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# Toys within the collections of selected Cieszyn Silesia museums as a source of knowledge of the former ludic culture of the youngest inhabitants of the region

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*Toys within the collections of selected Cieszyn Silesia museums as a source of knowledge of the former ludic culture of the youngest inhabitants of the region*

The aim of the article is to familiarize the readers with the collections of toys gathered in selected museums of Cieszyn Silesia and to consider their role in the cognition of the former forms of entertainment of the youngest inhabitants of this region. The study is based on visits and queries conducted from May to September 2018 in the ethnography departments of three institutions: The Museum of Cieszyn Silesia in Cieszyn, the Jan Jarocki Museum in Ustroń and Muzeum Těšínska in Český Těšín, as well as interviews with museum personnel employed by these institutions. The article does not include detailed characteristics of the entire inventory of toys in any of these facilities. The purpose is to signal the problems that must be considered by any researcher attempting to draw inferences on the topic of the former ludic culture of children in a given region, on the basis of sources available in museums.

Keywords: toy, play, anthropology of things, museum, culture of region

Toys have been a subject of research for decades. But the results of regional research on children's toys are still unsatisfactory.

According to the definition coined by Jan Bujak a toy is *a material object made especially for the purpose of play, which contains a cultural context characteristic of a given period or previous periods within the scope of material, spiritual or social culture, and which expresses them in such a way that it evokes certain ludic attitudes, and therefore shapes the physical, psychological or emotional development*<sup>1</sup>.

The article constitutes a report on pilot studies for the purposes of the realization of the project, the objective of which is to develop a lexicon of traditional toys and games of Cieszyn Silesia. The aim of this study is to enrich the current research on children's toys in the context of the Cieszyn Silesia region. Research into the history of toys in the Cieszyn Silesia region requires the use of methodology from various scholarly disciplines – traditional methodology of ethnographic and historical studies – as a comparative method. Getting to know the former ludic culture of children requires referring to various sources – written, iconographic and material. The knowledge about out-of-use museum toys, and indirectly about the games played with them, is provided through objects stored in museums. The aim of the article is to depict the toy museum resources of three institutions – the Museum of Cieszyn Silesia in Cieszyn, the Jan Jarocki Museum in Ustroń and Muzeum Těšínska in Český Těšín (hereinafter referred

<sup>1</sup> BUJAK, Jan. *Zabawki w Europie. Zarys dziejów – rozwój zainteresowań*. Kraków : Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1988, p. 24. All quotations are rendered by a translator.

to as the Cieszyn Museum, the Ustroń Museum and the Těšínska Museum, respectively) and consider their role in getting to know the former games of the youngest inhabitants of this region. Research executed in these museums from May to September 2018 constitutes the basis for the research conducted. The context of this article, devoted to toys accumulated in the collections of several museums in Cieszyn Silesia, is the anthropology of things<sup>2</sup>.

Modern anthropology has finally noticed things/items in their original roles which made it possible to open a new research field. Both taking an interest in the histories of objects and writing them down are relatively recent phenomena. This text could have been ornamented with references to various authors such as James Clifford<sup>3</sup>, Krzysztof Pomian<sup>4</sup>, or Karolina Dudek<sup>5</sup>. However, the author of this work – on this occasion – took the liberty of abandoning the general (sometimes too excessive, although usually required) convention of quoting several authors, in this case those dealing with the anthropology of things and sociology of objects<sup>6</sup>. Ethnology and anthropology have already seen new reflections on the topic of things. Anthropology already has brilliant texts regarding objects<sup>7</sup> and this new idea has also begun to take root in ethnomuseology<sup>8</sup>. Yet the question remains: how to speak about things? How to show the many themes associated with things and display the multitude of paths they have taken in a limited museum space? How to show their history and permanence? How to prepare an exhibition in accordance with the idea that it should inspire and expand contexts without being limited by stereotypes? How do we conceptualise research on things? After all, what it all boils down to is not just a few literary tricks... In this paper, the author will focus on presenting a museum context in the functioning of toys. Using selected examples of museums, the author will attempt to show how contemporary museums conceptualise the “new dimensions” of toys.

