

Museums and Display

Stories in a showcase

Symposium 13-14 November 2009

Netherlands Institute in Turkey, İstanbul

***Museum displays are the outcomes of choices. On what grounds are these choices made?
What message does the arranging of objects bring?***

In the past, museums of art were seen as temples; holy places where the public admires beautiful and costly objects. Nowadays, in most museums we see a trend to show the cultural background of these objects: to add historical information. The esthetic point of view is interchanged for a focus on the cultural context. The outcome of this vision is that art-collections, historical collections and all forms of multimedia are intertwined and that most museums focus on cultural history.

Objects are more appreciated nowadays for their cultural value. They are selected not only because of their esthetic value but because of the links in the chain they can form in the cultural story the curator wants to tell. The ensembles of objects resemble the paragraphs of a story. The aim of the curator is to visualize history and the immaterial heritage, the individual stories and memories behind the object.

To visualize cultural history, objects are indispensable. In some cases many objects are available to the curator, in other cases there are none. This could give an unbalanced vision of history. In this case the collection dictates the themes for exhibitions. Or the curator could use his inventiveness. Choices for visualizing only some chapters of history are not always the outcomes of gaps in the collection. It could even be a gap in the memory of a nation. From this point of view it is one step further to ask how the story can be manipulated. How can the visitor be led or misled to certain perceptions by giving the objects different meanings?

The trends and theories of display and the questions they bring, will be discussed from different angles in two sessions:

Display and Ideas

Translating into Display

Symposium Program

November 13, Friday Display and Ideas

Discussion Moderator: **Lucienne Thys-Şenocak**, Koç University

- 14:00 – 14:15 **Fokke Gerritsen**, Netherlands Institute in Turkey, Director
Welcome
Charlie Smid, Netherlands Institute in Turkey
Introduction
- 14:15 – 14:45 **Susan Legêne**, Free University Amsterdam (VU)
Museums and the Nation in a post colonial world. Plea for a historical critique of exhibitions
- 14:50 – 15:10 **Nevra Ertürk**, Yıldız Technical University
A New Understanding of Display for the State Museums in Turkey: The Diyarbakır Museum Project
- 15:10 – 15:30 Break
- 15:30 – 16:00 **Özge Sade Mete**, Koç University, 2009-10 RCAC Fellow
Modernization and Memory: Selective Remembrance in Archaeological and Ethnographic Museums in Turkey, 1960-1980
- 16:00 – 16:30 **Mirjam Hoijtink**, University of Amsterdam (UvA)
Orhan Pamuk's 'Museum of Innocence': an Artist Studio?
- 16:30 – 17:00 **Deniz Ünsal**, Bilgi University
Objects in-between: An analysis of display in the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts

Discussion

November 14, Saturday Translating into Display

Discussion moderator: **Charlie Smid**, Netherlands Institute in Turkey

- 10:00 – 10:30 **Robert Verhoogt**, Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science
Transition on Display. Recent Changes in Museums and the Presentation of Collections in the Netherlands
- 10:35 – 11:05 **Burçak Madran**, Yıldız Technical University
Dreaming about the Museum Exhibitions
- 11:05 – 11:25 Break
- 11:30 – 12:00 **Kees Zandvliet**, Amsterdam Historical Museum
The Amsterdam Historical Museum in Motion: City, People, Collections and Exhibitions
- 12:05 – 12:35 **Edhem Eldem**, Boğaziçi University
The Challenge of a 'Flat' Collection: The Ottoman Bank Museum

Discussion