br.-Heidelberg: Universitatsbibliothek Heidelberg, pp. 1–20. http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/3123/1/PieroEgg.pdf

BRISSON, Dawid W. (1980). Piero della Francesca's Egg Again. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 62(2), pp. 284–286. ISSN 00043079

BRUNES DE, JOHANNIS (1661). *Emblemata, of Zinne-werck: vorghestelt, in beelden, ghedichten, en breeder uijt-legginghen, tot uijt-druckinghe, en verbeteringhe van verscheijden feijlen onser eeuwe*, Amsterdam: Bij Abraham Latham boeckverkoper op't Rockin, op't hoeckje van de Lange brug steegh.

CATS, Jacob (1625). *Houwelyck*, Middelburg: Jan Pietersz. vande Venne.

CLARK, Leah R. (2019). Objets croisés: Albarelli as Vessels of Mediation Within and Beyond the Spezieria. In: *Études Épistémè Revue de littérature et de civilisation (XVIe – XVIIIe siècles)*, 36: 1-25. https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.6292

De JONGH, Eddy. *Erotica in vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinnigheid van een reeks 17de eeuwse genrevoorstellinge*n [Erotica from a bird's-eye view: Double Entendre in Some seventeenth-Century Genre Subjects]. In: *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 3(1), pp. 22–74. https://doi.org/10.2307/3780472

De SMET, Peter A.G.M., HELLMUTH Nicholas M. (1986). A multidisciplinary approach to ritual enema scenes on ancient maya pottery). In: *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 16, pp. 213–262. https://flaar-mesoamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/enema-ritual-enema-scenes-on-ancient-Maya-vases-ceramics-De-Smet-and-Hellmuth-1986.pdf

DIXON, Laurinda S. (1993). Some Penetrating Insights: The Imagery of Enemas in Art. In: *Art Journal* 52(3), pp. 28–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1993.10791520

DOYLE, Derek (2005). Per Rectum: A History of Enemata. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 35(4), pp. 367–370. https://doi.org/10.1177/14782715200535040 08.

EZZ EL-DIN, Dina M. (2020). Ostrich Eggs of Predynastic Egypt. In: *Journal of the General Association of the Arab Archeologists*, 11(11), pp. 40–56. https://doi.org/10.21608/ JGUAA.2010.2754. Accessed 8 May 2025 at: https://jguaa.journals.ekb.eg/ article_2754_9a36080136c91901261c665144ee1d0d.pdf

FRANTIS, Wayne E. (1993). *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ISBN 0-521-43129-8.

FRIEDENWALD, Julius and Morrison Samuel (1940). The History of the Enema with Some Notes on Related Procedures. Part I. In: *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 8(1), pp. 68–114. ISSN: 1086-3176.

GILBERT, Creighton E. (1974). The Egg Reopened Again. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 56(2), pp. 252–258. ISSN. 0004-3079.

GOŁGOWSKI, Tadeusz (2004). De lucernis et de ovis struthiocamelinis – symbolika jaj strusich w kościołach wschodniochrześcijańskich. In: Zbigniew KOBYLIŃSKI Zbigniew and Wojciech BRZEZIŃSKI (eds). *Hereditatem cognoscere. Studia i szkice dedykowane Profesor Marii Miśkiewicz.* Warszawa: Letter Quality, pp. 21–26. ISBN: 83-917894-5-4

GRAAF de, Regnerus (1668). *De virorum organis generationi inservientibus, de clijsteribus et de usu siphonis in anatomia*, Lugd. Batav. et Roterod. [Leiden and Rotterdam]: Officina Hackiana 1668.

GREEN, Nile (2006) Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam. In: *Al-Masāq* 18(1), pp. 27–78. e-ISSN 1473-348X.

HERLES, Michael (2007). Der Vogel Strauß in den Kulturen Altvorderasiens. In: *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, no 139, pp. 173–212. https://www.orient-gesellschaft.de/repositorium/MDOG/MDOG_139.pdf

Het Vermakelyk Bagyn-Hof (1739). Amsterdam: Weduwe Jacobus van Egmont, pp. 90–91. Available at: https://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ver046verm02_01/_ver046verm02_01_0051.php (accessed: 8 May 2025).

HODOS, Tamar et al. (2020). The Origins of Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean and Middle East. In: *Antiquity*, 94(374), pp. 381–400. https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2020.14

HOFER, Ricarda (2019). Sie Sammeln und Sie Tauschen: Schloss Ambras als Knotenpunkt eines Europäischen Netzwerks Kunstaffiner Fürstenhöfe der Spätrenaissance. In: *Historia Scribere* 11: 301–321.