The text takes into account several issues in the field of methodology of ethnographic museology. It is obvious that the study of toys in their original context, the practices and meanings connected with them, is undoubtedly an anthropological enterprise, but the investigation of objects in the museum context changes the perspective significantly. The aim is not to discuss the usefulness of the determined typologies of toys in the analysis of this category of collections presented in museums. The article does not contain a detailed characterization of the entire inventory of toys in each facility. The aim is to signal the problems that have to

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<sup>2</sup> RYBUS, Agata – KORNOBIS, Maciej Wiktor. *Ludzie w świecie przedmiotów, przedmioty w świecie ludzi. Antropologia wobec rzeczy*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> CLIFFORD, James. *Kłopoty z kulturą. Dwudziestowieczna etnografia, literatura i sztuka*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwo KR, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> POMIAN, Krzysztof. *Historia. Nauka wobec pamięci*. Lublin : Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> DUDEK, Karolina. W czym tkwi „rzecz”? Antyessentializm, doświadczenie i etnograficzne media. In: *Etnografia Nowa*, vol. 3, 2011, Warszawa : Państwowe Muzeum Etnograficzne w Warszawie, pp. 93-103.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g.: BALL, Donald, W. Toward a Sociology of Toys: Inanimate Objects, Socialization, and the Demography of the Doll World. In: *The Sociological Quarterly*, vol. 8, 1967, Is. 4, p. 447-458, source: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1967.tb01081.x>; KRAJEWSKI, Marek. *Są w życiu rzeczy... Szkiele z socjologii przedmiotów*. Warszawa : Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> CZACHOWSKI, Hubert. Życie rzeczy. O autonomii przedmiotów – projekcje Joanny Wróblewskiej. In: *Etnografia Nowa*, vol. 3, 2011, Warszawa : Państwowe Muzeum Etnograficzne w Warszawie, pp. 71-76.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g.: JORDANOVA, Ludmila. Objects of Knowledge: A Historical Perspective on Museums. In: VERGO, Peter (ed.). *The New Museology*. London : Reaktion Books, 1989, pp. 22-40; STRÁNSKÝ, Zbyněk Z. Museology and Museums. In: *ICOFOM Study Series – ISS*, vol. 12, 1987, pp. 287-292.

be taken into consideration by researchers who, on the basis of the available museum sources, attempt to draw conclusions about the former folk culture of children in a given region.



**Pict. 1:** Map Cieszyn Silesia region

To start with, I have prepared a general description of the toys which are in possession of the above mentioned museums; I have presented the themes of exhibitions devoted to toys and childhood, prepared in recent years by these facilities. In the subsequent part, when describing the collections of toys from the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum, I have considered the semantic scope of the term ‘out-of-use museum toy’ and referred to the issue of identification of toy objects in the archaeological material of the Cieszyn Museum. The next fragment was an attempt to depict the influence of various factors which determine the local character of the collection during the process of its creation on the example of toys gathered by the Ustroń Museum. The subsequent review of toys owned by the Těšínska Museum made it possible to reflect on legitimisation and the issue of selecting toy objects for the collections of ethnographic museums. The summary of the article, which emphasizes the importance of museum exhibits in getting to know the past folk culture of the youngest inhabitants of Cieszyn Silesia, includes comments on further possibilities of research on this aspect of the cultural heritage of the region based on various available sources.

### Toys in collections and museum exhibitions

Toys have been gathered by museums on the Polish and Czech side of Cieszyn Silesia for decades. Museums in which research was carried out do not specialize in their collection. The number of inventory items in the ethnography departments of the studied museums is respectively: 6634 in the Cieszyn Museum, 2874 in the Ustroń Museum and around 3500 in the Těšínska Museum. However, items that used to be used by children to play with can also

be found at exhibitions and in the storages of the departments of archaeology, history, art and technology. Some conclusions about old toys and children's games can also be drawn while browsing the collections of archival photographs of a given museum and getting familiar with other historic objects.<sup>9</sup>

What links the collections of toys from these facilities is their diversity. Museum resources contain many items related to childhood in various historical periods. These museums are in possession of prehistoric objects which are believed to have had a play-related use, toys of the youngest members of wealthy Cieszyn families and items used for playing by bourgeois and peasant children.<sup>10</sup> Carefully made sets of doll' furniture can be found there as can simple folk toys made of wood and clay, from the same time period. In addition, there are also toys produced in manufactories, by craftsmen and copies of mass factory production from both before 1989 and the last decades.

The wide range of toy objects in possession of city museums can be admired during temporary exhibitions and other projects devoted to childhood, organized by these institutions. All three of the museums discussed have organized such undertakings.

