

---

**Matija Dronjić**  
Ethnographic Museum  
Zagreb  
matija@emz.hr

UDK 39:688.7]:069  
069.5:688.7  
069.02:39](497.521.2)  
Review paper  
Received: 12 October 2014  
Accepted: 16 October 2014

---

## The *World of Toys* Project



- The paper presents the chronology and the basic information on the realisation of the *World of Toys* project (Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, 1 December 2012 to 2 June 2013), which included a cycle of five exhibitions with a number of accompanying events such as workshops, performances and lectures about children's toys. Particular emphasis is placed on its epilogue, and in the introduction children's toys and children's culture are considered within the context of the activity of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

Key words: Ethnographic Museum (Zagreb)  
World of Toys (project)  
museum exhibitions, toys at exhibitions

### INTRODUCTION

The *World of Toys* project of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, led by Senior Curator Iris Biškupić Bašić, Ph.D. was realised in the facilities of the Museum between 1 December 2012 and 2 June 2013. Through the exhibition cycle the public was presented objects from several museum collections, and numerous objects owned by private collectors, associations and citizens. A rich educational programme for all age groups was implemented along with the exhibitions. Supported by interactive guided tours interested visitors could participate in numerous workshops, puppet shows, story-telling sessions and cycles of scientific and expert lectures about children's culture.

The Project was made possible by the Administration of the City of Zagreb, the City Office for Education, Culture and Sports and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, and it was supported by the Croatian Chamber of Commerce, the Croatian Forestry Management Authority, the Ministry of Ag-

riculture, the Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts, Krapina-Zagorje County, the Tourist Board of the City of Zagreb, the Agency for Commercial Activity, the Zagreb Puppet Theatre, Zagrebačka Banka d.d.; media partners: 24 sata ('24 hours'), Radio Kaj, Hrvatski radio – Radio Sljeme, Europlakat d.o.o., Zagreb moj grad (Zagreb, My City) journal. The Project was also realised thanks to excellent inter-museum cooperation with the Croatian School Museum, Museums of Hrvatsko Zagorje, Zagreb City Museum, Klovićevi Dvori Gallery, Mimara Museum and The Museum of Toys and Play from Kielce, Poland.

The paper, envisaged as a Project Chronicle, is structurally divided into several separate units. The first chapter outlines the history of exhibition activity and expert work of the staff of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb as related to children's toys.<sup>1</sup> The second separate unit presents the exhibition concept of the *World of Toys*, i.e., the basic data on every exhibition with the cycle, while the third places emphasis on the accompanying events. The final chapter, the epilogue, describes the continuation of exhibition activities in similar institutions throughout Croatia, the formation of the new Collection of Children's Toys and Games, and the development of the project *Let Us Give Children Roots and Wings*.

The realisation of the *World of Toys* project started soon after the start of my traineeship in the Museum. On the invitation of Iris Biškupić Bašić I immediately joined the expert team. Considering the scope of the Project and the tasks I was assigned, I was involved in the Project as a staff associate and co-author of a section of the exhibition. Eventually this turned out to be a very positive and worthy experience. This contribution to the publication is based on the paper I prepared for the curator examination, with the note that it is a much longer variant in which the focus is shifted from my own involvement, within the context of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills during traineeship, to the implementation of the *World of Toys* project.

### **MUSEUM ACTIVITY RELATED TO CHILDREN'S CULTURE OF THE ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM IN ZAGREB**

Along with textile material, objects related to traditional economic activities, home inventory and cottage industry (crafts), from the very beginning the collection-focused activities of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb have also

---

1 In order to remain within space limitations, no special review will be made of children's toys in the Collection of World Culture Objects, which were displayed within the Project exhibition.

included children's toys. As shown by available data, as far back as 1921, two years after its foundation, the Museum purchased a wooden cradle from Letovanić, made in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. This museum object can with every right be considered the first toy in the Museum holdings (cf. Biškupić Bašić 2012: 27).

The beginnings of the Museum's exhibition activity are inseparably linked with its permanent display, and arguments supporting the claim that it exhibited toys since the very beginning can be found in the earliest Museum publications. In his *Strolling Through the Ethnographic Museum* Mirko Kus-Nikolajev describes the first permanent display. The description of the then Hall VIII at the ground floor is significant for the theme under consideration:

“The nice collection of rural children's toys deserves particular mention. Notwithstanding few decorations and little material, these children's works can conjure up images of the future ploughman and the future housewife. Children's works produced in schools after models and under teacher's supervision are more elaborate”.

In the *Ethnological Research* journal published on the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Museum and presenting its history from foundation to the late nineteen-eighties, Nada Gjetvaj presented some additional information on the Museum's permanent display between 1922 and 1935. Although she did not explicitly refer to the wooden toys in the hall mentioned above, she did mention that “children's works modelled after original rural pottery” were also displayed there in the Pottery Collection” (1989: 32).

The available information show that both that both wooden and ceramic children's toys from the contemporary display were exhibited in the same hall, warranting the conclusion that the first permanent display reflected a clear conceptual idea regarding toy display within the context of associated forms of traditional economy. In broader terms, the idea can be discerned of presenting children's culture in a single spot, as seen in Franić's *Reorganised Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb*. According to the blueprints of the contemporary permanent display, Hall VIII on the ground floor of the building was called *Technological Department*. Displayed there were *Toys for children* (Showcase 128) and *Pottery ... from different parts of Yugoslavia* (Showcases 126 a, b, c; 127; and 68). Also important is the fact that whistles were also exhibited in adjacent Hall X as part of the Collection of musical instruments (cf. Franić 1936).

