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**REFORM OF SERBIAN MUSEUMS THROUGH
CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECTS**

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Abstract

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

[Museums] are a mirror to our own times and illuminate development in our culture and society. We offer a place of education, community, discovery and reflection, a shelter from the pressures of our daily lives, and inspiration for our inner beings. We have a responsibility to preserve, display, research and enhance our collections... At the core of our public service lies our ability to inspire curiosity and stimulate learning. By providing concrete experiences of the world's culture and achievement, we act as unsurpassed generators of ideas.¹

1.1 Introduction

Serbia, a country that has been gone through a very dramatic, painful and in every other way difficult process of political, economic, cultural and moral transition since 1990, stands today in front of both negative consequences of its recent past and new opportunities for better and perspective future. In this landscape of opportunities culture represents one of the strongest pillars that can bear and support all the challenges and temptations of this responsibility.

Following the processes and phases of change in culture and its institutions, I have been looking forward to seeing the signs of new times in Serbian museums too. The majority of other non-profit cultural institutions like theaters, cultural centers, galleries, have so far shown the will to answer to demands of new times, to catch the flow, to build new partnerships and to build their new image for the 21st century; although the results come slowly, sometime maybe too slowly and with a lot of effort, one can see the ultimate resolution to succeed in this difficult task. In the same time, Serbian museums look like they gave up this fight. With very few exceptions, they remain in a deep institutional depression, deserted, forgotten and thus almost abject by audience, artists, researchers and authorities.

The reasons of this state of arts in Serbian museums might be different, but I see most of them in the field of professional depression and apathy that rules the museums

¹ Manifesto for Museums, March 2004

http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/images/publications/manifesto_for_museums.pdf

professionals in this country. Absence of any “care” by authorities and cultural policy makers, isolation of all museal circles and flows, long silence in which they have survived for years – all this made the museum staff and museums in Serbia inert, self-oriented and self-sufficient, isolated islands within lively, dynamic and creative artistic and cultural scene in Serbia. As a defense mechanism, museum professionals have been trying to develop and keep an image of “untouchable noblemen distraught in their strange and secret world of wanderers”. It has been the justification of poor conditions rooted in a complex economic, political, social and cultural deterioration of the 90’s.

But, in spite of such conditions, Serbian museums will soon take its place in the agenda of local and national policy makers and funders and, hopefully, of new generations of museum professionals who will be ready to take the challenge of an inevitable change of the museums role in contemporary Serbian culture and society.

1.2 The aim of the thesis

This thesis has for the aim to examine and propose some strategies for reform of different museums in Serbia and for creation of new image of museum as an open, dynamic, creative institution competitive with other contemporary types of organizations existing in Serbia. These strategies come out from the practices of contemporary art and its richness of forms, techniques, ideas, market experiences, social and cultural status and, above all, its privileged status in the “era of image” we live in. The thesis tries to detect a number of strategies that have already been or might be introduced into the museal practice, while coming from the multifaceted and rich world of contemporary art. Relying on selected examples both from internationally known museums like the Louvre, Musée d’Orsay or MAK in Vienna, international projects like Gemine Muse or Serbian National Museum in Belgrade and Museum of African Art in Belgrade, as well as on some other illustrations, this thesis calls attention to positive results of the encounters of different kinds of museums and contemporary art way of visual thinking. This visual thinking and its philosophical/aesthetical, conceptual, narrative-making, media and technology capacities could serve as a toolbox for fixing new image of Serbian museums and “para-

artistic communication language”² that would help the museums to become different from what they are now.

Identification of different characteristics or “strategies” of contemporary art and their analysis in the context of museums should lead towards outline of some possible tools and models of changing the image, policy, attitudes and institutional discourse of the museums in Serbia. The thesis should prove that implication of these strategies immanent to contemporary art and its vocabulary into the museal context could improve museal practice in Serbia with less effort and transform the museums from inert and disinteresting places of dead objects into vivid and progressive, knowledge and ideas-generated centers for the 21st century. The suggested models should draw attention of museum professionals to capacities of the museum concepts for self-regeneration and development.

The strategy proposed by the thesis concerns the field of museum management and audience development, which is one of the major questions of modern museums, especially in Serbia where it has been neglected for more than a decade. The thesis that aims to underline the capacities of contemporary visual arts concepts and presentation models in the field of museum management does not intend to discuss the animosities between the art system(s) of today’s global world or the complex relations that emerge from the market economy and liberal socio-political environment. Its aspiration is to propose a model that combines project-based strategy of institutional change (reform). Theoretical basis for such model has been found in theories of organizational development and strategic management proposed by Milena Dragicevic Sestic and Sanjin Dragojevic in complex and “turbulent” social and political environments³. Their theoretical concepts provide the tools for context definition and for creation of

² In his book *Eseji o muzejima i njihovoj teoriji: prema kibernetičkom muzeju* (Essays on museums and their theory: Towards the cybernetic museum), Dr Tomislav Šola speaks about “ecomuseum” i.e. new “open” or “total museum” for the new era. He identifies a list of tendencies that lead towards the ecomuseum (conceptualization of museum, crisis of traditional theory of museums, merging of cultural and commercial, cultural tourism, individualization of museums, integration of information system, re-definition of non-profit status, multidisciplinary approach, participation, nationalistic temptations etc.) among which he sees also “para-artistic communication language”.

See: Tomislav Šola, *Eseji o muzejima i njihovoj teoriji: prema kibernetičkom muzeju*, Zagreb: Hrvatski nacionalni komitet ICOM, 2003

³ Milena Dragičević Šešić, Sanjin Dragojević, *Arts management in turbulent times: Adaptable Quality Management*, Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, Beokmanstudies 2005

appropriate strategy for organizational development. Model of reform proposed by this thesis is based in the project logic (which is, according to Dragicevic Sesic and Dragojevic, a desirable model of institutional behavior), but more in the form of testing the institutional capacities in the transitory phase from institutional towards full project logic. The model combines elements of several developmental strategies - strategy of linkage, strategies of program diversification, quality achievement strategy...⁴- with the aim to regulate program quality, audience development, capacity building, public relations, funding.

Integration of recognized theoretical frame and practical management solutions is realized in the field of marketing and its audience oriented tools⁵. The reasons for this thesis rely on the need of Serbian museums to overcome transitional problems and to improve their image in the public. Marketing solutions that are chosen here come both from the museum marketing theory and practice and from contemporary art practices that can be very successful.

1.3 The main research questions

The principal research questions of this thesis are:

1. *What capacities and strategies of contemporary art can be used as tools for change of the Serbian museums?*
2. *Would introduction of contemporary art strategies help in a more efficient and creative way repositioning of Serbian museums within national and broader cultural context?*
3. *How and to what extent would the strategies of contemporary art help audience attraction in the Serbian museums?*

First, it would be necessary to explain what is meant under the syntagm “strategies of contemporary art”. By this I refer to all those *representation techniques, organization modes, visual and symbolic instrumentality and relations of object and surrounding space*

⁴ Ibid, pp. 89-90

⁵ Tomislav Šola, Marketing u muzejima, Ili o vrlini i kako je obznaniti, Beograd: Clio 202, pp. 99

that have been established through development of visual culture, institutionalized through art market, expanded to other fields like architecture or design, or rooted in theory of 20th century. Comparing the developments of many mostly European museums and related institutions (archives, botanical gardens...), I could see that many of these museums have adopted principles belonging to the world of (contemporary) art. Of course, this kind of shift in display orientations, policies, new partnerships or upgraded narratives has come into museums probably under the influences of expanding art market, domination of visual culture and postmodern paradigm that allows impossible connections. But, these elements have brought a new primarily visual and representational energy that enabled the museums to stay in the very heart of contemporary creation and to even introduce innovative interdisciplinary projects. In the same time, the introduction of visual art in different layers of a museum of natural history, archeology, a historical event, a person, or the introduction of contemporary art into an art historical museum opens new “readings” of the collections and their objects and creates different, for today’s visitors more understanding or communicative narratives.

This paper examines different types of museums with the exception of the museums of contemporary art, which is, by its content, focused on the art and art tendencies of today. In the global “museumscape”, we witness an incredible rise of contemporary art museums (in Europe, USA, Japan, but also in China, Latin America, South East Asia, Middle East and Euro-Asia where the tradition of contemporary art has no deep roots). Many of them have become the landmarks with its architecture design (Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Centre Pompidou in Paris, Museum of Contemporary Art de Niterói in Brasil), centers of artistic and technological innovation and experimentation (Museum of the Future/Ars Electronica in Linz, ZKM – Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe), popular tourist destination and highly important actors at the art market. There must be something that the other museums and hopefully also some museums in Serbia can learn out of these experiences.

In the following text the examples of art historical, historical, archeological, natural history, ethnographic, memorial and other similar museums will be discussed. The

museums of contemporary art do not belong to the following discussion as objects of research, but only as tools and/or comparison factor.

1.4 Methodology

This thesis is built upon a conceptual framework, based on relevant literature, which is then compared with the key case studies from local and international, mostly European museum landscape.

The empirical research involved observations of the dimensions of museum service delivery carried out by researchers and followed by extensive data recording. Additionally, in-depth interviews with several directors and curators were conducted initially to aid the generation of constructs and, later, to add insights to the research issues and, eventually, to contribute to the analysis of Serbian museum's potentials for reforms. In-depth interviews were conducted in a non-directive manner. For example, broad, open-ended questions were used and discussion centered around the experiences and opinions of directors.

The museums considered in this thesis are all the museums except the museums of contemporary art, not-for-profit institutions that have a director on staff, are wholly or partly funded by government⁶, have a permanent collection and are open to the public. The research protocol was designed to explore research issues through qualitative methods and model the key issues discovered.

The first phase of research was dedicated to investigation of European museums and programs that practice inclusion of contemporary art on regular or occasional basis into the museum programming, exhibition and space design or specific partnerships. On the basis of gained information, analysis of the cases was done. This analysis implicated a wide bibliography research in order to define the main structure of the problem, issues that had been discussed and those that are hardly covered by the available bibliography. Desk research followed in order to collect information that reflects strategies of public relations and reactions (quantitative data, articles, reviews...). Once the picture of

⁶ Only one museum analyzed as example from European museum practices is private – Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna.

European examples (case studies) was completed, additional research of the state of art of Serbian museums was done which also included the interviews with several directors and curators. Acquainted research material and bibliography study enabled to proceed with the finalization of the thesis.

After the presentation of the motives and methods of research given in the first chapter, in the second chapter presents an overview of contemporary art practices that have been already implemented into the standard museal culture mostly in Europe. It also speculates about the audience reactions and impacts over the different kinds of audiences, as well as about cultural policy issues regarding the position of museums in cultural systems. Third part examines the state of art in Serbian museums strongly influenced by the overall socio-political conditions that marked 1990s and by transition processes that are still at stake. In this part the main characteristics of museal socio-cultural cycle are defined, serving as the frame for further speculation in the fourth chapter. More general as well as more specific management and marketing issues are discussed in this part leading towards conclusions and recommendations.

2. MUSEUMS AND CONTEMPORARY ART CREATION

2.1 The role of the museums in contemporary culture / shift of discourse

At the very beginning of this chapter, I would like to draw attention to some ideas about museum that come from the early 20th century and that still wait to be heard and hopefully understood. These ideas are found in the writings of Alexander Dorner, director of the Hanover Museum in the 1920s who defined the museum as an self-transforming institution and as a “Kraftwerk” and was willing to realize a contemporary, dynamic display of a museum on the move (“atmosphere galleries”). He anticipated the issues that are potent and valid today more than ever before:

- “The museum in permanent transformation within dynamic parameters.
- The museum in an oscillation between object and process.
- The multi-identitarian museum.
- The museum on the move.
- The museum as a risk-taking pioneer: to act and not to wait.
- The museum as a locus of crossing of art and life.
- The museum as laboratory.
- The museum based on a dynamic concept of art history.
- The elastic museum, which means both elastic display and elastic building.
- Bridges between the artist, the museum and other disciplines.”⁷

We should not forget one more personality that thought of museums in a far-seeing way: it was Kasimir Malevich who, as a head of GINHUK - State Institute of Artistic Culture in St. Petersburg, was establishing the ground for the further innovational research in the sphere of fine arts and museums. He strived for a museum with a classical permanent collection and an active program with living artists from all over the world⁸. This idea, about close relations between classical museums and *art of today* is not new, but

⁷ Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *Migrators Curator*, Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris cited in: *What do you expect from an art institution in the 21st century?* Jérôme Sans and Marc Sanchez (eds.), Paris: Palais de Tokyo 2003, pp. 9-10.

