

# The collector Jindřich Waldes and the curator Jan Hofman: One museum, two approaches<sup>1</sup>

Kateřina Hrušková

Mgr. et Mgr. Kateřina Hrušková, Ph.D.  
University of Hradec Králové  
Philosophical Faculty, Institute of History  
Rokitanského 62  
500 03 Hradec Králové 3  
Czech Republic  
e-mail: hruskka2@uhk.cz  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6440-095X>

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*The collector Jindřich Waldes and the curator Jan Hofman: One museum, two approaches*

The study deals with an aspect not considered until now in relation to the Waldes Museum of Buttons and Fasteners, existing in Prague-Vršovice between 1916 and 1945, founded at the initiative of Prague industrialist, collector, and patron of the arts Jindřich Waldes. Alongside Waldes, the other key figure was art historian, conservationist and museum curator Jan Ješek Hofman, whose work between 1916 and 1919 in many ways achieved the plan to build a collection and research institution. What was behind this outwardly-representative, functioning private institution and how did the relationship between Waldes, an enthusiastic and affluent private collector, and Hofman, the expert tasked with putting his ideas in place at a professional level, actually evolve? The study aims to present an interpretation of the relationship by analysing preserved archival materials and period publications. It also represents the Waldes Museum as a remarkable museum experiment.

Keywords: Jan Ješek Hofman, Jindřich Waldes, collecting, Waldes Museum

## Introduction

In 1916, prominent Prague businessman, patron of the arts, collector, philanthropist and owner of the world-renowned Waldes & Co. Jindřich Waldes (1876–1941) began fulfilling his dream of creating a museum of buttons, seemingly trivial objects of daily use which fascinated him. This passion probably had its origins in the 1890s.<sup>2</sup> Compared to Waldes' other collections, this did not stand at the same level of investment in art as his well-known collection of paintings, for example. Although he was merely a layperson with no specialised education, Waldes was interested in the button as a cultural object, an artefact used for centuries on human clothing across cultures around the world, an object of social identification and an object of fashion and design, or indeed an object illustrating a range of techniques using a variety of materials. This, in fact, might have summarised in the mind of the collector the arguments in

<sup>1</sup> The study was written as output of the project “Specific Research 2020 – Collecting Buttons as a Societal Element – Comparative Analysis of the Formation, Development, and Importance of Collecting Activities in American and Czech Society in the Years 1850–1940”, which was financed, under no. 2103, with funds from the Student Grant Competition at the Philosophical Faculty, University of Hradec Králové.

<sup>2</sup> In his introductory text to the first edition of the museum periodical *Zprávy musea knoflíků*, he mentions: “I have been dealing with the button for several decades now”. The first issue was published in mid-1916.

favour of creating the Waldes Museum – Collection of Buttons and Fasteners,<sup>3</sup> which existed between 1916 and 1945 as a separate unit of the renowned snap-fastener factory in Vršovice.

Waldes was not the only one within the business environment to build a collection or museum relating to his line of business.<sup>4</sup> Collections and museums focusing on the documentation of specific aspects of everyday human life had been created in Europe even before his own project. Waldes' project, however, was unique in that the museum was to be a place in which to present the collection and a full-fledged scientific institution in one, with its own research and publishing activities. Neither did the museum present, at least directly, the products manufactured within the Waldes empire, Waldes himself rejecting the connection.

The task of expert guarantor of the museum was entrusted to a board of curators comprising representatives of important Prague museums, cultural historians and a great many of his corporate associates and friends, who, in spite of what they might have contended, often supported Waldes' enthusiasm rather than guiding it. The museum took on two experts in September 1916, one of them being Jan Ješek Hofman, now recognised as a prominent Czech art historian, conservationist and museologist. This curious private institution was certainly not the culmination of his career of which he might have dreamed, yet he carried out some remarkable work there, work which has until now been overlooked. Pavel Šopák introduced his study to mark the 115th anniversary of Hofman's birth with the words "There are many unjustly neglected names in the history of conservation".<sup>5</sup> In the case of Jan Ješek Hofman, this is also true when it comes to the Waldes Museum, which is primarily associated with its founder.

The study considers the first intensive period of work at the museum, between 1916 and 1919. The aim is not to provide a factual description of how the museum flourished, but instead to observe this period within the context of Waldes and Hofman as the two main actors of this opening era, because it was their interaction, initiatives and distinct relationships to the very cultural significance of the button that fundamentally influenced the first stage of the museum's existence. In some respects, it might be viewed as a clash between an amateur and a professional, or a dreamer and a realist.

The study partly draws on the second chapter of the author's dissertation "Social role of the button and Jindřich Waldes".<sup>6</sup> It was during the preparation of that dissertation, and thanks to the research conducted, that the need intensified to address the relationship of these two figures, Waldes and Hofman, and in addition to observing their evident contribution to the creation and opening of the museum to reflect the differing approach to the collecting activities of the

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<sup>3</sup> This designation was used by the museum right from the opening of the exhibition in September 1918. The name had been gradually evolving until that time. The topic is mentioned in the study: Helena Koenigsmarková – Filip Wittlich, Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze a Waldesovo museum knoflíků a spínadel všech dob – počátky spolupráce v letech 1916–1920, in: Kateřina Hrušková et al (ed.), *Sborník semináře k 100. výročí otevření Waldesova muzea*, Praha 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Collections or museums that focused on certain fields of production or products were also created elsewhere, e.g. the Zlín collection of historical footwear established by Tomáš Baťa, Iwan Weiskopf's or Otto Riedl's collections of the glass buttons of Jizera Mountain entrepreneurs, Jablonec entrepreneur Albert Sachse's collection of competing costume jewellery products and glass, which was later purchased by the Czechoslovak State, and abroad, for example the Deutsches Klingensmuseum in Solingen or the Deutsche Ledermuseum in Offenbach.

<sup>5</sup> ŠOPÁK, Pavel. Jan Hofman. Ke 115. výročí narození. In: *Zprávy památkové péče 58*, Praha: Národní památkový ústav, 1998, p. 308.

<sup>6</sup> HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina. *Společenská role knoflíků a Jindřich Waldes*. Hradec Králové, 2022. Disertační práce, Univerzita Hradec Králové, Filozofická fakulta, Historický ústav, available at: <https://theses.cz/id/in6o73/>.

Waldes Museum and how the importance of the material collected and studied was perceived. This study focuses more on the museological aspects of the subject-matter, something which was not possible in the dissertation in light of its thematic definition. Research was based on an assumption that the approaches of the two figures to both the object of the museum's professional focus and the execution of the planned project differed. Jindřich Waldes initiated the creation of the museum as an act of social significance and enlightenment rooted in his fascination with the button, to which he attached significant cultural and historical value. Jan Ješek Hofman probably took the position for purely existential reasons, but in spite of this he tried to approach the material and the museum itself as critically and methodically as possible. He attempted to test the capacity of the button to become a symbol of a certain cultural circle. The initial situation might sound almost idyllic: a patron of the arts with almost unlimited financial possibilities supports the creation of a professionally-run museum. The paper was written on the basis of a study of source material and professional thematic publications.