The second permanent display, also presented in the mentioned publication, was set up in accordance with Franić's concept in 1935. The *Technological Department* is still there, but it was moved to the central staircase in Hall III and appears only as *Technology* in the blueprints. It is closely linked with the exhibition spaces on the first floor which present, along with other materials, the thematic sections *Ceramics/Pottery*, *Musicological Department* and *Children's Toys* in the respective showcases (cf. Franić 1936).

The third permanent display was opened when Marijana Gušić became the Director of the Museum after the Second World War. As compared with earlier concepts it introduced considerable changes in the way of presentation of the material. Museum objects were arranged in thematic blocks in terms of their geographical spread and in the spirit of the then dominant culture historical method in ethnology. Her *Commentary on the Exhibited Material*, a specific catalogue of the permanent display, discloses how toys were treated in the display. Thus, at the end of the publication there is a photograph of toys from Vidovec with a caption claiming that they constitute exhibits; however, there is no link to the text and their location within the display is not clear (cf. Gušić 1955).

In the early nineteen-seventies the Museum building underwent adaptation and the fourth permanent display opened in 1972 under the supervision of Jelka Radauš-Ribarić. A considerable part of it (other than the northern hall at the ground floor) still serves the same function. The material was divided into three basic groups: *Basic Branches of Economy and Folk Handwork*, *Department of Extra-European Cultures*, *National Costumes of the SR of Croatia and Selected Objects of Folk Arts and Crafts* (cf. Gjetvaj 1989: 45-48).

Ceramic/pottery objects were displayed in the northern ground floor wing of the Museum (the hall used at present for occasional exhibitions) within the scope of the first abovementioned group. The available photographs show that small ceramic objects serving as children's toys were not part of the display, while musical instruments were displayed on the first floor as part of the group *National Costumes of the SR of Croatia and Selected Objects of Folk Arts and Crafts*. In this conception their display was also governed by the arrangement of objects in showcases presenting in the majority of cases specific geographical entities. The display did not include any instrument that could be treated as a child's toy while the number of other objects relevant for the theme is very low. A wooden rocking horse and a bird on a stick are presented within the section on *National Costumes in the Zagreb Environs* and

two ceramic bird figurines are on display in the showcase on *Anthropomorphic and Zoomorphic Motifs of the Folk Art of Slavonia and Baranja*. Similarly, several pebbles in front of dolls showing a boy and a girl in *National Costume of Konavle near Dubrovnik* could be interpreted as objects related a child's game, i.e., elements of children's culture.

Until the nineteen-nineties toys were also presented at occasional museum exhibitions either in the Ethnographic Museum<sup>2</sup> or as a part of exhibitions touring other museums and art galleries, but only within events devoted to similar or over-riding themes. A cursory look at the list of exhibitions held in the nineteen-eighties shows that only one exhibition was devoted to the traditional aspect of this cultural phenomenon. Children's culture in the broadest terms was mainly the concern of Nada Majanović within the context of applied pedagogy; in 1982 she realised in the Travno Ethnogallery an exhibition entitled *Children's Toys* (Gjetvaj 1989: 112).<sup>3</sup>

A closer examination of available catalogues of occasional exhibitions warrants the conclusion that information on children's toys and children's culture can only be found in publications covering exhibitions on broader themes. For instance, the publication *Ethnographic Past of Zagreb* mentions the organised production of children's toys at Vidovec and in the somewhat more remote villages of Laz and Marija Bistrica (Gjetvaj et al. 1979). In this context due mention also needs to be made of traditional pottery, the study of which included the display of ceramic toys from the Museum holdings (Pušić et al. 1974; Barlek 1982).

Until the late nineteen-eighties there were almost no published independent scientific-expert studies on children's toys by the staff of the Ethnographic Museum. As late as 1987 the double issue of *Ethnological Research* published two papers with systematically collected data. In Maja Kožić' text on *Children's Games in the Zagreb Environs* children's toys are presented as an integral part of the children's culture in the area (1987: 416-417, 434-436), while Ivica Šestan, discussing traditional crafts, describes the production and sale of children's toys by the people in the Prigorje village of Vidovec (1987: 167).

---

2 A particularly productive period was the time after 1920, that is, after the reconstruction of the building and adaptation of the second floor, carried out precisely for occasional exhibitions (Gjetvaj 1989: 48).

3 Unfortunately, there was no catalogue and a closer determination of the exhibited objects would not be possible without extensive archival research.

Since the nineteen-nineties Iris Biškupić Bašić has actively studied children's toys either as an independent theme or through the prism of traditional crafts. She has authored several exhibitions, catalogues and catalogue texts (Biškupić 1989; Biškupić Bašić 2001: 185-187; 2010: 32, 38-45), and her scientific research work based on extensive field studies of a present-day phenomenon, the production of traditional wooden children's toys in Hrvatsko Zagorje served as the basis for the nomination of this skill for the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Heritage of Humanity and its inscription in 2009. Finally, as the author of the successful exhibition *Croatian Intangible Cultural Heritage on UNESCO Lists* she has systematically focused on the international promotion of this and other phenomena of the traditional Croatian heritage.

