

ART ON WAVE. PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE TULCEA'S ART AND HERITAGE

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Abstract: Often overlooked by locals, tourists, and even artists, art museums are risking to become simple architectural elements of the city, forgotten both by the public and by the artists.

Increasing the visibility of our department was among the essential activities to give meaning to specific museum activities. In addition to the classic methods of promotion, the institution managed to attract attention to the art heritage of Tulcea through educational activities, exhibition projects in the city's neighbourhoods, and temporary exhibitions both in other museum centres and appropriate museum spaces in rural areas or hard-to-reach localities.

The visibility of art from Tulcea is also amplified by the internet and online exhibitions and presentations. These forms of promotion and activities will be carried out individually, cumulatively, or in collaboration with other sections of the institute or other cultural entities.

The presentation will include an exposition of the potential of the Museum Complex of Northern Dobruja Cultural Heritage, not only in terms of the activities carried out up to this moment but also in terms of the projects to be implemented for the promotion and capitalization of the mobile and immovable cultural heritage owned. Through all these activities, the museum becomes more visible, dynamic, forms its future audience, and familiarises it with the new status of the museum - namely as a cultural centre of our society, not only a passive objects keeper.

Keywords: Romania, Dobruja, Tulcea, cultural heritage, cultural tourism, museum education.

Culture attracts tourists and tourists influence culture

"In making the connections between culture, management activities, economic growth and the establishment of an identity of Europe, cultural tourism is one of the most interesting fields of the current times. The factor called "tourism" with all its cultural components is increasingly used in the sense of: discovery, recognition and interaction between the citizens of Europe".¹

Museums have always been for tourists

Often overlooked by locals, tourists and even artists, art museums risk becoming mere architectural elements of the city, forgotten by both the general public and artists. Increasing the visibility of our department was among the essential activities to give meaning to specific museum activities. In addition to the classic methods of promotion, the institution managed to draw attention to the art heritage of Tulcea

¹ Penciu 2006, 181.

through educational activities, exhibition projects in the city's neighbourhoods, through temporary exhibitions both in other museum centres, and in appropriate museum spaces in rural or hard-to-reach areas. Also, the visibility of Tulcea art is amplified with the help of the Internet, exhibitions and online presentations. These forms of promotion will be carried out individually, cumulatively and in collaboration with other departments of the institute and with other cultural entities.

Tourism has become a major life factor of the 21st century, it has evolved by 25% compared to the last 50 years. This aspect was favoured by the permanent improvement and development of means of transport that facilitated the mobility of humanity. The current demographic transformations and the dynamism created by the tendency to form a space without borders have influenced and required a transformation of museum activity. Museums become points of convergence for the human community.

Tourists allocate less and less time for vacations in their everyday life. Thus, they no longer value financial value, but value time. Vacations are no longer planned in advance. They become almost spontaneous, after arriving at their destination, they become interested in the experiences offered locally. Tourists are looking for unique experiences with a high emotional impact. They want to feel the essence of the visited places after these visits. So, they want to live by interacting with people, animals, activities, phenomena, and events. They prefer experiences that use multiple meanings. Authenticity is what defines the new demands of tourists. Authenticity also means experiences in their natural context, but the desire for authenticity can be enjoyed and appreciated by the tourist at its true value only by interacting under the guidance of an expert in the field, who will guide them towards what really represents, in its entirety, the area visited. A large part of the tourists who arrive in Tulcea tend to skip visiting the museum centres and tourist spots in the county.

"Romanian society registers profound social, economic and cultural changes with each stage. At the current stage of reform, culture is likely to play a major role in society's adaptation to this unprecedented structural evolution. In this sense, cultural politics can and must become a tool of education and instruction to save identity, a means of promoting human values, tolerance, cooperation and the plurality of opinions".²

Tourists look for each destination they visit to have its own identity. Something that the Danube Delta represents for Tulcea County. Precisely from this perspective, our institution wants to draw attention to the other points of tourist interest existing in the territory but eclipsed.

To connect local tourism with museum institutions, there have been developed increasingly elaborate and ingenious marketing policies over time. The promotion plan takes into account the social situation, the anthropological evolution and the organizational behaviour of the community.

This process of modernizing the place and the role of the museum has already been triggered in many of the world's great museums, which have brought the educational function to the forefront of their activity, rethought and revitalized through museum pedagogy departments and the new technologies used.