### Sources and literature on the subject

A number of titles have already been published on the subject of the Waldes Museum and its collection. The creation of a collection of buttons and fasteners and the founding of the museum itself are considered as a sub-topic of the collecting of Jindřich Waldes in a publication by Patrik Šimon entitled *Jindřich Waldes: sběratel umění*.<sup>7</sup> Šimon does not primarily deal with the museum from the perspective of an analysis of the institution itself, but introduces it as one of Waldes' collecting activities and deals mainly with the significant collections. The book was the first of its kind after the demise of the museum and aroused interest among the professional public in the personality of Jindřich Waldes, his collections and the museum.

The book *Sbírka Waldes*,<sup>8</sup> a catalogue-type publication from 2014, is devoted to the museum and the collection between 1916 and 1938 and offers a cross-section of the preserved part of the collection fund stored at the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou (hereinafter MSB) since 1973. For the first time ever, he deals with the use of the file in this institution. At the same time, for the first time ever, it focuses on the value of the collection as a whole in the context of peasant fastenings. A study, "Sbírka Waldes v letech 1946–1977"<sup>9</sup> is dedicated to the fate of the museum and the collection after 1945. The study, supported by the study of legal and archival documents, draws attention to the complex fate of the collection after the Second World War and the inappropriate conditions in which the greater part of the collection was stored, mainly due to the legal vacuum in which it found itself.

Selected collections are mentioned in publications issued to mark thematic exhibitions, such as *Knoflík od rokokoa do secese*,<sup>10</sup> *Necuke: drobná japonská plastika*,<sup>11</sup> and *Karlštejnský poklad*.<sup>12</sup> The Waldes Museum and the figure of Jindřich Waldes are considered from various perspectives

<sup>7</sup> ŠIMON, Patrik. *Jindřich Waldes: sběratel umění*. Praha: Egmont, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina. *Sbírka Waldes = Waldes collection = Waldes Sammlung*. Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablonci nad Nisou, 2014.

<sup>9</sup> HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina. *Sbírka Waldes v letech 1946–1977*, *Fontes Nissae* 22, Liberec: Technická univerzita v Liberci, 2021, pp. 96–110.

<sup>10</sup> MATERNOVÁ, Věra, NEŤUKOVÁ, Runka. *Knoflík od rokokoa do secese*. Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablonci nad Nisou, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> BOHÁČKOVÁ, Libuše. *Necuke: drobná japonská plastika*. Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablonci nad Nisou, 1975.

<sup>12</sup> KUBŮ, Naděžda, KOENIGSMARKOVÁ, Helena, PANENKOVÁ, Duňa. *Karlštejnský poklad – kultura císařského dvora Karla IV.* Praha: Národní památkový ústav, 2016.

in the proceedings of papers presented at a seminar to mark the 100th anniversary of the opening of the Waldes Museum exhibition.<sup>13</sup> Within the context of this study, it is particularly worth mentioning the paper given by Helena Koenigsmarková and Filip Wittlich, which deals with selected matters from the origins of the museum's existence, emphasising the connection between this small private institution and the Museum of Decorative Arts.<sup>14</sup> The text points to Waldes' high ambitions for the museum's final form.

A number of other publications focus on Waldes' business and collecting activities. In addition to Patrik Šimon's book, mentioned above, we have *Jindřich Waldes: podnikatel, sběratel, mecenáš: katalog výstavy*, which considers many aspects of Waldes' activities.<sup>15</sup>

Jan Ješek Hofman is mentioned only marginally within the context of the museum and his role has not thus far been interpreted as being of any great significance, despite the fact that he played a crucial role in moments such as the organisation of the collection fund, the building of the permanent exhibition, and the publishing activities of the museum. Two biographical studies by Pavel Šopák deal with Hofman, reconstructing a rich professional life during which he was able to make a significant impact on the issue of heritage conservation and the history of architecture. Šopák summed up the professional episode of his working life at the Waldes Museum in both texts always very briefly with only one sentence.

In looking directly at the subject-matter of this study, it is necessary to draw on archive sources and on the period publications of the Waldes Museum, which are also employed here as a source. Materials relating to the running of the museum, acquisitions, publications and exhibitions, or cooperation with other institutions are all found in the Waldes Museum Archive (hereinafter referred to as AMW), which are deposited at the Museum of Glass and Jewellery. The fund has not yet been processed: the materials are merely thematically sorted, and the content of individual boxes is briefly summarised in a makeshift inventory. Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Curators and internal correspondence are of most use to the study, the content of those materials primarily relating to the building of the permanent exhibition. For the most part they are in German, partly in Czech.

The rules for cataloguing and inventory management are summarised by Hofman in a typed document "Návrh na katalogizaci a revizi sbírek Waldesova muzea,"<sup>16</sup> which is part of the Hofman Jan Ješek fund in the Museum of Czech Literature Literary Archive.<sup>17</sup> Other materials which illustrate the subject-matter under consideration are also stored there, primarily private correspondence with Waldes which point to formally polite relations even at a time when Hofman no longer worked at the museum. At the same time, they fit contextually with the correspondence stored in the Jindřich Waldes Fund in the archive of the National Gallery in Prague.<sup>18</sup> In some cases, it is necessary to work with both at the same time to obtain the

<sup>13</sup> HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina a kol. (ed.), *Sborník semináře k 100. výročí otevření Waldesova muzea*, Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablenci nad Nisou, Praha: Kotěrovo centrum architektury, 2018.

<sup>14</sup> KOENIGSMARKOVÁ, Helena, WITTLICH, Filip. Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze a Waldesovo museum knoflíků a spínadel všech dob – počátky spolupráce v letech 1916–1920. In: HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina a kol. (ed.), *Sborník semináře k 100. výročí otevření Waldesova muzea*, Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablenci nad Nisou, Praha: Kotěrovo centrum architektury 2018, pp. 34–37.

<sup>15</sup> KRÁLOVÁ, Hana, SOVÁK, Martin. *Jindřich Waldes: podnikatel, sběratel, mecenáš: katalog výstavy*. Praha: Národní technické muzeum, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Proposal for Cataloging and Revising the Collections of the Waldes Museum.

<sup>17</sup> Památník národního písemnictví (hereafter PNP), Literární archiv (hereafter LA), f. Jan Ješek Hofman, archive collection 540.

<sup>18</sup> Národní galerie v Praze (hereinafter NG), f. Jindřich Waldes, fund no. 101.

complete content of the exchange of information between the two addressees. Correspondence speak of the systematic maintenance of contacts and real cooperation. Unfortunately, it is not very large in scope. In the context of the Waldes Museum, the most valuable document from this fund is the “Návrh na katalogizaci a revizi sbírek Waldesova muzea”.