### **THE EXHIBITION CYCLE OF THE *WORLD OF TOYS PROJECT* *CHILDREN'S TOYS FROM THE CROATIAN HERITAGE***

The *World of Toys* project is a new step in the promotion of Croatian traditional wooden toys, but conceptually it transcends the framework of the cultural phenomenon of a skill inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List. As Iris Biškupić Bašić, author of the Project and of the exhibitions, put it:

“The idea of the Project arose from the fact that our Museum safeguards toys produced made as early as the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. We wish to present to the public children's toys from the Croatian heritage, inscribed (in terms of manufacturing skill) as part of the heritage of humanity on the UNESCO Representative List. These are toys in the Museum holdings, some of which are still produced in Croatian villages. We would like to promote interest in this precious segment of folk creativity and thereby fulfil one of the roles of the Museum – popularisation of national creativity – along with its safeguarding, interpretation and presentation”.

In order to present the concept to the public, the central exhibition entitled *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage* was displayed in the northern hall on the Museum ground floor (Fig. 1/p. 324); it mainly presented material from the holdings of the Ethnographic Museum, and only some objects were borrowed from private collections and similar institutions like the Croatian School Museum and the Museums of Hrvatsko Zagorje. Bearing in mind state-of-the-art museological standards and the conception imperative – streamline the exhibition for the youngest citizens – the displayed objects were presented in several separate, visually clearly delimited thematic sections.

The oldest toys from the holdings of the Museum, mainly collected during the first field expeditions in the nineteen-twenties, were presented in the first part of the exhibition at the end of the corridor leading to the hall. The displayed toys – cradles, dolls, sleighs, clappers, models of hunting and other weapons, etc. – are specific because they were made by the children’s parents and grandparents, or by the children themselves. In this section visitors are shown living conditions in rural areas throughout Croatia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when buying toys was an unattainable luxury for the average peasant. On the other hand, emphasis is placed on the fact that almost all the men were self-taught carpenters who did not find the making of these simple forms a particularly challenging technical task, while women reciprocated with textile-related skills and made rag dolls with ease from worn-out clothing or surplus fabrics.

The second section told the story about the Prigorje village of Vidovec whose villagers made wooden and wicker-work children’s toys, and sold their products in the Zagreb market-places. Along with the specific artistic expression displayed on the wooden toys, with prevailing flat figures inspired by rural life and painted only partly in red-black tones, Vidovec was presented as a theme because it was a well-documented example of organised cottage industry toy-making in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the proposal of the *Women’s Association for the Safeguarding and Promotion of Folk Art and Crafts*, the *First Croatian Peasants’ Cooperative for the Production and Marketing of Children’s Toys* was founded precisely in Vidovec in 1932 (Biškupić Bašić 2012: 32). However, because of fast industrialisation after the Second World War manpower demand in the City of Zagreb increased, and working-age population left the surrounding rural communities. Owing to gradual depopulation cottage industry was abandoned, and the cooperative activities in Vidovec eventually ceased in the mid-nineteen-fifties.

The holdings of the Ethnographic Museum include many wooden toys made in Vidovec, and extensive documentation on the activity of the Cooperative. Along with a selection of objects, documents and photographs, an additional highlight of the display is the representation of a typical carpenter’s workshop in which toys were made with a selection of tools. The whole is rounded off a film, shot in the field by Iris Biškupić Bašić in cooperation with Žarko Nikin, showing the memories of the villagers of Vidovec related to the period of the greatest prosperity for the *First Croatian Peasants’ Cooperative for the Production and Marketing of Children’s Toys*.

A separate section presents ceramic toys from the rich Pottery Collection of the Ethnographic Museum. The several dozen different types displayed in this part can generally be divided into two parts. The first comprises stylised animal figures serving as whistles (*fučkalice* or *žlamburači*), children's piggy banks or just decorative objects also used as toys, e.g., the *Hare's Wedding* toy series. The second group is made up of a variegated models of traditional pottery. In the selection of exhibits due account was taken of the need to present material from all the parts of Croatia; emphasis was placed on ceramic toys from Jerovec, a village in the Zagorje region, the potters of which were known far and wide for the quality and aesthetics of their pottery.

Like children's toys produced along with traditional pottery, wickerwork was set out as a separate section, although to a somewhat more limited extent because part of the material was presented within the scope of the "Vidovec story". Along with standard household items, the wicker-workers of Zagorje, Međimurje and Podravina made doll prams and small baskets. A wickerwork pram such as produced today in the village of Šemovec near Varaždin was also displayed at the exhibition.

The manufacture of wooden children's toys in the region of Dalmatinska Zagora, more precisely in the village of Zelovo, was also presented as a separate story. Like Vidovec, Zelovo was in a way a centre for the manufacture of toys, sold by the masters and their families in the towns and fair-grounds in the area. In terms of form, classic motifs prevail, derived from everyday rural life, e.g., rocking horses, birds and dancers on a stick, and hammer-like flutes. However, there are also "more modern" forms such as airplanes or acrobats. The toys from Zelovo were fully hand-made; moreover, they are distinguished by their unique colours – a yellow background embellished only partly with black, red and green tones. As in the case of Vidovec, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Zelovo also had a cooperative of local masters. About fifteen years ago, after the death of the last master, Jakov Delaš, nobody carried on the skill of toy-making in this area (Biškupić Bašić 2012 75-77).

The display of tamburitzas in a separate section highlights two Zagorje centres known for the production of this type of traditional children's toys – Tugonica and Turmišće. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was also a cooperative of tamburitza makers in Tugonica; the tradition moved to near-by Turnišće when a master resettled to the latter village where it is still carried on by his successors (Biškupić Bašić 2012: 69). Along with instruments from the Museum holdings, tamburitzas from private collections are also exhib-

ited; the whole is additionally enriched by the presentation of a phase in the production of this toy instrument.