The museum has changed its role. It becomes a training space, a point of educational activities; it promotes and develops the involvement, creativity, and tolerance of the young participants. The museum becomes not only a space of creativity, but also a place of communication, having as its centre of interest intercultural heritage and dialogue between generations (of artists and/or visitors), promoting comprehensibility.

Culture is a core component, not just a form of recreation of society. Culture can become a formative and emitter of behavioural models, ways of interhuman communication and of humanity with nature. The main resource for promoting the heritage held by museums is the human factor. But this is also the purpose of museum activity.

For the proper implementation of marketing projects, the employees involved had to form unitary teams.

² Cosma et al. 2003, 44.

The Art Museum, along with Avramide House, two representative buildings for Tulcea and the beginnings of Northern Dobruja museology, own in total seven collections: The modern and contemporary painting collection consisting of 980 works, the modern and contemporary sculpture collection containing 299 objects and ensembles, the Collection of icons comprising 770 objects, the Collection of modern and contemporary graphics, also the largest in which 4886 works are registered, the Collection of engravings consisting of 601 plates, the Collection of oriental art with 311 pieces and that of European decorative art with another 121 objects.

From the beginning, it was desired to create a permanent meeting point within the Avramide House with the aim of the cultural development of Northern Dobruja.

This is how events such as "Avramide's natter" appeared, during which recitals, book launches, temporary exhibitions and promotions of artists were held.

The museum, in the last two decades, has been oriented towards the formation of the new public, thus the museum education activity has been amplified. Interrelationship with young people, with the future of humanity was desired, and the adjacent activities became very important for the museum.

We also started educational projects in the Avramide House space. These - timidly at first - took place indoors, and then, during the summer, with the attraction of new participants, the creative workshops were organized in the museum courtyard, in the shade of the trees. The promotion became open, the activity was exposed to passers-by, and this caused an exponential increase in participants. The topics addressed were aimed at satisfying the children's desire to play, but also at acquiring and familiarizing themselves with the elements of plastic expressiveness. Models, plaster forms, and volumetric elements were made that helped the children to understand the rendering of three-dimensionality in a two-dimensional plan. The children played and at the same time used colour and imagination to beautify the given materials. To satisfy the parents' desire to educate the children's aesthetic and creative sense in the classic way, we improved the children's workshops by addressing the subject that was found in the playful elements, on traditional work boards.

"The role of art in education is to help children become themselves, instead of becoming like everyone else," said Sydney Gurewitz Clemens, a consultant in the education of children, and the author of several specialized books. Artistic activities, drawing, painting, theatre, music, or even visiting museums help children to develop harmoniously. What children create are parts of themselves, from that stage of their lives.

With this in mind, we proposed and realized within the Tulcea Art Museum a series of creative workshops intended for children between the ages of 6 and 14, these being adapted according to the age groups.

Here we can mention the workshops entitled "Holiday at the Museum", carried out during the summer, but also the partnerships concluded with the schools in the municipality of Tulcea, in which children from primary and secondary schools participated. In these activities, the little ones made reproductions of the works of art from the museum's basic exhibition, but they also practised combined techniques: collage or three-dimensional works, made of different materials, such as cardboard, paper, thread, recyclable materials, etc.

We aimed to teach the children what a museum is, what works of art are, what heritage is, what materials paintings or sculptures are made of, but above all they learned how important heritage is and the fact that it must be protected and exploited.

Both at the summer workshops and at those held in partnership with schools in the municipality, we wanted the little ones to familiarize themselves with the basic notions of working in a museum. The children learned what collections are and that what they see in the core exhibitions are only a small part of what the heritage of such an institution contains. We explained to them about the collections of the Art Museum and who takes care of them, who the conservators are, and what the restorers, the museographers or scientific researchers do.

The little ones received all this information following dialogues, and we tried to get the children to define all the notions themselves following logical deductions. For example, we asked them if they

collect things at home and several said yes, coins, stones or even dolls. Thus, they understood more easily what collections are and what they represent in the long term, that museums are a kind of time capsules, a kind of boxes with surprises that can be opened in the future and there you can find the objects that were used many years ago or the paintings that were made in those distant times. We chose to convey this information especially to young children, from grades I-IV, and to the older ones, from grades V-VIII, we told them about the life and work of the plastic artists promoted by the Tulcea Art Museum. We chose to talk about the great Romanian painters, so the first thematic lessons were about Nicolae Grigorescu and the following ones about Theodor Aman (Fig. 1). The first stage of the classes took place in the main exhibition of the Art Museum, and the second, i.e. the creative workshop, was located on the ground floor of the building, in a room dedicated to temporary exhibitions.