⁸ The first museum of contemporary art was founded in Soviet Union as Museum of artistic culture on 5th December 1918 in St. Petersburg

unfortunately, it is very rarely taken optimistically and as a chance for improvement of the museum practice, image and influence in the wide fields of art creation, education and cultural policy.

Still today museums are perceived to be timeless, standing still and on the sidelines of economic, political and social debates. But the reality is quite different. They cannot be immune from sweeping international, cultural, technological, and social changes. In fact, museums are responding by innovating and evolving; they have reshaped the way in which they work, increasing the quality and public benefit of what they have to offer. They must remain relevant and inspiring institutions intellectually and ones in which the public - as citizens - play a vital role.

First attempts for museums repositioning started in the USA in the 1950's synergetic discussions on practical, theoretical and critical levels with the emphasis on practical museum work. In the period 1960/1980 there was a similar synergy, but the leading force was the wish to develop museums as social institutions with political agendas. At the end of the 1970s in France the social role of museums was re-defined by a new generation of progressive museologists. Finally, at the end of the 1980s the new museology appeared in the United Kingdom in connection with a re-assessment of the educational and social role of museums in the post-war period.

The new museology⁹ that first appeared in the USA does not treat the museum as an institution that is simply concerned, in a neutral way, with *classification, collection and conservation activities*. The museum is, according to this perspective, a tool available to a society to find and to demarcate its identity; its role is to visualize cultures. Thus, the museum is reduced to a "façade" of social differences and becomes a representation of dominant ideological interests.

Here I would like to mention one important tendency in the museological theory, which criticizes institutional and ideological frames and instrumentalization of European rationalist idea of the museum. American art historian Donald Preziosi, devoted to the deconstruction of the museum (of art) as an exemplary epistemological technology of

⁹ There are distinction between the Anglo-Saxon concept of "new museology" and the French-Canadian concept of "nouvelle muséologie" which insists on "reappropriation du territoire, du patrimoine, pour l'autodeveloppement individuel et collectif": the concept of museum is not confined to a building, the museum can be anywhere, and is anywhere and everywhere within a specified territory. For this museum concept the term *ecomuseum* has been coined.

Modernity¹⁰, sees the museum practices as key-players in production, conservation and spreading of the essentialist and historicist fictions that created social reality of the modern world. They developed conviction that a museological exhibition can factually “represent” a non-museal situation or a history. Preziosi accuses museums for falsification of history by interpreting the past according to the artifacts presented in their collection,¹¹ for creating “virtual reality”.¹²

According to the institution-focused theories, the museum space is considered as a symbolic space; the display is a microcosmic representation of national existence or political differences. Material culture studies tackle the internal principles of the arrangements of specific collections. Thus, the approaches of both institutional theories and material culture studies presume that the museum’s objective is to reflect the dynamic eternal reality. By external it is meant the social, political and cultural worlds with which the museum interacts. So, the museum is considered as *a visual embodiment of external, past and present social reality*.

Almost from the beginning, museums have been expected to provide the possibility of inspiration and enlightenment through direct experience of genius. Whether in art, history, science or culture, museums have presented themselves as principal repositories of society's greatest achievements. Moreover, museums have taken upon themselves the responsibility to fashion the conditions within which education could best be achieved. Reserving for themselves this position has been an ongoing theme of the professionalization of museums in this century. The core activities of educating publics of all kinds have guided collecting, conservation and research, and education has been the currency by which museums have elevated their access to power. In the education field the museums found the fertile ground for building the new identity: the one of the source of knowledge that emerged from the growing influence of global economy of knowledge. As such museums have become complex sites of cultural dynamics. But it is never a

¹⁰ Preziosi considers art (of art history) as the main product of Modernity - as a model paradigm, an important frame of references within the Modern knowledge. See: *Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, Donald Preziosi (ed.), Oxford University Press 1998

¹¹ Donad Preziosi, *Zbirke i muzeji u: Kritički termini istorije umetnosti*, priredili Robert S. Nelson i Ričard Šif, Novi Sad: Svetovi, 2004, pp. 487.

¹² Ibid, pp.490.

generator (of culture or art) but amplifier and catalyst, never material relic of culture but a *pacemaker* for its dying heart, never an actor but a stage.¹³

Complex and accelerated processes of social and, consequently, institutional developments in the globalized world with dominating neo-liberal economy, multicultural “openness” and postmodernist decentralisation call for the change of each constituent element of the system: the museums that operate in the field of “permanent values” are also asked to do self-evaluation. Now, collections, always the core of the museums, now coexist with narratives and educational programs as prime museum values. This is proved by the shift from control by experts to control by audiences (in the USA mostly, Great Britain, Australia etc.), from the exhibition towards educational programs. In recent years museums have changed from being predominantly custodial institutions to becoming increasingly focussed on audience attraction. New emphasis is placed on museum-audience interactions and relationships¹⁴. Older modernist models for communication based on the transmission of authoritative subject-based facts to a mass of passive receivers are being superseded by new approaches that acknowledge “active audiences”, constructivist and interpretist learning theories and the complexities of cultural politics. New museology has become more people than object oriented, instead of temples of vanity they’ve become places where wider cultural realities are taking place.

This change of focus (from the collection to the audience), naturally, influenced the position of the collection within the museum system. Museum experts understood that it would be necessary to change the *narratives* of the museum exhibitions and displays in order to be able to fulfill the new role of the museum. The new narratives (in exhibitions, policy and audience policy) would offer possibilities for the reconceptualisation of art (and other) museums that are rooted in late 19th-century modernist culture. The new narratives are based on communication and interaction as the most spread “tools” of global knowledge. This has brought replacement of old definitions of museum by different approaches in defining what would be the prime role of the museums in

¹³ Tomislav Šola, *Eseji o muzejima i njihovoj teoriji, Prema kibernetičkom muzeju*, Zagreb: Hrvatski nacionalni komitet ICOM, 2003, pp. 154.

¹⁴ Stransky speaks of “programme orientation” instead of “cognitive orientation”. Stransky, Z. (1983) 'Basic paper', in: V. Sofka ed., *Methodology of museology and professional training*. ICOFOM Study Series 1, Stockholm 1983, pp. 126-132.

contemporary culture. One of the definitions coming from Jorge Glusberg makes distinction between so called “hot” and “cold” museums. “Cold” museums are communication museums, while “hot” museums are information museums where former allow active learning and creative development, and latter only transmit information already shaped and determined neutralizing audience’s participation in the learning process¹⁵.

In the late 1980s the museums found themselves in front of the new era. In that time the western world started to face a continuing boom of cultural institution projects, despite all cost-cutting programs and neo-liberal attitudes, while all cultural institutions confronted the increasing difficulties, mainly financial. Peter Noever believes that “undisputed function of museums (and of art and culture) for public identity formation and self-definition is... fundamentally at stake as a consequence of misguided notion of democratisation and the all-encompassing economisation of society.”¹⁶

Within the scope of this thesis, I will mention some earlier theoretical hints and allusions about museum institutions and art as creative act. For example, Jean Claire noticed that museum seemed to have tendencies to exhibit itself because each procedure that defines the museal practice – collecting and collection, taxonomy, notation, selection, putting into showcase – gradually has become an aesthetic category.¹⁷ He defines the museum of 20th century as schizo-museum, followed by schizo-museology,¹⁸ just like the art of the same century. Speaking about this art, André Malraux begins his reflections, not with abstract definitions of art, but with the range of particular *objects* that contemporary Western culture considers to be art - and thus, to begin with, the objects displayed in the world’s art museums. These, together with many objects that cannot be moved (such as stained glass windows and many frescos) make up what Malraux terms our “musée imaginaire” - a vast art collection “in our minds”, so to speak, that far exceeds the scope of any individual institution no matter how large or well endowed. Therefore, museum is for Malraux self-conscious of art, an ideal place.

¹⁵ Jorge Glusberg, *Cool museums and hot museums* (“Hladni” i “vruci” muzeji), Zagreb: Muzejski dokumentacioni centar, 1983, pp. 69.

¹⁶ *Museums without Futures*, Peter Noever (ed.), Vienna: MAK 2001, pp. 108-109.

¹⁷ Jean Claire, *Herostrat ili Muzej pod znakom pitanja* (Erostrate ou le musée en question), Kultura 97, Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka, Beograd 1998, pp. 39.

¹⁸ Ibid.

2.2 Contemporary art in historical museums – successful encounter

The history of relations of museums and living art is very long and it overpasses genesis of museums of modern /contemporary art. But, the theme of this study is the relation between the museums of different kinds and contemporary art creation in the last 2 decades. As a matter of fact, European and American museums entered a new phase in the conception of their public policy starting to invest more and more knowledge, work, money but also other disciplines and fields' experiences (like marketing, visual communication and design, applied psychology, cultural studies, galleries and art market etc.) into the audience development and outreach. This trend naturally derived from the previous phase when all efforts had been put onto the educational program. Of course, this activity remained as one of the prime functions of the museums in contemporary culture. But, in the same time we have been facing the flourishing development of contemporary arts in their various appearances: popping up of contemporary art museums all over the world, highest social and economic roles of these museums (that became the bearers of local regeneration), development of art market, contemporary artists as stars, contemporary art entering the large auction houses (Christie's, Sotheby's, Phillips de Pury & Luxembourg...) with prices in millions of dollars, multiplication of biennials, international large-scale exhibitions, mobility of artists etc. All this made contemporary arts becoming an important branch of cultural (creative) industries that generates huge income to cities, regions and state budgets.

Such a growing development has necessarily influenced the museal field in general, especially the museum management. Analysis of the most successful museums can indicate what changes in the image, public relations, programs, exhibition displays and even human resource policy have been made under direct or indirect influence of contemporary art. All these changes are, as it has been said before, focused towards new audiences.

I chose several examples of the museums in Europe that have been introducing a different approach in their otherwise successful strategies of promotion and audience outreach. This approach originates in the contemporary art world – its institutions, communication models and capacities, conceptual layers, immanent formal openness etc. The cases that

follow are those that and that intersect with some of the most prospective projects within the field of today's art in Europe.

Selected museums and projects are good showcases of the practice that this study stands for: introduction of contemporary art “projects” into the museums. The criteria for their selection are:

- they are prominent and respectful institutions with long history,
- they clearly stated intentions to develop new policies whose aim is, among other things, introduction of contemporary arts,
- my personal interest in these museums and projects.

2.2.1 FIAC in the Grand Palais and in the Louvre

FIAC – *Foir de l'art contemporain*, famous art fair in Paris, founded in 1974, have been organized every year within Paris Expo, Paris fair site at the outskirts of the city (Porte de Versailles). As all other similar manifestations (in Art Basel, Art Basel Miami Beach, Frieze London, Arco Madrid, Armory Show in New York etc), this fair is meant to contextualize the contemporary art in view and to be a regulatory tool of the world art market. After regaining its position among the most important art fairs after 2000¹⁹ (with more than 200 international leading art galleries and art dealers and thousands of visitors during 3-day fair), FIAC is moving in 2006 into the very heart of Paris: in the Cour Carrée of the Musée du Louvre and the Grand Palais. This move might look strange: the most cutting-edge visual arts that is being presented and “on sale” at the fair meets the most prestigious cultural cite, symbol of Paris and of the French historic culture, the very foundation of the world museum culture, “ephemeral architecture of great quality”. But it was significantly inspired by program orientation of the two distinguished art institution. When the Grand Palais officially re-opened in October 2005, FIAC was invited to host a “memorable inaugural celebration” followed by a series of artistic events including

¹⁹ Comparing to other European and American fairs, Fiac used to be considered by the gallery owners and artists as more conservative and “very French”. But in 2000 Fiac opened more towards international galleries, artists and “one-man shows” that proved to bring a lot of success to the participating galleries. See: *Les galeries d'art contemporain en France, Portrait et enjeux dans un marché mondialisé*, François Benhamou, Nahtalie Moureau, Dominique Sagot-Duvaurox (eds.), Paris : Ministère de la culture et de la communication, DAG, La Documentation française 2001, pp. 86-92.

performances, film projections and large scale installations involving 40 international artists. Contemporary art was given opportunity to, in a way, be promoters of the national cultural heritage of the highest degree. In the same time, the established value, by the decision of the authorities – French Ministry of Culture, supported creation of new value, new art and their “strategies” in public sphere. In this case I read the cultural heritage – with all its symbolic, but also institutional capital – as an tool of French cultural policy used for supporting and generating new value, new cultural capital, as well as for upgrading significance of the art market and the local, French part in it (art market today is an evitable fact that is no longer possible to deny and it is losing its negative aspect of being the murderer of creativity, experimentation, innovation and freedom of art). On the other side, the new audience is to (re)visit the historic site and experience it in a different way: as a vivid part of today’s cultural developments and as consistent and relevant partner of contemporary creation. Introduction of the narratives rooted in postmodern culture into the classical cultural institution dedicated to the grand masters of (Eurocentric) art history represent a break through which loops historic and contemporary cultures in a far-reaching way.

