

THE BRUKENTHAL NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SIBIU STRATEGIES IN MUSEUM LEARNING

Dana Roxana HRIB

*Head of the PR, Education and Marketing Department
Brukenthal National Museum*

The important status of the museum pedagogy in the educational process taking place in schools has a more or less well defined tradition in the Romania of the last decades. Along with the social changes determined by the implementation of the European standards and regulations, the museum education became one of priorities of the contemporary museology, enjoying a complex orientation towards all educational levels (primary education to the faculty one) together with the most important activity of adult continuous formation.

Pedagogy as such implies the problematic of specialized education and general cultural orientation, visitor's psychology, defining/self-defining local, national and European cultural identity.

There are at least three ways in which an institution of culture could choose to articulate its role in the formation of young generations: to define its own contribution to the youth education, to explore the way in which the values promoted in school are acquired and expressed, to have a clear representation on its aim and objectives.

During the period between 2006 and 2008, the Brukenthal National Museum was subjected to a

spectacular transformation, all the buildings in its administration being renovated while about 85% of the exhibitions were reconsidered. In the process of remaking the old exhibitions and issuing new ones, the educational aspect was one of the priorities.

Before 2006, museum education activities were random. Because of the renovation process paralleled by the events of Sibiu European Capital of Culture in 2007, an articulate educational programme was possible to be run only starting with school year 2008/2009. The first education rooms in the Museum were opened in 2007 at the Museum of Natural History and 2008 at the Brukenthal Palace (Art Galleries) and the Museum of History.

In September 2008, the youth educational programme "DISCOVERING THE MUSEUM" has been launched at the Brukenthal National Museum in Sibiu. For the beginning, the broad educational offer – a step-by-step activities timeline comprising 57 themes and eight projects – was disseminated at all urban or rural levels. What the Museum aimed at was to encourage students of different groups of age to become familiar with the museum through recurrence in visiting, to let them discover the museum step by step, to give them



Kinder garden ecology workshop

the possibility of learning, being creative and enjoying in recreation.

The chosen strategies in accomplishing the above mentioned task could be structured on several categories.

1. Teaching the Teachers

The project *Ecology between necessity and reality* run at the Museum of Natural History opened with a

theoretical stage of 4 lectures on ecology, delivered by the Museum's curators, the trainees being 45 teachers from rural kinder gardens. There were also two following practical stages, the teachers organizing two series of workshops with the children: "Spring symbols made out of recycled materials" and "A vegetal alternative in egg-painting" as the result of which 2



The exhibition on spring symbols



Guided tour to the Brukenthal Palace

exhibitions opened in the Museum and a sketch on ecology was written by the teachers on the occasion of the opening, being played by the children.

2. Teaching the future Teachers

The pedagogy praxis project was run by the Art Galleries curators, the trainees being students of the Pedagogy High School in Sibiu, and involved guided tours to the Brukenthal Palace/Art Galleries and lectures on guiding primary school students. On the 29th of May, the high school students in the 10th grade at the “Andrei Şaguna” National Pedagogy College in Sibiu, completed the one year praxis stage in the Brukenthal National Museum by presenting thematic guided tours for kinder gardens and primary school students in a story-like ambience.

3. Study facilities for future artists - Art praxis

Opened in 2008, in Brukenthal Palace, the permanent exhibition of 19th c. plaster-cast copies was specially arranged to accommodate the classes of students in art. Entitled *In Light and Shadow*, the



Guided tour to the Plaster-cast Copies Exhibition

project was the result of the partnership between the Brukenthal National Museum and the Art High School in Sibiu, enjoying the participation of 10th grade, Graphics Department.

The drawing study after plaster-cast copies is a stage in learning the artistic representation of human figure, involving the page framing, the understanding and the covering in light and shadows of the represented subject.



Art praxis



The exhibition of the resulted works



Visitation circuit in a 3rd grade student's work



Glass box display in a 4th grade student's work



The exhibition

Done on black or white support, the compositions draw our attention on the last of the above mentioned aspects, the light and the shadow dressing the objects in accordance to the novelty game of interchange.