The holiday creative workshops were held from June until the end of August, two days a week, Monday and Wednesday, from 4 pm to 5 pm, and 15-20 children participated in each workshop. The teams were relatively constant, except for the days when they left town on vacation. In total, about 50 children participated in the holiday workshop.

Apart from the fact that the children saw the work they were going to reproduce in the museum exhibition, in the workshop room, on the easel, an A3 photo of the work was presented, as well as a simplified model painting made by us, so that they could distinguish colours and images more easily. The drafts of the papers were also simplified, giving the children the opportunity to come up with their own ideas.

The works of art reproduced by the children were: Alexandru Ciucurencu, "Static nature" and "Still life with guitar"; Rodica Maniu, "Girls picking fruits"; Ion Theodorescu-Sion, "Boats on the sea"; Camil Ressu, "Countrywomen" and Nicolae Grigorescu, "The ox cart", as well as the icon "Mother Mary with the Child" and an oriental decorative plate from the 18th century.

Also, the painting classes were alternated with creative classes, in which the children used Duplex cardboard, coloured paper, tracing paper, glue and scissors. They had to make a guitar, fruit baskets or boats, and objects that were related to the panels they were painting. Every hour the little artists also received colouring sheets for the remaining free time or homework.

Under the same formula, the painting classes for students from the partnerships concluded with the schools in the municipality were held. They took place starting from the end of February, until the middle of June, within the Different School Program and more than 30 primary and secondary classes participated.

The children from the primary cycle painted on sketches of works signed by the painter Alexandru Ciucurencu, "Still life" and "Still life with guitar", and the secondary school children made reproductions after Nicolae Grigorescu, "Peasant on the road" and Theodor Aman, "The singer with the lute".

During this activity, the children were explained how to make a reproduction. Both the beginning part in which all the elements of the work are composed and positioned, as well as the colour scheme, the style in which the respective painter fits and at the end, retouches and additions, discussions related to possible changes to be as complete and as close to the original work (Fig. 1).

For many of the children it seemed very difficult, or even impossible, to make such reproductions after the great Romanian painters. In the end, the little ones were very surprised by the result obtained and by the fact that it is not so complicated if they follow clear steps and stages of making a reproduction. Many of them said they would frame those works and display them in their rooms.

We want, through these museum lessons, children to start loving art, to be able to distinguish, when they grow up, works of art from worthless ones, and to develop their aesthetic sense.



Fig. 1. Children during a creative workshop.

Another educational project addressed to all ages is "I'm not a copy ... I'm the original" (Fig. 2) which includes both a workshop and a competition. All art lovers were invited to participate in it. Free participation and provision of the necessary materials for the event facilitated access for all people, regardless of material possibilities. The contest ended with a prize, in which the winners received tablets, phones or painting materials. The project aimed to promote the museum's collections, but also to cultivate the creativity and artistic talents of the participants. Participants would view the permanent exhibition, analyze the work of the month, which was usually the source of inspiration for the competition, which they would then reproduce or reinterpret. The choice of the winner was made in such a way that the followers of the posts on the Internet and the visitors were directly involved, they could vote to choose the winner.



Fig. 2. The poster of the educational project "I'm not a copy ... I'm the original".

In parallel, the North-Dobruja Cultural Heritage Museum organized painting and engraving biennials, the museum space hosted concerts, meetings of various types, and projects launched in various fields.

All events were promoted through traditional methods (posters, leaflets) but also through mass media and social media. A real test of community loyalty and involvement was the launch of the "Adopt a Painting" project, through which art lovers could support the restoration of works of great importance for the

mobile cultural heritage owned by our department. Thus, 24 works classified in the treasury and fund were restored.

The program was initiated in 2016, and the actual restoration of the works from the first edition was carried out in 2017, in accredited laboratories, with the approval of the National Commission of Museums and Collections. The project took place in three editions: the first was fully supported by art lovers, the second became a project that was partially financed by AFCN, and the third edition (Fig. 3) won the Second Prize at the Civil Society Gala in the Art and Culture Section. For a better promotion and highlighting of the activity carried out, rollups were made that formed a micro-exhibition that was toured in the country, within the museum events Dobroart, Drobeta, Museum Fest or in the Art Museum from Constanța, but also in non-conventional spaces, transit areas, such as hotel spaces. Analyzing the categories of visitors that cross the threshold of our exhibitions, we noticed a difference between the urban and rural environments. Any event or promotion of cultural heritage is processed and carried out always taking into account the fact that their safety and preservation is paramount.