As for the Musée du Louvre, the background for this encounter is situated in the special program existing in the Louvre since 2004. It is called *Contrepoint* and is dedicated to specific introduction of contemporary art creation in the museum’s collection displays. Opening its doors and the Cour Carrée to Fiac, the museum provides a further opportunity to highlight, for the public of Fiac and visitors in general, the plethora of fertile interactions, which contemporary artists have always entertained with works inscribed in an historic and cultural heritage.

“Within an ephemeral architecture of great quality, respectful of the exceptional nature of the site and preserving its accessibility to the general public, of the Musée du Louvre will provide a unique context for the presentation of the art of today.”²⁰

²⁰ From FIAC’s website <http://www.fiacparis.com/page.php?lang=uk&id=35&m=1&sm=1>

Just like the program *Contrepoint*, this specific initiative acts in favour of the development and diversification of the visiting public, in particular its younger audience. Parallel to the fair in the Cour Carrée, Fiac and the Louvre organize together an ensemble of outdoor projects implanted in the Tuileries gardens and the grounds of the Musée du Louvre, comprising installations and monumental works proposed by exhibiting galleries and open to the general public.

2.2.2 Musée du Louvre, Paris

The collaboration of Fiac with the Musée du Louvre is a natural extension of the Louvre's policy of enlarging the scope of the museum's activities to embrace contemporary art. At the inauguration of *Contrepoint* it was said: "Following its policy of opening to contemporary art, the Louvre establishes a new dialogue between the past and the present ..."

The program *Contrepoint* was initiated in 2003 by Henri Loyrette, President Director, and had its first edition in 2003/2004. The idea of the Museum and the curator Marie-Laure Bernadac (chief curator for contemporary art) was to enable the encounter between the past preserved in and interpreted by the museum and the artists who should react in a creative / artistic way to "a museum object, a place, a historic period, a myth"²¹. These artists were to choose the way to react: they could make a new piece of work for this occasion and environment, they could also place an already existing oeuvre in the chosen museum space / setting / atmosphere / architectural frame / thematic unit etc. They were free to contemplate what the Musée du Louvre represents, owns, offers or hides and what it could give in future. "Reflexion about a museum object, about time, memory, conservation, plastic issues, displacement of the migratory objects, anthropologists' interpretations, liaisons between tradition and modernity are ways to dialogue with museums collections."²²

In this first editions the Louvre included 10 artists that stepped into the museum with very different works and media. Among others there were Christian Boltanski, Gary Hill,

²¹ Communiqué de presse "Contrepoint, L'art contemporain au Louvre", http://www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/contrep_v2_m56577569830541126.pdf

²² Ibid.

Jean-Michel Othoniel, Jean-Luc Moulène, Xavier Vielhan, Jean-Michel Alberola and others. They made installations, video installation, sound installation, new media installations, performance, drawings, sculpture...

In the next edition 2005/2006 the focus of *Contrepoint* was on the crossing of sculpture and porcelain (with the title “De l’objet d’art à la sculpture – Porcelaines contemporaines”). This time it’s not that the cooperation only included the museum collections and the artists (like Bertrand Lavier, Louise Bourgeois, Jim Dine, Anne et Patrick Poirier...), but also La Manufacture Nationale de Sèvres that offered its ateliers, knowledge and finest porcelain to the artists. The resulting works were then displayed in the permanent collection of the Decorative Arts Department.

The curator states that “passage along centuries and technical diversity in this department create a context particularly inspiring for contemporary art. Confrontation between the works of the present and of the past, displayed in the same setting opens the question of boundaries between an applied art object and a sculpture, witnesses about longevity and revival of a traditional technique and gives new museographic perspectives.”²³

Finally, for the edition in 2006/2007 is dedicated to the medium of sculpture. Through the work of several artists (like Richard Deacon, Luciano Fabro, Anish Kapoor and others) it will investigate the possibilities for the new “reading” of classical sculptural works in the Louvre collection.

Finally, the main reason for this past-present dialogue is the following:

”Giving another artistic and alive point of view of the past, this strange passage, this sudden discovery of objects from different times or different techniques, allow assembly of different audiences.”²⁴

2.2.3 British Museum, London

²³ Communiqué de presse “Contrepoint 2, De l’objet d’art à la sculpture - Porcelaines contemporaines”, http://www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/src_document_50583_v2_m5657756983062_6348.pdf

²⁴ Communiqué de presse “Contrepoint, L’art contemporain au Louvre”, http://www.louvre.fr/media/repository/ressources/sources/pdf/contrep_v2_m56577569830541126.pdf

British Museum is one of the oldest museal institution in Europe that arose from the collection the physician and naturalist Sir Hans Sloan in 1753. It celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2003 as the first national, public and secular museum in the world. The British Museum, which has one of the largest historical collections of artifacts from all over the world, developed as well a particular program that reflects the current trends in the global culture and combines the affirmed values and the living art. In 1999 the Museum's curator James Putnam founded the British Museum's Contemporary Arts and Cultures Programme which relates to the philosophically rigorous role of museums: to examine and re-examine history, art and artefacts in the light of current cultural-related issue. Under this program many living artists were invited to install work among the permanent collections - Christo, Richard Wilson, Braco Dimitrijevic, Isaac Julien, Mike Nelson and Karen Knorr, Andy Goldsworthy, Marc Quinn, Richard Wentworth... The museum organized large symposia about phenomena that are part not only of contemporary culture – like performance art with all most representative actors of this art form from all corners of the world, but it insists on research and dialogue between museums and artists, their interactions with museums, real or imagined, and fascination that these institutions exert over artists' imaginations.

The example of the British Museum in this context is worth of considering in the environments that are more traditional and inert. I believe that the museums from a social and cultural context like Serbian could more easily identify themselves with such “classical” institution with long and respectful history and that eventually they could understand the reasons for such enterprises. The British Museum has gained the credibility of its historical research legacy. This might help in persuasion of skeptical smaller museums that today's museum, no matter what it “collects, researches, protects and presents”, must be open and sensitive to new creation, to re-questioning of their own *raison d'être* and to the fact that “we live in a world in which...virtually anything can be made to function as a museum.”²⁵

²⁵ Preziosi, David, Farago, Claire, *Grasping the World*, XXXX

2.2.4 MAC, Vienna

Museum of Applied Arts or MAC in Vienna is an outstanding example of European museum that has introduced many innovatory practices into museal field. The MAC was founded in 1864 as the Imperial & Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry and, according to the time of its foundation, conceived as a typical 19th century museum (Alois Riegl, a famous art historian of 19th century, worked in the former MAK). In 1986 it was restructured and the new director was appointed. Peter Noever initiated a large campaign for complete renovation of the museum that also comprised new museological social practices as well as the rise of critical voices against political and economical pressure on arts and culture.

In the museum's mission Noever defined the frame for a new museum:

“With an extraordinary collection of applied and contemporary art, the MAK serves a dual purpose as a conservator of significant art objects and as a center for the scientific research of art with a special emphasis on its production, preservation, and reorientation. The MAK regards itself as a laboratory of artistic production and a research center of social awareness. The powerful ideas created here today will serve as models for tomorrow.”²⁶

When the authorities cut the operational budget of the museum in 2001 the MAK and its director decided to transform the museum into the “venue of constructive discussions and reflection”²⁷ of artists, critics, and theoreticians and so to fulfill the empty exhibition halls. Several projects were initiated as support for such policy of the museum and a large number of artists and writers sent their encouragement for the director and his team.²⁸ One successful symposium was organized in the central exhibition hall of the museum

²⁶ MAK Mission Statement at http://www.mak.at/e/mission/f_statement.htm

²⁷ *Museums without Futures*, Peter Noever (ed.), Vienna: MAK 2001, pp. 110.

²⁸ Like this statement of Kendell Geers, world known artist from South Africa: “I fully support the MAK in its position to stand firm in its belief in art and refuse to allow the politicians to tell us what to do.» http://www.mak.at/e/mission/f_mission.htm

with some of the most prominent artists and art professionals that joined their ideas about the position of the art and the museums in contemporary world.²⁹

Peter Noever introduced several novelties into a classical museum of (applied) art history.

First, he has included the exhibition design that is result of a contemporary artist intervention: an invited artist is given the task to conceptualize one particular collection and to design its display. It has brought a new and existing mode of exposing permanent collections allowing “an unparalleled interplay of historicism and contemporary intervention.”³⁰ The outstanding museal ambients are created as a kind of double art perspective: historic art objects and contemporary art installation, intensifying thus visitor’s perception, aesthetic reception of the work(s) and attraction to the place “full of surprises”. Displays of historic furniture in the MAK may be the part of any contemporary art exhibition worldwide. And some of the artists invited to intervene were Barbara Bloom, Jenny Holzer, Donald Judd, Heimo Zobernig and many others.

The next novelty of the MAK’s program is production of new works that are placed in the museum’s interiors as well as in the public spaces. Walking through the museum one can always cross a piece of contemporary art that in various ways relates to the museum itself, its collections, its history, its place in today’s world, or something else. Installations, sculpture, photographs, projections, architectural models... all these works make the MAK a different place that always communicate with the audience, with the time and with those that create today. There have been works of Vito Acconci, Chris Burden, James Turrell, Jannis Kounellis, Magdalena Jetelova, Donald Judd, Raymond Pettibon, Franz West, Jenny Holzer, Zaha Hadid, Elke Krystufek... One of the projects that are in preparation is a World War II anti-aircraft tower in Vienna that will be transformed into the Contemporary Art Tower (CAT) whose “unique avant-garde architecture and pioneering program, this "monument of barbarism" will become Vienna's foremost venue for contemporary art”³¹.

²⁹ Texts from this symposium are gathered in the book *The Discursive Museum*, Peter Noever (ed.), Vienna: MAK and Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz Publishers 2001

³⁰ MAK Mission Statement at http://www.mak.at/e/mission/f_statement.htm

³¹ Ibid.

In 2000 the MAK created the program MAK NITE© that has opened the museum every Tuesday until midnight and shown the works of youngest visual artists. These often first shows of young generation “enable an open and unsparing insight into the in-between spaces of society and thus provide cultural life with a new and non insignificant impulse.”³²

The MAK has gained large audience and has found the ways to keep it and “refresh” it. It is a unique example of a museal institution – by definition traditional, hierarchic and self-oriented, that has taken a strong ideological position against any pressure over art and culture, becoming “a citadel of social criticism and the permanent countervision”³³ and having director such as Peter Noever. Taking into consideration the results of the MAK’s innovative museal practices, the audience rise, collection enrichment, so many world art community members as friends and collaborators, the policy and action that mobilize the subversive potential of art and culture, it is possible to point out this museum as a functional model of new museum. Different strategies and potentials of contemporary art are fully explored here through an open and free cooperation with its actors.

2.2.5 Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna

Sigmund Freud Museum in Vienna is a small private museum situated in Sigmund Freud’s Viennese home so the museum has the typical apartment structure adjusted for the needs of a memorial museum. It possesses the large number of Freud’s furniture, photographs, documents, writings, objects from his collection of small sculpture etc. But, in the same time, the museum’s rooms have many art objects – paintings, photographs, sculptures, and installations by contemporary artists that relate to psychoanalysis, its multifaceted conceptual potentials, in accordance to its strong influence on artistic creation during the 20th century.