4. Learning about Museum's history - *Samuel von Brukenthal and his palace*

Targeted on all groups of age the topic was comprised in the thematic guided tours timeline as well as in the creativity contest *The Brukenthal Palace in the Eyes of Children*. The activities focused on Palace's structure, the reception rooms and von Brukenthal's personality.

5. Learning about exhibitions I

Targeted on primary school students, the topic was comprised in the thematic guided tours timeline, while the activities focused on: visitation circuit, ways of displaying exhibits and how to read labels.

6. Learning about exhibitions II

At this level, the project entitled *Collection to Museum* was targeted on secondary school students who learned about the collections on which exhibitions rely on, along notions as conservation, appropriate storage and inventory, practicing on their own collections.

The exhibition that concluded the project adjoined the collections put together by students with the scientific collections of the Museum in a display meant to evince similarities and differences.

7. Learning about Brukenthal Collection of Painting

Entitled *The thematic of Angels in the European Painting Collection of Brukenthal National Museum and in the creations of Art High School students in Sibiu*, the project was targeted on students in Art High School, Graphic Section (the 3rd and 4th year of study), chosen to create works inspired by the European Painting Collection of Brukenthal National Museum. The experiment was one of learning about the European art values represented by the paintings, the vocational profile of their school being the most suited for such an application.

Meant to cumulate a series of pre-established factors, the project brought together the training artist and the cultural values of the European painting, the museum and the school, the exhibition and the workshop, the theory and the practice, the old and the new in an endeavour dedicated to the

community of which the museum and the school are part of.

Among the objectives of the project several are worth to be mentioned the intellectual development of the students through the opportunity of learning about the collection of painting in the possession of the Brukenthal National Museum, followed by the creative application, the cultural development of the students through the understanding of the historical and cultural context of the chosen sources, the social development through the perception of the complexity of local cultural environment, from the museum information to the specially adapted work, considering the exhibition location: the Calvinist Church.

The educational project of Brukenthal National Museum and the Art High School in Sibiu introduce, along with the institutional cooperation, a spiritual approach and a disposition for ecumenism, offering students a new perspective in comparison with the common patterns in their activity.



Students with the exhibition catalogue



The exhibition



Performing experiments



The guided tour



The creativity workshop

The iconography of angels and the opening of the exhibition in December – time preceding Christmas – occasioned the experience of referring to the community's values.

8. Temporary exhibitions/The Contemporary Art Gallery

As second part of the *Animated Films from Germany* exhibition (hosted by the Brukenthal Museum's Contemporary Art Gallery) was a workshop to which 5 teams (of 2 high school students each) participated in order to learn how to realize their own animated films. The festive presentation of films took place at the „Gong” Theatre.

9. Challenging topics: *The Museum of Pharmacy for primary school students*

The project aimed at facilitating the understanding of the specialized notions related to the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Pharmacy. In order to adapt to the primary school level, the tour was preceded by a presentation of similarities extent between the story telling about wizards and the historical reality of the social perception on the first pharmacists. The pilot activity brought together the Harry Potter chosen thematic for the annual carnival of the 3rd grade with spectacular chemistry experiments, a talk about understanding the scientifically background of the spectacular phenomena based on plates and plasticine objects and the guided tour to the Museum of Pharmacy.

10. Learning about ethnic history: *Thematic guided tours for Romani students* (project)

Romani International Day was marked at the Museum of History *Altemberger House* through a series of thematic guided tours for students of Romani background. The School of Alțâna village and the School Nr. 10 of Sibiu took part to the project. The guided tours focused on evincing the most important moments in the history of Romani people. The final stage of the project implied creative activities, the students being invited

to draw subjects inspired by the Museum exhibitions.

During the school year 2008-2009, the museum education programmes developed by the Brukenthal National Museum enjoyed the partnership of over 70 kinder gardens, schools and high schools in organizing 20 projects implying 259 activities, 10 exhibitions and 7017 visits (3565 – first semester and 3452 – second semester). There are a number of activities still to be run during the summer holiday as well.