To get an idea of the shape and development of the interior of the permanent exhibition of the Waldes Museum, which they show, period photographs can also be found in the Fund of the Czechoslovak News Agency.<sup>19</sup>

Museum publications, in particular *Průvodce sbírkami Waldesova muzea v Praze – Vršovicích*<sup>20</sup> and a brochure published to mark the opening of the museum exhibition to the public entitled “Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích,”<sup>21</sup> provide us with a general idea of the collection fund and the appearance of the exhibitions and the other places in the museum, as well as staffing and the composition of the board of curators. In addition to schematic plans, they contain several contemporary photographs of the exterior and interior. One other valuable source is the four editions of *Zprávy Waldesova muzea* magazine, which provide information about the Hofman-designed organisation of collections, the preparation of the exhibition, the activity of the board of curators and new acquisitions. Crucial to an understanding of Hofman’s concept of the cultural and historical value of the button and his thoughts on the concept of the museum is the text of a lecture for the Circle of Cultivating the History of Art, the content of which was subsequently published in *Zprávy Waldesova muzea*.<sup>22</sup>

## Waldes Museum of Buttons

“Apparently, a man who doesn’t have much work or practical sense has established a museum of buttons in Prague in order to add to the number of freaks in the field of collecting.”<sup>23</sup>

The Waldes Museum – Collection of Buttons and Fasteners<sup>24</sup> existed as a unit<sup>25</sup> of Waldes & Co., based in Prague-Vršovice.<sup>26</sup> It actually began its work on July 7, 1916, but it was not until January 12, 1917 that it obtained a permit to operate from the imperial and royal district governorate of Královské Vinohrady.<sup>27</sup> A permanent exhibition and a specialised library were

<sup>19</sup> National Archive, f. Fotoarchiv Československé tiskové kanceláře, Praha 1918–1939 (1950), No. NAD 1451, for example NAD1451 – 27361, 27362, 33441, 33911, 33912.

<sup>20</sup> HOFMAN, Ješek. *Průvodce sbírkami Waldesova muzea v Praze – Vršovicích*, Praha: Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích, 1919.

<sup>21</sup> HOFMAN, Jan Ješek (ed.), *Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích*, Praha: Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích, 1918.

<sup>22</sup> HOFMAN, Jan. *Náš program*. In: *Zprávy Waldesova muzea* 2, Praha: Waldesovo museum: Sběrka šatních spínadel všech způsobů a dob, 1917, pp. 1–5.

<sup>23</sup> Jindřich WALDES, *Waldesovo museum – světově jedinečné*. K 15. výročí. *Kob-i-noor Magazin*, 4 (45), 1933, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> This designation was used by the museum right from the opening of the exhibition in September 1918. The name had been gradually evolving until that time. The topic is mentioned in the study: Helena KOENIGSMARKOVÁ – Filip WITTLICH, *Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze a Waldesovo museum knoflíků a spínadel všech dob – počátky spolupráce v letech 1916–1920*, in: *Sborník semináře k 100. výročí otevření Waldesova muzea*, ed. K. Hrušková et al, Praha 2018, pp. 34–37.

<sup>25</sup> The preserved part of the collection fund is now part of the collection at the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou. The collection, known as the Karlštejn Treasure, is found in the collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

<sup>26</sup> Praha-Vršovice, German Prag – Wrschowitz, a district of Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic.

<sup>27</sup> Today Vinohrady, a part of the capital city of Prague.

opened to the public on September 25, 1918.<sup>28</sup>

The aim of the museum was to present buttons and fasteners in a versatile way, not only as fasteners, but also as objects of social identification, fashion and design, or as objects demonstrating the level of craft of a particular community within the contexts of time, place and tradition.

In addition to three-dimensional examples of various fasteners, there were also pictures and a technological archive. Waldes conceived of building the museum as an ambitious project to create a full-fledged collection-building and scientific and research institution in which the button was part of the material and spiritual culture of man, and to which end used and gradually expanded the collection originally established by J. Waldes with purchases and donations. The museum's activities were backed by the board of curators, the advisory board to Jindřich Waldes,<sup>29</sup> who was essentially the director, despite not considering himself to be so. Among the members of the board of curators were, for example, František A. Borovský, then Emeritus Director of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, and its then director František X. Jiřík. These two close friends of Waldes' were able to point the museum on the way to becoming an institution at the same level as the large museums, which was indeed the intention.<sup>30</sup> In the first months of 1916, the members of the board of curators essentially took part in the running of the museum. They compiled museum regulations, defining the key subject-matter of activity and other activities that made the museum an institution suitable for researching the topic of the button and, contrary to the original plan, fasteners. Dana Stehlíková states that the reason for changing the area of interest was the fact that buttons had become more common at the time the museum was established and it was necessary to look for a more specific niche for the newly created collection.<sup>31</sup> The change was justified among the members as a reaction to the fact that the button is naturally linked to other fasteners and clothing, and it would be wrong to separate them.<sup>32</sup> However, it can be reasonably assumed that the inclusion of fasteners in the items collected was influenced by other circumstances too. One reason was the fact that several gifts contained other fasteners, often rare pieces that enriched the collection. Clasps and buckles could open the way to other specialised subjects. What is more, the good availability of fasteners from Roman colonies as archaeological finds, for example, could take the time span of the collection all the way back to Antiquity. The regulations approved on June 7, 1916 stated, inter alia, that "The purpose of the museum is to collect and gather in a scientific way exhibition and study items in the collection if they serve as clothing fasteners".<sup>33</sup> The button

<sup>28</sup> More about the creation of the museum: HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina. *Sbírka Waldes = Waldes collection = Waldes Sammlung*. Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablonci nad Nisou, 2014, pp. 2–3.

<sup>29</sup> This was essentially an amalgamation of the Management Board, the Executive Committee and the Director's advisory body.

<sup>30</sup> Among its members was Václav V. Štech, who served as secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Education. Of Waldes' partners, there was co-founder of the company and his friend Hynek Puc, his brother Zikmund, running the branch in Dresden, and the director of that branch Eduard Merzinger. The correspondent members included architect Jan Koula, Josef Václav Myslbek, who was also actively involved in the preparation of the exhibition, and Wilhelm Exner, who was incidentally one of the founders and then the director of the Technical Museum in Vienna and the commissioner of the Austrian exhibit at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1900. We should also mention Joseph L. Kottner, administrator of Náprstek Museum in Prague. A complete list of the members of the board of curators can be found in ZWM from 1917 onwards and in the publication brought out to mark the opening of the exhibition in 1918.

<sup>31</sup> STEHLÍKOVÁ, Waldes a ti ..., p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> MSB, AWM, Protokol o jednání kuratoria "Waldesova musea knoflíků" of June 7, 1916, 3 p.m.