The idea of collecting and exhibiting contemporary art in Sigmund Freud Museum had come in 1989 when the American conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth created the installation "Zero & Not" on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Sigmund Freud's death,

³² Peter Noever in: *The Call of the Site*, publication for the annual press conference in 2006

³³ Ibid.

manifesting his continual preoccupation with Freud's theories. In the same time, the artists and the museum wanted to confront a scientific institution with contemporary art. This work and this idea triggered other artists to donate their works to the museum, which got a new line in its mission statement: to bring together under the museal roof psychoanalysis, research, contemporary art and new audiences. The collection named “The Sigmund Freud Museum Contemporary Art Collection” has the works by John Baldessari, Pierpaolo Calzolari, Georg Herold, Jenny Holzer, Ilya Kabakov, Franz West, Clegg & Guttmann, Jessica Diamond, Marc Goethals, Sherrie Levine, Haim Steinbach and Heimo Zobernig.

The museum building’s storefront has a shop window transformed into a window gallery where the museum also makes “exhibitions” of contemporary works relating to a phenomenon from the psychoanalytic theory and practice is displayed. Joseph Kosuth, Louise Bourgeois and Clegg & Guttmann made some of the previous installations purchased for the museum’s collection.

The complementary addition of temporary art exhibition make this museum a place of repeated visits in spite of its small size and permanent exhibition display. New works exhibited occasionally and the “street window” with small exhibitions co-opt for the character of an art gallery: you go back every time you find interesting the new project, exhibition, artist, curator etc.³⁴ In this way the museum approaches the audience more interested in contemporary art and which is regular art galleries audience. It figures in the contemporary art sections of the cultural programs of the city, but it also contributes to the image of the open institution that offers its “symbolic capital” to the creators of today. By doing so, it promotes the very content of its museological object: work, ideas, personality, faith and endowment of Sigmund Freud, which is precisely the mission of this museum.

2.2.6 Musée d’Orsay, Paris

³⁴ Current exhibition is *The Couch: Thinking in Repose* with modern and contemporary art works including Felix Vallotton, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Andy Warhol, Rachel Whiteread and Spenser Finch.

The Musée d'Orsay, one of the “monuments” of the Mitterrand’s era (although initiated by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing) was conceived as a museum of “the artistic creation of the western world from 1848 to 1914”.³⁵ But, existing in the heart of one of the world’s leading art capitals, this museum, so much loved by tourists and famous for its high quality exhibitions, could not resist the appeal and over-presence of contemporary art. A new program was created under the name *Correspondances*. Three times per year one living artist is invited to enter the dialogue with an old master. The 19th century’s masterpieces are confronted with a sculpture, installation, painting, photograph or video made to perfectly fit the postmodern syncretism in its most fertile form: education capacities of both historic and today’s art are used to emphasize the hidden, mysterious, underestimated, neglected or forgotten sides of each other.

The *Correspondances* authors always chose two contemporary artists at the same time, one French and one foreign, of different generations and styles. Like Pierre Soulages and Tony Oursler, Annette Messager and Robert Mangold, or Jeff Wall and François Morellet. This part of the regular program of the museum functions as a contemporary art gallery in an exclusive space of the industrial heritage (railway station) placed among numerous priceless art works from another time. The visitors of the museum, walking along the used-to-be train platforms, come across a contemporary work like a “cadeau”, a favorite social game in the palaces of the French noblesse³⁶.

2.2.7 Nuit Blanche, Paris

Nuit Blanche is the annual project created in 2002 in Paris has become already a brand that is spreading all around the world: its success in number of visitors of cultural sites during one night³⁷ (in October) justified all invested financial means (that count in millions of euros). The idea of the project is to not just to open different historic sites, museums, galleries, *palais* and *châteaux*, industrial heritage sites and other similar places

³⁵Musée d'Orsay web site:

<http://www.musee-orsay.fr/ORSAY/orsaygb/html.nsf/By+Filename/mosimple+collect+histoire+index?OpenDocument>

³⁶ In the 17th century French aristocracy the host of a soirée or diner would make a surprise to the guests by inviting an orchestra, hiding a nicely decorated table with eccentric food or bringing an unusual and unexpected guest as a “cadeau” that should underline the sophisticated taste of the host and his circle.

³⁷ In 2005 around 1 300 000 people attended the events organized for the *Nuit Blanche*.

of culture (like for the Night of Museums, another one-night event of significant proportions), but to animate and “discover” them through new art works, installations, light works, music and sound installations, even dance and interactive works, new media and culinary art. Most prominent curators are invited to propose the program and to mastermind this nocturnal carnival that celebrates art in such a special way.

This scenario has been tested on many historic sites and museums, and I chose the Château de Versailles as an example of an almost spectacular interaction of a monument – museum and contemporary art in its limitless freedom of expression.

As a special program within the Nuit Blanche, *Versailles Off* is conceived as a huge open stage where the artists intervene in all possible ways. The invited artists are both well-known stars of the world of contemporary arts and the emerging artists, French and international: Jean-Michel Alberola, Patrick Bouchain, Daniel Buren, Marc Couturier, Pascal Cribier, Matali Crasset, Paul Méfano, Franck Scurti, Alain Séchas, Claude Closky, Alain Ducasse, Markus Hansen, Patrick Jouin, Jean-Philippe Poirée-Ville, Rudy Ricciotti, David Saltiel, Felice Varini and others. They create works that range from the space interventions within the chateau’s interiors and its gardens, parks, fountains, lawns up to performances and parties: the visitors could see a huge disco-ball in the middle of a lawn, cheered up with a DJ set at a nightlong party attended by the thousands of young visitors. In such ways the Château renews the artistic creation of today with the royal cultural heritage of 17th and 18th century, and vice versa, its own historic image is renewed by the living art.

Huge number of visitors of the Nuit Blanche cannot be only the consequence of the value of this château, but the different temporary image and appearance of the site and its transformation by the new view on it. The audience’s view is being switched from the primal museal or educating aspects of the monument(s) to “the spectacle that should enhance the forgiveness of history in culture”³⁸. This sensation of known but mysterious place is further intensified by the similitude with the world of vide and computer games whose “action” is placed in a historic ambience, but with a slightly distorted, the game generic free gaze which is dreamlike, imaginary and limitless. The entire château

³⁸ Guy Debord, *Društvo spektakla* (La société du spectacle), Zagreb: Arkzin 1999, pp. 152.

complex, re-designed as an ephemeral spell, looks like a work *in situ* created in the spirit and with the resources of the place itself. It is about seeing more and differently.

Although this kind of manifestations brings large numbers of visitors in only one exhibition night, it is not allowed to ask whether a monument like the Chateau de Versailles needs it: each museum or monument complex necessitates the audience. The Nuit Blanche is a tool for reaching the new audience that should learn how a place of traditional culture could be integrated into contemporary culture.

2.2.8 European project: Gemine Muse

Gemine Muse is a project initiated in Italy by the organization “Giovani artisti italiani” in 2000 as a counterpoint between a past and contemporary art: young Italian artists were invited to produce a new work inspired by and placed in a museum in Padua. Good response of the artists and the hosting museums developed further into a national program that engaged several cities and their museums and monuments all around Italy. Finally, in 2003 it became the European program spreading its network in several countries in Europe³⁹.

The original idea of the project was to motivate young artists to who should enter a museum “as an attentive visitor to find out his/her ideal alter ego or alter locus/logos.”⁴⁰ Then it evolved into a large platform of mutual support between the museums and the new art. It has emphasized several potent relations that this study is trying to abstract from different practices identified in European museums:

1. It establishes creative connection – “a fruitful contamination”⁴¹ - between past and present art in museums that usually do not collect contemporary art;
2. It supports emerging artists and their artistic development in non-traditional ways, providing them with an open space for research;

³⁹ Museums in Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania, Russia and Turkey joined in 2004 and 2005 when the project was granted by the European Commission under Culture 2000 Programme.

⁴⁰ Virginia Baradel, *Correspondances*, in: *Gemine Muse. Giovani artisti italiani nei musei italiani*, Torino: GAI 2003, pp.11

⁴¹ Ledo Prato, Secretary General CIDAC (Association of the Cities of Art and Culture) in: *Gemine Muse. Giovani artisti italiani nei musei italiani*, Torino: GAI 2003, pp. 8

3. It gives a model for new cultural policies showing that a “simple presence of works of art and monuments... is not enough to attract visitors, but these treasures have to be constantly and effectively enhanced, through projects like this one, in order to create a new public and consolidate the profits obtained by their exploration.”⁴²

Becoming the European project, *Gemine Muse* grew into a European network that further has contributed to exchange and circulation among European art scenes actors (artists, curators, critiques, theoreticians, museum professionals...), but also to the cultural heritage promotion and intercultural exchange, which again confirms high interest of museum – contemporary art connections.

Gemine Muse represents an innovative, complex program, able to link different aspects and processes of contemporary artistic production such as the international mobility, the productive residences, the new voices of critics, the cultural heritage of the towns, the public institutions, the new customers and the museums. The extended network of towns and museums which was established in the two Italian editions and in the three subsequent European events managed to involve an overall number of 350 young artists, thus contributing to production of a remarkable number of “site specific” works.

* * *

Presentation of new art – not yet institutionalised by collections, museums, studies etc. – does not represent devaluation of the museum itself, its aura, its sacred spaces, its value and dignity, its status.... Practice and programs of the major world museums prove this, and even the existence and program orientations of the museums of contemporary art show that this opening towards the new trends in arts, visual culture and even other forms of artistic production (new music, theatre experiments, architecture, design and new media) raise the social function of the museum, intensify its “content”, develop its educational character and place the museum in the very center of contemporary culture.

⁴² Ibid.

2.3 Strategies of contemporary art in museums' reform

Museums of contemporary art belong to the family of youngest museums and consequently they should be the museums with most flexible policies, internal and external relations and most dynamic flow of people, ideas and technological improvements. Although these museums cannot be proclaimed generally as the leaders in new museological practices, they are often first to introduce innovations and experiments (in exhibiting, new technologies, marketing, education programs, staff policy etc). The museums of contemporary art have arisen from Foucault's critique of institutions as "museums of influence" which is the fact visible in the genesis of the major European and world museums.

On the narrative level as well as on the level of meta-languages, modern and contemporary art is among the most communicative media channels in today's culture. It is freed of norms of historic art and it includes in its procedures *technae* of all kinds, including those archaic and non-western. It is in the same time freed of privileged themes, materials, media and forms that used to define a work of art. Such liberty in the age of postmodern hybridism, non-hierarchy, decentralization and technological advancement, makes the entire field of contemporary art a source for new conceptual, institutional, political and research protocols for functioning of the museums today.

One of the key forms of *sampling* contemporary art is the exhibition. It is a form that differs from the permanent collection, survived but still very present display configuration of the original concept of museum (*Kunstammer*). Temporary exhibition as a "small format" of museological presentation has become more and more present in all other different museums (non-contemporary-art-museums). Mieke Bal speaks of allegory of the museology or the idea that a museological display in its physical and technical aspects represents a discourse, while one exhibition is a statement within this discourse. The statement doesn't consist of words, single images, frames or constructions of the given display, but of productive tension among images, legends (words) and

physical positions (row, high, light, combinations). This perspective should inevitably deprive the museum practice of its naiveté and give it possibility to explain and educate.⁴³ Bourriaud's concept of postproduction as a dominant paradigm of the art of 1990s examines the exhibition as an integral part of the work: »L'exposition n'est plus l'aboutissement d'un processus, son 'happy end' (Parreno), mais un lieu de production. Tout en récusant les formes académiques de l'exposition, les artistes des années quatre-vingt-dix envisagent le lieu de monstration comme un espace de cohabitation, une scène ouverte à mi-chemin entre le décor, le plateau de tournage et la salle de documentation.»⁴⁴ The museum might be seen as a place of accentuation of these conditions, the prime form of postproduction paradigm in contemporary art.