The largest section is devoted to the presentation of the toy manufacture skill in the region of Hrvatsko Zagorje inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Heritage. Most of the exhibits are drawn from the Museum holdings, and some of them are borrowed from private collections. The selection presents a collage of wooden toys produced between the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the present day, with particular emphasis on the typological diversity of form. With the exception of several flutes showing the development of painting techniques, the objects were displayed in a dynamic rhythm with no wish to establish a chronology in terms of production technology or decoration. In order to present this large ensemble in a concise fashion, it was divided into several subgroups with the display of similar toys. Thus, wooden rocking horses, flutes, airplanes, trains, cars, dancers on a stick., etc., are presented together. The *Hrvatsko Zagorje* section also included a cycle of fourteen short ethnographic films showing the production of different types of children's toys, and children's reactions to toys in schools and kindergartens. All the films were shot in the field and produced jointly by Iris Biškupić Bašić and Žarko Nikin.

In visual terms, the display was streamlined particularly bearing in mind the youngest visitors, and that is primarily visible in the design of the interior and of the postaments distinguished by vivid colours and lively forms. Thus, two postaments imitate a doll house, and one is designed as a motorway and railway track, winding as in an animated cartoon and forming a kind of a tunnel under which children can pass. Additional original designs include the cylindrical showcases with small round windows through which children are supposed to peer, and a cloud with wooden airplanes "flying" underneath. The latter installation turned out to be very interesting because visitors could watch it from below lying on a broad variegated tabouret set just under it. The whole exhibition space was divided by vertical many-coloured fabric strips, "banners" strung in a series of full circles across a structure stretched from the floor to the ceiling of the hall. Some strips were made from transparent plastic sheeting to which objects were attached, and some carried information aids. The many visual motifs used in design were taken over directly from the visual motifs on the displayed toys; this was especially enhanced on the round envelopes of the cylindrical showcases and their small windows, and legends printed on round *forex* panels fixed later on the walls. A broad

range of documentary photographs was also used to set the individual sections into the appropriate physical and historical context. Nikolina Jelavić Mitrović was the author of the visual design of the exhibition, while painter and graphic artist Pero Mrnarević contributed the additional embellishing illustrations.

The visual design of the exhibition included direct educational features like riddles and surprise pigeonholes. A postament in the section on Zagorje toys, an upright cylinder with separate chambers, displayed materials from which toys are made – sawdust, shavings, tamburitza tuning pegs, fake fur, unbaked clay balls, branches – so that interested visitors can touch them to get the feel. Along with visual and tactile impressions, the olfactory aspect was also taken into account by providing a chamber with the smell of raw wood. A playroom with traditional children's toys from Hrvatsko Zagorje and several large format puzzles with appropriate motifs completed the range of educational attractions. After the opening, a children's table with chairs modelled after doll furniture, produced and decorated by the Zagorje master Ivan Mesar, was placed in the middle of the exhibition space.

The exhibition *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage* had a well-outfitted 120 page catalogue in Croatian and English, 28 by 22 cm, printed in one thousand copies. Two types of posters were designed and printed along with publicity banners for the Museum front. Nikola Šiško of *Art Design*, Zagreb, was the author of the overall visual identity of the Project.<sup>4</sup> In this context the Agency for Commercial Activities deserves particular mention: as a sponsor it took care of the printing of all catalogues, posters, leaflets, invitation cards and entrance tickets.

The exhibition opened on Saturday, 1 December 2012, and on 2 June 2013 the *World of Toys* project was officially closed in the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb.

### **WORLD OF TOYS**

The *World of Toys* project was held parallelly with the central exhibition, *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage*. It was displayed in the central hall of

---

<sup>4</sup> The design of all the catalogues, including the catalogues of accompanying exhibitions, posters, leaflets, entrance tickets, picture cards and invitation cards was based on the same conceptual model.

the first floor of the Museum, and conceptually its display was a complement to the material presented on the ground floor. It was intended to present comparative examples of traditional toys from European countries,<sup>5</sup> primarily cottage industry products. It also presented toys manufactured in factories and workshops of foreign producers with a long tradition like the German *Steiff*.

The Museum exhibits were displayed in four diagonally set niches in the corners of the room, and two showcases. Traditional wooden toys from a number of countries and plush *Steiff* toys were displayed in the niches. The showcases were reserved for gender-oriented exhibits, i.e., toys intended for boys and girls, in order to allude to the importance of toys in the learning of gender roles from the earliest age. Thus, the “girls” showcase presented miniature tea party sets, miniature tableware, dolls and doll houses; while the “boys” showcase was dominated by metal wind-up toys – cars, motorcycles, tanks, zinc toy soldiers, etc. The central exhibit, popular equally among the children and adults, was a functional train model produced by the youngest members of the Toy Railway Model Club Zagreb (Fig. 2/p. 324).

Since the exhibition was conceived, prepared and opened together with the central exhibition on the ground floor, the exhibits were included in the catalogue of the *World of Toys – Children’s Toys from the Croatian Heritage*. Although a special poster had been designed for it, it was presented by a separate banner on the Museum front.

The *World of Toys* project closed in mid-March 2013, and a segment of the next Project section, *The Toy Has a Heart*, was displayed in the same hall.