<sup>33</sup> Program, bod 3, Zprávy Waldesova musea knoflíků: Sbírka šatních spínadel všech způsobů a dob, v. 2, no. 1, p. 24.

retained the dominant role, as is evident from the content of the collection and the publication activities tied to the museum's work.<sup>34</sup>

The part of the museum fund which still remains is currently located in two Czech collection institutions, namely in the collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague (hereinafter referred to as UPM)<sup>35</sup> and in the collection of the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou (hereinafter referred to as MSB). Both preserved wholes offer a realistic picture of the original museum fund and permanent exhibitions.

The Waldes Museum was unique in its narrow focus on buttons and fasteners; however, the concept of documenting a chosen object of everyday life in all its forms and of bringing a collection, and knowledge, to the general public was not new. Hofman was aware of this fact and, in his search for a concept for the Waldes Museum, sought inspiration from other museums that concentrated on so-called ordinary things. Private collections and museums were created in Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the aim of collecting and documenting activities focusing on specific groups of objects, materials and production techniques or human activities. At the same time, the collections reflect the production techniques and the materials used, or a wide range of existing designs, in some cases with the emphasis on regional tradition. Craft, artisanal and applied products are most commonly seen in the collections. As in the case of the Waldes Museum, these collections often owe their origin to collectors from the rich aristocracy and industrialists, educational institutions or societies. It is typical for them to deal with what are essentially ordinary things, objects associated with everyday life. These might include a variety of tools, cutlery, objects associated with a specific field of production or sporting and leisure activities. Many of them still exist, whether in the form of fully-developed institutions or as collections incorporated into other collection funds. They are an important part of European material culture and a source material for studying everyday life.

In the Czech lands, parallels can be found to the Waldes Museum in the shape of collections of buttons and other items. Of extremely narrow profile are the collections amassed by Dr Iwan Weiskopf and Otto Riedl.<sup>36</sup> Both collections document the development of the phenomenon of what is known as the Jablonec glass button in terms of the technology, design and sheer breadth of the range in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>37</sup> Both are irreplaceable documentation and comparative material within the context of the history of Jablonec costume jewellery.<sup>38</sup> Another domestic example was the collection assembled by Georg Stradiot, a typical collection of nineteenth-century buttons that included a variety of materials and designs. What is more, it was all arranged on so-called collector cards. Georg Stradiot died in 1893, but his

<sup>34</sup> Zprávy Musea knoflíků / Zprávy Waldesova muzea, 1916–1919; Ješek HOFMAN, *Průvodce sbírkami Waldesova muzea v Praze – Vršovicích*, Praha 1919; František Xaver JIŘÍK, *Knoflíky egglomované*, Praha 1917; The appearance of buttons in the collections of the museums of that time was also the focus of unfinished nationwide research by Jan Hofman. Only some of the returned questionnaires have survived from his research.

<sup>35</sup> The collection at the Museum of Decorative Arts also includes a collection known as the Karlštejn Treasure.

<sup>36</sup> Both collections are now found in the collections of the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou, sub-collection Buttons.

<sup>37</sup> KYBALOVÁ, Ludmila a kol. *Jablonecký knoflík = Gablonzer Knopf = The Jablonec button*. Jablonec nad Nisou: Muzeum skla a bižuterie v Jablonci nad Nisou, 2007.

<sup>38</sup> They were incorporated into the MSB collection during the interwar period, probably after an exhibition of local history in Smržovka in 1929. Descriptive exhibition cards were created for this exhibition, to which buttons and other objects are applied to this day.

relatives kept the collection, unchanged, keeping it in his house in Šporkova Street in Prague.<sup>39</sup> One example of a collection that centres on a particular branch of production is the collection of historical footwear founded by Tomáš Baťa in Zlín.<sup>40</sup> The collection amassed by Jablonec exporter Albert Sachse (1851–1921), which includes costume jewellery and decorative objects of folk production made by the indigenous tribes of Africa, Asia and Oceania using the glass beads manufactured by Sachse's enterprises, as well as competing products, is also interesting from the perspective of the personal collector's initiative.<sup>41</sup> This is a unique collection that provides evidence of ethnicities from all around the world working with one type of material. Hofman knew of this collection and, in light of his visits to Jablonec nad Nisou, already a renowned centre of button production, it is very likely that he became acquainted with it. Albert Sachse was also a correspondent member of the board of curators and there was a great deal of communication between the two institutions.<sup>42</sup>

### Jindřich Waldes – collector and button lover

Jindřich Waldes (1876–1971) was long fascinated by the button as something of a statement on the status of clothing culture, technology and the artistic aspect of a certain group of people, all in miniature. He was fascinated by the extreme breadth of the shapes, materials and designs of these fasteners and was interested in all forms of the button. Waldes was a respected authority in private collecting, particularly in the field of fine arts. The button collection, therefore, is somewhat out of sync with his other activities. Its origins probably date back to the 1890s,<sup>43</sup> with the collection being amassed from items that Waldes acquired during his trips abroad.<sup>44</sup> It therefore included unusual and technologically or materially interesting pieces, souvenir buttons and curiosities. Together with donations and purchases, Jindřich Waldes and his wife Hedvika built up the museum's exhibition in the interwar period in this way. Compared to Waldes' other collections, it was not an investment in art, such as his famous collection of paintings.

Just as Jindřich Waldes was a confident *self-made man* in the world of business, he was sure of his own erudition in the expert approach to buttons based on his own interest in the topic alone: "I have been dealing with the button for several decades now, from various perspectives."<sup>45</sup> He considered himself to be an expert capable of researching the button and, above all, capable of guaranteeing the high-quality output of specialised work.<sup>46</sup> Apart from proclamatory or educational texts, however, he never did publish any studies or texts that would exhibit the parameters of an expert paper. The various functions of the button for people, particularly within the European cultural space, were more important to Waldes than the technological side of affairs. One aspect that is completely omitted with regard to Waldes' attempt to capture

<sup>39</sup> TURNWALD, Kristian. Stradiotova sbírka knoflíků. *Kob-i-noor Magazin 90*. Praha: Waldes & Co., 1937, p. 141.

<sup>40</sup> STEHLÍKOVÁ, Waldes a ti ..., p. 27.; Now incorporated in the collection of the Museum of Southeast Moravia in Zlín.

<sup>41</sup> JIROUŠKOVÁ, Jana a kol., *Albert Sachse's collection in the National Museum*, Praha: Náprstkovo muzeum, 2011, p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> MSB, AWM, Zápis o schůzi kuratoria Waldesova musea knoflíků ve Vršovicích dne 14. března 1917 o 3 hod. odp., p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> In his introductory text to the first edition of the museum periodical *Zprávy musea knoflíků*, he mentions: "I have been dealing with the button for several decades now". The first issue was published in mid-1916.