In the Ustroń Museum, the idea of displaying toys appeared in 2008 and was realized in the form of an exhibition titled *In the Circle of Childhood*. Toy objects had already appeared at the earlier exhibitions prepared by this museum – they formed, for example, part of the exhibition titled *A souvenir from the communist era* (from 1945 to 1989 – the times of the People's Republic of Poland). Today, the exhibition from 2008, slightly diminished, forms a part of the permanent exhibition of the museum and, according to the employees' statements, it has been raising unchangeable interest among the visitors for the past 10 years. I will discuss the toy collections of this institution in more detail in further sub-chapters..

The temporary exhibition titled *The world of a child long ago, yesterday and today...* was organized by the Cieszyn Museum in Cieszyn in 2011. The author of the script of the exhibition was Grzegorz Studnicki – an employee of the ethnographic department. The display held not only toys, but also various artefacts related to childhood – from those dating two centuries back to the ones used closer to modern times. It showed toys from both rural and urban areas. The aim of the exhibition was to present how the responsibilities, rights and pleasures of childhood have changed through the ages.

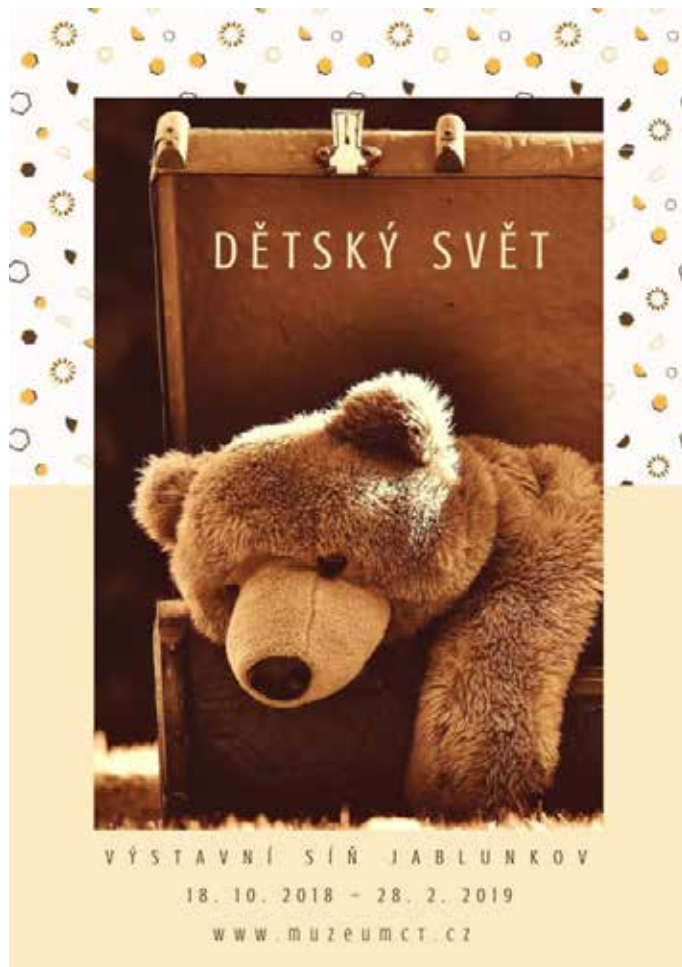
Cieszyn and Český Těšín located by the border river Olza, which marks the course of the Polish-Czech border, have been cooperating in various fields for years. The exhibition was prepared as part of the cross-border project titled *Dwa miasta jedna tradycja – Dvě města jedna traduce* (*Two cities, one tradition*), and the Těšínska Museum was its co-organizer – lending over 80 exhibits to the facility on the other side of the Olza River. The Cieszyn Museum presented 32 objects from its own collections at the exhibition; about 70 more were received from private individuals, and the remaining 243 objects were borrowed from the Upper Silesian Museum in Bytom, Municipal Museum in Zabrze, Museum in Gliwice, the Silesian Museum in Katowice, and therefore from outside the area of Cieszyn Silesia. The exhibition was accompanied by lectures and workshops. Visiting it provided an opportunity for children and adults to exchange experiences, memories, reflections on what is different and what has remained the same in childhoods of the past and present generations. The display of numerous toys and other objects

<sup>9</sup> PIERONKIEWICZ-PIECZKO, Krystyna – PAUL, Małgorzata. *Dolls, Teddies, Horses... Toys in the Collection of the Silesian Museum in Katowice*. Katowice : Muzeum Śląskie w Katowicach, 2013, pp. 193-215.