### **POLISH TRADITIONAL CHILDREN’S TOYS**

The visiting exhibition *Polish Traditional Children’s Toys* authored by Anita Bak and organised in cooperation with the Museum of Toys and Play (*Muzeum Zabawek i Zabawy*) from Kielce, opened on St. Nicholas Day, 6 December 2012. The objective of the exhibition was the presentation of toy production in Poland through the selection of its rich holdings, and the comparison of Polish and Croatian examples. According to the author (Bak 2012: 4-5), the idea was “... to cover two aspects in the production of Polish toys: the first regards folk toys selected from localities in which their manufacture flourished, and

---

5 It presented material from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Russia, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Slovenia and Portugal.

the second toys produced in cooperatives between the nineteen-forties and the nineteen-nineties, which were the sources of toys in the Polish market.”

The exhibition was displayed in the hall intended for occasional exhibitions on the second floor of the Ethnographic Museum. The exhibits were arranged in free standing prefabricated showcases and some makeshift glass cases with built-in lighting. The prefabricated showcases set in the central part of the hall presented toys manufactured in industrial-craft cooperatives (plush toys, metal and plastic car, tractor and truck models, and various turned wooden educational toys); Polish traditional toys (mainly with rural life motifs, especially horses, but also airplanes, spinning tops, flutes, etc.) were displayed in makeshift glass cases set against the wall. Although the author did not mention them, quite a few forms produced by cutting and multiple folding of paper were displayed in makeshift picture frames. They mainly represented geometrised, strictly symmetrical abstractions, or mythological figures like *Baba Yaga*, the supernatural being from Slavic folklore, and quite a few were-wolf-like beings. Some wooden toys with the same motif – flying witches, spinning tops representing the devil and witches, etc. – were displayed in the open so that visitors could play with them.

A raised extension of the hall was converted into a children’s playroom with authentic Polish traditional toys (Fig. 3/p. 324). In the same area children could colour prepared models with toy motifs or write letters to the Museum and put them into stylised post-boxes prepared by the Polish guests. An extensive multi-medial presentation of toys from the museum holdings was projected on the adjacent wall; frames with materials presenting the visual identity of the visiting institution were hung on the surrounding walls.

The exhibition was accompanied by a 24-page catalogue with the author’s text in Polish and Croatian. It was produced in accordance with the visual identity of the *World of Toys* project, but printed in a smaller format (21.5 by 17 cm) in five hundred copies, and a special poster and promotional banner were also designed and printed for the exhibition.

The exhibition *Polish Traditional Children’s Toys* came to a close on 6 March 2013. By the end of the year it was repeated in the Museum of Slavonia and the Rupe Ethnographic Museum in Dubrovnik.

## **TRAINS FOR KIDS AND ADULTS**

*Trains for Kids and Adults* was an exhibition shown only several days – between 9 and 17 March 2013 - in cooperation with the Toy Railway Model Club Zagreb on the second floor hall of the Ethnographic Museum immediately after the closing of the Polish toy exhibition. It was meant to present railway modelling, a hobby with an extremely rich history, and stimulate visitors to remember their own railway models from childhood. Railway models were certainly one of the most popular toys of many generations.

Models of trains of varying scale from the private collections of the Club members and their own models were displayed in prefabricated and makeshift showcases. A functional, modular railway model dominated the space: it was set along the whole western wall, and a so-called garden railway “...with rails and models made of weather-resistant materials allowing playing in the open all the year long” (Vinčić and Biškupić Bašić 2013) was mounted on a raised platform in the hall.

There was no catalogue, but only a leaflet 21.5 by 17 cm in Croatian (Fig. 4/p. 325), printed in two thousand copies. It was designed, along with the poster and banner for the Museum front, fully in accordance with visual identity of the Project.

Because of the sensitivity of larger models and special technical conditions of their transport and assembly, at their insistence the members of the Toy Railway Model Club Zagreb took care of all the technical details related to the mounting of the exhibition. During the exhibition several model makers were present in the hall at all times in order to explain to the visitors all the details of their hobby and demonstrate the functionality of the displayed models. The exhibition week culminated with a small fair of modelling equipment and accessories at which numerous railway model enthusiasts exchanged experiences and replied to the questions of visitors regarding involvement in the world of railway modelling.

## **THE TOY HAS A HEART**

Thanks to cooperation between the Museum and the local community, *The Toy Has a Heart* was conceived as an exhibition of citizens' memories, i.e., an exhibition of their childhood toys, photographs and generally memories of this carefree period in life. Preparations for this section of the cycle started al-

ready in September 2012 in cooperation with Croatian Radio – Radio Sljeme and journalist Anamaria Šnajdar. A radio show entitled *The Toy Has a Heart* was broadcast once a week over several months. Through numerous stories about traditional toys in the collections of the Ethnographic Museum and the masters that produced them, citizens were encouraged to look for their old toys and find them a “home” in the Museum, either permanently or just for the exhibition (cf. Biškupić Bašić 2012: 12-13).

Supported by the media coverage of Radio Sljeme, the toy collection drive turned out to be extremely successful. Immediately after the opening of the first exhibitions in the cycle listeners began to bring their favourite childhood objects.<sup>6</sup> The toys were taken over once a week, but public interest increased as the opening date of the exhibition drew closer. In February 2014 toys were received almost daily, and some arrived in packages by mail. Almost a hundred interested citizens responded to the drive, and altogether about 1,100 objects were received.

Toy collection was carried out as a small scale ethnographic research project. It included numerous narratives used for the exhibition and the accompanying catalogue as an illustration of the childhood world of the most varied generations. The collected material covered the period between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and almost the present day, and included toys still on sale in shops (cf. Šnajdar et al. 2013: 29-31).