JÉKELY, Zsombor (2015). Ostrich Egg Cup of Christopher Bathory. *Jekely.blogspot.com,* October. Accessed 8 May 2025 at: https://jekely.blogspot.com/2015/10/ostrich-egg-cup-of-christopher-bathory.html

JURKOWLANIEC, Tadeusz (2009). Strusie jaja w Prusach. Z badań nad średniowieczną ikonografią maryjną. In: *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki*, 71(1–2), pp. 5-33. ISSN 0006-3967

KAMIŃSKA, Lidia M. (2016). Powojenne Składnice Przemieszczanych Dóbr Kultury w Polsce. Przyczynek do Szerszego Opracowania. In: *Muzealnictwo*, 57, pp. 74–80. ISSN 0464-1086

KEMP, Martin (1995). Wrought by No Artist's Hand': The Natural, the Artificial, the Exotic, and the Scientific in Some Artifacts from the Renaissance. In: Farago Claire (ed). *Reframing the Renaissance Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450-1650*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, pp. 177–196. ISBN: 0300062958

KOBIELUS, Stanisław (2005). *Fizjologi i Aviarium: Średniowieczne traktaty o symbolice zwierząt*. Kraków: Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów. ISBN 83-7354-107-1

KORNACKI, Krzysztof (ed.) (2004). *Muzea rezydencje w Polsce. materiały sesji naukowej zorganizowanej w Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce 14-16 października 2004* r. Kozłówka: Muzeum Zamoyskich w Kozłówce. ISBN 83-919292-2-1.

KOYAMA, Tomiyasu and TENNYSON, Alan J.D. (2016). Respiratory Pores on Ostrich Struthio camelus (Aves: Struthionidae) Eggshells. In: *Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology*, 923, pp. 51–55. E-ISSN 2214-8019.

LAUFER, Berthold (1926). *Ostrich Egg-Shell Cups of Mesopotamia and the Ostrich in Ancient and Modern Times*. In: Anthropology leaflet, 23. Chicago: Field Museum of Natural History. https://dn790009.ca.archive.org/0/items/ostricheggshellc24lauf/ostricheggshellc24lauf.pdf

LIEBERMAN, William (1946). The Enema. In: *The Revue of Gastroenterology*, 13, pp. 215–29. ISSN 0096-2929

LORIAUX, Lynn (2016). Regnier de Graaf 1641–1673. In: LORIAUX Lynn (ed). *A Biographical History of Endocrinology*. Washington: Endocrine Society and John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. pp 61–68. Online ISBN: 9781119205791 |DOI:10.1002/9781119205791

MARCZUK-SZWED, Barbara (2009). Miłość i medycyna we francuskiej literaturze renesansowej. In: ŚNIEŻYŃSKA-STOLOT Ewa (ed). *Spotkania Klubu Historii Idei 2004-2007* T. 2. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, pp. 97–102. ISBN 978-83-233-2641-0

MEISS, Millard (1954). Addendum Ovologicum. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 36(3), pp. 221–222. ISSN 0004-3079 E-ISSSN 1559-6478

MEISS, Millard (1975). Not an Ostrich Egg? In: *The Art Bulletin*, 57(1), p. 116. ISSN 0004-3079 E-ISSSN 1559-6478

MENZHAUSEN, Joachim (1968). Das Grüne Gewölbe. In: Erich Steingräber (ed), *Schatzkammern Europas. Weltliche Schatzkammern*. München: Hirmer, pp. 59–66, Figs 81–96.

MISSINNE, Stefaan (2020). *The Da Vinci Globe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN 1-5275-1134-0.

OCZKO, Piotr (2020). *Bezem en kruis. De Hollandse schoonmaakcultuur of de geschiedenis van een obsessive*. Leiden: Primavera Pers. ISBN 978-90-5997-326-8.

PANOFSKY, Erwin (1966). *Early Netherlandish Painting, its Origin and Character*. Vol. I. Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press. ISBN 0802016308

PETTERSON, Einar (2001). *Amans Amanti Medicus: Das Genremotiv „Der ärztliche Besuch" in seinem kulturhistorischen Kontext*. Berlin: Gebr. Mann. ISBN 3786118086.

PHILIPPOVICH, Eugen von (1966). *Kuriositäten, Antiquitäten. Ein Handbuch für Sammler und Liebhaber*. Braunschweig: Klinkhardt and Biermann. ISBN 10: 3781400336 / ISBN 13: 9783781400337.

POMIAN, Krzysztof (2001). *Zbieracze i osobliwości: Paryż-Wenecja XVI-XVIII wiek;* translated by Andrzej PIEŃKOS. Lublin: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej. ISBN 83-227-1764-4.

POTTS, Daniel T. (2001). Ostrich Distribution and Exploitation in the Arabian Peninsula. In: *Antiquity*, 75(287), pp. 182–190. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00052881.

RAGUSA, Isa (1971). The Egg Reopened. In: *The Art Bulletin*, 53(4), pp. 435–443. https://doi.org/10.2307/3048899.

RATHJE, Anette (1986). Five Ostrich Eggs from Vulci. In: SWADDLING Judith (ed). *Italian Iron Age Artefacts in the British Museum*. Papers of the Sixth British Museum Classical Colloquium 1982. London: British Museum Press, pp. 397–404. ISBN 0714112747, 9780714112749.

SAYED, Kitat S.E. (2014). Ostrich Egg and Its Symbolic Meaning in the Ancient Egyptian Monastery Churches. In: *Journal of the General Union of Arab Archaeologists*, 15(1), pp. 23–41. Available at: https://journals.ekb.eg/article_3088_2896b3b73097d1bd92a006489b7f4da6.pdf (accessed: 8 May 2025).

