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INTERIOR DESIGN IN THE RENOVATION, MODERNIZATION AND AESTHETIC EDITING OF THE MUSEUM OF HISTORY AND ETHNOGRAPHY IN UNGHENI

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Abstract. The present paper deals with a scientific analysis of the interior design within the licensing process concerned with the renovation, modernization and aesthetic editing of the Museum of History and Ethnography in Ungheni, carried out in 2022. In the context, the historical course of formation and evolution of the museum is described, prominent personalities who contributed to the development of the museum, museum pieces and categories of exhibits in the museum's possession. All these have been used in value through the vision of interior design which is researched through the historical, ethnographic and artistic prism. Through the research, the role and responsibility of interior design in the process of consolidation and valorization of the national cultural heritage is highlighted. The given study presents the result of the interior design project, concerned with the correspondence or synchronization of the new modern implementations with the ethnographic data inherited from the historical period.

Keywords: *interior design, space, ethnography, craft, tradition, heritage, renovation.*

Rezumat. Lucrarea de față prezintă o analiză științifică a designului interior din cadrul procesului de renovare, modernizare și redactare estetică a Muzeului de istorie și etnografie din Ungheni, realizat în anul 2022. În context se descrie parcursul istoric de formare și evoluție a muzeului, personalități marcante care au contribuit la dezvoltarea muzeului, piese muzeale și categorii de exponate aflate în posesia muzeului. Toate acestea au fost puse în valoare prin viziunea designului de interior care este cercetat prin prisma istorică, etnografică și artistică. Prin intermediul cercetării se scoate în evidență rolul și responsabilitatea designului interior în procesul de consolidare și valorificare a patrimoniului cultural național. Studiul dat prezintă rezultatul proiectului de design interior, preocupat de corespunderea sau sincronizarea noilor implementări moderne cu datele etnografice moștenite din perioada istorică.

Cuvinte cheie: *design interior, spațiu, etnografie, artizanat, tradiție, stil, patrimoniu, renovare, restaurare.*

1. Introduction

The Museum of History and Ethnography in Ungheni is a symbol of the regional and national cultural-artistic entity. Representing the community located in the Middle Prut Valley, today the Ungheni Museum is known for the originality and uniqueness of the pieces it holds, but also for the history of its creation. The museum was established at the end of the seventh decade of the last century on June 13, 1967, at the initiative of a group of teachers and students. The community sensitized the local authorities through a "grievance" that was "launched on January 30, 1965 in an article in the local newspaper "the city needs a museum" [1, p. 91]. It is considered that the founding of the Ungheni Museum was "the only solution at the time to save the building of the St. Alexandru Nevski church from demolition" [2, p. 1]. This impulse appeared as a reaction against the rise of atheistic society, when many parishes were forced to close their doors. In this situation was also the church "St. Aleksandr Nevski" in the center of Ungheni, which, with the intention of allaying the discontent of the locals, offered the opportunity to organize in its premises a museum of local historical and ethnographic artifacts [3, p. 40]. After almost twenty years in 1988, along with the socio-cultural changes of the time, the church was reopened as a place of religious worship, and the Ungheni Municipal Museum was transferred to the halls of the Ungheni Municipal Culture Palace [4].

Starting from 1990, after the city of Ungheni deeply experienced the emotions of the "Bridge of Flowers over the Prut" event and at the same time the totalitarian regime of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was shaking and collapsing, the Museum of History and Ethnography prodigiously increases its activity to complete the collections, to preserve and capitalize on the cultural heritage [5]. This beginning of a new evolution of the museum is largely due to the contribution of the historian, researcher and director Vasile Iucal, who dedicated a large part of his life to the research and promotion of the city of Ungheni [6].

Numerous exhibitions, fairs, excursions, scientific and archaeological research, publications and actions to promote national values were included in the museum's activity. The historical relics in the museum's endowment list more than 10,000 pieces from various historical periods [1, p.91]. Each object is valued, in chronological order according to archaeological research data, showing an age of about 4000 years before Christ (BC) [7]. The museum's equipment includes several categories of historical data: archaeological pieces, documents, photographs. Ethnographically these include collections of: archaeology, history, numismatics, folk wear, traditional fabrics, decorative art, folk art, wear, interior fabrics, textiles, carpets, towels, embroideries, ceramics, home industry, household utensils and fine art contemporary. [1, 2]. The archeology collection also contains vestiges of the "Cucuteni-Tripole" culture - known as one of the oldest in the country [8. p. 38]. The Museum also keeps "medieval documentary collections related to the history of Ungheni in unpublished manuscripts" [1, 2].