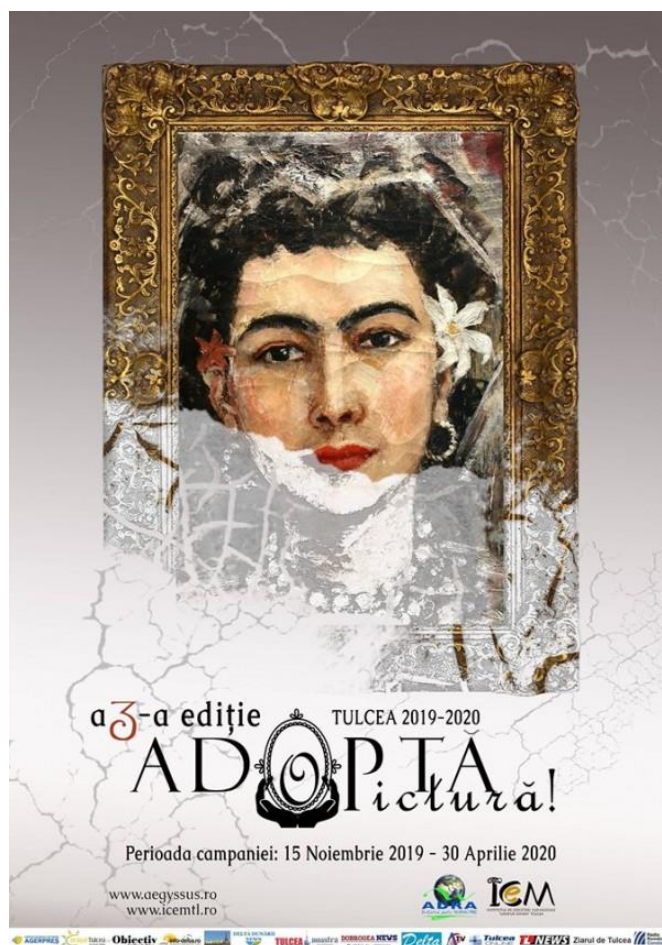


Fig. 3. The poster of the "Adopt a Painting" project.

Also, as a philanthropic activity, a book collection was created for the organization of a small library in the Avramide House space, where people who wish to read can relax by reading. This mini library can periodically become a "transient" library to accompany exhibitions in disadvantaged environments, to also satisfy the desire for reading, not just for the contemplation of the heritage objects on display. Another philanthropic project in which the local but also the international community was trained was called "Be a Santa Claus", which managed to improve the winter holidays of several needy families from the donations made.

Because we noticed a low level of local participation in cultural and artistic events in rural areas, we organized temporary exhibitions in the existing museum space in rural localities. The opening of such an event took place in 2018, on April 1st, where an exhibition of church books and icons from the collection of the Tulcea

Art Museum was opened, under the title Icon - Path to Resurrection in the museum space that houses the Paleo-Christian monument from Niculițel (Fig. 4). Along with the short presentation of the exhibition, there was a mini-concert of religious songs performed by the Choir of the Saon Monastery. The religious theme was chosen because in rural areas, religious activities are the most frequent activities after household ones. Cultural activities also in rural areas have a negligible importance. We have interspersed religious objects meeting the locals with objects familiar to them. The objects were exhibited to the public, and the temporary exhibition was appreciated, at the end of the opening, from the auditorium: local residents identified, appreciated and compared the exhibited objects with those owned in their own households. Such interrelationships manage to involve diverse communities and will facilitate the formation of a correct image of the movable and immovable cultural heritage existing in the studied area.