SCHEICHER, Elisabeth (1995). Zur Ikonologie von Naturalien im Zusammenhang der Enzyklopädischen Kunstkammer. In: *Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums und Berichte aus dem Forschungsinstitut für Realienkunde*, pp. 115–124. http://www.rhinoresourcecenter.com/pdf_files/127/1278631105.pdf ISSN: 0934-519

SEVCIK Anja K. (ed). (2015). *Schalcken - Gemalte Verführung*. Stuttgart: Belser Verlag. ISBN 3763027211

SPIVACK, Barney S. (1991). A. C. Celsus: Roman Medicus. In: *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 46, pp. 143–157. DOI: 10.1093/jhmas/46.2.143.

STRUŻYŃSKA, Katarzyna (2016). *Curiositas* jako kategoria kultury barokowej (XVI-XVII wieku). In: *Meluzyna*, 1(4), pp. 35–51. I*SSN* 2449-7339.

TEXIER, Pierre-Jean et al. (2010). A Howiesons Poort Tradition of Engraving Ostrich Eggshell Containers Dated to 60,000 Years Ago at Diepkloof Rockshelter, South Africa. In: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA*, 107(14), pp. 6180–6185. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0913047107.

THOMA, Hans (1958). *Schatzkammer der Residenz München: Katalog*. München: Bayerische Verwaltung der Staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen.

TOOHEY, Peter (1992). Love, Lovesickness, and Melancholia. In: *Illinois Classical Studies*, 17(2), pp. 265-286. ISSN: 0363-1923 https://www.jstor.org/stable/23064324?seq=1.

WINTERBOTTOM, Matthew (2015). *Treasures of the Goldsmith's Art: The Michael Wellby Bequest to the Ashmolean Museum*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications. ISBN 9781910807019.

WOŹNIAK, Michał (1991). O naturaliach w sztuce złotniczej. In: CHOJECKA, Ewa (ed). In: *Sztuka a natura. Materiały XXXVIII Sesji Naukowej Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki*, Katowice 23–25 listopada 1989, Katowice, pp.191–206. ISBN 83-85039-89-9.

ZIMMERMAN, Michael R. (2017). Practicing Medicine in Ancient Egypt. In: *Juniata Voices* 17, pp. 144–152. ISSN. 1068-8498. https://www.juniata.edu/offices/juniata-voices/media/volume-17/vol17-Zimmerman.pdf

ZUROSKI, Eugenia (2017). Nautilus Cups and Unstill Life. In: *Journal 18*, issue 3. (online) DOI: 10.30610/3.2017.

Nikifor's Work at the Krynica Zdrój Museum as an Example of Twentieth-Century Lemko Naive Painting

Ion Sandu – Krystyna Paprzyca – Oleksandr Kashchenko – Valerii Tovbych

Doctor, Professor Ion Sandu
Academy of Romanian Scientists AOSR,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Interdisciplinary Research Institute – Science Department,
National Institute for Research and Development in Environmental Protection,
Romanian Inventors Forum, Rumunia
e-mail: ion.sandu@uaic.ro
ORCID: 0000-0003-4088-8967

Doctor of Science (Architecture), Professor Krystyna Paprzyca,
Academy of Silesia, Faculty of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Applied Arts, Katowice, Poland
e-mail: kpaprzyca@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0003-0112-1456

Doctor of Science (Technical Science), Professor Oleksandr Kashchenko,
Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, Ukraine
e-mail: kashchenko.ov@knuba.edu.ua
ORCID: 0000-0001-8570-264X

Doctor of Science (Architecture), Professor Valerii Tovbych,
Kyiv National University of Construction and Architecture, Ukraine
e-mail: tovbych@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-4794-4944

Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2026, 2026,14:2:71–81
doi: 10.46284/mkd.2026.14.2.5

Nikifor's Work at the Krynica Zdrój Museum as an Example of Twentieth-Century Lemko Naive Painting
This article analyses the activities of the memorial museum of the self-taught artist Nikifor Krynica, whose real name is Epifaniusz Drowniak. The museum's uniqueness lies in its location in a historic wooden villa called Romanówka, which lends the museum an authentic atmosphere.
The importance of Nikifor's paintings lies not in the mastery of techniques or colour, but in their authenticity to the lands of his native Lemko region. On the other hand, his sketches and watercolours provide insight into everyday life and society at different times; they depict real architectural objects, some of which have not survived. In this case, the artist's paintings become an important cultural, historical, and restorative source of information.

Keywords: Nikifor Krynicki, Krynica Zdrój, Lemko culture, self-taught artist, naive painting.

Introduction

The twentieth century is associated with the multiplicity of styles in both architecture and art, in contrast to previous centuries. The twentieth century was a time of development and popularisation of folk art and so-called naive painting, which came to reach a wide audience. One of the outstanding artists of the naive painting style was Nikifor Krynicki.

Nikifor was a member of the Lemko ethnic group, who mainly inhabit an area across today's Ukraine, Poland, Slovakia. The research presented in this article aims to expand knowledge about the artist's work, analyse his creative approach, both in graphic art and watercolour; and

examine the foundations of the exhibition at the Nikifor Museum in Krynica Zdrój.