<sup>10</sup> BLAŽEVIČIUS, Povilas. Toys as a reflection of player's social status. In: ROMANOWICZ, Paulina (ed.). *Child and Childhood in the Light of the Archaeology*. Szczecin : Chronicon, 2013, pp. 137-151.

related to Cieszyn Silesia aimed at awakening the recipients' sense of bonds with their place of residence and its community as well as inspire interest in the past and culture of the region.<sup>11</sup> During the conducted research, Monika Kupková, ethnographer at the Těšínska Museum in Český Těšín, prepared the exhibition titled *Dětský svět* (*A Child's World*). The temporary exhibition was available in the Jablunkov exhibition hall from 18 October 2018 to 28 February 2019. This exhibition showed how childhood in the Cieszyn Silesia region looked like and changed from the late 19th century to modern times, on the basis of an assortment of toys and other objects from the collections of the Těšínska Museum. Illustrations of stories about the history and changes of everyday life of children – from birth, through early childhood to school times – included: antique doll carriages, children's books, school supplies, games, puppets and dolls. 2. An out-of-use museum toy – or just a folk one?

Bearing in mind the definition of the specifics of the ludic culture of the youngest inhabitants of Cieszyn Silesia, also based on the objects preserved in museums, the term “out-



**Pict. 2:** *Exhibition poster: Dětský svět.*  
<https://www.muzeumct.cz/jablunkov/> (access on Oct 3, 2018)

<sup>11</sup> PODSIADŁO, Jolanta. *Museum as a means of development of regional identity*. Kielce: Muzeum Zabawek i Zabawy. Kieleckie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2010, pp. 103-110, 199-200.

of-use museum toy” should be defined. The question is whether it is reasonable to limit the analysis to regard merely the 19th century folk toys, which are considered the most “regional” manifestations of ludic culture. In popular understanding, these are, above all, objects which were made by native folk artists, either for sale or for their own use, according to the knowledge and patterns handed down in a given environment from generation to generation.

The preliminary research at the Cieszyn Museum made it possible to get acquainted with the examples of folk toys kept in the ethnography department. Descriptions of museum inventory cards of individual objects show that many wooden and clay toys from this section are products made by artists who lived in Cieszyn Silesia. In the 1960s, the museum purchased, among others: a sculpture-toy *jemioluszcza i dzieci z gąską* (eng. *a waxwing and children with a goose*) made by Józef Motyka from Jaworzynka, a clay whistle in the shape of a cockerel and a dove by Jan Drobik who lived in Bielsko-Biała and sold his toys e.g. at the market in Skoczów and Cieszyn as well as a wooden toy violin purchased at the Cieszyn stall from Jan Dziecina from Bielsko-Biała.

However, many of the toys obtained by the museum in this period of time are handicrafts from outside Cieszyn Silesia. These include, among others, a wooden cradle toy, a rocking horse, a pair of horses pulling a cart, wheelbarrows, a horse on wheels, which Jan Kęпка, an illiterate folk artist from Koszarawa (Żywiecki county), traded for a pipe, and a moving figurine of a bird pecking at the grain made by Jan Krzysztanek from Jerzmanowice (former Olkusz county). The toy collection also includes a *klepok*, which is a bird on wheels, attached to the stick which moves its wings, a wooden sculpture of an Austrian shooter, a moving toy in the form of a pair of head-butting goats. In the museum registration cards, those items have no annotation regarding the identity or descent of their creators or how these toys ended up in the ethnography department of the Cieszyn Museum.

The aim of the research was, above all, to become familiar with the documentation and toy exhibits of the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum. However, additional interesting information was also obtained from the archaeology department. The problem of identifying toys in the archaeological material of the museums of Cieszyn Silesia goes beyond the thematic framework of this text.<sup>12</sup> However, since the research that makes it possible to draw conclusions about old toys that have been recorded in the history of the culture of the region demands the analysis of all available sources of information, it is necessary that attention is paid to this issue as well. In the archaeological resources of the Cieszyn Museum, toys that were discovered during the excavations carried out at the Castle Hill in Cieszyn include, among others: a miniature axe, a single die and a game piece dating back to the 12th-13th century.

It is possible to name prehistoric objects made as miniatures of tools and equipment used by adults for the purposes of children’s games on the basis of museum collections.<sup>13</sup> Some of these objects were used for not only play, but also socialization and the preparation of the youngest children to perform various economic actions. However, in the case of archaeological sources, it is not possible to unambiguously determine whether a minor object, obviously made with a child’s capabilities and needs in mind, did not perform, for example, the magical or sacral functions, either exclusively or additionally. The analysis of exhibit guides and directories

<sup>12</sup> ROMANOWICZ, Paulina. Guzik czy zabawka? O problemach identyfikacji zabawek w materiale archeologicznym. In: KABACIŃSKA-LUCZAK, Katarzyna – ŻOŁĄDŹ-STRZELCZYK, Dorota (ed.). *Zabawka – przedmiot ludyczny i obiekt kolekcjonerski*. Poznań : Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2016, pp. 91-102.