Personally I found working on the *The Toy Has a Heart* exhibition the greatest challenge. Because of my past involvement in the collection of objects, the author of the Project, Iris Biškupić Bašić, wanted me to participate in the exhibition as a co-author and write one of the texts for the catalogue. I accepted with great enthusiasm. On the other hand, since most of the material arrived in the Museum only a few months before opening date, the material had to be analysed in accordance with professional rules in record time. This is why we pooled efforts and prepared, at the very start of the process, a register of arrived material in the form of a separate data base. The objects were then given provisional inventory labels, photographed and associated with information gleaned from the owners' narratives. After initial analysis led by Jasminka Vujičić, senior preparator and member of the exhibition staff, the objects were cleaned, restored as required and transferred to the storeroom

---

6 Due note should also be taken of cooperation with the Esplanade Zagreb Hotel which joined the project and offered its lobby for the toy collection drive in the evening on 20 December 2012.

for provisional storage.<sup>7</sup>

The preparation of the exhibition space on the second floor of the Museum started immediately after the closing of the *Trains for Kids and Adults* exhibition. Because of the great quantity of collected material and our sincere wish to display at least one object from each donor or borrower, the need arose for additional space. Because of that the *World of Toys* project was temporarily moved out from the round hall on the first floor of the Museum. In its central part, used for the display of the train model, three showcases were installed for the display of children's social games, jigsaw puzzles and the large toy car collection of the private collector Ivan Špehar. The side walls of the hall were embellished with different kinds of children's playing cards, and thematically selected objects were arranged in niches. The display included a hand-made puppet theatre from the family of the famous Croatian writer August Šenoa, and typical doll accoutrements and objects from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a pram, drawing room furniture and hand-made clothes – with dolls from the same period. The exhibition included quite a few picture and other books, and children's illustrated publications.

Most of the objects in the hall on the second floor were displayed in pre-fabricated showcases, each presenting a separate story (Fig. 5/p. 325). The objects in several showcases were grouped according to the period of their primary use, e.g., toys belonging to specific generations. Thus, one showcase contained objects dated between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, another objects from the nineteen-sixties and nineteen-seventies, and a third exhibits from the nineteen-eighties and nineteen-nineties. Variegated showcases were placed on the raised extension of the hall with toys belonging to generations born after the year 2000; some trans-generational specimens like LEGO cubes or action hero figures “crept” into this part.

Other showcases displayed specific indivisible wholes. A doll house from the estate of Professor Tihomil Stahuljak was displayed separately;<sup>8</sup> the adjacent showcase presented a part of a collection of rare early 20<sup>th</sup> century railway models from the collection of Ante Dlačić. A showcase with several plush toys owned by the Vavra family told the story about their family workshop which existed in Zagreb in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A group of

---

7 For more information on the cleaning and preventive protection of the collected objects see Mihaela Grčević's paper in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

8 Through the courtesy of the current owner, collector Jura Gašparac.

objects owned by Živko Parac illustrated the growing up of a boy in Zagreb during the Second World War. A particularly valuable borrowing were the toys from August Šenoa's family from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many photographs showing children with their favourite toys also enhanced the exhibition; most of them came from the private collection of Professor Neven Budak from the University of Zagreb. Finally, the wall opposite the hall entrance was used to place a large wheel-like postament with niches displaying toys from different periods; the adjacent educational workshop presented toys made during treatment by the little patients of psychotherapist Zlatko Bastašić.

A playroom for the youngest visitors was placed in the central, raised part of the hall. In this way, after a brief break between two interruptions, i.e., between the closing of the Polish exhibition and the opening of this event, the Museum again had two playrooms. This turned out to be a practical solution for situations in which several groups of children were simultaneously visiting the Museum and participating in educational programmes. Children could play with many toys, while Zagrebačka Banka provided quite a few promotional colouring books. Along with colouring and drawing different motifs on sheets of paper, visitors were encouraged to draw something on the side wall of the hall, an invitation welcomed particularly by teenagers.

A film on people who donated or borrowed toys was shown within the exhibition area, so that visitors could get first-hand knowledge on the individuals deserving credit for the realisation of the exhibition as well as gain insight into the process of object acquisition. The film, scripted by Iris Biškupić Bašić, was shot by Žarko Nikin.

The visual designer of the display was Nikolina Jelavić Mitrović, and the painter and graphic artist Pero Mrnarević illustrated the area with drawings. A catalogue in Croatian, 21.5 by 17 cm, printed in one thousand copies, a special poster and a banner were produced within the scope of work on the visual identity of the project.

The *The Toy Has a Heart* exhibition came to a close on 2 June 2013 together with the exhibition *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage*. This completed the *World of Toys* project. Participants in the Project received special thank-you letters informally awarded immediately after the end of the exhibition cycle.

## ACCOMPANYING EVENTS WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE *WORLD OF TOYS* PROJECT

Considering the theme, we expected with every right that the majority of the visitors would be accounted by children. Because of this the design of the exhibitions was particularly adapted to our youngest visitors, and most of the accompanying events followed the same design conception. Guided tours of the exhibitions and playrooms ran to full capacity thanks to the good organisation of the educational service supervised by Željka Jelavić.<sup>9</sup> Particular credit needs to be given to the great dedication of trainees and volunteers who conformed to the new working hours of the Museum during the six months of the project.<sup>10</sup>

Educational workshops were organised for all age groups, but most of them were intended for kindergarten and lower class primary school children. In standard workshops children were supposed to draw their favourite toy or an exhibit that impressed them the most. They also made various forms from collage paper – small dolls, animals, cars, trains etc. Special workshops were also held occasionally where children could participate in the production of traditional children's toys from Hrvatsko Zagorje. Thus, master Zvonimir Majdak from Turnišće demonstrated on several occasions the production of tamburitzas, and children were given the opportunity to decorate them traditional motifs. On weekends visual artist and puppeteer Kruna Tarle organised special *Make a puppet!* workshops for all age groups. A series of *The puppet in the street* puppet shows was held in cooperation with her studio and the Zagreb Puppet Theatre (Fig. 6/p. 325). Writer Željka Horvat Vukelja held several interactive story reading sessions, *Storypics*, for pupils of lower primary school classes.