The research objectives included:

- analysing the influence of external factors and his living conditions on the formation and development of his artistic style;
- examining the various thematic directions of his work (landscapes of his native places, churches, buildings, self-portraits, scenes from life);
- analysing the techniques used to create his works; and
- examining the organisational foundations of the Nikifor Museum exhibition and its importance in expanding the Lemko folk art.

To meet these objectives, a list of sources was prepared according to the following directions: works concerned with the general question of art in general and naive art in particular;[1] works devoted to the study of Nikifor Krynicki's biography;[2]

3) publications dedicated to the study of Nikifor's work;[3] and

4) publications about the Nikifor Museum.[4]

Materials and methods

The study applied methods of historical analysis, cultural analysis, art history analysis, comparative analysis and photo fixation, as well as interviews of specialists and researchers of Nikifor's work and field surveys.

Through this combination of methods, it was possible to identity specific aspects of the Nikifor Krynick's creative stylei, analyse his creative output over the years, and establish what exactly constituted the "Nikifor phenomenon" and his sudden recognition in the world.

---

[1] BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto. *Masters of Naive Art: A History and Worldwide Survey*. Russell M. Stockman, trans. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1971; BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto. *Das naive Bild der Welt*. Cologne: M. DuMont, 1959, pp. 146–147; BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto, TOMASEVIC, Nebojsa-Bato. World Encyclopedia of Naive Art: a hundred years of naive art. London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1984, pp. 453–454; GRYGLEWSKI, Piotr, IVASHKO, Yulia, CHERNYSHEV, Denis, CHANG, Peng, DMYTRENKO, Andrii. Art as a message realized through various means of artistic expression. In: *Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts*, 2020, XXII, pp. 57–88; PETULLO, Anthony. *Self-taught and Outsider Art: The Anthony Petullo Collection*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

[2] BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor*. Warszawa: Arkady, 1984; BANACH, Andrzej, BANACH, Ella. *Historia o Nikiforze*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004; LESYTCH, Wadym. *Nykyfor z Krynytsi*. [*Nikifor of Krynica*]. München: Sučasnist, 1971. [In Ukrainian]; JACKOWSKI, Aleksandr. Notatki o Nikiforze. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1985, 3-4, pp. 227-236; BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor Mistrz z Krynicy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1957; BANACH, Andrzej. *Pamiątka z Krynicy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1959; BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor*. Warszawa: Arkady, 1984; MAJKOWSKA-SZAJER, Dorota. *Legenda o Nikiforze*, *2021*, https://www.muzea.malopolska.pl/en/articles/1276; MONROE, Gary. The Artist Formally Known as Nikifor. In: *Raw Vision*, 2008, 62, pp. 44–47; PLUTA, Wladyslaw. *Nikifor*. Olszanica: Bosz Publishing House, 2008; SLABOSHPYTSKYI, Mykhailo. Nykyfor iz Krynytsi [Nikifor of Krynica]. In: *Nauka i kultura*, 1990, 24, pp. 324–335. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZYRBUŁA, Maciej. Jeszcze o Nikiforze. Fakty, domysły o legendy. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1990, 1, pp. 37–48; WISŁOCKI, Seweryn (1985). Przyczynek do biografil Nikifora Drowniaka, nazwanego "Krynickim". In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1985, 3–4, pp. 219–226; WOLANIN, Zbigniew. *Nikifor*. Olszanica: Wydawnictwo BoSz, 2000.

[3] *From the Salzman Collection – Nikifor*, https://psymeet.com/Salzman/SalzmanCollection/Nikifor/index.html; MADEYSKI, Jerzy. *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne, 1970; SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24-30.

[4] *Muzeum Nikifora*, https://muzeum.sacz.pl/oddzialy/muzeum-nikifora; Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej. *Przewodnik po Muzeum Nikifora w Krynicy*. Nowy Sącz: Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej, 2024.

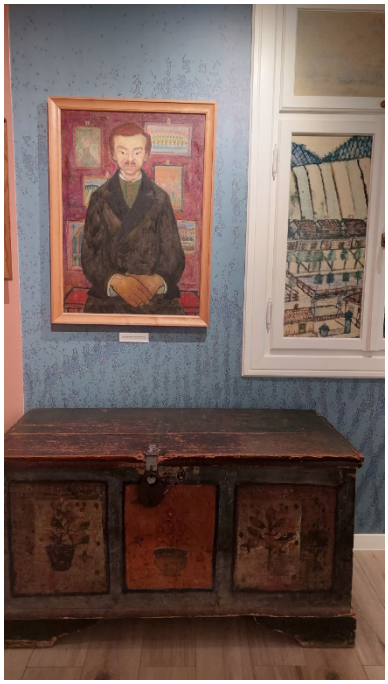

Fig. 1: *Portrait of Nikifor. Artist: Maria Dawska, 1950. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.*
Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

Analysing the influence of external factors and the conditions of his life on the formation and development of Nikifor's authorial style

Nikifor's artistic style was shaped by his personal history[5] and the circumstances of his life work.[6] In conducting this study, we focused not only the artistic but also the psychological phenomenon of the self-taught artist. Born with hearing and speech impairments and suffering from poverty for most of his life, Nikifor created his idealised world in art. In this world, unlike the real world, Nikifor held a prominent place.