The richness of the collections, values of the exhibited objects, their origins and cultural values might be approached differently. There lies their richness: they can be interpreted in many ways that communicate different message, recognizable or totally unknown, and extravagant facts and stories. Because of that contemporary exhibits use large scale of tools for re-contextualisation of displayed objects or scenes. These approaches can be noticed on *the formal level* and on *the content level* i.e. art interventions, exhibitions, installations, events, productions.... The following examples are treated as some possible approaches to museum reform that might function as project-based strategies that function individually – as particular attempts in a non-favorable museum environment, as well as a unit within the complex strategic planning of a museum with outlined reform strategy. They are given through analysis of positive examples both from international and Serbian museum field.

2.3.1 Installation principles

Museum display represents the basic communication channel within the museum space. It organizes the objects in chronological, thematic, generic or relational way transmitting the information, message or aesthetic sensation to the audience. By its character and

⁴³ Mieke Bal, *Muzej koji govori* (Telling Museum) in: Anomalija, Časopis za kulturu, istoriju i teoriju umetnosti 1/2005, pp. 23.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, Les presses du réel 2003, pp. 67.

capacities to transmit all this, the museum display can reflect institutional, political or aesthetical position of the museum, its management and staff, its founders etc. It also reflects the policy of the museum regarding towards its existing and potential new audience and reveal the grade of institutional development and maturity. The example of the largest number of Serbian museums whose collection displays were created twenty or thirty years ago illustrates clearly the absence of any audience development strategy.

Collections display must respect severe technical or security conditions necessary for showing sensitive musealia (like old books, tiny objects of sensitive material, natural specimens...) or objects treated as invaluable artifacts (like Mona Lisa by Leonardo da Vinci shown under highest security measures, pieces of jewel and precious stones etc.). But, with all restrictions and limitations, there is always a possibility to create an inspiring, information-charged and visually attractive display in every museum.

Writing about the possible adoptions of gallery display principles in the museums, C.R.Marshall gives the example of the Earth Galleries in the Natural History Museum in London:

“By rotating it [the hippo] from its ‘natural’ stance the designers have also achieved a more artificial and thus also more artistic effect. The viewer is accordingly asked to contemplate this specimen not as a serial, didactic component but rather as a beautifully framed aesthetic object in its own right. This is, to be sure, a striking and accessible strategy. Yet the art effect is strong, even arguably distracting to a degree, since it reminds us of nothing so much as the work of a certain English *enfant terrible*⁴⁵ of contemporary art with his predilection for cabinets filled with mutely suspended sharks, cows and other animals”.⁴⁶

The other example might be again the natural history museum, but the one from Paris where the whole chain of evolution is represented in a long procession, a dynamic

⁴⁵ The author refers to the works with sliced animals of one of the most distinguished and controversial British artists, Damien Hirst: “The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living”, 1991, “Some Comfort Gained from the Acceptance of the Inherent Lies in Everything”, 1996 etc.

⁴⁶ Christopher R. Marshall, *The contemporary museum as art gallery*, *Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions*, Suzanne MacLeod (ed.), London and New York: Routledge 2005, pp 172.

ensemble of inherently projective elements that at the same time share the viewer' space. It creates a strong art effect that brings to mind a work of Finnish artist Maaria Wirkkala "Found a Mental Connection II" (1998)⁴⁷.

Fabienne Galagau-Querat, speaking about the renovation of the Museum of the Grande Galerie de l'Evolution in the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, states that "lights, sounds, colors and distribution of specimens are the main museographic tools used by the designers to translate the characteristics of each natural ecosystem"⁴⁸. By this she compares the display and exhibition design of the natural specimens as closely related to those made in art galleries. And that "this original and refined combination of art and science aims to offer a source of wonder, of knowledge, of reflections and questions, enabling the visitor to open up to the understanding of the world."⁴⁹

If we investigate majority of different museums in Europe, USA or Australia, we can see an increasing appeal towards the display techniques of the art galleries: to draw attention to specific objects from the collection, to a distinctive group of objects that make this museum unique, special, or to a coordinated message sent to the audience. Art galleries do the same: focus on the autonomy and individuality of the artwork displayed in its own right⁵⁰.

Given examples should indicate a trend in the museological practice today and draw attention of other museums, not yet using these techniques. I believe that such approach may foster the museum displays and spaces to open up to a more experimental and evocative form of message communication and to overcome traditional ways of exhibiting permanent collections. New museum exhibit practice should adopt an integrated approach, within which contemporary art forms and practices are those innovative features that help to think outside traditional and outdated models of representation.

⁴⁷ This work I saw at the exhibition "Center of Gravity" curated by Rosa Martinez, Chief Curator of Istanbul Modern, Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, 8th September 2005 – 8th January 2006

⁴⁸ Fabienne Galangau-Querat, *The Grande Galerie de l'Evolution: An alternative cognitive experience*, in: *Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions*, Suzanne MacLeod (ed.), London and New York: Routledge 2005, pp 102.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Christopher R. Marshall, *The contemporary museum as art gallery*, *Reshaping Museum Space: architecture, design, exhibitions*, Suzanne MacLeod (ed.), London and New York: Routledge 2005, pp 171.

2.3.2 Architecture and space design

In today's museum field the architecture and design are among the key elements of public image of a museum. Many museums in Europe founded long ago were given historical buildings for their collections and this "match" of "historic facts" (art works, documents, objects of the history of science and nature, personal belongings of a historic personality, testimonies of a historic event etc.) and a "historic place" was considered logical and dialectic. Then in 1980s the expansion of new monumental postmodern architecture influenced the museum building too. New structures were made mostly for the museums of modern and contemporary art, but the old museums were added new wings and parts (ex: Pyramide du Louvre) that further influenced displays of permanent collections and temporary exhibitions and opened museums for new contents focused on audience and its needs (shops, learning centers, mediateques, cafeterias...). New space organization, new material, and different visual aesthetics of architecture penetrated into the museological field and "refreshed" traditional museum displays. 19th century museums, cold and unwelcoming building with dark rooms, distant showcases and shelves, silence and one-direction halls were replaced with open glass walls, daylight, sound installations, free movement of visitors (non-directive way), direct communication with the outer space, spreading of museal "content" outside of the walls and introduction of new technologies. The architectural design of spaces in which different kinds of musealia are presented strongly influences the perception of these musealia, be it art works, historical documents, ethnographic objects, natural history specimens, industrial products etc. The aesthetics of the space cannot stay separated of display of works/objects, system of light, communication ways, entrance and all concomitant spaces and services. It gives a sense of "contemporary eye" referring to diverse art and other musealia. A certain postmodern encounter between the historical objects and contemporary setting makes every collection (which does not belong to an ambient complex or interior) closer to the contemporary visitor, viewer and "user".

It has been discussed many times about the social and economic role of the new museums that gave or are to give valuable input to local development and territorial marketing. We

can site Bilbao, Kanazawara or Metz (where a new Bobourg will be open in 2008), but there should be much more examples of the world cultural heritage preserved in museums not yet fully visible and adequately promoted. There are also other, older, more traditional museums that accepted challenge of their famous “neighbors” and changed their own image by adding newly designed parts to the old museum buildings (ex: Museum of Fine Arts in Bilbao that commissioned the new extension in 1998 and invited to the Jury a famous architect Norman Foster).

Finally, the architecture proved to be able to achieve a status of museal object charged with history, information, emotion and message. Its language is not only a formalistic frame for exemplars of material culture or for documentation on intangible heritage. It uses its formal, symbolic and relational tools to complete the functions of a museum. The most copious example is the Jewish Museum in Berlin by Daniel Liebeskind: it is a museum without objects, but it still tells about the story about one of the most horrible chapters in human history. Here the building has become an artwork upraised on the level of institution of accumulated knowledge interpreted for preservation and further transmission.

Contemporary architecture as a constituent part of contemporary visual culture has enormous capacities in the field of museum development and significantly influences the image of a museum, be it in an old or in a modern building. Design of space has been given great importance for exhibition making in general (shop windows, fairs, public spaces, contemporary art exhibitions, museum exhibitions...) and, as an omnipresent issue in everyday practices, its importance cannot be neglected in the museums of all kinds and all sizes in spite of the fact that sometimes architecture overshadows the museum's collections and destroys the balance.

2.3.3 Conceptualization of display

Conceptualization of museum collection displays aims at making a museum, a collection, its objects and thematic segments more communicative, contextualized or thematically broadened. Introduction of new works with different comments, readings or interpretation of museum objects may enlarge the perspective of understanding and receiving their

message. In the same time, museum can be shown as a terrain of strange, deviant and inexplicable (Kunstkammer or Wunderkammer), which is the notion that upgrades the museum's image at the new audiences oriented more towards contemporary visual or even performing arts.

In conceiving museum displays curators should not outmaneuver contemporary art theories that are of great help for making new relations and links between apparently distant and incompatible art works and objects. This approach that overpowers traditional chronological or simple thematic order can increase the importance of the collection or its artifacts revealing the hidden layers and establishing new relations. Display of permanent collection can be treated as an (art)work *per se* that incites intellectual curiosity and public interest, participates in wider social and cultural issues and becomes a cite of edutainment.

One example can be the exhibition "Tranzit(i)" by Cameroonian artist Barteley Togo organized in the Museum of African Art in June 2006. This very well known contemporary artist who lives in Paris and is considered as one of the most prominent representative of French contemporary art scene, showed his drawings, photographs and documents of his earlier performances, but also made an installation of selected Museum's objects. But, with some of his works he introduced a topic of ecological preservation of Africa and its natural treasures that have been in danger for decades as a consequence of impossibility to overcome colonial heritage. Beside its artistic qualities and visual "reanimation" of the permanent collection and spatial organization of the Museum, this artwork brought a new issue into the Museum's content - different artistic, ethnological and historical phenomena related to Africa and its complex cultural heritage. Strong statement of the artist regarding the ecological problems of today's Africa enabled a new reading of the collection, its history and its present function. For a regular visitor of this museum it was a new issue that is now associated with the Museum of African Art.

2.3.4 Supplement for the missing objects

In many museums that aim to present, educate and evoke certain topics, events, personal histories etc, a number of, sometimes crucial, objects/artifacts might lack. One of the

most successful ways to “fulfill” the gap, the empty space in the discursive field, is new art creation that supports and emphasizes the communicative capacity of the collection, its educative elements and/or its museological unity and wholeness. In such way, art can help building up a picture that otherwise would be almost impossible to create. Christopher R. Marshall gives the example of the Museum of Sidney⁵¹ that preserves the material history of the site, pre-colonial and colonial roots of the city. Of course, reconstruction of history is neither always easy nor good, especially when the museum lacks documents and objects from the period that need to be represented. In the same time, it is very difficult to make such exhibits attractive, understandable, communicative and visually appealing. The use of new technology can help, but cannot replace the real objects. In order to create a more deepen sensation, to widen perception of the viewers and to give more information about the history of the city, the Museum of Sidney invited two artists that made works integrated into the historical and ethnographical collection of the Museum: the sound installation was made by the musician and sound artist, David Chesworth, and a video installation by the writer, film-maker and media-theorist, Ross Gibson. The permanent exhibit became very popular and was seen as the prime education tool for teaching history of the city and the country. It immediately became an interesting partner for the network of contemporary art institutions, but also individual artists and art project authors. This innovation in the museal display made the museum passing very quickly the way towards a status of exiting, inspiring and educative institution, which should be the goal of every museum.

2.3.5 Setting the stage for the narrative

This role of the artwork made or installed in a museum environment should help to express wider institutional perspectives similar to the role performed by a public sculpture in a prominent public space. Such work could gain a major responsibility as regards the projected self-image of the institutions in terms of the deeper cultural and ideological values that it seeks to uphold. New narratives offer possibilities for the reconceptualisation of art museums that are rooted in late 19th-century modernist culture.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp 173.

Contemporary artwork that immanently reflects political, social and theoretical discourses of its time can become a benchmark for repositioning of the museum. This strategy or possibility is very important in discussions about future of a certain museum. It should not be taken as an inappropriate question whether a museum should change its role, its research or educative capacities and procedures by introduction of some “strange” and “alien” features. It should be rightly considered as an auxiliary tool for repositioning of the museum within the institutional context, public relations and audience outreach.