A rich programme of various events for all ages was prepared for *Long Night of Museums* held late in January 2013. Along with regular guided tours throughout the facility, shows and workshops, visitors had the opportunity to watch the production of various children's toys. Potter Toma Kovačić from Globočec presented his workshop on the ground floor, master Ivan Mesar from Marija Bistrica displayed wooden toys of Hrvatsko Zagorje, and on the

---

9 For more information on educational activities during the *World of Toys* project see Željka Jelavić's text in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

10 During the *World of Toys* project the Ethnographic Museum was opened for the public every day between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. (except on Monday when it was closed for regular maintenance).

second floor the already mentioned master Majdak showed his tamburitzas. About 8,000 visitors confirm the successful synergy of *Long Night of Museums* and the Project.

*World of Toys* included a number of scientific and expert lectures in the educational workshop on the second floor of the Museum. They were held once a week during two months and covered a number of inter-disciplinary children's culture themes. Dubravka Balen-Letunić, long time associate of the Archaeological Museum, held a lecture on pre-historic toys. Iris Biškupić Bašić spoke about Croatian traditional toys, and Ivanka Ivkanec, Adviser (ret.) of the Ethnographic Museum in Zagreb, discussed the relation of toys and jewellery in terms of the link between traditional culture motifs and present-day goldsmith's trade. Zlatko Bastašić, psychiatrist and family and children's psychotherapist (ret.), presented in his lecture his long-standing experience in the use of puppets in children's psychotherapy and education. Mirjana Šagud, Professor at the University of Zagreb, Department of Pedagogy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, reviewed the role of play in the holistic development of children. Two research associates of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research also held lectures. Marijana Hameršak reviewed the historical development of the fable and the development of toys based on this literary form, and Irena Miholić spoke about toy instruments. Finally, Željka Čorak, Fellow Emerita of the Institute for the History of Art, recalled her own collection of memories in her talk on *The Doll House*.

Finally, the description of accompanying events must include the enlarged souvenir shop, designed and integrated into the existing assembly hall of the Ethnographic Museum by Nikolina Jelavić Mitrović. The offered souvenirs, specifically streamlined to the Project, highlighted original wooden and ceramic toys produced by the masters of Zagorje. Šimić&Co provided quite a few products with motifs from traditional children's toys – T-shirts in many colours, shawls, scarves, bags, Christmas tree decorations, *Memory* playing cards, etc. Souvenirs also included applied arts and crafts inspired by traditional children's toys, e.g., jewellery designed by Julijana Ozimec Rodić and the well-known Zagreb goldsmith's family of Bashota.<sup>11</sup> Visitors could buy posters of all the exhibitions and eight types of picture cards with the visual identity of the *World of Toys* project.

---

11 For more on jewellery inspired by motifs from traditional children's toys see Ivanka Ivkanec's paper in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

## EPILOGUE

Objects borrowed for the *The Toy Has a Heart* exhibition were returned to their owners, and donated toys underwent another selection. After subsequent analysis, they were assigned inventory marks, photographed for secondary documentation in studio conditions and, in cooperation with the preparator workshops, treated for permanent storage in the Museum storerooms. A direct result of the *The Toy Has a Heart* exhibition was the foundation of the Collection of Children's Toys and Games entrusted to Iris Biškupić Bašić. As this paper was drafted all the material was inventoried, digitised and catalogued in the Museum data base. The Collection is currently under review by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia for the approval of its cultural asset status pursuant to the Law on the Protection and Conservation of Cultural Assets.<sup>12</sup>

Thanks to the great interest in guest appearances of the *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage* exhibition throughout Croatia, the postaments were only partly dismantled and adapted together with the objects for transport requirements. In mid-September 2013 the exhibition was displayed within the scope of the 17<sup>th</sup> International Lace Festival on *Lace-Making and Children* in Lepoglava. In December 2013 it was shown in Slavonski Brod and then, in early 2014, in the Museum of Slavonia in Osijek within the *Long Night of Museums* event. On International Museum Day, 18 May, it was staged in the Ethnographic Museum of Istria in Pazin (Fig. 7/p. 325) where it stayed until the second half of October 2014.

Since some interested institutions could not meet the minimum physical and technical conditions for the display of *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage* on a scale that would not affect the conception of the exhibition, Iris Biškupić Bašić authored two smaller exhibitions on the same theme, traditional children's toys. An exhibition entitled *Traditional children's Toys from Croatia* was shown at the Ideal City Gallery of the Susedgrad Culture Centre; in October 2013 an exhibition on *Children's Toys from the Time of Milan Lang* was opened in the Samobor Town Library.