The artist was born as Epifanius Drowniak on 21 May 1895 in Krynica; he died on 10 October 1968 in Folusz.

A large number of his self-portraits – where he portrays himself as an elegant artist, a soldier, an official, even a clergyman – played the role of a compensatory reaction to what he did not receive in real life. We emphasise this human, psychological aspect of his work because it is the only way to explain his desire to depict himself as an ideal person. It helps us understand why, in all his paintings, his figure is larger than that of others.

The curiosity surrounding Nikifor's work stems from the mysterious and unusual nature of his character (Fig. 1). For a long time, it was impossible to determine the artist's real name. Later, it was discovered that his mother's birth name was Jewdokia Drowniak. To this day, however, the origins of the surname Nikifor remain unknown. It is also unclear why he sometimes signed his paintings as Nikifor-Matejko.

We know little about Nikifor's family. The father's identity is unknown, and only his mother's diminutive name, Odocha, is known. Nikifor's private photo album contains only one photo of his mother. It is known that she was a poor, homeless peasant woman from the Lemko village of Krynica, and that it is from her that he inherited his hearing and speech impediments.

---

[5] BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor*. Warszawa: Arkady, 1984; BANACH, Andrzej, BANACH, Ella. *Historia o Nikiforze*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2004; LESYTCH, Wadym. *Nykyfor z Krynytsi*. [*Nikifor of Krynica*]. München: Sučasnist, 1971. [In Ukrainian]; JACKOWSKI, Aleksandr. Notatki o Nikiforze. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1985, 3-4, pp. 227-236; BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor Mistrz z Krynicy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1957; BANACH, Andrzej. *Pamiątka z Krynicy*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1959; BANACH, Andrzej. *Nikifor*. Warszawa: Arkady, 1984; SLABOSHPYTSKYI, Mykhailo. Nykyfor iz Krynytsi [Nikifor of Krynica]. In: *Nauka i kultura*, 1990, 24, pp. 324–335. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZYRBUŁA, Maciej. Jeszcze o Nikiforze. Fakty, domysły o legendy. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1990, 1, pp. 37–48; WISŁOCKI, Seweryn (1985). Przyczynek do biografil Nikifora Drowniaka, nazwanego "Krynickim". In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1985, 3–4, pp. 219–226; WOLANIN, Zbigniew. *Nikifor*. Olszanica: Wydawnictwo BoSz, 2000.

[6] *From the Salzman Collection – Nikifor*, 2025, https://psymeet.com/Salzman/SalzmanCollection/Nikifor/index.html; MADEYSKI, Jerzy. *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne, 1970; SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24-30.

These disabilities contributed to his problems at school, as his writing was incomprehensible and riddled with errors. However, from a young age, he considered his artistic work a mission and considered himself a professional artist. Nikifor had strong ties to Krynica, where he painted most of his paintings. However, among his paintings, one can also see landscapes of other nearby places and drawings from his travels.

Traditionally, Nikifor would sit in front of the Old Spa House or near the entrance to the New Mineral Baths with his portable workshop that packed into a wooden suitcase. From there, he offered his paintings, drawings and watercolours for sale to guests at the spa. However, his drawings remained of little interest to the public until the 1930s (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: *Graphic sketches, 1920s. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

His talent was spotted by Roman Turyn, a renowned Lviv artist who was the first to collect Nikifor's paintings and exhibited his work in Paris as early as 1932. The second phase of promoting Nikifor's work continued after the end of World War II, with exhibitions, press coverage, books and films, which led to him being a well-known artist in Poland by the 1950s. A 1959 exhibition in Paris was crucial for Nikifor's international fame. The most important exhibition of Nikifor's work in Poland took place in Warsaw in 1967. Nikifor died in 1968, and his fame began to spread shortly before his death. At that time, he became an honorary member of the Association of Polish Visual Artists. However, despite already being a famous man, he did not change his lifestyle until his death.

The thematic directions of Nikifor's work

The main thematic areas of Nikifor's work are self-portraits in various perspectives (Fig. 3), social and religious scenes from everyday life, real and fantastic landscapes, images of saints, churches (including Orthodox ones) and civil buildings.[7]

Nikifor's self-portraits offer insight into how the artist imagined himself. In a watercolour

[7] MADEYSKI, Jerzy. *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne, 1970; SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24-30.

self-portrait (1930–35) (Fig. 3), we see an elegant young man – an artist with art materials, a top hat, a suit, a bow tie, and pince-nez. Another of his paintings from the 1930s and 1940s depicts a man in a suit with a bow tie in front of an easel with a self-portrait. One of his earlier self-portraits from 1925–30 depicts him under an umbrella. The artist's self-portrait in front of an Easter table, which depicts various dishes he had never experienced in his life, dates back to the same years (Fig. 4). Another important self-portrait is Under an Umbrella with a Flag, which dates from the 1940s and reveals hidden traits of the artist's personality at different stages of his life.

Fig. 3: *Self-portrait 1930–1935. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

Fig. 4: *Triple self-portrait 1920–1925. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

However, gradually, the artist paid more attention to the background behind him. From the 1930s onward, we see Nikifor's attention drawn to depicting architectural objects and landscapes with architecture. He draws realistically churches and civil buildings in foreshortened perspective, sometimes adding fantastical details to the architecture.