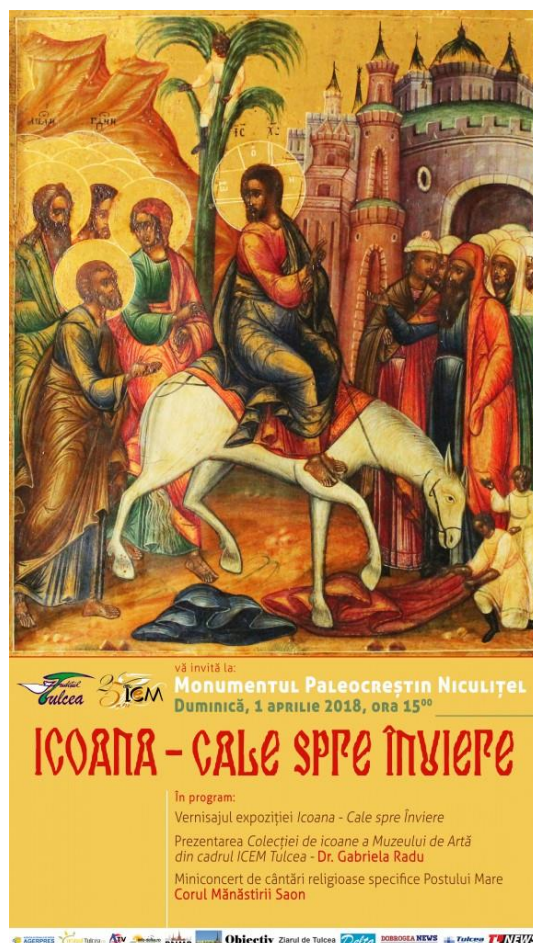


Fig. 4. The poster of the exhibition of church books and icons from the collection of the Tulcea Art Museum "Icon – Path to Resurrection".

The local population becomes receptive and aware of the heritage values exhibited and owned. Young people, following the increase in the frequency of organizing cultural activities in rural museum spaces, become interested in the study, in the educational system and the opportunities it offers, becoming visitors and lovers of beauty. In their turn, they will educate their descendants, to attend the institutions that sparked their interest in the museum space.

Another form of promotion of mobile cultural heritage is the digitization of information held regarding museum collections, an activity that took place at the level of the entire institution, and in which the Northern Dobruja Cultural Heritage Museum participated, registering and promoting over 80% of collections. Also, the museographers' social media activity supported the permanent connection with the public, especially during the pandemic. Also then, the educational activities were carried out online through live presentations on classroom or teams' platforms.

Each month an object is designated as the object of the month. The interested people followed us on the Internet and when the visits resumed, they could directly view the works that piqued their interest in the permanent exhibition.

Also in the virtual space, we created virtual micro-exhibitions, on the occasion of special holidays or events.

Visitors, through the virtual environment, manage to be with the specialized staff who either reveal stages of the exhibition panelling, or stages of the restoration process of heritage objects. The invitations to the opening are accompanied by short presentations of the exhibition that aim to excite the public.

However, collaborations with other museums or cultural organizations have not been abandoned, receiving or participating through them in original exhibitions from the country and abroad. The Museum was a permanent participant in the Night of Museums and the Night of Researchers. Within these events, a complex presentation of exhibitions, video projections of related activities, and workshops specially created for these events (Tulcea paints, Dark painting - on black paper, Cane painting) were made.

Another project to promote the cultural and artistic heritage existing in our Museum was carried out under the coordination of the Aegyssus Development Association (ADRA) in partnership with the "Gavrilă Simion" Tulcea Eco-Museum Research Institute (through the Art Museum and Avramide House), through which we ran the "Neighbourhood Museum" project on the streets of Tulcea starting from November 2021. The initiative was carried out with the support and co-financing of the Tulcea City Hall and consisted of displaying, in Tulcea neighbourhoods and important points of the city, posters with 50 of the most important works from the heritage of the Tulcea Art Museum. Thus, the spontaneous itinerant exhibitions highlighted both works that can be admired directly by visiting the Art Museum, but also original works by the most important Romanian artists works in the Museum's collections (Figs. 5-6).