<sup>13</sup> GOMUŁKA, Izabela. Children’s toys in medieval Silesia. In: ROMANOWICZ, Paulina (ed.). *Child and Childhood in the Light of the Archaeology*. Szczecin : Wydawnictwo Chronicon, 2013, pp. 153-162.

containing diminutive name forms may falsely lead to the conclusion that the archaeological museum collections contain toys.<sup>14</sup>

A review of prehistoric and historical miniaturized museum objects which were defined by diminutives makes it clear that an ethnographer and a museum worker can also encounter similar doubts at work. Although the oldest items in the ethnographic department come from the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the lack of information about the functions of some items – upon being obtained by the museum – and their small size may make an ethnographer wonder – never gaining absolute certainty – whether the object in question is a toy, an item with a completely different original purpose, a multifunctional object or an object that had once been damaged, lost its economic usefulness and was handed over to children to play with. It is illustrated perfectly by the example of the collection of the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum, which holds a clay “rynik” dated to the first half of the 20th century, which is a shallow, baked, glazed bowl on three legs<sup>15</sup>. The object bearing the reference number MC / E / 00617 has a broken handle, and its item card states that it could be a miniature object used to store small amounts of products, e.g. spices, or else that it could have served as a child’s toy. The fact that some functions of historic museum objects from the department of archaeology, history and ethnography are so difficult to identify may additionally enhance their incompleteness.

Due to the fact that toys in the Cieszyn Museum remain in the collections of departments specializing in the study of the culture of various past historical periods, it seems right to consider all the toys from the given area deposited in museums as manifestations of the old folk culture of the region, from prehistoric toys to those popular in periods closer to our times. It is also necessary to take into account the toys that have been purchased, imported, and included in the local cultural inventory, eventually ending up in the museum. It seems that a broad understanding of the term “out-of-use museum toy” is more useful, especially if toys imported from other regions or countries are represented in large numbers in local museum collections. This proves that the games played with them constituted an element of popular culture, fashionable among children in a given area decades ago. Taking into account the oldest, including not fully confirmed, examples of toys from archaeological collections of a given museum as a manifestation of the past ludic culture of the region creates an opportunity to both explain the unchanging form and function of some toys and show, on their example, the course of various cultural and civilizational processes that occurred in the region centuries ago.<sup>16</sup>

## How is the museum’s collection of toys created? Example of the Jan Jarocki’s Museum of Ustroń

Reporting on the research carried out in the Ustroń Museum will allow to present its collections of toys and help identify factors that give the collection a local character.

The museum exhibition presents out-of-use museum toys, games, books, school supplies and children’s clothing. The space, arranged to look like a children’s room from the first half of

<sup>14</sup> KAPALSKI, Maksymilian. *Na skrzyżowaniu dziejów i kultur. Ekspozycja stała Muzeum Śląska Cieszyńskiego*. Cieszyn : Muzeum Śląska Cieszyńskiego, 2005, pp. 15-22.

<sup>15</sup> Photography and description of the object – available at <http://www.katalog.muzeumcieszyn.pl/dzial/etnografia.html> after entering “rynik” into the search engine (access on: 2018.09.10).

<sup>16</sup> BROOKSHAW, Sharon. The Material Culture of Children and Childhood: Understanding Childhood Objects in the Museum Context. In: *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 14, 2009, Is. 3, pp. 365-383.



the 20th century, contains dolls, teddy bears, prams and toy prams, beds, wooden ponies and many more. The museum is in possession of various toys – folk, bourgeois, manufactured ones as well as those originating from the Polish communism period. The oldest toys emphasize the specific character of Ustroń, which in the 18th century was an industrial town, and in the 19th century – a spa resort. The exhibits from this period show what toys were used by children of patients who used to come for a treatment in Ustroń.