A significant part of Nikifor's artistic output is his pencil sketches of wooden Lemko churches from the Sącz region. These sketches date from the 1920s and depict churches in Krynica, Łabowa, Tylicz, Mochnaczka, Jastrzębnik, Żegiestów, Wojkowa, Powroźnik and Zlockie.

The original sketches were drawn on two sides of paper. Only seven remain, and it is unknown how many there actually were. Among his artistic achievements are many watercolour works, and during his stays in hospitals and sanatoria, he drew with crayons.

Artistic techniques

Most of Nikifor's paintings are watercolours executed with inexpensive paints (Fig. 5).[8]

Fig. 5: *Watercolours, from left to right: City Architecture – A Town Hall, 1950–60s; Krynica Spa house, 1930–40s; The Circus, 1950s. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025,

Works from the 1920s and 1930s were drawn in pencil, while those from the 1960s were executed in crayon. Nikifor did not have the money to buy expensive drawing paper, so he drew on whatever paper or cardboard he could find. These could be old school notebooks, posters, wrapping paper or even cigarette boxes. Because paper was scarce, he sometimes drew on both sides – for example, pencil sketches.

Analysing works from his early to later years, it can be seen how his approach to drawing in foreshortened perspective developed. His earlier works tended more towards a flat surface, gradually moving towards three-dimensionality. This is most evident in his drawings of architectural objects.

It can be seen that foreshortening gradually became one of the most important features of Nikifor's work in scenes from life and paintings of buildings.

Another characteristic of his work is his polychrome. Most of his paintings are dominated by a cool colour palette, with a focus on blue and ultramarine, with red or orange a rarity. Often, the coloured spots are emphasised with thick lines. The paintings are mostly dark in colour, the exceptions being his later works, created in crayon in the 1960s, which include portraits of saints and a few portraits of his friends.

The Nikifor Museum exhibition and its importance for the Lemko folk art school

The Nikifor Memorial Museum was established as a branch of the Nowy Sącz museum in 1995.[9] It is located in the historic villa Romanówka, which was built in 1850 and served as a guesthouse. After World War II, it housed apartments and an artist's studio. However, from the

[8] SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24–30.

[9] *Muzeum Nikifora*, https://muzeum.sacz.pl/oddzialy/muzeum-nikifora; Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej. *Przewodnik po Muzeum Nikifora w Krynicy*. Nowy Sącz: Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej, 2024.

late 1980s until 1992, the house stood empty. Over two years, Romanówka was dismantled and its components underwent conservation. After the conservation work, it was rebuilt on the site of the former Litwinka villa on Dietla Boulevard.

From the beginning, the museum was organised as a memorial, showcasing not only Nikifor's artwork, photographs, and art promotion section, but also his personal belongings (Fig. 6).

Fig. 6: *Nikifor's clothes. Room I at The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

The idea of organising a museum for the artist emerged during his lifetime, in the 1960s, during his lifetime, with the idea to purchase a home him (he had not owned such a thing in his life) and to establish a studio and gallery there. The idea of a museum dedicated to the artist was raised again after he died in 1968

After Nikifor's death, the Nowy Sącz Museum took charge of organising such a museum. Since he had no family or heirs, many of the artist's works and personal belongings were transferred to the museum by court order. However, the creation of a Nikifor Memorial Museum took much longer due to a lack of funding. Romanówka villa, one of the oldest guesthouses in Krynica, was chosen. The original plan was to move it to the Nowy Sącz open-air museum. The land for the villa was donated by the Krynica Commune Office. The villa itself had belonged to the Nowy Sącz Museum since 1990. Establishing the Nikifor Museum in a historic villa was offered both a showcase for the artist's work and life in an authentic setting and a way to give the historic villa a second life.

The exhibition was organised in four rooms.

Room I. A presentation of selected posters, portraits, and the artist's personal belongings.

Room II. The exhibition's documentary section.

Room III. A room displaying drawings in pencil and crayon, as well as two works of artistic documentary nature: Nikifor's Sketchbook and Prayer Book.

Room IV. Paintings.

Room V. Changing exhibitions.

Room I includes posters for Nikifor's exhibitions, including those from Warsaw (1949 and 1967) and Paris (1959). Portraits of Nikifor by other artists are also on display. A unique aspect of this museum is the exhibition of the artist's few personal belongings, including his coat and hat (Fig. 6), and an old Lemko folk chest with floral ornamentation in which he stored his paintings – and sometimes slept when he was homeless.

Room II presents photographs related to Nikifor's life and exhibition posters (Fig. 7). Most of the photographs from earlier years were taken by photographers from Krynica. Nikifor is often photographed at work in his painting studio. This room contains the only photograph of his mother. It presents not only the artist himself but also photographs of him in conversation

with other prominent artists, curators and representatives of Lemko culture. Nikifor's portable art studio is also on display, with his box of school watercolours and crayons, pencils and brushes, paint cassettes and scraps of paper, as well as his watches, glasses and the stamps he used to mark his works. A significant element of the exhibition in Room II is his reproductions of sketches by Roman Turyn from the 1930s.

Fig. 7: *Photos of Nikifor from different years and a film about the artist. Room II at The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.* Photo by Y. Ivashko, 2025.

