

## REDEFINING AND REASSUMING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE COMMUNITY - A MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF ROMANIAN MUSEUMS

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The issue of identity arose for the first time in the Romanian social, political and historical life along with the Transylvanian School; it then crystallised itself in the 1848 period, due to the intellectuals' imperious need of presenting themselves to the modern and civilized world; afterwards, through the work of important personalities, it became a matter of defining the national specificity and the Romanian ethnic feature. Poetry also contributed to defining Romanian identity, emphasizing simplicity, for example, as one of its features.

The inter-war period was the most fruitful one for analyzing the idea of identity on a multi-level basis. Preeminent representatives of all cultural fields have set this issue as their main concern, regardless of the intellectual path each has taken; thus, Romanian identity was outlined historically, sociologically, religiously, philosophically etc. This same period was also a peak in curatorship – the museum itself became the keeper of identity, promoting it at the same time among the young generations.

This spectacular effervescence of Romanian intelligence and sensibility that so helped defining the cultural, political and national identity was brutally brought to an end by the coming to power of communism. One of the most devastating consequences of this regime was the beheading of the Romanian identity and the severe limitation of free thought. Subsequently, a new issue arose, to accentuate the spiritual impasse of the Romanians: globalization.

The museums and the connected institutions also suffered greatly from the communist regime, on almost all levels of their activity. While the crucial role of the museum in establishing the national personality was confirmed internationally in the 1980s and the 1990s, Romanian curators only realized the importance of cultural and scientific education in museums after 1989. The recovery of our true cultural identity was eased by the rise of a new field – museum pedagogy – and its active role in the main functions of the museum.

<sup>1</sup>End of the 18<sup>th</sup>  
century – beginning  
of the 19<sup>th</sup> century

But Romanian identity changed in the mean time; it gained new aspects, and lost others. Romania was freed of the oppressive communist influence and it became part of the E.U., but true values were now in danger of being confused with the caricatures promoted by a consumer society. The goals and means of advertising applied to all products, cultural or not, have made difficult the museum promoters' task; the budgets allotted to museums are too often too small to compete with less culturally important, but profitable products. Another problem is that the larger part of the entertainment offers promotes ideas and products devoid of true, important, good values.

In these conditions, the museums' public relations departments should have as a goal the affective approach of the public, especially through an effective communication. The link between the museum and its public should be permanent, reciprocal, warm and attractive, and the services offered by the museum should always be adapted to their specific target population. For achieving this, museums from more advanced countries have perfected

the methods of museum education and have thoroughly researched the public's interests and characteristics. Pedagogy and psychology are becoming almost indispensable for museums to attract youths and children. Romanian museums have still to learn from the example given by museums in other countries in order to transform the institutions into true public spaces, open to the public, receptive and welcoming, educative, alive and truly valuable. They have to become actively involved in the social life of especially the young generation, so they could reclaim their important status of bearers and promoters of national identity.

As a conclusion, every museum, especially those of history, art and natural sciences, should have special departments dedicated to public relations and to museum education. Museums should be active partners of institutional education of every level and they should give the possibility to experiment, to develop and to deepen the knowledge learned in schools, stimulating at the same time the community's interest towards them.