2.3.6 Humour

Humour as a form of human communication that engages people’s feelings of happiness and pleasure can become an effective museological instrument. Although the ancient Greeks used it in medical practice as a cure for human body and soul, we could say that contemporary art often use it for the similar purposes, be it ironic, satiric or just fun. This does not mean either that previous époques were not familiar with humor and its many visual forms and functions, it just wants to say that only art of 20th century and popular culture have upraised humor to the level of high art (absurdity, caricature, comics, clowns...). Used in some of the regular museum features like text panels, direction instructions, secondary signs (for toilettes, cafeteria or restaurants, wardrooms, shops, entrance/exit...), humour becomes an “added value” to apparently ordinary elements of museum equipment. Such museum environment shortens the distance between its institutional “coldness” and the audience becoming a place for being well.

2.3.7 Hidden spaces of museums – material for new art

Many artists have accentuated the mystery of the museum depots, by presenting objects in settings that resemble the ‘back stage’ of museums. The depots should become *centers for research and reflexion*. Making them available for temporary use could be another way for the museums to open towards the outside world: what can be found inside? Works that haven’t been displayed for years or never, objects that are almost forgotten by the official histories and art reviews, pictures of persons that became legendary (subject

as an value, not the work itself), pictures or objects related to some historical, forgotten, controversial events that arouse imagination of contemporary artists and authors.... A museum depot could inspire all kinds of creative authors – visual artists, emerging and established ones, designers, graphic and industrial, theater directors, set designers, costume and fashion designers, art historians, art theoreticians, historians, writers of all kinds, journalists, composer, students, children and many, many more. We could specify one museum with a collection partially hidden for more than twenty years, but during all that time it has inspired artists with its mystery. It is the ex-Museum of 25th May with its collection of Josip Broz Tito's personal belongings, documents from his time, official gifts he had been given by different personalities, well known and anonymous. The museum, today a part of the Museum of Yugoslav History, is a unique testimony of the times of a country that does not exist anymore and preserves the symbols of the recent past that is still perceived as a certain taboo and remembered with nostalgia and ambivalent feelings. These characteristics make Tito's museum a desirable place for discovering and thus it has great capacities for transformation into a vivid place of creation, learning and new values generating.

2.4 Museums and audience – a creative force

Simultaneously with the change of museums and their social role, its audience has been changing too. As the museums stopped to be “temples” or “shrines” of creative genius, the audience stopped to be a passive consumer of aesthetic value or scientific facts. We could say that the communication channel between the two was actually the first area of change because this very change was generated from the evolution of the feedback (museums – audience).

The museum audience today includes social categories normally cited as commanding institutional attention, as well as people and groups asserting affinity with the materials held by the museums (native and traditional communities, artists, descendants of donors and the like), and the peers of museum workers (including content specialists, educators, and designers). Publics also include governing authorities and agencies (including boards of trustees, and attorneys general), media outlets, and groups promoting tourism. Each of

these groups expects and requires particular forms of communication and encouragement, which are not always compatible with one another.

Main tasks of the museums regarding the audiences in the changing conditions (social, political, economical etc.):

1. to cross the communication gap between the display and visitors,
2. to change audience expectations,
3. to increase the visual literacy,
4. to become more dynamic and experimental, theatrical and changing, rather than static and monumental.

Observed from the point of view of audience, the museum doesn't represent only a place of education, an information pool, but also the place for oblivion, entertainment, and emotional adventure. Beyond the visual perception of items, a visitor looks for opportunity of taking part in a new type of museal experiment and cultural or social experience. A new audience - young computer generations, familiar with the communication via Internet, interactivity of new technology gadgets, aesthetics of new media should be approached differently and intrigued with new aesthetics of the museum exhibits and museum spaces.

All these tasks for the new museum should be systematized and inserted into their strategic plans, education and communication being the standard criteria. This needs to be emphasized when we speak about particular case of Serbian museums that have faced great difficulties and obstacles in development of basic museum functions. Education in museums is a matter connected with the wider use of communication, while communication is a vast area that includes activities that, apart from attracting visitors to a museum (publicity and marketing), investigating their education and entertainment needs, also provides for their intellectual needs. However, the majority of Serbian museums today still function regardless the number of visitors, variety of audience (children, school children, students, adults, families, retired people, people with special needs...), media coverage and evaluation. The system of public cultural institutions has not been fully transformed according to the project logic (still predominant institutional logic), standards of quality control, self-evaluation and evaluation. The founders and

funders of the Serbian museums – local or national authorities, keep financing the museums and their basic activities i.e. salaries, functional expenses and regular activities, without evaluating the audience outreach. This is especially problematic in smaller museums in the province where the number of visitors is often measured in dozens per year.

According to the last survey of museum audience in Serbia done in 1997⁵², regular as well as potential museum audience complains that different events in the museums – like concerts, lectures, projections etc. – are too rare and regrets the lack of similar occasions that might appeal more different kinds of audience to get connected to the museums. With the exception of several museums that organize similar events (National Museum – Festival of archeological film, Festival of spiritual music, book exhibitions... African Museum – Afro Festival, ethno music concerts, African bazaar, lectures etc, Ethnographic Museum – Festival of ethnographic film, lectures about exotic cultures, music programs etc.; Museum of Contemporary Art – electronic music events, theater and dance performances...), Serbian museums are very hesitant when it comes to the introduction of different forms of non-museal contents: music, film, theater/dance performances, art fairs or similar cultural events. On the other hand, many museums prove to be open for some more commercial events in their premises like business companies' celebrations, product/service presentations, even wedding parties, political parties' events etc. Former should be audience reach focused, latter are financial gain focused.

Audience of Serbian museums is more interested in temporary (“thematic”) exhibitions and less in the permanent collection display. The reason for this is outdated permanent exhibits. Tatijana Rap⁵³ gives examples of several Belgrade museums in the research done in 1997: Military Museum have not changed its permanent exhibition since its foundation in 1961, Ethnographic Museum since 1985, and the House of Princess Ljubica, the part of the City Museum of Belgrade, since 1981.⁵⁴

⁵² In the issue No. 97 from 1998 of the review *Kultura* the results of this survey were presented.

⁵³ Tatijana Rap, *Achievements of the museum marketing in Serbia and development perspectives* (Dometi marketinga muzeja u Srbiji i perspektive razvoja) in: *Kultura* No 97/1998, Belgrade: Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka, 1998, pp. 98.

⁵⁴ In the meantime, the situation has not changed: even today the permanent collections in these and many other museums are the same.

The permanent exhibitions of Serbian museums seem to be very unattractive to visitors because they do not offer any visual excitement, they do not provide the audience with new sensations and they do not develop any entertainment contents. Good example of the audience's evident need for intensive sensations and different ways of learning in the museum was the launch of the Night of Museums project that started in Belgrade in 2005. In three editions of the program (April and September 2005, June 2006) the number of visitors gradually grew from 20 to 200 thousands⁵⁵. The program has evolved and involved every time more and more museums, galleries and cultural centers. It had a strong animating character with programs that took place in open space of the city streets, parks, squares etc. An intensive public and media campaign was carried during several weeks preceding the Night of the Museums and in direct way animated the audience. Long lines of visitors in front of the Belgrade museums were very unusual scene. The program that ranged from dance and theater performances, music concerts, parties, film programs, children workshops and site specific installations to exhibitions of all kinds (temporary one-night exhibitions or permanent collection and regular program). The contemporary art projects were not present in any significant measure, which again shows the lack of cooperation between the museums and contemporary artists or at least that the existing links do not exceed the frame of standard relation between a gallery space owner and artist competing for the exhibition.

According to the same survey, the museum audience in Serbia is not essentially the audience that goes to the contemporary art galleries and exhibitions. Its main reason for visiting museums is learning.⁵⁶

Taking into consideration these inherited predispositions of the museum and cultural audience in general as well as the increased number of contemporary art organizations and programs and their presence in public cultural field in Serbia, it could be realistic to introduce contemporary art into museal field. This introduction implemented on the level of management transformation, audience development and cultural policy could significantly change the profile of the museum audience and increase its number. The changes could be expected as progressing in concentrated circles that involve the

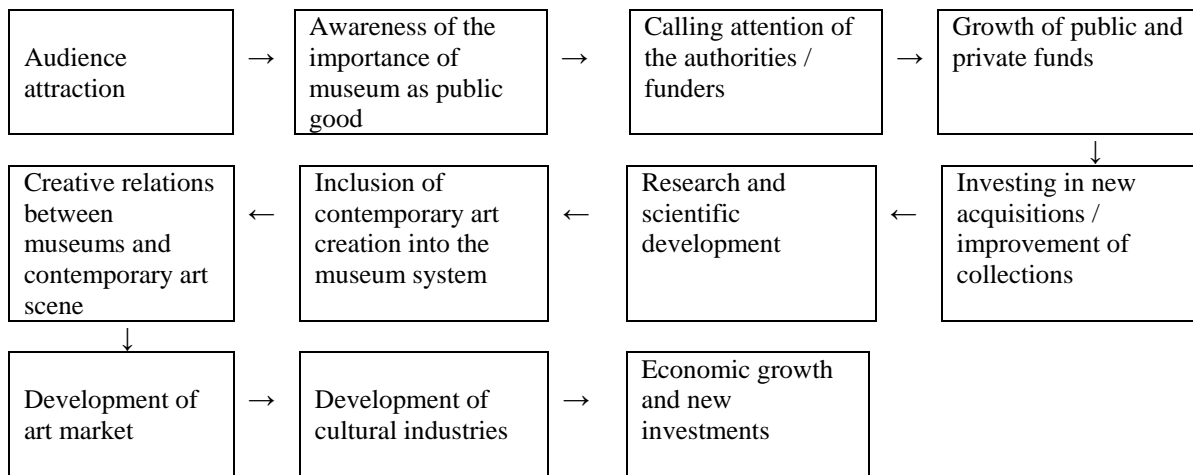
⁵⁵ www.nocmuzeja.org.yu (accessed on 25th June 2006)

⁵⁶ Milena Dragičević Šešić, *Museums and galleries in Serbia: Audience* (Muzeji i galerije u Srbiji: publika), Kultura br. 97, Beograd: Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka 1998, pp. 80

following target groups: contemporary art curators and experts, artists, gallery managers, journalists, students, contemporary art public, other cultural institutions staff.

The efforts of the museums like Serbian that are at the threshold of reforming processes and much more visible position in the public sphere (monitoring, evaluation, project logic, stipulation of funding...), might result in a creative force leading towards more stable and sustainable position of these museums.

Chain of positive outcomes of audience development:



Each activity of museums that aim at outreaching new audience is worth of trying and experimenting. The examples of similar and related fields like contemporary art field (galleries, biennials, art fairs, programs like *Night of Museums* or *Nuit Blanche*) should be used as test models. The least possible result could be contemporary art audience visiting museums too.

3. SERBIAN MUSEUMS – SUSPENDED HISTORY

3.1 Serbian museums – state of art

Today in Serbia there are around 100 museums⁵⁷, mostly public, supported by the Serbian government, the province of Vojvodina, cities or municipalities (i.e. founders), while private museums are only few⁵⁸. During the 1990s all of them have passed through a difficult period of general social pauperization and stagnation, as well as through dramatic and frustrating processes of social and political changes. On all levels of social structure public institutions have been submitted to often violent shifts that demanded instantaneous changes, policy adaptability and constant protection of professional ethical values: following the shifts of state politics in the 1990s, legal framework, cultural policy, cooperation policy, staff policy, as well as objectives of cultural institutions (including museums) have been changing radically. In such situation, museums and museum professionals have been facing various risks: from incompetent directors and other responsible staff, lack of finance for urgent repairs, absence of necessary systems for collection protection (alarm and surveillance system, humidity control system, dry and safe depots etc.), rupture with all outer partners and lack of international cooperation, restriction of professional development of museum personnel and experts, to malversations with museum collections and space, to direct physical threats during the NATO bombing campaign in 1999. Museumscape in Serbia was characterized by modest exhibition, research and publishing activities (especially outside of larger urban centers), while educational function was almost completely neglected. Museums were surviving in both inner and outer isolation: they were losing more and more connection with the society and its needs – their prime reason of existence; they were far from the international networks, projects and partnerships.

⁵⁷ *Muzeji Srbije*, Ljiljana Benderić (ed.), Beograd: Zavod za proučavanje kulturnog razvitka, 2000;

In this book are given only the basic and mostly standard facts about 111 museums and galleries with collections. Among them are also the museums from Kosovo, whose collections are today moved out of Kosovo.