Several months after the end of the *World of Toys* project, the Ethnographic Museum and Radio Kaj started the educational project entitled *Let Us Give Children Roots and Wings*. The project involved the donation of sets of tradi-

---

12 For more information on the Collection of Children's Toys and Games see the paper by Iris Biškupić Bašić in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

tional wooden children's toys in order to "... preserve the production of traditional wooden toys as a protected intangible cultural asset on the UNESCO Representative List".<sup>13</sup> According to the verbal report of Marijana Drobina, marketing manager of the Ethnographic Museum, so far the drive has covered 43 kindergartens, and the project will continue on the same scale until its planned completion in 2015."<sup>14</sup>

Finally, at the Third Congress of Croatian Museum Experts with international participation held in Opatija in the first half of October 2014, the panel of the Croatian Museum Society awarded to Iris Biškupić Bašić and Mirjana Drobina a special Certificate of Merit for the *World of Toys* Programme.

## CONCLUSION

In summarising the *World of Toys* project one has to highlight first and foremost the numerous positive reactions to the events which filled the space of the Ethnographic Museum with the sound of excited children's voices. Owing to the quality of the exhibition cycle and accompanying events, and extraordinary media coverage, the Museum had a record number of visitors evaluated at 40,000. In the meantime, the tour of *Children's Toys from the Croatian Heritage* continues. In late October it will leave Istria for Turopolje where the Museum of Turopolje will host it until spring 2015. All this shows that interest in the theme is not waning. Indeed, at this moment the claim that Turopolje will be its latest stop would certainly be premature.

Considering the impressive number of visitors, extraordinary public acceptance, encouraging reviews of the profession, the special Certificate of Credit of the Croatian Museum Society and, finally, the *Let Us Give Children Roots and Wings* Action, Iris Biškupić Bašić has achieved the planned objective – the popularisation of national creativity, i.e., of the traditional toy production crafts which, in the words of the author, is "...one of the tasks of our Museum" (2012: 7). Furthermore, the Ethnographic Museum has been enriched with yet another exhibition, which will continue to grow and certainly represent the starting point for future exhibition, research, scientific and expert projects.

---

13 Source: [www.korijeni.info](http://www.korijeni.info) (25 May 2014)

14 For more information on the Drive *Let Us Give Children Roots and Wings* see Gordana Viljetić's text in this double issue of *Ethnological Research*.

A flashback to the discussion about the past of the Ethnographic Museum within the context of children's culture warrants the conclusion that the project has again actualised this segment of museum activity in terms of acquisition, documentation, presentation, and research and expert analysis. This important impulse, the fact that the traditional skill of toy-making in Hrvatsko Zagorje has been internationally recognised as a relevant phenomenon of the heritage of humanity, and the fact that this new exhibition will hopefully soon become a cultural asset of the Republic of Croatia, children's culture will very probably be represented in the future new display in the measure which it deserves.

On the other hand, the *World of Toys* holds a personal dimension for me. I am extremely proud of having been a member of the team because I gained first-hand knowledge on what it means to participate in the realisation of a great exhibition. This is why I would like to use this opportunity to thank again the author of the Project, Iris Biškupić Bašić, and all my colleagues for their unselfish patience, expert advice and trust. I am immensely pleased with the *World of Toys* as my first involvement in the exhibition aspect of museum activity, and I will always remember it with great pleasure.

TRANSLATED BY: JANKO PARAVIĆ

## REFERENCES

- Bak, Aneta. 2012. *Poljske tradicijske dječje igračke*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.
- Barlek, Mirjana. 1982. *Lončarstvo u Hrvatskoj*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.
- Biškupić Bašić, Iris. 2001. „O proizvodnji dječjih igračaka“. U *Hrvatska tradicijska kultura na razmeđu svjetova i epoha*. Zorica Vitez i Aleksandra Muraj, ur. Zagreb: Barbat, str. 185-187.
- Biškupić Bašić, Iris. 2010. *Stubički obrti kroz povijest*. Zagreb – Gornja Stubica: Etnografski muzej – Muzeji Hrvatskog zagorja, Muzej seljačkih buna.
- Biškupić Bašić, Iris. 2012. *Svijet igračaka*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.
- Biškupić, Iris. 1989. *Dječje igračke Hrvatskog zagorja*. Zagreb: Sveučilišna naklada Liber.
- Franić, Ivo. 1936. *Reorganizovan Etnografski muzej u Zagrebu 1935. godine*. Beograd: Štampa Državne štamparije Kraljevine Jugoslavije.

Gjetvaj, Nada. Randić Barlek, Mirjana. Eckhel, Nerina. Benc, Katica. Bakrač, Ivanka. Barlek, Josip. 1979. *Etnografska prošlost Zagreba*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.

Gjetvaj, Nada. 1989. „Etnografski muzej u Zagrebu – u povodu 70. obljetnice“. *Etnološka istraživanja* 5: 1-144.

Gušić, Mirjana. 1955. *Tumač izložene građe*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.

Kozić, Maja. 1987. „Dječje igre u okolici Zagreba“. *Etnološka istraživanja* 3-4: 413-445.

Kus-Nikolajev, Mirko. 1927. *Šetnje kroz Etnografski muzej*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.

Pušić, Maja. Lechner, Zdenka. Randić, Mirjana. 1974. *Lončarstvo Hrvatskog zagorja*. Brdovec – Zagreb: Muzej u Brdovcu – Etnografski muzej.

Šestan, Ivica. 1987. „Obrti u okolici Zagreba“. *Etnološka istraživanja* 3-4: 165-197.

Šnajdar, Anamaria. Biškupić Bašić, Iris. Dronjić, Matija. 2013. *Igračka ima srce*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.

Vinčić, Davor. Biškupić Bašić, Iris. 2013. *Vlakovi za velike i male*. Zagreb: Etnografski muzej.