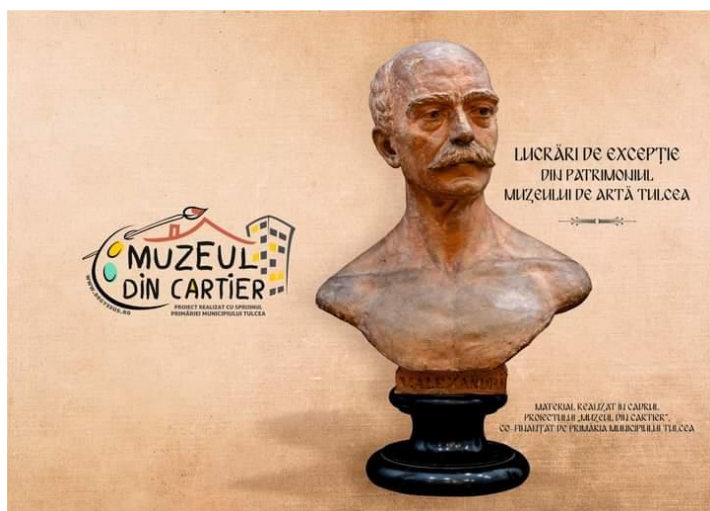


Fig. 5. Poster of the "Neighborhood Museum" project.



Fig. 6. Art on the streets of Tulcea.

The general objective of the project was to increase access to the cultural act and to the special cultural values managed by the Tulcea Art Museum for the population of the municipality and county of Tulcea, on the one hand, and for Romanian or foreign tourists visiting Tulcea, on the other. The ten double panels made to ensure the display of reproductions in A1 format have proven essential in promoting the heritage also on other occasions - Night of the Museums - May 2022 (posters with Constantin Găvănea's Tulcea) and workshop to make puzzles with the same works; Danubius Cartfest Book Festival (Fig. 7) (Outstanding Works from the Heritage of the Art Museum). Also, Victor Brauner's nine works, present in the painting and graphics collections, were promoted on these posters.

To make the varied offer of the museum's permanent exhibition clearer, brochures with information about all the collections were also produced and printed within the project: painting, graphics, engraving plates, sculpture, icons, European decorative art and decorative Oriental art. The brochures were

distributed both during the outings in the main areas of the city, as well as to the visitors of the Art Museum and the Avramide House.



Fig. 7. The poster of the "Danubius Cartfest Book Festival".

In the future, it is desired to continue the projects already underway, resume successful activities and organize new exhibitions both in the museum space owned by the Museum - the Art Museum and the Avramide House, but also in the countryside or hard-to-reach areas, using the exhibition spaces of the others sections of the Institute. It is desired to transform the exhibitions into complexes of activities, correlated with important community events. For these, exhibition themes specific to the area and the community will be addressed. Such an exhibition can be organized in the town of Babadag, in the Panaghia House, and can include works from the oriental art collection, the city being known for the Muslim community existing here. This can be supplemented with educational activities carried out in the museum location. Another exhibition can present at Niculițel the belt buckles from the decorative art collection of the museum, alongside the belt buckles from the collection of the Museum of History discovered following archaeological excavations carried out in the locality. Along with the classical speeches, a recital could be organized that pays tribute to the popular port, the belt buckles being elements assimilated to it. Those who wish could make decorative elements inspired by the ornaments exhibited during creative workshops.

As one of the most visited points of interest in Sulina, the Old Lighthouse Museum, is about to open, the collection of icons could be exhibited highlighting the heterogeneity of the local community, and its specifics could be contained in the title: "Icon - fisherman of men". Young people or those who wish could make boats from different materials (paper or recycled materials) which they could decorate as they like.

Also, new technologies could bring virtual presentations to the exhibition halls that could transpose the visitor into the plastic creation of different artists.

Through all these activities, the museum becomes visible, dynamic, forms its future audience and familiarizes it with the new status of the museum – namely as a cultural centre of our society, not just a passive keeper of objects.

"Today, more than ever, the contemporary museum is a communication institution, which must respond to the expectations and needs of the public of the next century. The justification of the museum's *raison d'être* and its ability to obtain public and private funds largely depend on the ability to attract the public, in competition with television, disco, electronic games or the amusement park. ... A museum without an audience, therefore unable to communicate and attract, is an institution without life. From any perspective, the museum cannot be separated from the public, from the social echo it produces. The museum exists for the public. His performance and social utility is also measured in the number of visitors.

The new museum becomes a visiting card for the community that reflects its entire cultural value in its heritage. The museum reflects and must respond to the cultural aspirations of the community.

How to attract the public, how to get them to spend time looking at and thinking about the objects in the museum, how to suggest to them the pleasure and appeal of such an activity, how to strike the right balance between access and security, learning and fun, interest and amusement, concepts which, fortunately, are not exclusive? It takes imagination, goodwill, talent, and a well-planned effort".³

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³ Oberländer-Târnoveanu 1997, 9.