The museum has been hosting tourists and visitors for years – parents and grandparents with children and groups staying in Ustroń and the nearby towns. Some of the current visitors may feel that the exhibition is dominated by toys for girls, which is why the employees make sure that toys for boys are also displayed. There is also a playtime corner, complemented by showcases presenting smaller toys and archival photographs. These photos often present the patients who visited Ustroń in recent years and who, enchanted by the collection and way of presenting toys, shared their own photographs of childhood, portraying them with a toy, which, at that time, was an indicator of family wealth. It happens that visitors send their childhood toys to Ustroń or bring them as gifts during their subsequent visits, thus adding to the exhibition. These are, therefore, items not always associated with the region of Cieszyn Silesia, but they allow to draw conclusions about what toys children played with in a given period. Alicja Michalek – sharing her observations on the audience's reactions – notes that both younger and older people *succumb to the magic* of the objects: they take them in their hands and simply start to play with them. The older the visitor – the greater the sentiment to the presented toys and the reflection that the museum is the best place to save their own toys from childhood from being thrown *into the dustbin* appears more often.

The collection of toys from the Ustroń Museum is growing not only because of the gifts mentioned above. It happens that the inhabitants of Ustroń and the surrounding area, who know the museum's profile, call and ask for the protection of items – including toys. As a museum ethnographer, Alicja Michalek also participates in the demolition of old houses and boarding houses, where she inventories and selects various objects to join the collection, sometimes also finding valuable specimens of toys. While expanding the collection, other contemporary possibilities are also put into use. For example, a collection of small dolls in regional costumes from around the world also continues to expand due to the fact that employees of a nearby *second hand* shop often inform the museum about a new potential exhibit identified by them among the items on sale. Following various online auctions also creates a possibility of expanding the collection.

Toys shown at the Ustroń Museum exhibition are not all the toys in the collection – roughly the same amount is located in the storage rooms. Various cardboard boxes contain teddy bears, sets of dolls' clothes in decorative packaging for chocolates, books, school supplies, small cars, etc. In the case of the youngest visitors, who come to the museum with their parents or grandparents, finding out-of-use museum toys provides an opportunity for an intergenerational dialogue.<sup>17</sup> Although most visitors are reluctant to leave the museum play area, sometimes the younger children are less enthusiastic about out-of-use dolls with dark circles under their eyes, unhealthy pale complexions and bluish fragile palms. During tours of the exhibition, museum's workers occasionally have the opportunity to see that today's teenagers, who have never seen

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<sup>17</sup> COLE, Anne J. – PETERSSON Brooks, Eva. Toy Story: Childhood versus Children in Toy Museums. In: *Museum & Society*, vol. 14, 2016, Is. 2, pp. 294-312.

toys from the beginning of the 20th century, or examples of rough toy production from the communism era, find the aesthetics of the out-of-use museum toys rather strange.

### Legitimisations: example of the Těšínska Museum



**Pict. 3:** *Dolls: the Ustroń Museum. July 16, 2018. Photo by Magdalena Szalbot*

Ethnographic museology, which aims to document various aspects of the culture of the dynamically changing everyday life, has been trying in various ways and for many years to determine the criteria for selecting items that will be directed either to the museum storage or directly to the exhibition.<sup>18</sup> Consumer culture, with its excess of production of objects of all types – including toys for children, does not facilitate this task for the museum personnel.<sup>19</sup> Creating a museum narration about childhood always involves a certain amount of doubts, regarding, for example, which objects to choose, keep and show in the museum. Modern toys, which are a part of everyday life of today's generation of children, are also the next link, illustrating the transformation of the toy assortment. Currently, toys are becoming out of date at an incredible pace, because they are being replaced by a flood of subsequent layers of mass toy production. In the near future, the same will be true for the currently fashionable and desirable children's toys, and the question will be asked: which of them should “rest” in the museum to show the next generations of children what their parents', grandparents' and great-grandparents' toys used to look like.

Yet another issue is the ordering of museum collections of toys according to a specific principle. In the case of the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum, the collection of previously described wooden and clay folk toys does not require a division based on extensive

<sup>18</sup> BOUQUET, Mary. *Academic Anthropology and the Museum. Back to the Future*. New York-Oxford : Berghahn, 2010; NIEROBA, Elżbieta. Dynamics in the Field of Museums: Contemporary Challenges for Polish Museologists. In: *Social Sciences*, vol. 7, 2018, Is. 77, pp. 1-9.

