

the same time the void in this area is a metaphor for the infinite loss that resulted from the »Aktion gegen entartete Kunst« (Nazi state action against so-called degenerated art).

All in all it is important not to submit to the temptation of attempting to unite the surviving material fragments of the history of Berlin, and with it that of Germany, to a homogeneous picture. This can but only be a distorted image. The acknowledgement of the fragmentary character of that which remains bound together with the unmistakable reference to the destroyed - »the traces of the unborn« as Libeskind says - is perhaps the best prerequisite for our pedagogical intent.

Suggested Relationship between Manner of Display and the Permanent Exhibition:

the Museological Adaptation of the Archaeological Subsoil of the *Carrer Comtes* in the Barcelona City History Museum

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Introduction

The opening of a new visiting area in the subsoil of the Barcelona City History Museum is a result of the project for the entire museological adaptation of all the buildings and properties. This transformation was needed for the renewal of the previous style of museum - in many cases totally obsolete - and the reform of the facilities to meet the new requirements of the public and in line with new techniques and discoveries in museology.

The new museum project, given approval in 1994, is to regulate the reform process that will be implemented in the mid-term, with the aim of completion in the year 2000.

Broadly speaking, this project defines the History Museum as a dynamic institution with the objective of investigation, conservation and public education concerning the historical heritage of the city. The museum has to understand and help to understand the city in all its complexity, and therefore it has to make use of the widest possible range of resources, from the permanent exhibition, to temporary exhibitions, urban routes, presentation of monument sites, publications, school activities, etc.

Here we will mention only that aspect of the project dealing with the establishment of criteria for the museum's public education policy. This is determined by the permanent exhibition, which is in the main building, as well as by what we have called the decentralised museum, the temporary exhibitions, publications and education activities directed at different social groups.

As regards the permanent exhibition, this has to offer a global vision of the history of the city, emphasising those aspects that are peculiar to

it. We propose therefore that a synthetic exhibition, in which by means of the objects, buildings and structures of the museum, texts and display resources, such as video facilities, take the visitor on a journey through the history of the city, from the time of its origins up to the present day.

One of the important factors in the manner of display is the proposed establishment of a constant relationship between the medium and the message, such that each building that makes up the museum complex is the site of its own exhibition, which corresponds to the historical period that the building itself belongs to. Thus, the visitor can make a journey in time, in the scenery and with the objects that correspond to each historical period. Equally, the permanent exhibition has to be very dynamic, the objects on display there, always contextualised, being subject to substitution when appropriate. The information communicated by means of the various support equipment has to make use of clear and concise language, suited to enabling the visitor to understand each historical period of the city.

The "decentralised museum" complements the manner of display of the museum, directing the visitor to some of the historical monumental relics that are scattered throughout the city, the conservation and conditioning of which are the responsibility of the museum itself. These sites have to allow the visitor to make connections between the remains of the past and the city of the present.

Finally, the temporary exhibitions offer an analytic focus on specific themes and periods in the history of the city, thus contributing to a greater understanding of the history of Barcelona, and at the same time giving the museum many possibilities.

This is the general framework that contextualises the renovation of the Barcelona City History Museum. The recent inauguration of a part of the archaeological subsoil of the city, incorporating it into the existing itinerary of the museum buildings, represents the first step in this process of transformation. In our opinion, the new exhibition area includes the basic factors already mentioned that are fundamental in the new model of museum.

With this opening, therefore, the first step in a new stage for the museum has been taken, a stage in which many obstacles still lie ahead. Whether we overcome them or not will depend on the constructive criticism that we receive and on our ability to incorporate it into our future planning, and on the response of the public, who, in the final analysis, are the owners and those who have the right to enjoy the museum.

Brief Description of the Subsoil of the Carrer Comtes

The archaeological subsoil of the Plaça de Sant Iu and the Carrer Comtes was initially inaugurated in 1954 by Agustí Duran i Sanpere, but the official opening - including a mass - was not until 1960. This part of the museum remained open to the public until the 1980s, when the state of repair of the premises, and the problem of reforms to meet modern museological criteria, made it advisable to close it temporarily.