Apart from these, the Ungheni Museum serves as a cultural center that gathers researchers, people of culture, plastic artists, researchers interested in history, traditions and beauty to various cultural-artistic events [9]. Also, the Museum manifested itself as a promoter of contemporary plastic art, which "thanks to the collaboration with the Culture Fund of Moldova with numerous valuable plastic artists, it was possible to organize a rich collection of contemporary plastic art signed by plastic artists: Mihail Grecu, Ada Zevin, Emil Childescu, Dumitru Verdianu, Ion Zderciuc, Tudor Cataraga, Valentin Vîrtosu, Andrei Mudrea et al." [1, p.93].

Undoubtedly, the segment of museum ethnography is "important both for the knowledge of the history of ethnography and museology...", about which the researchers say that "in our space, ethnographic museums should be considered as museums with a special specificity" [3, pp. 31-46].

Analyzing the culture and art of a people we inevitably understand the value of the historical vestiges of the ancestors, because they imprint a pure truth, which can be continuously researched by the following generations. For this reason, cultural-artistic edifices that define the evolution and identity of a nation are particularly important [10, pp. 221-232]. Aware of their historical and cultural-artistic importance, the Interior Design study program of the Technical University of Moldova includes in the field of scientific-practical research the problem of preserving and promoting the national architectural heritage of the country (Republic of Moldova). This subject being of major importance in the socio-cultural and scientific environment of the given time in the country [11, p. 233]. Thus, in the didactic process of the mentioned specialty and especially in the Bachelor's Theses program, the themes of renovation, modernization and aesthetic editing of buildings of major importance for the national cultural heritage are encouraged [12 - 14].

In this context, we propose in the given work the analysis of the Bachelor's project "Interior design of the Museum of History and Ethnography in Ungheni" carried out by the graduate Elena Comarnițchi in 2022. The interior design concept project presents a special relevance from a functional, technical and artistic point of view. At the same time, the idea of the project tends to create an optimal environment or environment for each individual historical relic, thus favoring a unique perception through the proposed solutions.

2. Technical solutions in the functional management of the museum interior

Respectfully valuing the historical data of the edifice of the Museum of History and Ethnography in Ungheni, it was decided to carry out the project of renovation and modernization of the interior design, at the same time establishing a series of objectives. They are based on the substantial improvement of the technical parameters of exhibition, storage, preservation, air conditioning, lighting and operation of the museum according to the new trends in the field [15]. The process of renovating the interior was based on the results of historical research of the edifice, through which the management and organization predilections practiced until now were deduced.

The total area of the designed space was over 450 m², including 6 exhibition rooms, storage rooms, offices, entrance hall, hall, etc. The 6 exhibition halls represent compartments of the exhibits according to different periods: hall 1 - the ancient era, hall 2 - the medieval era, hall 3 and 4 - the era of the modern period up to the 19th century and hall 6 - exhibition gallery of contemporary palstic arts.

In the process of designing the museum, the idea of structuring the spaces according to the historical eras was preserved, as well as the existing basic brick walls, to which Autoclaved Cellular Concrete (ACC) blocks were added to form niches in rooms 2, 3 and 4. ACC blocks have properties of sound insulation, resistance to fire and the action of living organisms, being an ecological material and easy to process. In the constructive completion of the walls, increased attention was paid to the "object-mode of exposure" problem for a good transmission of information to the public and a correlation with the organizational principles of museums [16]. In the context, it was also proposed to lower the ceiling by 200 mm, being made of plasterboard boards, to ensure a sound-insulating effect, also creating

favorable possibilities for mounting lighting fixtures. In this last category, lighting fixtures on magnetic rails were chosen, considered advantageous due to the possibility of moving the position or directing them towards the exhibits. The intensity of the light, which plays a primary role in the museum's composition, was also thought out in detail, favoring highlighting from the detail to the general and vice versa [15].

The types of exhibited objects, the material, the elaboration technique, their category and age were carefully analyzed in order to create optimal conditions for their display and preservation.

Based on the typology of the exhibited objects, the decisions of the finishing materials for the walls, the floor and the furniture or the supports for the exhibits were also chosen. From the tradition of historical models made of wood, stone, clay, metal or vegetable and animal fibers, the palette of materials used in the proposed interior design was inspired, suggesting a predilection for the rustic style. The rustic style was most used in room no. 4 which is manifested by the presence of elements made of stone, wood, decorations with ethnographic motifs, which remind us of nature, childhood and country life. In the rest of the rooms, a stylistic combination was made between rustic and modern, to create an easy adaptation to the new techniques and technologies for finishing the rooms. Elements in modern style contain shiny surfaces of stainless steel, chrome metal, glossy paint, glass, tiles and other materials that invigorate the surroundings of the interior.