<sup>19</sup> See eg.: BELK, Russell W. *Collecting in Consumer Society*. London-New York : Routledge, 1995; TAŃCZUK, Renata. Kolekcjonowanie i nadmiar przedmiotów. In: *Kultura Współczesna*, vol. 1, 2013, Is. 76, pp. 105-117.

typologies.<sup>20</sup> However, the problem of how to group toys becomes important in the case of the Ustroń Museum and the Těšínska Museum, as both of these institutions not only have more toys than the Cieszyn Museum, but also present their toy collections in a wider time-frame and social perspective. Toys in the ethnographic department of the Těšínska Museum in Český Těšín are divided into the following groups: 1) dolls, 2) toy prams, 3) books for children, 4) little furniture, 5) puppets and stuffed animals, 6) wooden toys. The above categories of toys are the most numerous among the toy resources of this institution. However, the review of the inventory cards of individual museum objects and a visit to the storage rooms revealed the museum's wealth when it comes to the items that escape this classification. This includes, for example, puzzles, math, board and skill games, a set of stamps, a miniature *Singer* sewing machine, a miniature table football game, a three-film projector, two wire-connected telephone toys, a toy optical laboratory and even inflatable sleeves for swimming lessons and many plastic toys produced after 1950.

In spite of the involvement of ethnographic museums in the problem of excess and “overrepresentation” of objects in the contemporary culture, wherein the decision about musealization requires selection from amongst many potential ‘candidates’, the opportunity to familiarize oneself with the collections of just three selected institutions allowed to notice other issues which should be further examined in order to expand the knowledge about out-of-use museum toys and children's games. These issues include collecting toys for the youngest children and acquiring toys in their original packaging.

The oldest type of toy for these children who are still unable to sit on their own is – and has been, since the earliest times – a rattle.<sup>21</sup> Its specimens were obtained during excavations and are stored in the archaeology departments of various museums. The institutions where this study is conducted do not have toys that fall into this category. For an ethnologist / anthropologist of culture an interesting subject of study may involve the issue of providing children as young as infants with toys. Museologists have limited possibilities of enriching collections with prehistoric rattles. But the observation of the dynamically developing branch of modern toy production directed largely at new-borns should encourage to supplement the museum collections – when possible – with the oldest objects preserved which used to function as toys for these youngest children. The potential acquisition of some of the 20th century toys in this category, which – as research has shown – are rarely represented in the museums of Cieszyn Silesia, will ultimately pay off, for example, during the preparation of exhibitions presenting the earliest childhood and its historical changes in their entirety.

Another research problem noticed concerns the analysis of toy packaging. Formerly, toys consisting of numerous small parts or the more expensive and advertised ones – that came from well-known manufactories – were packaged. Descriptions on antique toy boxes inform us how their creators transferred knowledge about their educational values, purpose or recommended use. Multilingual instructions attached to out-of-use museum toys allow to determine the expected distribution range.<sup>22</sup> The comparison of description form and content on old and modern toy packaging may also be an interesting supplement to the knowledge

<sup>20</sup> ŻOŁĄDŹ-STRZELCZYK, Dorota et al. *Dzieje zabawek dziecięcych na ziemiach polskich do początku XX wieku*. Wrocław : Chronicon, 2016, pp. 19-23.

<sup>21</sup> ROMANOWICZ, Paulina. Archaeological finds of playthings in late medieval towns. Contribution to the study of the development of children in the past. In: ROMANOWICZ, Paulina (ed.). *Child and Childhood in the Light of the Archaeology*. Szczecin: Chronicon, 2013, pp. 163-184.

<sup>22</sup> ŻOŁĄDŹ-STRZELCZYK, ref. 20, p. 164-172.

about the dynamics and direction of changes in toys.

Decades ago most children had few toys. They were far more respected and passed on to other children in the family from generation to generation.<sup>23</sup> Practice shows that the packaging is the part of a given toy that is usually immediately thrown away, unless it is a solid wooden box. The situation was similar decades ago, which is why many toys from museum collections have no packaging, although the Ustroń Museum and the Těšínska Museum are in possession of toys in their original, slightly battered packaging. In the case of puzzles or board games, the packaging is not only a container, but an integral part of the toy, which explains methods of using it for fun. Since some antique games and toys are without boxes, they are not able to fully present their values to the contemporary recipient. The activities of employees of the studied museums have shown that they are making efforts to add toys with their packaging to the collections. This will enable further research into this aspect of the functioning of toys in both past and contemporary culture that is rarely shown at exhibitions, yet is extremely interesting.

Toys from the museum collections as a source of knowledge about the transformation of ludic culture of children living in the Cieszyn Silesia region

The history of the region's culture, presented by local museums, is also a story about out-of-use museum toys and children's games. The collection of toys owned by small local museums helps in determining the local specificity of the ludic culture of a given region. The toys are also part of the museum's narration about history, civilization changes and foreign cultural influences that gave a unique character to the towns where the individual museums were created.<sup>24</sup> Analysing this category of museum objects is an important step in learning the manifestations of the local colour of the old folk culture and the current forms of its continuation.