It was not until 1993 that the idea of reopening the site was once again put forward, this time with the intention of incorporating the Early Christian baptistery of Barcelona, one of the biggest in Europe, into the public visit. Discovered in 1968 during the excavations made by the History Museum under the existing Gothic cathedral, access to it had

always been a problem, and visits, by small groups, infrequent. Then in 1994, having obtained a minimum budget allocation, the elaboration of a new museological project was undertaken and work on fitting out the site adequately began in November of that year. On 17th February 1995, in the context of the exhibition Barcino-Barcelona the subsoil of the Carrer Comtes was finally reopened to the public.

This archaeological site consists of various structural relics illustrating a chronological route beginning with the founding of the city and going up to about the year 1000. This broad window in time can be divided into three great periods: relics from the Roman period (1st - 4th century), relics from the Early Christian Episcopal monuments (5th - 8th centuries) and finally the relics from the High Medieval period (between the 9th and 11th centuries).

Despite the fragmentary state of the architectural structures there are some elements of great importance for the history of the city. Noteworthy among these are the presence of a street and the remains of a great house of the Roman period, the basilica and baptistery among the early Christian Episcopal constructions, and the remains of the door of the Romanesque cathedral and of a palace consisting of various units corresponding to the High Medieval period.

The museological project

As has been mentioned previously, the museological arrangement in the subsoil of the Carrer Comtes formed part of a museological project for the museum, whose basic principles have already been described. What followed, therefore, was the establishment of working criteria that allowed the development of an

action plan, taking into account three basic principles: cleaning and conservation of the structural remains, making it possible for visitors to understand them, and finally conditioning them for visits and in accordance with current regulations for public areas.

One of the basic elements in the museological project for the subsoil of the Carrer Comtes is the route proposed for the visitor. Together with ease of circulation, we have tried to make this itinerary into a precise chronological circuit and to make this aspect obvious to the public. In this regard, passage through the subsoil is shown by a linking metal structure which offers various possibilities. In the first place, the fact that it is a modern and different material helps to give a clear indication of the route that the visitors should follow. Moreover, its relative transparency allows us to show up some elements of interest under the metallic platform, such as sewers, drains, etc. This linking structure also facilitates the cleaning and ventilation of the remains underneath and allows for conservation work as it becomes necessary.

Furthermore, the stopping places along the linking structure, and especially the handrail, serve as a support for most of the textual and graphic information given to the visitor, at the same time achieving a physical distancing from the remains, which is a particularly useful aspect in their conservation. In some places the metal structure is substituted by thick glass in order to enable a view of the mosaics and paving, and there is also glass between the metal structure and the handrail where they come very close to the remains. This last feature is a result of a spatial assessment of the whole area, that is, a calculation of what will be the most problematic points on the underground route, in relation both to circulation (narrow places, steps, etc.) and also,

importantly, to those places where the archaeological remains could be most easily damaged. Notwithstanding this, which has to go unnoticed by the visitor, the route is deliberately intended to make the public feel that they are inside the remains, either because of their proximity to them or because they really are inside them.

The systems for facilitating information to the visitors have also been the object of special attention in the museological project. There are two rather different kinds: the information points and the thematic areas. The information points identify and in some cases restore by means of drawings the hypothetical form. The idea of these hypothetical reconstructions is to enable the visitor to develop an idea, vertically, of what is on view and of which there are no more than a few remains. From the very start, the inclusion of the usual kind of archaeological drawings and graphics was avoided, especially in the case of the floors, since it was decided that this kind of information was difficult for the non-specialised visitor to read. The information points are also equipped with drawings that show the visitors where they are in the subsoil and in relation to the outside world.

The information points always have text in different typefaces and colours, in Catalan and in Spanish, as well as drawings when they are considered necessary. The drawings make use of a special chromatic treatment which differentiates graphically by means of the printing colours between the visible remains and hypothetical reconstructions. The drawings also include elements of spatial awareness for the visitor such as the stopping places and any modern architectural structures.