Room III presents Nikifor's early graphic works, as well as works in pencil and crayon. It is worth noting that before painting with watercolours, he made all his drawings in pencil and then painted them. There are also fourteen sketches on seven double-sided sheets of paper which for some reason were not painted with watercolour. It is believed that it was the artist's intention to leave them in this form. One theory for this is that he could not paint while travelling through the Lemko region by train. These sketches were originally made on small pieces of paper and spread over two pages. To display them in the exhibition, copies of each page were made and enlarged. These crayon works date from the artist's final years, when he was undergoing treatment in hospitals and sanatoria.

A prominent feature of the exhibition in Room III is Nikifor's devotional prayer book. This small booklet has 86 pages with pencil drawings related to biblical themes drawn by the young artist in the 1920s. The contents of this prayer book are presented to visitors on interactive screens placed beneath the book itself. Room III also includes a corridor, the walls of which are decorated with enlarged photographs depicting Nikifor in the 1950s and 1960s and showing him with prominent figures.

Room IV presents Nikifor's colourful works in watercolour and crayon. It is thought that he may have painted and drawn tens of thousands of paintings during his lifetime. However, it is unknown how many of his drawings were destroyed during the period when his work was underappreciated. As already noted, Nikifor's artistic achievements can be organised into several artistic cycles. However, a problem arises with the period of creation of many of the works, as drawings from a single thematic cycle could have been drawn anywhere between 1920 and 1930.

We want to emphasise the importance of these drawings not only as appreciated works of naive art but also as a source of information for sociological, ethnographic and architectural research.[10] Nikifor's drawings depict military scenes, scenes of worship, scenes of everyday life, and landscapes with buildings that he visited at various times. One aspect of the significance of Nikifor's works for ethnographic research is the meticulous detail included of military, civilian, and clergy outfits of the period.

His images also form an important source for conservators, as he depicts the facades and interiors of important buildings, providing, to some extent, a basis for restoration to their original appearance. His drawings depicting Krynica's former historic villas. In such cases, archival photographs and drawings of the villas that were destroyed by fire may be the only source of information about them.

Another significant part of Nikifor's oeuvre is his sketches and watercolours of former Lemko Orthodox churches, detailing their distinctive features. His drawings and watercolours of wooden churches represent a source of information about their original appearance and the changes and reconstructions made to these structures. This is especially important since wooden churches often burned down in fires and were replaced by new ones. Thanks to Nikifor's drawings, art historians and conservators can analyse the specific features of Christian wooden architecture from the turn of the twentieth century.

Room IV also features Nikifor's remarkable Triple Self-Portrait (Fig. 3), as well as his photographs of it. Painted in the 1920s, it is his largest self-portrait. As noted earlier, Nikifor enjoyed imagining himself as both realistic and fantastical figures. To this day, the identity of the two other smaller figures standing at Nikifor's sides remains unknown – they may be friends of his or they may be self-portraits.

Because Nikifor lacked the financial means to purchase materials, he used cheap paints. As a result, a special lighting system is used in Room IV to protect the pigments. A few of the artist's personal belongings – such as a wooden box, a paint case, a highlander's walking stick, flat caps and other hats – add to the authenticity of this room.

Room V presents changing exhibitions by contemporary artists in the fields of folk and naive art. In this way, the museum fulfils Nikifor's dream of creating a gallery.

Conclusions

The Nikifor Memorial Museum is a major tourist attraction in Krynica, showcasing not only the work of this outstanding artist but also recreating the atmosphere of this prominent artist's life through his clothes, watercolours, photos of his friends and old photos of Krynica.[11] The museum is unique due to the ideosyncratic and enigmatic nature of Nikifor himself. The exhibitions are designed to showcase the diverse aspects of the self-taught artist's life. These include not only drawings and watercolors from different periods, but also various

[10] MADEYSKI, Jerzy. *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne, 1970; SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24-30.

[11] MADEYSKI, Jerzy. *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne, 1970; SYDOR, Oleh. Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: discoveries and discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 1985, 110, pp. 159-161. [In Ukrainian]; SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz. Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1974, 4, pp. 221–242; WOLF, Jerzy. Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 1938, 3, pp. 24-30.

accompanying photographs, posters, and a documentary film about Nikifor, all of which create an authentic atmosphere.

Nikifor (Fig. 8) was a self-taught artist who was unknown for half of his life until fame found him. The twentieth century was a period of many experiments with creative styles, among which naive painting occupied an important place.

The importance of Nikifor's paintings lies not in the mastery of techniques, not in the use of colour, but in their authenticity to the lands of his native Lemko region. His sketches and watercolors provide an insight into everyday life and society at different times. They depict real architectural objects, some of which have not survived, making his works an important source of cultural and historical information, and an invaluable resource for architectural restoration.

Fig. 8: *Photograph of Nikifor. The Nikifor Memorial Museum in Krynica Zdroj.*

In this sense, his drawings can be compared to the handwritten illustrated albums of De la Flisé, who depicted the everyday life of the inhabitants of the Kyiv province and the landscapes of cities and villages.