Nowadays, museums are depositaries of knowledge about former toys and children's games by various means, including cooperation with currently active folk artists from the region. Handicraftsmen make toys referring to memories from their own childhood and modelled on formerly common toy models. In 2008, the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum was enriched with toys made by Jan Kocyan from Wisła. Among the purchased wooden toys distinguished by their vivid multi-coloured hues were: a highlander doing somersaults, a duck on wheels, a pecking hen, *klepok*, head-butting goats, pecking cockerels, a horse pulling a cart on wheels, a rocking horse on wheels and a cockerel pecking at grains.

Sometimes a museum's cooperation with local artists is not only about buying their toys. Museums use the artists' help by commissioning a specific toy, the existence of which in the area decades ago has been confirmed by field tests. It may be an object once commonly used by children to play with, absent from the museum's collections, but which would be a valuable asset to the exhibition being prepared. An example of a toy which contributed to the ethnographic department of the Cieszyn Museum is a toy *flinta* – a shotgun with a wooden body and a simple firing mechanism made of a clasp, nails and rubber used for sealing jars – prepared by Otmar Kantor – a local sculptor and folk artist from Jablunkov (Czech Republic, district of Frýdek-Místek).

<sup>23</sup> See eg.: JAFFE, Deborah. *The History of Toys. From Spinning Tops to Robots*. London : Sutton, 2006; FRASER, Antonia. *A History of Toys*. London : Spring Books, 1972.

<sup>24</sup> HOOPER-GREENHILL, Eileen. *Museum and the Shaping of Knowledge*. London - New York : Routledge, 1992.



**Pict. 4:** *Flinta*: Museum of Cieszyn Silesia in Cieszyn. Nov 9, 2018. Photo by Magdalena Szalbot

Out-of-use museum toys have also become a carrier of knowledge about the region's cultural traditions through highly popular workshops, craft stands, meetings with folk artists that make toys according to given patterns – all of which are part of cultural events and events co-organized by local museums. The specifics of the local ludic culture can also be found in the linguistic layer of the region's culture. In the past, similar toys and games were perhaps widely known in individual regions, but they have gained separate names specific to a given area; these names may still be remembered by the oldest inhabitants of the region. The reference on the basis of toy museum collections to the specifics of the ludic culture of the youngest inhabitants of Cieszyn Silesia – the region which was divided by the Polish-Czech border since 1920, also requires further research on the issue of the popularity of some toys spreading across the border of the Olza River.

The studies, carried out in the three selected museums of Cieszyn Silesia, based on fieldwork material such as curator and guest interviews as well as observation notes, showed that museum exhibits are valuable sources which significantly assist in learning about the local specifics, changes and continuity of the regional children's culture of play. Further research requires referring to all available archives and, above all, persuading people to share their memories about the out-of-use toys and games from the oldest generation of Cieszyn Silesia residents. In-depth research requires answering the question: are the Cieszyn Silesia toys somehow different from the artefacts collected by museums in other regions or are they similar?

The world around us is changing continuously. Toy has become a vital attribute of consumer culture. Toys changed together with the development of civilization and new historical epochs. Toy collections are created in museums all around the globe. Collections of toys in the museums of Cieszyn Silesia constitute a representative set, illustrating the history of the social culture of the region, as well as the transience of customs and fashions. The museums of Cieszyn Silesia hold mainly unique collections of toys produced from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present. It is in these toys that the charm of the bygone culture of the region and the particular and peculiar character of its residents are set. They call to mind the tales of old and legends of yore, a

nostalgic representation of Cieszyn Silesia traditions, customs, and rites. They will, therefore, always remain a part of the cultural heritage.

When toys are collected for a museum, attention is always paid to their origins, creators and uses. The individual components of an exhibition are based on personal stories of the people met by ethnographers during field research. Among the collected objects there are those which enable us to tell the story of their owners. Once we start paying attention to the temporal dimension of toys and their transformations, we revise our way of conceptualising museum objects. These transformations are what the anthropologists should be interested in. The anthropological theory, the practises of toy collection and the organisation of the museum and its exhibitions are parts of a system wherein a museum is understood as a medium of ethnographic knowledge. The point is that this system should be considered as a whole, with toys being an important part thereof.<sup>25</sup>

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