Great importance has also been attached to the design and choice of locations for the

information points. The basic format consists of a 20 x 20 cm. metallic lectern, the width alone being subject to variation, depending on the quantity of information placed there. These lecterns can be fixed to the handrail of the pathway, and in some cases to modern walls, or can stand on their own feet. They are always sited in accordance with the view that the visitor has of the archaeological remains.

The thematic areas, for that matter, are intended to help the visitor contextualise the visible remains in the cultural framework by providing the necessary historical information. There is both text and graphics and there are also small exhibition areas for objects connected with the period of the remains.

In the case of the subsoil of the Carrer Comtes the decision was made to develop two very clear concepts linked to the growth of the city. On the one hand, the evolution from Roman colony to territorial capital in the feudal period, and, on the other, Christianity viewed as a changing cultural phenomenon. In a similar way to the information points, each thematic area has a specific location in the subsoil which is partially associated in a clear way with the archaeological structures that surround it.

The form of the thematic areas also makes use of a specific design and materials. Thus, as with the information points, flat inclined fittings have been constructed, the length of which depends on the quantity of text and visual information placed there. Some of these fittings have an interior glass showcase in which small objects connected with the theme have been placed. In the case of bigger objects, different kinds of support and physical proximity to the fittings of the thematic areas have been sought.

The lighting and the treatment of the colours of

non-archaeological walls in the subsoil have been areas in which great efforts have been made. One of the criteria that was considered of fundamental importance for developing the potential of these archaeological relics was the dramatisation of the space. This dramatisation is based on the achievement of a contrast of light and shade that is evident to the visitor and that highlights differences between the various elements of the subsoil: relics, information points, thematic areas, circulation areas, etc. To attain this lighting atmosphere the treatment given to the walls and modern structural elements is of great importance. The use of a range of dark grey shades with the addition of various warm colours, facilitates the absorption of the light, in this way visually hiding these modern architectural features, which are naturally less attractive. Consequently, a meaningful visual contrast is achieved and logically the archaeological remains benefit from this treatment visually.

As well as the pictorial treatment of the modern structures, we must mention the treatment of the reconstructions that had already been carried out directly on top of the archaeological remains. These reconstructions, most of them dating from the 1954 museological project, have been treated in two different ways. In those places where archaeological and historiographic evidence led us to the conclusion that they were erroneous or the result of an excessive and manipulative wish to instruct, these reconstructions have been eliminated. The contrary has been the case for reconstructions that responded to a clear structural reality or that made it easier to understand the structures; these structures were maintained and painted a different colour. Thus the visitor can immediately see the difference between authentic remains, reconstructed areas and the modern items.

Together with reformation for visiting, one of the basic objectives of the museological project has been to promote development of criteria for conservation, treatment and consolidation of archaeological remains. It has to be borne in mind that since its inauguration, and more obviously since its temporary closure, various environmental and human factors have affected, and in some cases altered the state of the structures and land. Therefore, one of the principal considerations in the development of the museological project has been protection of the structural remains, not only throughout the period of the works, but also in the reformation of the subsoil for public visits. The pursuit of an equilibrium between the demands of conservation and visiting has generated various resources such as the metallic linking structure, the routing in the form of a circuit, and, especially, a system of atmospheric conditioning, the lack of which in the previous museological project was to a certain extent the cause of the bad state in which some of the structures and remains were found.

At the same time, a large-scale specialised manual cleaning operation has been implemented by a number of professional restorers. This has brought about the recovery of the shape and original colouring of the surfaces of the pavements and walls, as they appeared when they were excavated. Furthermore, various structural reinforcement and refacing projects have been carried out, together with important general sanitation work designed to prevent the presence of agents such as mineral salts, fungi, damp, etc.

To finish with, we must state that the end result - that is, the specification and implementation of a museological project as complex as this - has been the consequence of an on-going collaboration between different professionals, specialists in various fields such as museology,

archaeology, history, restoration and architecture. The museological conditioning of the subsoil of the Carrer Comtes, therefore, rather than being the work of one person alone is the result of the work of a group.