The finishing works include the processing of the floor, ceiling, walls with the specific plaster that has the role of acoustic, thermal insulation and maintaining humidity. Chromatically, modern style walls will be treated in monochrome shades to create a perfect background for modern art pieces. In rustic-style spaces, the use of stone and wood texture will be used in the processing of the walls. Color-wise the walls will be limited to shades of: butter, sage, grey, dusty blue, sand or creamy white. In room no. 4 they will be painted in a shade of light gray, combined with tiles that will have brick imitation.

The suspended ceilings will be covered with plasterboard and sound-insulating boards, on which the lighting fixtures directed on the rails will be applied. In addition to these, local lighting will be installed in several areas through LED strips, for better lighting of the windows. In the rustic style, the ceiling is completed with solid oak beams, painted in natural colors, contrasting with the walls [16].

The rustic-style floor is proposed with a slightly unfinished wooden look or with layered parquet, which offers a look suitable for the rustic style and fulfills the function of both acoustic and thermal insulation.

In the given project (Museum of History and Ethnography), sculptures from the respective eras with stylized shapes, photographs, glass objects or natural materials will be placed as decorative objects. The paintings allowed will be very large, but without being framed.

Wooden furniture will be used in combination with metal and textiles. Several modern furniture items are present in the museum layout, which stand out for their straight, simple lines, with very discreet details.

Shelves attached to the wall and solid wood objects painted with special varnish will create the impression of "old" or "traditional". The furniture is combined with the handicraft pieces from the exhibition: clay dishes and pots, tools, old pieces, traditional carpets and folk crafts, etc.

3. Artistic solutions in the formation of the aesthetic concept of design

Starting from the idea that the Museum represents an important component of culture, being a direct consequence of the socio-cultural and even political-economic evolutions of a society, it was proposed to arrange the museum space by creating interesting areas that would attract the visitors' eyes, instilling the desire to know every particle of it.

The design of the interior space of each room was decided according to different principles and solutions, depending on the pieces or the historical data they present. At the entrance to the Museum, the project proposes a welcoming opening through the entrance hall - arranged in an eclectic manner that combines rustic, classicism and modernism (figure 1). Using a value contrast between the transparent lightness of the glass and the massive pieces of clay, or the strict geometrized and naively modeled forms, the author succeeds in creating a playful game. This game is also animated by the mural that tends to bring back as close as possible the vivid feeling of the historical ambience. The ancient hall was solved in the key of the stone grotto, offering innovative solutions in the modeling of the walls, the floor and the supports of the exhibits (Figure 2). By resorting to the assembly and partial dismantling of the walls, massive niches with a depth of 500 mm were made. In these niches, a sculptural relief associated with the rock invoice specific to the ancient civilization was created. The proposed solution creates an environment typical of the reference historical period and perfectly fits the peasant predilections for pottery and traditional craftsmanship.



Figure 1. Entrance hall.



Figure 2. The ancient hall.

Rendering of the interior design by Elena Comarnițchi.

The medieval hall, richer in the variation of pieces, materials used and their processing technology, comes with an added flavor of shape modeling, which has a deeply rustic character linked to the culture of stone masonry - an aspect intensively promoted in the ambience of the villages of the Valley Prut (Figure 4). The locality being closely related to aquatic activities, it still keeps a wooden boat and some fishing pieces in the museum's equipment (Figure 3).

At the same time, the historical evolution of the temporal segment also dictates certain solutions in the modeling of stone forms that already resorted to cutting in straight lines and more monumental modeling. Thus, they opted for robust modeling in massive stone, configuring large, well-ordered monumental surfaces and coloristic toning.

The room for the modern period (the hall of folk costumes, traditional pieces and utensils) is treated differently, using wood, metal modeling and forms from the tradition of costumes and folk crafts (Figures 5, 6).

In balance with the formal manifestations of the exhibits of the given time, laconic, minimalist modeling of the space is resorted to, thus offering a passage of attention towards.



Figure 3. Medieval hall.



Figure 4. Medieval hall with niches.

Rendering of the interior design by Elena Comarnițchi.



Figure 5. Hall of folk costumes.



Figure 6. Hall of traditional pieces and utensils.

Rendering of the interior design by Elena Comarnițchi.

The following hall represents the modern society of the century. 19th century, closely related to textile art presenting a wide variety of hand-woven carpets, embroidered towels, garments, pieces and working techniques (Figures 7, 8). Emerging from their character and ethnographic data, the vision of plastic approaches in design was formulated. He opted for games of structure, texture and plastic form, which articulate beautifully with the existing exhibits.



Figure 7. Hall of folk crafts.

