

The Sun Shines After the Storm

The Kraków Museum has become involved in a project that is meant to lead to an exhibition entitled "The Sun Shines After the Storm." The exhibition is going to recount the stories of Kraków and its residents during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. The Museum's intention is to engage Kraków residents in joint creation of the exhibition with the use of narratives, artefacts and photographs. Given the uncertain epidemiological situation in Poland, the dates of the exhibition have not yet been set. Nevertheless, the exhibition is going to be a response of the Kraków Museum to the moment when life in the city is going to return to its ordinary course. The final shape and overtone of the exhibition depends on how the epidemics is going to affect all of us. The idea of the exhibition is not a historical, maximally distanced portrayal of the period of pandemics, yet an attempt at capturing the emotions and events accompanying the city residents right after the expiry/ stabilisation of their catalyst, i.e. the virus. The structure of the exhibition will rely on materials received from city residents (tangible and intangible) and a selection of characters who are going to offer their voices and stories for the exhibition. The curator's choice of the characters is going to be the most comprehensive. When describing the reality that has, in principle, affected all city residents, it is important to show the multiplicity of experiences. Thence, apart from persons who are at the front-line of fighting the virus, namely physicians, nurses and paramedics, there will also be artists, including niche, entrepreneurs who were the most affected by the national quarantine, persons who embarked on charity activity due to the epidemics, as well as persons who came down with COVID-19. The stories of characters, combined with materials donated to the Museum by the residents, will allow for building the most comprehensive image of the events of spring of 2020. Being aware that the discussed issue is a sensitive one (traumatisation of the society, economic repercussions of the epidemics, potential spike in the rate of depression and PTSD), the content of the exhibition and its final shape will be consulted with psychologists and psychiatrists. Uncertainty, anxiety, courage, mobilisation, humour, but also withdrawal, resignation, resistance and aggression: all of this will be hidden in the accounts, artefacts, photographs and narratives. Such a structure of the exhibition calls for interdisciplinary expertise engaging research tools of historians, journalists, sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists.

The main purpose of the exhibition is to tell the stories of Kraków residents during the pandemics and the national quarantine. For many people, this is an unprecedented event. The generation-wide character of the tackled subject and of the exhibition determines its unique importance. This is of particular significance in relation to the clash of the times of uninterrupted growth and prosperity with the moment of complete "freezing" of life due to the pandemics. Through the exhibition, the Kraków Museum will become a transmitter of stories hidden not in history, but in single moments perceptible for everybody. The purpose of the project is also to allow the city residents to become aware of conscious creation of the exhibition and, through this, the city's heritage. In the context of such exhibition, the Museum interacts with people and becomes a catalyst of experiences related to the pandemics. Finally, it will be a form of a catharsis and working through the feelings related to this unique time. Initially, this will happen by sharing one's emotions contained in tangible and intangible tokens related to the pandemics. Additionally, every visitor will be able to confront their intimate emotions and stories with the ones presented at the exhibition.

This procedure, carried out with a significant dosage of care, has a potentially therapeutic nature. Eventually, construction of a stationary exhibition will not be the end of the project of the Kraków Museum related to the compilation of accounts and materials from the time of the pandemics: to fulfil the idea of “cleansing”, the exhibition must offer the visitors a possibility of leaving their own stories/ artefacts.

The exhibition, in spite of the fact that it refers to Kraków and its residents, on account of the global nature of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemics, has a universal character - both for the visitors from Poland and abroad.