⁵⁸ Among a few private museums there are Museum of the football club “Red Star”, Serbian museum of bread *Jeremija* in the village of Pećinici, Equestrian museum A.D. *Zobnatica* in Bačka Topola and Museum of beekeeping of the Živanović family in Sremski Karlovci.

Problems mentioned above were significantly fostered by lack of any systematical museum policy at the state or local level, which further egged on misuse, neglecting and malversations with museum collections, spaces and funds. It is important to stress that almost one decade passed without acquisitions and enrichment of Serbian museums' collections⁵⁹, which caused the fact that some museums remained deprived of crucial artefacts that would have made their collections relevant and complete (especially in the field of contemporary art, design and applied arts, technology etc.).

A new chance was given to Serbian museums after year 2000 when Serbian society stepped into the new stage of its transition. Opening of the country toward international community began first in arts and culture field. New possibilities for institutional reform were offered by international networks and institutions, but also by the local experts and professionals. But when it comes to the museums, it seems that they have remained at the periphery of actions and policies of the Ministry of Culture and other authority levels. Policy of the Serbian state regarding the sector of museums looks more like as the museums are a «necessary evil», so the policy the state designs aims to keep the museums surviving, with no interest for their development and possible new roles in contemporary culture. As Bernard Gilman remarks, “the museums are blockaded more by absence of any public policy than by the lack of funds”⁶⁰. This notion becomes very true if 6 years after year 2000 the Serbian state still hasn't defined long-term strategy for reform of the museum sector. Only a small number of museums in Serbia have initiated internal reforms on the level of management, marketing, funding system and audience policy. But, in spite of several cases with positive outcomes, their efforts haven't been fully supported by the authorities because of the lack of national cultural policy and any consistent policy in the field of heritage protection and museums.⁶¹ Some museums were entrusted to new management after year 2000 and that (radical) change enabled the institution to initiate important inner reorganization based upon principles of

⁵⁹ Exceptions are several museums that embraced the works from museums and collections coming from the war areas in Croatia (ex. National Museum).

⁶⁰ Bernard Gilman, *Le musée, l'agent d'innovation culturelle*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe 1977.

⁶¹ *Law on cultural property* was adopted in 1994 and the new version is not yet finalized. None of the laws regulating cultural issues has been yet adopted after political changes in 2000. A few of these laws are currently in the parliamentary procedure.

contemporary museum management, organization, programming and presentation⁶². This is the result of awareness of dramatic situation of museums in Serbia today. But, simultaneously, one can perceive significant passivity and resignation of large part of museum staff and cultural policy makers when it comes to resolving serious problems in this field, problems that cry out for systematic and long-term solutions. Namely if the museum is considered as an enlightenment invention that came into the core of social, ethical and political formation of *bourgeoisie* of modern nation-states, as one of the most powerful *genres* of modern fiction and shaping of history⁶³, it becomes strange that in post-socialist Serbia, in the processes of new national identity creation (in Milošević's time and after the change of regime in 2000), the museums were not assigned any important role⁶⁴. Majority of the museums have been surviving difficult years in the state of hibernation, while the museum professionals have been waiting for better days. But, it proved that long years in such conditions left serious consequences clearly visible when it came to definition of *vision* and *mission* of each particular museum institution. Many museum directors and leading experts in their scientific fields have not been able to define what should be vision and mission of their museum, unique and exceptional institution in a specific geopolitical and cultural context. It looks like as they forgot the reasons of its existence, like they never knew that the museum is a public good and public treasure. Outdated concepts of museum functions is clearly visible in the definition of the museum activities given in the book «Museums of Serbia» published in 2000 by the Institute for cultural development: none of here presented museum institutions in their fundamental activities does not cross over the boundaries of «collecting, research, protection and presentation» of cultural goods, some have publishing activity, some organize lectures and here we come to the end of their action. Neither education as one of

⁶² Examples: programs of professional development of museum staff, still modest conditions for study visits abroad, attempts of making museum strategic plan, new fundraising techniques for renovation of museum premises and other activities, new marketing strategies, new museum professions like PR manger etc. These initiatives are, for the moment, visible and practiced mostly in Belgrade and just few museums out of Belgrade.

⁶³ Donad Preziosi, *Zbirke i muzeji u: Kritički termini istorije umetnosti*, priredili Robert S. Nelson i Ričard Šif, Novi Sad: Svetovi, 2004, str.486

⁶⁴ There were several examples of abuse and misuse of the museum institution by the previous regime when rude and brutal political and ideological messages were sent in the form of museum exhibition: Museum of Applied Art in Belgrade with the exhibition “Genocide over Serbs 1941-1945” in 1992 and Museum of Contemporary Art with exhibition “Balkan routs of Serbian art in 20th century” in 1994.

the central demands of today's museums nor interdisciplinary scientific research, entertainment (creative industry) and community work are mentioned.

Museum staff and experts in Serbia see the lack of funds as the main reason for the poor state of their museums, modest number of visitors, lack of new projects and of educational programs, old-fashioned management, absence of latest techniques of conservation, presentation and evaluation of museum collections. Bazon Brock says that bankruptcies of museums are less consequence of local economics and are more related to what the museum staff does to develop its identity⁶⁵. But, such responses reflect also an attitude towards the world outside of the museums that is based on the belief that museums still live on the ground of «myths about omnipotent science, superiority of the human race over the nature, determination of knowledge...».⁶⁶ Which is a fake ground. It is often suggested in the official and unofficial statements that the prevailing attitude among museum staff and museologists in and around Serbian museums is one of non-commitment. This criticism concerns museums institutional frame, the museum profession as well as museological theory.

* * *

Therefore we conclude that the origin of today's state of art of the Serbian museums is understandable if taken into consideration a complex and dramatically changing context of Serbian society, its political and cultural outbreaks and deep sense of collective frustration and defeat. The museums are deeply rooted in such social and cultural environment and their current profile is actually the symptom of difficulties of transitional societies and their unaccomplished cultural systems. They reflect the flows and directions, still non-regulated and irregular, of political influences and groups of interest, as well as non-established criteria of professional ethics and professional conscience. The neglecting of museums' need for institutional transformation and for

⁶⁵ Bazon Brock, *God and Garbage – Museums as creators of time*, In: *The Discursive Museum*, Peter Noever (ed.), Vienna: MAK 2001, pp. 24.

⁶⁶ Tomislav Šola, *Eseji o muzejima i njihovoj teoriji, Prema kibernetičkom muzeju*, Zagreb: Hrvatski nacionalni komitet ICOM, 2003, pp. 44.

radical change of social role has come from two sources, two major factors that determine the present and the future of the museums:

- a) **the authorities** as founders and bearers of highest responsibility for public good and in charge of creating a consistent, long-term, far-reaching, future-oriented cultural policy, based on largest possible consensus of all cultural actors, and
- b) **the museum professionals** that must be open, sensitive and mobile – mature enough to respond first to the fact that their world changed (post-socialist conditions) and then to the rapidly changing “big” world they are part of.

3.2. Contemporary art in Serbian museums: a few cases

The museums that were founded or specially taken care of during the socialist period with the aim to emphasize ideological body of the “communist revolution”, socialist ideas, national heroes, unity and brotherhood and other socialist values, are being read today as important cultural signifiers, the trails of cultural, social, political, ethical development of the society. Change in political and social context brought the new value to such museums and institutions, but most importantly it proved the capacities of museums to evolve in time and, properly understood and run, to become places of symbolical concentration. In this context I see the capacity of the museums to interfere with both theory and contemporary art practice as their symbolical concentration might be potent “material” for artistic reflexion, (political) reaction, social engagement, intercultural mediation, experimentation etc.

Cases of direct merge of contemporary art and different museums whose primary museal function does not include the living art are very few. In fact, there were only two significant cases of exhibitions initiated and realized by the museum curators. Their character and success both with the audience and with the art community inspired me to consider the capacities of contemporary art exhibits and projects for institutional reform of museums in Serbia.

National Museum: *Experiences from memory*

First of these projects was the project *Experiences from memory* in the National Museum in Belgrade, the oldest museum of Serbia founded in 1844 with largest archeological, numismatic, art and historic collection and central museum in the system of public museums of the country. The project *Experiences from memory* was organized as a series of exhibitions in the National Museum in Belgrade from August 1994 to July 1995. It consisted of 14 exhibitions of 15 artists from the contemporary Belgrade art scene. Irina Subotić and Gordana Stanišić Ristović, curators of the foreign collection of the National Museum, in the frame of celebration of Museum's 150th anniversary, organized this pioneer museum project. Two authors wanted to use the works from the collection that have already been historicized as triggers for new creation. Sixteen artists⁶⁷ were invited to choose one or more works as points of departure for creating their own work/setting/installation/interpretation "in which these historical categories are understood but are valued in a completely individual, and as yet uncoded manner, outside the customary extent of art history."⁶⁸ The artists introduced new technology, video games, industrial manufacturing and processing, installed the works, transformed the museum galleries...Working in the museum environment, traditionally structured, of closed hierarchy, unused to many of production and exhibition making procedures of living art, with severely defined rules, the artists adapted themselves to the museological work, which additionally stimulated successful project realization⁶⁹.

The concept of the project, in accordance with the dominant post-modern readings of the past, used the contemporary art language and paradigms to re-evaluate the museum and its collection and position it as an art place equal to galleries, art centers, studios. It wanted to redefine profile of the National Museum in difficult cultural perspective of Serbian society in the 1990s when one of the most dominant paradigm was the nationalist

⁶⁷ The following artists were selected: Čedomir Vasić, Dušan Otašević, Nikola Pilipović, Branko Pavić, Aleksandar Dimitrijević, Jelica Radovanović and Dejan Andjelković, Dragoslav Krnajski, Mileta Prodanović, Zoran Naskovski i Dobrivoje Krgović, Mrdjan Bajić, Zdravko Joksimović, Vera Stevanović, Veso Sovilj, Igor Stepančić. They represent various generations and poetics, but are among the most important artists at the Serbian art scene of the 90's.

⁶⁸ Irina Subotić, *New museological concept*, in: Na iskustvima memorije, katalog izložbe, Beograd: Narodni muzej 1995, pp.8

⁶⁹ Ibid.

paradigm and populist call of the national past: “Thus, the place where the work of art is collected, the museum as the physical space where it is preserved, presented and kept, becomes the space / possibility / domain of a different consumption and communication in which the introduction of such a process from the present actualizes and reflects its past in the future. The awareness that museums do not have to be exclusively closed and almost holy monuments, centuries removed from the needs of the modern artist, thus becomes an acceptable consequence of the present times.”⁷⁰

The whole enterprise was even more significant when the time of its creation comes to mind. It was the mid-90s, the time of international political, economical and cultural isolation of Yugoslavia, the period of deepest social crisis that entered all social levels. Artists as well as all other creative authors wanted to confirm to them selves and to others that Yugoslav culture belongs to European culture and world heritage: “This creates a current picture of the past as well as a picture of our very selves, and at the same time offers the possibility in some other, future time of forming a judgment about present position of Belgrade’s art scene. This direct contact established between the contemporary artist and the referential works created a special discourse between the old and the new, enriched by the local –global relationship, or more precisely by including our art situation in the international, European heritage, to which we belong in terms of our history, which is also attested by the National Museum’s collection of foreign art work.”⁷¹

The project attracted large number of visitors, many of which rediscovered again the National Museum, which had been for a long time (before and after *Experiences from Memory*) museum-temple with classical exhibitions and elite approach towards program making, audience and entire cultural environment. These exhibitions brought to the Museum audiences mostly interested in contemporary art and younger urban population. The organizers invited young art historians and critiques to write about the exhibition, which resulted in dozens of texts about the individual art works or project idea and made

⁷⁰ Gordana Stanišić Ristović, *On the phenomenon of the “decomposition of experiences” in the first half of the 90’s*, in: Na iskustvima memorije, katalog izložbe, Beograd: Narodni muzej 1995, pp. 10

⁷¹ Irina Subotić, *New museological concept*, in: Na iskustvima memorije, katalog izložbe, Beograd: Narodni muzej 1995, pp.8

the information enter all printed media. These texts were collected and published within the catalogue of the exhibition, which again linked younger authors and the National Museum.