<sup>44</sup> WALDES, Jindřich. Moje museum. *Zprávy musea knoflíků Jindřich Waldes Praha-Vršovice* (Zprávy Waldesova musea knoflíků), Praha: Museum knoflíků Jindřicha Waldese, 1916, pp. 1–2.

<sup>45</sup> WALDES, Moje..., p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 2.

the button as comprehensively as possible, both within his own concept and Hofman's, is particularly striking: in spite of Waldes being an entrepreneur in haberdashery and related industries, the economic contribution of this line of production as such, or indeed of buttons within the modern concept of industrial batch production, was not fundamentally emphasised. Button-making was reflected in the museum from the perspective of regional tradition and the development of technology. We might assume that this was one way of distinguishing itself from *Butonia*, already an established periodical, which can be considered the magazine of the button industry, and which took economic matters into consideration.

It is also clear that Waldes was not interested in building a purely private museum whose purpose it would have been to present a closed, museum-style private collection. He aimed to pursue two fundamental objectives: namely to create a publicly-accessible collection of buttons that would document the maximum diversity of the subject-matter across cultures, and down the history of human culture, and to contribute toward education in the field. Secondly, he saw the need to create a specialised publication that would deal with the button in a universal way and fill a gap in cultural history. Waldes was by no means interested in presenting Waldes & Co., a fact that distinguishes him, and his museum, from the Leoty Company project, for example, and its collection of corsets, and from the Bat'a Museum. It was František Borovský who came along with the idea of incorporating the products currently being made at Waldes' enterprise into the museum collection and exhibition. Waldes rejected the proposal outright. In discussing Borovský's proposal, he stated that "the whole venture has absolutely nothing to do with Waldes & Co., the company contributes nothing to the purposes of the museum and the museum should not be an advertisement for the company".<sup>47</sup>

He left nothing to chance and from the very outset his aim in building the museum was to create a full-fledged collection and science institution. The establishment of a pictorial folk costume archive meant that his collection of buttons was unlike any other, in that the button was perceived as being and professionally treated as an object in its own right. In this case, it was not seen merely as a demonstration of craftsmanship, a sample of the manufacturer or a work of art that "accidentally" became a button, the original functionality completely lost. Emphasis was also placed on presenting a wide range of specimens, demonstrating the different styles of execution and the different cultures they came from, while exclusive and costly products were presented alongside cheap products available to the less affluent parts of society. The stress was placed on the button as a functional object connected with people and their clothing.

### Jan Ješek Hofman – collection clerk/manager and director

The increase in administrative work at the newly-created museum led to the need to hire qualified employees who would take up tasks such as recording the collections, editing the museum magazine, managing the library and preparing the museum exhibition. This requirement was first discussed at the meeting of the board of curators on August 17. The minutes from August 30 read that "so many applications have been submitted for the post of museum clerk that, in the interests of the museum, a decision will be postponed for some time".<sup>48</sup> Jan Ješek Hofman (1883–1945) was hired as museum clerk in September 1916. The recruitment process included

<sup>47</sup> Protokol o jednání kuratoria "Waldesova musea knoflíků" dne 17. srpna 1916 o 3 hod. odpolední.

<sup>48</sup> MSB, AWM, karton F, Protokol o schůzi kuratoria "Waldesova musea knoflíků" dne 30. srpna 1916 o 3. hod. odpolední, p. 1.

an interview with an important member of the board of curators, František Borovský,<sup>49</sup> and a vote taken by the board on his acceptance. Jan Hofman had studied law at Karlo-Ferdinand University,<sup>50</sup> and subsequently the history of art, thereafter gathering professional experience, for example, as the executive director and an active member of the Club for Old Prague, where he also proved to be a good organiser. He joined the museum from the position of member of the Archaeological Staff at the Museum of the Kingdom of Bohemia.<sup>51</sup> According to the records of the board of curators, at the beginning of the museum's existence its members sought ways of achieving Waldes' plans and of fully supporting the project in all feasible ways, and of asserting their own intentions as an aside. In this respect, Hofman's position was different. He essentially became Jindřich Waldes' counterweight. Hofman's position frequently changed in name, and he was most commonly referred to as museum clerk<sup>52</sup> or manager of the collections<sup>53</sup> or of the museum.<sup>54</sup> He held the post of director of the museum from January 16, 1919 until shortly before his time there came to an end. The second professional was Dr Paula Wahle (1884–?),<sup>55</sup> who was probably taken into employment even before Hofman, on September 15, 1916, her arrival being announced at a meeting of the board of curators on September 13, 1916. The minutes of that meeting show that discussions regarding Hofman's arrival, which, according to the preserved correspondence had been ongoing since at least September 9, had not yet been brought to a conclusion. According to the minutes, however, he was to have been hired without further delay. The arrival of these two professionals marked a short period of professionalising the museum.

From the very outset, Hofman showed his ability to find his way around the issue of buttons and fasteners, to think methodically about the collection and to seek inspiration in other institutions having a strong focus on a single theme, even beyond the borders of the Austrian Monarchy. His cool, rational approach was in sharp contrast to Waldes' almost uncritical enthusiasm. Hofman had a significant influence on the organisation of the collection and on professional work with it, conducted his own research and greatly improved the quality of publishing activities. From the point of view of the actual development of the museum as a scientific institution, he was clearly the key figure. It was during his time there that a permanent exhibition, one that he had conceived, opened its doors in the building at what is now Moskevská Street 262 in Prague-Vršovice.

Hofman's concept of organising the collection, included in a report he wrote on activities for the month of November 1916, was presented to the meeting of the board of curators on

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<sup>49</sup> Památník národního písemnictví (hereinafter PNP), Literární archiv (hereinafter LA), f. Jan Ješek Hofman, archíve set no. 540, letter from J. Waldes to J.J. Hofman of September 9, 1916.

<sup>50</sup> Now Charles University, Prague

<sup>51</sup> Now the National Museum, Prague; HOFMAN, JAN, 1883–1945, accessed September 20, 2022, <https://provenio.net/records/c530d758-8344-4283-8e89-85d528c6b83b>.

<sup>52</sup> He was also referred to as clerk and manager during the meeting of the board of curators in 1918, for example: MSB, AWM, box F, Zápis o schůzi kuratoria Waldesova musea o 3. hodině odpoledne dne 6. února 1918 v úřadovně pana Waldesa ve Vršovicích.

<sup>53</sup> He was mainly identified in this way in documents from 1917, for example: MSB, AWM, Zápis o přípravách k otevření nových místností Waldesova musea v bytě pana Waldesa dne 13. září 1917 o 4 ½ hod.

<sup>54</sup> For example, MSB, AWM, box F, Protokoll der Kuratoriumumsetzung des Knoúf-Museum Heinrich Waldes, Prag-Wrschowitz am 19. Dezember 1917 3 Uhr Nachm. im Bureaux des Herrn Waldes; concept of an article for *Časopis společnosti přátel starožitností českých v Praze*, vol. 25 / 1917, no. 1.