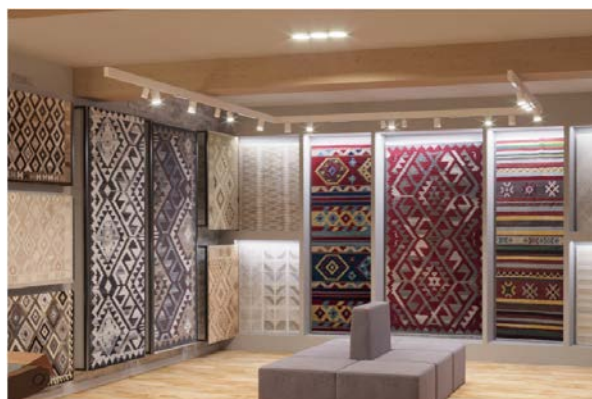


Figure 8. Hall of carpets.

Rendering of the interior design by Elena Comarnițchi.

In this context, forms of decoration were created aesthetically synchronized with the old artifacts, arranged in a restricted color scheme, thus creating a warm domestic range associated with the workshops of the time. Plastic implementations aim to create a sensitive-

tactile perception of wood, which was a material intensively exploited in all spheres of production (Figure 9).

For this space, it was proposed to partially cover the walls with large wooden slabs on which small geometric elements are mounted, an orderly decoration according to the artisanal ornaments typical of the given area. The interior design solutions are subtly synchronized with the characteristic data of the historical vestiges.

The color range used to decorate the museum (rooms no. 1 - 6) is represented by a palette of neutral colors, earths close to nature. This palette allows the monochrome arrangement of the spaces, limiting itself to a single general color that allows the use of color accents from the museum pieces. Shades of gray persist almost throughout the space in combination with brown, white and beige inspired natural warm shades, coming from the idea of tree bark, stone and earth. This decision visually increases the spaciousness of the rooms, while also creating favorable conditions for the integration of any color nuances of the pieces in the museum.

At the exit from the museum halls, a small contemporary art gallery is created that can accommodate various achievements of artists, craftsmen, students and teachers from the region (Figure 10).

The technical and artistic solutions implemented in the interior design project of the Ungheni Museum were coordinated with the design norms in force and existing analogies in this field, taking into account the most relevant buildings known in the country [17].



Figure 9. Hall of folk crafts.

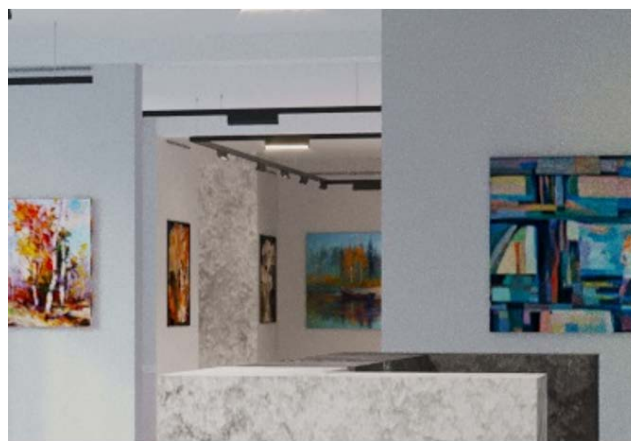


Figure 10. Exhibition hall.

Rendering of the interior design by Elena Comarnițchi.

The harmonious arrangement of the interior of the Ungheni Museum aims at the optimal realization of several problems: the rational use of space, ensuring circulation, sufficient lighting, sound insulation, ergonomic furniture solutions, creating a favorable climate, ensuring attractive color combinations, judicious use of textiles, the reasonable involvement of aesthetic decor, etc. All these elements were skilfully analyzed and solved in the given project, additionally using high-performance air conditioning systems, safety and security of the rooms in accordance with the modern provisions for such edifices. As a result of the renovation works, a refined aesthetic ambience was obtained, extremely luxurious, elegant and at the same time true to the historical prototype. A much improved version through the constructive, engineering and aesthetic possibilities, which provides a noble image to the edifice.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can state that the interior design solutions proposed in this museum building from Ungheni have demonstrated the ability to perfectly synchronize the rules of design with the ethnographic heritage of the regional national heritage. Completely respecting the historical reminiscences of the heritage objects, the young designers involve in a very subtle way some modern and postmodern solutions, which make an inevitable transition towards contemporaneity. Solutions of this kind can be seen in constructive, engineering, technical, functional, ergonomic, decorative, etc. decisions. implemented in the spaces of the new projects.

The contribution of young designers demonstrates that in the process of renovating the national heritage, the field of interior design occupies an important place, assuming major responsibility for restoring the ethnographic and aesthetic values of the historical past. At the same time, the interior design project includes a process of correlating historical traditions with contemporary ones, involving modern solutions in finishing techniques, construction materials and plastic modeling of forms. The plastic approach to the interior design respectfully preserves the incipient stylistic formula of the edifice, at the same time completing the aesthetic concept through associated modern and postmodern interventions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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