Nikifor's work should be considered in the context of Polish naive painting as a whole. Other representatives of naive painting include Teofil Ociepka (an important representative of Silesian primitivism), Grupa Janowska, Władysław Rybkowski, Julian Bajkiewicz, Bazyli Albiczuk, Maria Korsak and Władysław Walczak-Baniecki. Large collections of works by Silesian primitivists can be found in Muzeum Śląskie in Katowice.

Nikifor lived in the same period as Teofil Ociepka (1891–1978), but the two artists chose different approaches to creativity. Nikifor's approach was exclusively individual, while Teofil Ociepka combined individual creativity with collaboration within the artistic Grupa Janowska in Silesia. Despite the fact that both artists – Nikifor Krynicki and Teofil Ociepka – are excellent representatives of naive painting, they demonstrate fundamentally different authorial styles: Nikifor shows the world through the author's perception, while Teofil Ociepka's paintings are profoundly connected with Polish folklore and have a fabulous, mythological character.

Acknowledgements

The authors express their gratitude to the Nikifor's Museum and Director of the Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej, Dr Robert Ślusarek, for permission to include photographs of the halls of the Nikifor Museum

References

BANACH, Andrzej (1957). *Nikifor Mistrz z Krynicy.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.
BANACH, Andrzej (1959). *Pamiątka z Krynicy.* Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

BANACH, Andrzej (1984). *Nikifor*. Warszawa: Arkady. ISBN 83-21-33006-1.

BANACH, Andrzej, BANACH, Ella (2004). *Historia o Nikiforze*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie. ISBN 83-08-03641-4.

BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto (1959). *Das naive Bild der Welt*. Cologne: M. DuMont.

BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto (1971). *Masters of Naive Art: A History and Worldwide Survey*. Trans. by Russell M. Stockman. New York: McGraw–Hill Book Company. ISBN: 07-005257-3.

BIHALJI-MERIN, Oto and TOMASEVIC, Nebojsa-Bato (1984). *World Encyclopedia of Naive Art: A Hundred Years of Naive Art*. London: Frederick Muller Ltd.

From the Salzman Collection – Nikifor, accessed 15 July 2025, https://psymeet.com/Salzman/SalzmanCollection/Nikifor/index.html

GRYGLEWSKI, Piotr, IVASHKO, Yulia, CHERNYSHEV, Denis, CHANG, Peng and DMYTRENKO, Andrii (2020). Art as a message realized through various means of artistic expression. In: *Art Inquiry. Recherches sur les arts*, 22, pp. 57–88. ISSN: 1641-9278.

JACKOWSKI, Aleksander (1985). Notatki o Nikiforze. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 3–4, pp. 227–236. ISSN 0032-3721.

LESYTCH, Wadym (1971). *Nykyfor z Krynytsi*. [Nikifor of Krynica]. München: Sučasnist [In Ukrainian].

MADEYSKI, Jerzy (1970). *Nikifor Krynicki: 12 reprodukcji*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo artystyczno-graficzne.

MAJKOWSKA-SZAJER, Dorota (2021). *Legenda o Nikiforze*, accessed 15 July 2025, https://www.muzea.malopolska.pl/en/articles/1276.

MONROE, Gary (2008). The Artist Formally Known as Nikifor. In: *Raw Vision*, 62, pp. 44–47. ISSN 0955-1182.

Muzeum Nikifora. Museum website, accessed 15 July 2025, https://muzeum.sacz.pl/oddzialy/muzeum-nikifora

Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej (2024). *Przewodnik po Muzeum Nikifora w Krynicy*. Nowy Sącz: Muzeum Ziemi Sądeckiej. ISBN 978-83-972841-2-8.

PETULLO, Anthony (2001). *Self-taught and Outsider Art: The Anthony Petullo Collection*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. ISBN 0252026667.

PLUTA, Wladyslaw (2008). *Nikifor*. Olszanica: Bosz Publishing House. ISBN 8387730181

SLABOSHPYTSKYI, Mykhailo (1990). Nykyfor iz Krynytsi [Nikifor of Krynica]. In: *Nauka i kultura*, 24, pp. 324–335. ISSN: 0206–8001. [In Ukrainian].

SYDOR, Oleh (1995). Nykyfor-Epyfanii Drovniak: vidkryttia i vidkryvachi [Nikifor-Epiphany Drovniak: Discoveries and Discoverers]. In: *Pamiatky Ukrainy*, 110, pp. 159–161. ISSN 0131-2685 [In Ukrainian].

SZCZEPANEK, Tadeusz (1974). Z badań nad twórczością Nikifora. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 4, pp. 221–242. ISSN 0032-3721.

SZCZYRBUŁA, Maciej (1990). Jeszcze o Nikiforze. Fakty, domysly o legendy. In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 1, pp. 37–48. ISSN 0032-3721.

WISŁOCKI, Seweryn (1985). Prczyczynek do biografil Nikifora Drowniaka, nazwanego "Krynickim". In: *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, 3–4, pp. 219–226. ISSN 0032-3721.

WOLANIN, Zbigniew (2000). *Nikifor*. Olszanica: Wydawnictwo BoSz. ISBN 83-87-73018-1.

WOLF, Jerzy (1938). Malarze naiwnego realizmu w Polsce. Nikifor. In: *Arkady*, 3, pp. 24–30.