<sup>55</sup> She took a leading position after Jan Hofman's departure in 1919.

December 6, 1916.<sup>56</sup> Compared to the original sorting by material and processing technology that had emerged from previous proposals made by the board of curators, Hofman gave supremacy in sorting to the period of history, only then dividing objects according to material and technology within individual groups. At the same time, he proposed the creation of a collection catalogue. Hofman received the support of the members of the board of curators for this conceptual change, particularly from Borovský and Štech. Less than six months later, he presented his proposal for the arrangement of the permanent exhibition to the board of curators.<sup>57</sup>

Hofman's situation at the museum, however, was not easy. According to the minutes from the meetings of the board of curators still in existence, he only rarely engaged in the meetings, despite being in attendance in most cases. When his comments do appear in the minutes, they refer to truly fundamental issues, proving Hofman's ability to identify the needs of the museum and the exhibition. Jindřich Waldes involved himself in all matters surrounding the museum on a daily basis, as evidenced by extensive correspondence.<sup>58</sup> Although there is no evidence of specific disputes on the issue of building the collection, we are able to see the two protagonists' differing views of the cultural and historical value of buttons. Neither was cooperation helped by the comments and instructions that Waldes sent as often as several times a day. The choice and use of words indicate a certain level of tension.

In 1917, Hofman initiated a new record of exhibits and their division into four groups: a collection of three-dimensional objects, duplicates, the pictorial folk costume archive and the library. Two card catalogues were created for research purposes, kept in Czech and German, one taking into account chronological and the other technological division. The collection of fasteners was further divided into the General Historical Collection (the period development of fasteners according to artistic styles), the Ethnographic Collection (European ethnography) and the General Ethnographic Collection (ethnography outside Europe). The permanent exhibition copied the division of the collection. The archive of visual and written material comprised the Pictorial Archive of Folk Costumes, the Collection of Negatives and Slides and the Historical and Technological Archive, which also contained archival extracts. The library collected books and periodicals, exchanges taking place with institutions around the world, mainly in Europe and North America, the Metropolitan Museum in New York included.

The visual archive and the library were enlarged considerably as a result of positive ties with a number of domestic and foreign museums, and indeed private collectors,<sup>59</sup> from whom it was possible to obtain comparative visual material.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, Hofman's work at the museum is defined by the years 1916–1919. He did,

<sup>56</sup> MSB, AWM, box F, Protokol o schůzi kuratoria "Waldesova musea knoflíků" ve středu dne 6. prosince 1916 o 3 hod. odpol.

<sup>57</sup> MSB, AWM, box F, Zápis o schůzi kuratoria Waldesova musea knoflíků, v Praze – Vršovicích dne 2. května o 3 hod. odp., pp. 1–2.

<sup>58</sup> MSB, AWM, box M63, Soubor interní korespondence úředníků muzea s továrníkem Waldesem.

<sup>59</sup> In 1917, a set of photographs was obtained of the collection of Albert Figdor, a prominent collection which focused on artistic craftsmanship.

<sup>60</sup> This route stemmed from the connections of J. Waldes and the director of the Dresden subsidiary Eduard Mezinger. The Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague was an important partner. E. Mezinger managed to negotiate the possibility of creating documentary paintings of buttons from the collection of Klenotnice Grünes Gewölbe, establishing cooperation with the Landesmuseum für Sächsisch Volkskunde, with the Deutsches Museum in Munich, and with the Berlin Modenmuseum, to which the Waldes Museum gifted 247 fasteners from the collection of duplicates. Relations were also established with museums in Poland, Sweden and Yugoslavia.

however, continue his professional theoretical activities and most likely his editorial activities even after his departure. Perhaps his most important piece of work for the museum dates back to November 1920: comprehensive methodological material that deals with new records and the organisation of collections and at the same time addresses subsequent inventory-taking.<sup>61</sup> With this manual, Hofman endeavoured to come to terms with the consequences of the frenzied period of acquisition at the beginning of the museum's existence. He himself states here that objects intended for permanent exhibition had been put on record as a priority. At the same time, he offers the solution of separating insufficiently valuable material from the collection without the need to directly discard and dispose of it by creating a so-called definitive depository to hold objects that will not be used in the exhibition or for study. The material cited also indicates that it was created at the request of J. Waldes, who demanded the accelerated completion of proper collection records at the museum. Whether or not new records were made is difficult to prove with absolute certainty. Whilst a record number from the Waldes Museum was identified on a number of objects after thorough examination of the preserved part of the collection stored at the MSB, it cannot be said whether this number is original or new. However, given that these are, in many cases, objects that were provably displayed in the exhibition and are in the minority, we can assume that no new records were made. For the sake of completeness, it should be added that the original inventory has not yet been identified and possibly no longer exists.

Hofman also proposed the introduction of new record cards, supplemented by photographs or drawings. The material shows that the keeping of cards in this way was approved by the board of curators even before the creation of the manual.

Nevertheless, Hofman was inspired in shaping the concept of the museum by foreign projects. Those which appealed to him the most were also provided as examples in a text he wrote entitled "Náš program".<sup>62</sup> One example of a museum having a narrow profile and focusing on one phenomenon, a museum which still exists to this day, is the Musée de Cheval, created on the premises of the French Chateau Saumur.<sup>63</sup> This aimed to document horseback riding from all possible angles from throughout the history of humankind. A parallel with the Waldes Museum was apt here mainly because a wide range of items relating to the fastening of clothing and covering the widest possible spectrum of the subject became part of the collection during its first two years. The Musée de Cheval was created only four years before the Waldes Museum, and its beginnings were marked by great enthusiasm and many selfless donations of exhibits. Older, but in certain ways analogous to the original, more-monothematic museum in Vršovice, was a collection of corsets built by the owners of the world-famous French company Maison Leoty and Ernest Leoty's publication *Le Corset à travers les âges*,<sup>64</sup> focusing on the historical development of the women's corset. This work was and remains quality methodological inspiration and an example of the universal cultural-historical treatment of a specific object of daily necessity. Applying this to the context of corsets, let us recall Waldes' idea that the evolution of the button reflects therein the cultural development of society. The development of the corset too reflected the gradual shift in society, not only in terms of fashion, craft and material, but also of the attitudes and opinions of certain groups

<sup>61</sup> Památník národního písemnictví (hereinafter PNP), Literární archiv (hereinafter LA), f. Jan Ješek Hofman, archive set no. 540, Návrh na katalogizaci a revizi sbírek Waldesova muzea, datováno 23. listopadu 1920.

<sup>62</sup> HOFMAN, Náš program... p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Saumur, France.

<sup>64</sup> Full version of the text: [https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le\\_Corset\\_%C3%A0\\_travers\\_les\\_%C3%A2ges](https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Le_Corset_%C3%A0_travers_les_%C3%A2ges).

of society.

