

Introduction

Marcin Szeląg

In the last decade, Poland has witnessed an unprecedented development of infrastructure of institutions of culture, primarily museums. Until the mid-2000s, the diagnosis put forth in the 1980 *Report on the state of criticism and an art institution* remained valid: “There is no museum of contemporary art in Poland. This is a negative phenomenon on a global scale”¹. Museums of old art and others fared no better. A marked change took place after Poland joined the European Union. It was then that the creation and modernisation of museums and other institutions of culture gained momentum as never before. Ever since, infrastructural changes, often combined with the approval of the criteria of their financing from EU funds, contributed to new opportunities for and conditions of programmatic museum operation, especially in its most spectacular aspects of exhibition and educational projects. From today’s perspective of a decade later, in hindsight the shifts are characterised by certain processes, one of the most prominent of which is the focus on the role of museum education. This, in turn, triggers reflection on this kind of museum activity in its historical, theoretical and practical aspects. It provokes analysis of its significance in the context of formal education, embedding it within artistic self-reflexion and treating questions arising from the spirit of education as the criteria of exhibition assessment. Moreover, the development of educational projects begs questions about the competences and skills of those in charge of this dynamically developing area of museum activity.

This issue of *Zeszyty Artystyczne* is dedicated to museum education. The articles it contains show it in two primary perspectives. One of them, addressed in texts by Marcin Szelaąg, Grzegorz Żuk, Aleks Karamanov, and Zygmunt Kalinowski, sets the general problems of museum education within a broader framework of issues of particular importance for museum studies, i.e. referring to the history of museums, their doctrines

» 1 *Raport o stanie krytyki i instytucji artystycznej* [Report on the state of criticism and an art institution] (on behalf of the Polish Section of ICA drafted by J. Bogucki, W. Borowski, A. Turowski), “Odra” 1981, No. 1, p. 38.

and concepts, critical museology and museum pragmatics. In a word, this perspective locates museum education within the zone of interest of so-called “new” and “old” museology. The other perspective, represented by texts by Renata Pater, Kinga Anna Gajda, Piotr Szaradowski and Rafał Boettner-Lubowski, considers museum education from the point of view of a specific case study, opening it up to fields of knowledge, science and practice from outside museum studies, such as cultural studies, education about culture, pedagogy of culture, art history, psychology, and analysis of the creative process. Both perspectives not so much compete against as supplement each other, at the same time revealing characteristic features of reflection on museum education in Poland. Although the authors are mostly people who are not museum educators at present (yet some have had this experience), the historical and theoretical issues they raise are of significance also for the understanding of current educational practice. This is especially true when the authors try to answer questions about the significance of collaboration of higher education institutions and museums in the field of cultural education, and when they point to the potential of the exhibition as a space and medium of museum education and indicate the background and skills needed by persons working in new museums and institutions of culture.

The vast majority of the articles included in this issue are proceedings from the June 2018 conference titled *Education in New Museum and Institutions of Culture*, held in Porta Posnania in Poznań under the auspices of the Faculty of Art Education and Curating of the University of Arts in Poznań in cooperation with the TRAKT Centre for Cultural Tourism in Poznań, the Wilanów Museum of the Palace of King John III, and the Forum of Museum Educators, with the support of the National Institute for Museums and Public Collections in Warsaw². ●

» 2 Dr Hab. Rafał Boettner-Lubowski did not participate in the conference.