3.2.2 Museum of African Art, Belgrade

The second case study from the Serbian museumscape is the Museum of African Art, founded in 1977 after two people, Veda and Zdavko Pečar, passionate collectors of African art, endowed their collection to the City of Belgrade. It is one of few African museums in Europe, conceived as a dynamic scientific and educational institution, which through various forms of museological and educational activities, familiarizes the public with the works of African arts, customs, tradition, and history of the African continent.

Museum exhibits representative objects that belong to the artistic heritage of various African peoples and communities. Apart from numerous masks and sculptures made of wood that are considered to be the classic expression of the art of West Africa, the collection also includes other cult, magic, decorative, and practical objects made of wood and bronze, then textile, ceramics, figures made of soft stone (steatite), as well as particularly attractive musical instruments. The Museum organizes thematic exhibitions, concerts, lectures, and panels on African arts and culture, presentations of books, film and video projections, performances, various courses, artistic workshops and Afro Festival, one day fair with African cultures through music, food, presentations and lectures, crafts fair and in cooperation with embassies of some African countries.

Situated outside of the city center, in one of the most pleasant residential area of Belgrade, the Museum has always been outside of the usual city “cultural routes”, but with its permanent (loyal) audience that attended all events and exhibitions.

In 2005 the Museum organized exhibition *Black body, white masks* curated by the curator from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade, Dejan Sretenovic. This curator was invited to make an exhibition like site-specific installation created from the point of view of professional freed of ballast of permanent work with the Museum collection. The exhibition was a great success with the large public because it brought a new relation to the space, collection and entire history of this museum. It also emphasized contemporary

perception of Africa and its art in the postcolonial theoretical discourse, referring as well to several Serbian writers and travelers to Africa during the 20th century. The author of the exhibition tried to draft certain key topics necessary for understanding of wider cultural and political context of African traces in our culture. It also examines diverse aspects of ethnographic representations of African culture of imperialism, transformation of African object to ethnographic artifact to artwork, phenomenon of primitivism in modern art. It comprised as well documents and testimonies of relations between decolonialization and politics of non-alignment, the cult of Tito in Africa, history of the Museum etc.

Another contemporary art project was the project *Coloured world* by visual artist Mihael Milunovic. *Coloured world* is a three-year long series of events and exhibitions that will examine mutual prejudices of African and European artists, both in artistic and social field, pursuing issues like colonization, postcolonial discourse, independence, immigration etc. First guest was Barthelemy Togu, young Cameroonian visual artist living in Paris who made an excellent exhibition *Tranzit(i)* where he showed his work and created an installation of all kinds of museal objects and African ethnographic material from the Museum. This exhibition was a new breakout of the Museum of African Art because it was placed on the map of the city galleries (that are much more dynamic in the sense of programming) and it welcomed much more visitors than for their regular exhibitions.

This exhibition was followed by another contemporary art exhibition of Belgrade artist Zoran Naskovski *Black, Red and White*. It was again a multimedia installation that problematised the history of blues and its roots in African music and slavery. It again raised great interest of public and media and finally persuaded the management of the Museum in positive outcomes of this unique and special encounter of traditional African culture in a European museum and contemporary artists and their free expression.

These two cases of Serbian museums that experimented with artists and curators from the field of contemporary visual arts are positive enough to be followed by other museums and museum experts.

Exhibition *Experiences from memory*, the one-year work in progress of two curators of the National Museum, was inspiring process of creation that opened the Museum for those that were, by the nature of their professional work, among non-visitors of this museum. Exhibitions in the Museum of African Art brought to repositioning of this museum within the cultural scene of Belgrade and opened new possibilities for other initiatives but also for its proper institutional development and change.

The main features of these projects that make the case studies of project-based breakout in strategic reform and management of a museum in Serbia are:

- Entering of a classical museum into the field of contemporary art production;
- Sensibilisation of living artists to produce work related to the historic collection;
- Visibility in the media;
- Audience outreach in an unfavorable social and cultural context;
- Production of new artworks;
- Capacity building inside (museum staff) and outside (young art historians and critiques) the museum;
- Outline and testing of a developmental instrument for museum reform;
- Change of the institutional image and new future perspectives;
- New partnerships.

All these features create a set of strategies of institutional development (programming strategy, quality strategies, strategies of linkage, strategies to engage public...) that can be further elaborated and upgraded to an effective museum reform strategy.

4. HOW TO “OPEN” SERBIAN MUSEUMS?

4.1. Management solutions

In analysis and critiques of the museum field in Serbia one cannot discern other but claim for very basic actions that are needed, which is due to the fact that the large number of crucial systemic questions of the museums functioning and their satisfactory management are still unsolved. These basic steps are: to regulate legally museal field, to define cultural policy priorities and museums' role in it, to ascertain channels of interactive cooperation with the authorities, to make strategic plans of museums' development, to search the existing and potential audience, to create marketing campaign, to innovate exhibition practices, to introduce alternative funding. These and other tasks⁷² should be realized on 4 levels:

- Individual museums,
- Serbian museum network (a kind of association of museums⁷³ that would represent the museum community in front of the Ministry of culture, regional and local authorities, international museum networks and organizations...) and Yugoslav committee of ICOM,
- Institutions that educate professionals in the museal field: Department of art history and Department of archeology of the Faculty of Humanities in Belgrade, Faculty of Applied Arts, Faculty of Dramatic Arts, Group for management in culture and cultural policy, Center for professional development and consulting in culture at the University of Arts in Belgrade, Center for conservation *Diana*,
- Serbian Ministry of Culture and other levels of authorities in Serbia.

On these levels a special attention should be focused on the strategic activities of the entire sector in the first phase of reforms:

- Cooperation with the centers of education of different museum professionals;

⁷² National Museum in Kruševac and Yugoslav committee of ICOM organized a symposium of museum professionals in October 2000 with the title “Where further?”. The conclusions of the symposium clearly define the basic tasks that should be completed. More at: www.ncd.matf.bg.ac.yu/yuicom

⁷³ U zaključke ovog savetovanja ušla je i preporuka Ministarstvu kulture da se osnuje Centar za medjumuzejsku komunikaciju «kao čvršća veza između Ministarstva i muzeja, ali i samih muzeja radi stvaranja baze podataka čime bi se poboljšao protok informacija o svim važnim i relevantnim pitanjima vezanim za rad muzeja«, www.ncd.matf.bg.ac.yu/yuicom . Ovakav centar nije osnovan.

- Education of curators, managers, conservation and restoration professionals, PR and marketing experts, designers, architects, volunteers, interns – these different profiles bring the strength as well as responsibility for the successful reform of the museums;
- New types of programs / innovative programming – meetings, lectures, presentations, interdisciplinary partnerships with other art and science areas: events and manifestations, not solely exhibitions;
- Establishing research as well as education centers for various target groups – starting from pre-school children to the third age, to pedagogues, to tourism professionals and businessman;
- Leadership is one of the basic pre-conditions for successful organizational development and transformation, just like in many other institutions that are expected radical change;
- Capacity building, which “refers to the capability of an organization to work on its transformation in accordance with its mission and vision, development objectives and priorities.”⁷⁴
- Partnerships for future:
 - Local – with other similar institutions, NGO sector, artists, independent projects and initiatives, schools; this enables innovation of their proper organizational methodologies;
 - Regional – with other museums, manifestations and events for matching programs, broadening of proper field of activities and audience development;
 - National – visibility on national level with innovative, far-reaching programs;
 - International – with similar museums and museum networks, participation in the projects, exchange,

⁷⁴ Milena Dragičević Šešić, Sanjin Dragojević, *Arts management in turbulent times, Adaptable Quality Management*, Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, Boekmanstudies 2005, pp. 50

- New technologies and digitalization: introduction of new technologies according to the types of collection, museum premises, specific programs etc. New technologies should significantly decrease expenses of the museum functioning;
- Marketing strategies, public relations and new total design / visual identity.
- Legal framework;
- Cultural tourism.

Simultaneously it is necessary to work on several “zones of change” that do not request too investments, but only a different more responsible relation towards the museum’ mission:

- internal campaign – motivation of the museum staff for teamwork in order to make a representative and for the public attractive museum that will become a place different from all other places of culture, education and entertainment;
- establishing the criteria of quality control in all segments of the museum institution;
- adaptation and keeping of all museum spaces so that every visitor feel good and welcome (clean and tidy spaces, cafeteria, souvenir shop, bookshop, communicative personnel);
- communicative permanent collection with understandable, informative and clear texts, flyers for all exhibitions, in Serbian and in foreign languages;
- working hours in accordance with the time of the year (ex: longer working hours in the summer period), cultural calendar in the city and region, and other manifestations and important events that might increase visibility of the museum programs;
- access to the museum for people with disabilities, strollers, old people;
- school children programs, students clubs, animation of different target groups;
- volunteers program development;
- cooperation with local and other centers for permanent education (University of Arts in Belgrade, NGOs, international organizations);

- participation in cultural life through linkage with programs of other cultural organizations, festivals, conferences etc;
- cooperation with other art fields: theater and dance performances in the museum, music concerts in specific museum interiors etc.

These strategies are also focused on successful shift from the never questionable rights of a public institution towards responsibilities!!! This attitude is the characteristic of the majority of public administrations in the post-socialist societies: belief that the state will continue to support their bare existence regardless their results and productivity; market economy is ignored and considered as a parallel reality not afflicting the “public” i.e. eternal and immutable institutions.

The problems and tasks that Serbian museums have to deal with are numerous and time and funds consuming. They need to be systematic, so strategic planning is essential, and it needs good expertise, excellent insight in the cultural and social context and persistent work in the field. European and American experiences show that the museums which strictly implemented their strategic planning in the processes of institutional development have achieved remarkable results like no other cultural institution, becoming thus not only the extraordinary cultural, but also social and economic factors crucial for the *renaissance* of their environments.⁷⁵

Project logic seems to be a good transitional methodology and it gave very good results in the French museums. Direction des musées de France introduced the practice of *cultural project* in all French public museums. Cultural project is a tool for planning and programming. It should fit into the new project logic that has been slowly introduced into the Serbian cultural institutions.

Cultural project needs to fulfill several criteria: systematic knowledge of the museum and its collections, knowledge of the audience and environment, professional maturity and responsibility towards cultural policy strategies and goals, and creativity and

⁷⁵ Irina Subotić, *Stvoriti i voleti publiku* (Making and loving the audience) in: *Muzej i publika*, Klod Žilber (ed.), Beograd: Clio 2005, pp. 17

innovation.⁷⁶ Working on a cultural project is giving the sense to a museum because it is based on the vision of the museum as an instrument of cultural and even social policy.⁷⁷ Proposed model of introduction of contemporary art project as a tool for organizational development of a museum could be the right “measure” for many Serbian museums which is indicated by the European experiences and several local case studies. SWOT analysis of this “partnership” shows its high capacities for achieving positive results.

SWOT analysis: contemporary art project + Serbian museums

If we consider the museum activities as a part of development strategy, as a spaces of synthesis, if we agree that the tasks of museums is not science, but public good based on scientific research, than it becomes clear that today in Serbia a united front should be established in order to show that it is now the last moment for the museums change and reform. Conversely, they will continue to perish, and museum professions (one more weak point in the museum system) will decline and vanish. The Ministry of Culture should, stimulated by and in cooperation with the museum professionals and local authorities, make a long term plan for resolving the basic problems of the Serbian museums. National strategy would also help bringing international expertise, scholarships, donations and strategic partnerships.

Further questions should be answered at the very beginning of the reform processes in the museums in Serbia:

- a) Why doesn't Serbian cultural policy use the potential of museums for identity definition, presentation, lobbying?
- b) Why are they put aside?
- c) Why do they play such a minor role in the national up-rise and in the post-socialist, transitional cultural regeneration?

⁷⁶ Marie-Elene Joly, *Cultural projects of museums*, in: *Muzej i publika*, Claude Gilbert (ed.), Belgrade: Clio 2005, pp. 88.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 90.

- d) Why do they have such a low position in the priority list of the authorities and policy makers?
- e) What makes the policy makers forget the museums in the Serbian cultural landscape?
- f) Why have the museum professionals been labeled as the most inert, reluctant and slow-changing professional groups in cultural fields in Serbia?
- g) Why don't they believe that the more active they are the more attention they obtain the more money they get?

4.2. Marketing in the museums

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Recommendations

5.2. Conclusions

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RESUME

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