The second publication that Hofman liked to mention and that might have helped from a methodological point of view was a study by Karl Weule on arrows used by the indigenous tribes of Africa. The work, entitled *Der afrikanische Pfeil: eine anthropogeographische Studie*, from 1899, combined taxonomic, ethnographic, technological and anthropological approaches to the objects. Hofman tried to apply the methods of this work and research when sectioning and subsequently processing the museum collection.

Hofman also had the opportunity to observe the arrangements of various collections of buttons at reputable institutions, for example ethnographic museums in Germany, with which the Waldes Museum maintained lively contacts and professional cooperation. Examples include the Royal Ethnological Museum in Berlin and the Bavarian National Museum in Munich, whose exhibits included a large tableau of buttons for folk costumes. Selected collections at these institutions were photographed and this study material is still found in AMW.

### Waldes and Hofman

Waldes himself stated, both in the early days of the museum and in the 1930s, that he was interested in the button as an object of “cultural historical significance”. In his introductory text to the very first edition of the museum periodical *Zprávy musea knoflíků* (Museum of Buttons News), he outlined his basic hypothesis surrounding the importance of the button.

The button, the fastening of clothing, is in the true sense a measure of national culture and often even a form in which the culture of nations appears. – The button played a significant role in the lives of all peoples past and present, and will surely continue to have such a role in the future.<sup>65</sup>

Jindřich Waldes appealed the need to consider the button from many angles, not merely as various materials and technologies or a specific item of folk or fashion clothing. He primarily saw the button as being “a faithful guide to man”. He saw various meanings and ways of using the button and the ability of this object to take on various forms and functions in line with human needs. Hofman also noticed the close connection between button and man, considering it “part of the physical person”,<sup>66</sup> and at the same time “an organic part of” clothing.<sup>67</sup>

Waldes emphasised that one of the functions of the museum was to inspire the button industry through exhibition and publication activities and to provide it with a high-quality professional background. “The modern realisation that only science and art together can produce quality work, and that only such work has a chance of lasting success, pervades even in the button industry.”<sup>68</sup> There is a certain shift in Waldes’ definition of the significance of buttons and fasteners to humans. At the time of the museum’s creation, he emphasised and preferred objects that reflected folk culture, because fasteners are an integral part of folk jewellery. In the 1930s, his appraisal writings focus more on the ability of fasteners to reflect artistic styles within the bounds of the periodisation of European history. What remained unchanged in Jindřich Waldes, however, was his almost obsessive predilection for the maximum variety of buttons in terms of their secondary functions, a direction he never took in relation to other fasteners, even though feasible to a more or less identical extent.

<sup>65</sup> WALDES, Moje..., p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> HOFMAN, Náš program... pp. 1–5.

<sup>67</sup> HOFMAN, Náš program... pp. 1–5.

<sup>68</sup> WALDES, Moje..., p. 1.

The crucial aspect on which Waldes and Hofman disagreed was the volume by which the collection was to grow. Waldes was uncritically fascinated with the rapid growth in the volume of new acquisitions, wanting the museum to include the widest possible range of material. On the contrary, Hofman was opposed to the permanent accumulation of new additions and rejected the so-called “sport of collecting”.<sup>69</sup> He was well aware that any unsystematic intake of additional items, mainly gifts, was not a good way to go. Moreover, he did not consider it expedient to take in more items than his expert staff was able to process. There was therefore clear conflict in terms of the ambitions and inspirations involved in building the museum. Jindřich Waldes wanted to build a monothematic variant of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague or the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Hofman was more restrained and sought inspiration in more feasible concepts, such as the Musée de Cheval or the Maison Leoty collection. He created the museum programme mentioned above in 1917, defining in the first place therein that it was necessary to maintain the exclusivity of the museum. He was critical of too much emphasis on the curiosity of the topic, as the elementary values of the assemblage, and above all a one-sided methodology of work that prevented the creation of synthetic works. He appealed strongly for the extension of the collection-forming plan to include representatives of fasteners and fabrics as a whole, precisely in the interest of synthetic work. At the same time, he sought to clearly define the methodology of museum work in line with the above concepts. He also worked over the long-term on defending the uniqueness and need for the existence of the museum, looking for reasons to anchor it in the museum network of the time, and began his own research, inter alia conducting a questionnaire survey on the fasteners found in the museum collections of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Unfortunately, this project was never completed, or even published on an ongoing basis, although some of the collected materials remain to this day and have already been partially analysed.

In 1917, Hofman gave a lecture to *Kruh pro pěstování dějin umění* (Circle for the Cultivation of the History of Art),<sup>70</sup> in which he theoretically dealt with the significance of buttons and fasteners and presented his concept for basic categorisation and development within the context of European history. He outlined various aspects of research and essentially summarised his views on the concept of the Waldes Museum.<sup>71</sup> Hofman defined the button as a “culturally historical detail that is significant by way of its purpose”.<sup>72</sup> In doing so, he confirmed his intention to place emphasis on the button as a fastener, and not simply a work of art in itself. At the same time, he pointed out that from the formal technical point of view, the button had reached its peak and could not be spoken of in the context of absolute progress, but that, from the perspective of transformations in its aesthetic and material concept, the button could be associated rather with “a concept of development whose wave rises or falls and is constantly developing, without being of unchangeable qualitative scales”.<sup>73</sup> This markedly distinguished him from Jindřich Waldes, who held the view of continual development. Hofman, of course,

<sup>69</sup> HOFMAN, Jan. Program Waldesova musea, *Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích*, Praha: Waldesovo muzeum. Sběrka šatních spínadel, 1918, p. 4.

<sup>70</sup> The Association of Theoreticians and Art Historians existed in Prague between 1913 and 1960.

<sup>71</sup> The talk was first recorded and published in the first issue of ZWM in 1917 and was subsequently used in edited form as the introduction to the publication brought out to mark the opening of the WM. Jan HOFMAN, *Náš program*, *Zprávy Waldesova musea*, 2 (1), 1917, pp. 1–5.

<sup>72</sup> HOFMAN, Program Waldesova..., p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> HOFMAN, Jan. O rozdělení a úkolu musejních sbírek. *Waldesovo museum: Sběrka knoflíků a šatních spínadel v Praze Vršovicích*, Praha: Waldesovo muzeum. Sběrka šatních spínadel, 1918, p. 24.

also focused on the aesthetic development of fasteners and his curation work was done well. Within the collection, it is possible to trace the collections that really work with the development of the artistic motif, from jewellery work to certain devaluation by batch production, or the transfer of the motif from fashionable luxury to cheap folk button.<sup>74</sup>

He defined the so-called forms of clothing to which buttons and other fasteners put the finishing touches, namely the *purposeful form*, which relates to, for example, the protection of the human body, and the *artistic form*, which directs how the appearance of clothing is completed, thus providing the fastener used with certain intentional aesthetic properties.<sup>75</sup> According to Hofman, the button could be examined on its own, without stitching or the context of the clothing, because, unlike other fasteners, its purpose is clearly informative. In general, however, he preferred the connection of fastener and garment, not only when demonstrating the purpose, but mainly because fasteners developed in parallel with clothing. He was of the view that the fastener could be examined as a source of different information from the technical and artistic points of view. From the perspective of production technology, this often involves elementary processing technologies, meaning that the button can be used, in the right way, to document the development of production and processing techniques. Fasteners can be used to point to the development of artistic craftsmanship and changes in design, or indeed the development of methods of fixing items to and assembling them on clothing. He distinguishes between fashion items and folk items, when the use of an artistic motif in the latter cannot be categorised under a certain period as in the case of fashion goods.

He also draws attention to the fact that buttons in particular become mere ornaments and thus lose their original function. Reference is made to Heinrich Wölfflin (1864–1945)<sup>76</sup> and his methodology of art history and it is in this spirit that Hofman tries to identify individual types and characteristic features of certain groups of specific objects. He uses the term *the architecture of clothing*,<sup>77</sup> where the garment reflects period architecture and artistic concepts; the basic silhouette, the structure, the choice of fabrics and, of course, jewellery, buttons and other fasteners are thus a natural part of the desired shape of the garment. Here we can find analogies with the prevailing style of the period from which the garment comes. This was reflected in Hofman seeing certain technological and artistic features as the primary aspect and at the same time trying to sort the collection according to real use so that he could refer individual groups to use on a particular garment. Hofman thus first examines the fastener itself and only then puts it into the context of real clothing. This is also tied to his initiative to introduce whole parts of clothing to the collection plan. This would facilitate a truly comprehensive study and presentation of buttons and fasteners, unlike other collections of buttons displayed in public, where the button is collected as an objet d'art in itself, in miniature. This is particularly evident when buttons are collected for aesthetic, material, curiosity or souvenir value alone.

<sup>74</sup> One example is a set featuring components made of Wedgwood stoneware. It includes both original products and a wide range of imitations, from luxury to inexpensive, and incorporates separate components made of stoneware and metal, and a rare fragment of terra sigillata from the Ittenweiler site in Alsace. Wedgwood worked with the technology of terra sigillata and the motif is at the same time on one of the buttons. Literature on the topic can be found in the archive. The collection was included in a study published in the museum magazine.

<sup>75</sup> HOFMAN, *Náš program...* p. 2.

<sup>76</sup> Swiss art historian.

<sup>77</sup> HOFMAN, *Náš program...* p. 3.

## Conclusion

The Waldes Museum existed for fewer than 30 years. The first short stage of its existence, between 1916–1919, was by far the most interesting and can be seen as an experiment in building a private scientific institution focusing on buttons and fasteners. Jindřich Waldes' enthusiasm, connections and money facilitated the creation and flourishing of the museum, while the scientific erudition of Jan Ješek Hofman transformed it into a professional institution. The museum carried out specialised publishing work, cooperated with other institutions and built a collection and exhibition. Hofman and external workers conducted research in their fields. Even seen through today's optics, they could certainly have sought recognition as a scientific research institute.

Hofman was an entirely fundamental figure, without whom the museum would not have reached such a high professional level. Unfortunately, he left the museum in mid-1919 after accepting a job on the *Vládný komisariát na ochranu pamiatok* (Government Commission for the Protection of Monuments),<sup>78</sup> working under the guidance of Dušan Jurkovič.<sup>79</sup> He had, apparently, been considering leaving after the war was over.<sup>80</sup> Accepting a position at the Waldes Museum was probably not his career goal in any case. One other reason for his departure was likely the fact that the museum exhibition was practically finished, and the guide to the exhibition which Hofman had prepared had been published. Although Hofman's departure was a significant loss for the museum, it is clear from the correspondence we still have that the relationship between the two protagonists remained decorous, perhaps even friendly.<sup>81</sup> Hofman did not leave the museum overnight. In 1920, he drafted a proposal for a new concept of working with the collection in terms of records and inventory-taking. He was also the editor of the final edition of *Zprávy Waldesova muzea*. His departure led the museum to stagnate, becoming an exhibition hall for the button. The museum became an interesting social space that was used for corporate representation and informal business meetings. After the Second World War, the museum was closed and its collections were subsequently transferred to the administration of the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague as a deposit. Currently, the preserved parts of the collection are located both in this museum and in the Museum of Glass and Jewellery in Jablonec nad Nisou, where a numerically larger part of the collection was transferred in 1973.<sup>82</sup>

The four years of cooperation between Waldes, as collector, and Hofman, as collection manager, was a creative period influenced by the collector's passion and love for the button

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<sup>78</sup> State office operating in Slovakia in the years 1919–1922. His was the protection of cultural and historical monuments. From 1922, it changed to the *Štátny referát na ochranu pamiatok na Slovensku* (State Department for the Protection of Monuments in Slovakia), and Jan Hofman became its director. More: STOCKMANN, Viliam. Vývoj štátnej ochrany prírody na Slovensku v rokoch 1918–1938. In: *Životné prostredie. revue pre teóriu a tvorbu životného prostredia* 50, Bratislava: Institute of Landscape Ecology SAS and BIOSFÉRA, Landscape Ecology Foundation, 2016, pp. 195–204. Online: [http://publikacie.uke.sav.sk/sites/default/files/2016\\_4\\_195\\_204\\_Stockmann.pdf](http://publikacie.uke.sav.sk/sites/default/files/2016_4_195_204_Stockmann.pdf)

<sup>79</sup> ŠOPÁK, Pavel. Jan Hofman. Ke 115.výročiu narodenia. In: *Zprávy památkové péče* 58, Praha: Národní památkový ústav, 1998, p. 309.

<sup>80</sup> ŠOPÁK, Pavel. Jan Hofman – pokus o portrét, *Umění* 51, Praha: Ústav dějin umění, Akademie věd České republiky, 2003, p. 115.

<sup>81</sup> This is evidenced by the correspondence we still have to this day: for example, condolences on the death of Hofman's mother, New Year wishes or Hofman's gift of two buttons to the museum collection, probably at the end of 1937 (Památník národního písemnictví (hereinafter PNP), Literární archiv (hereinafter LA), f. Jan Ješek Hofman, archive set no. 540, Letter from J. Waldes to J. J. Hofman of January 4, 1938.)

<sup>82</sup> More: HRUŠKOVÁ, Kateřina. Sbirka Waldes v letech 1946–1977, *Fontes Nissae* 22, Liberec: Technická univerzita v Liberci, 2021, pp. 96–110.

and the erudite and rational approach of its manager, who was able to set real limits on the collector's ambitions. Observing the first period of the museum's existence not through the number of collection items, but through these two figures, shows this chapter in the history of the Waldes Museum to have been a creative process based on the dualism of two prominent personalities.

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