

Fyodor Shmit's "Social Museum": On the Theorization of the Form and Purposes of Museums in Early Soviet Russia*

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Muzeológia a kultúrne dedičstvo, 2018, 6:1:33-41

Fyodor Shmit's "Social Museum": On the Theorization of the Form and Purposes of Museums in Early Soviet Russia

The article is devoted to the analysis of the project known as «the Social museum» developed by the prominent Russian academician F.I. Shmit. Through examination of an unpublished manuscript of this project from the archive fund of F.I. Shmit we can give a specific example of new ideas regarding the forms and purposes of museums. These ideas developed in a new culture, and connected the museum to other institutions of memory such as archives and libraries.

Key words: museum, museology, museum studies, Soviet history, Fyodor Shmit, social museum

In the early years after the October revolution of 1917 a sociological method of study of cultural phenomena became very widespread in Soviet Russia. Its dissemination was supported by the state. It was thought that it would be able to displace the psychologism and the positivism of pre-revolutionary science and contribute to the spread of Marxism, a creation of a new Soviet science. Special departments and committees emerged in a number of academic and educational institutions, which were enabled in order to develop the application of this theoretical method to concrete historical material. The experience of Petrograd, the former imperial capital was particularly indicative.

We will give only two illustrative examples. First, in 1924, a Department (or commission) of sociology of the arts was created at the Russian Academy of history of material culture. In April 1924, it was headed by Anatoly Lunacharsky, first Soviet People's Commissar of Education¹. The Academy itself was founded in 1919 as a successor and heir of the Imperial Archaeological Commission, and was a central institution in the field of archaeology and preservation of monuments in the country. Second, at the turn of 1924–1925 a Sociological committee designed to combine “the academic work of all departments of the Institute in the field of sociology of art”² appeared at the State Institute of art history. The Institute was founded in 1912 on the initiative of art historian count Valentin Zubov, and by the mid-1920s consisted of four departments (fine arts, literature, theatre and music). These two institutions constituted one of the most influential intellectual centers of Petrograd.

* I'm sincerely grateful to Olga Krivenkova (Saint-Petersburg) and Dr. Stephen Amico (University of Bergen) for the support with English translation of this text.

¹ Arhiv Instituta istorii material'noj kul'tury RAN (hereafter, AIIMKRAN), f. 2, op. 1. 1925, d. 1, l. 103.

² Arhiv Gosudarstvennogo Jermitazha, f. 6, op. 1, d. 219, l. 43-44.

Fyodor Shmit, a prominent Russian art historian, and specialist in Byzantine art, psychology of art, and museology, took an active participation in their activities³. Spending several years in Ukraine (in Kharkiv and Kiev, where he was even elected a full member of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences), at the end of 1924 Shmit moved to Moscow and then finally returned home, to Petrograd, where he was appointed to the post of director of the Institute of art history⁴. He actively developed the problems of the theory and typology of art in his works, and with great interest followed the activities of the coordinating Sociological committee of his new Institute. In January 1925, with his support, a special Museum section was created in the Committee. He also had long-standing relationships with the Academy of history of material culture. Even before the revolution he was well acquainted with its future head, the renowned academician Nikolay Marr⁵. During his mission to Moscow and Leningrad in the autumn of 1924 (at which time the question of his departure from Ukraine was finally settled) Shmit made a report in the Moscow branch of the Academy of history of material culture⁶, and met Marr⁷. After moving to Petrograd, Shmit continued to cooperate with the Academy. For example, during the first year of the existence of the Department of sociology of the arts, he thrice delivered speeches at its meetings (on the themes "Theory of style", "Dialectics of the development of art" and "Art and the public"⁸). The choice of themes was not accidental.

In 1925, in the preface to his book "Art: The Main Problems of Theory and History", considering the correlation of his method with Marxist philosophy, Shmit wrote: "While I was writing "Art", I noticed I matched with that theory not only in the common materialistic understanding of the facts, but even in the dialectical construction of the historical process; but I could not conceal from myself that the theory of the base and superstructure – in the basic form I knew it, did not coincide with historical facts and with my idea of the social activity of live art. Also, it was clear to me that I couldn't be a Marxist as the theory wasn't the starting point for me, I came to art without it, I wanted to illuminate the art not with the help of Marxist point of view"⁹. Without claiming the title of Marxist, Shmit, in fact, worked in a very similar direction, trying to identify global rules in the development of world art and to clarify the dialectical nature of the historical process¹⁰. With the inner logic of his scientific work, he was ready to apply broad sociological generalizations into the study. It was also logical that the museum became one of the specific objects to which he developed such a theoretical construct at that time.

The beginning of Shmit's active museum work dates back to the years 1912–1913. Having obtained a position as a professor at Kharkiv University, he headed at the same time the University Museum of fine arts and antiquities. He subsequently began develop his research in general problemes of art theory¹¹. It was hardly a common coincidence. We can assume that the proximity of objects of various historical periods and cultures, within the walls of several

³ On Shmit see: AFANAS'EV, V. A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, 216 p.; CHISTOTINOVA, S. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Moscow, 1994, 208 p.

⁴ AFANAS'EV, V.A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, pp. 68-70.

⁵ Sankt-Peterburgskij filial Arhiva RAN (hereafter, SPFARAN), f. 800, op. 3, d. 1079, l. 1.

⁶ AFANAS'EV, V.A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, p. 69.

⁷ SPFARAN, f. 800, op. 3, d. 1079, l. 9.

⁸ AIIMKRAN, f. 2, op. 1. 1925, d. 1, l.69-70.

⁹ AFANAS'EV, V.A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, p. 66.

¹⁰ SYCHENKOVA, Lidiya. *Pervye jeksperimenty v sfere iskusstvedcheskogo obrazovanija: Nezapolnennyj probel v istorii nauki ob iskusstve*. Uchenye zapiski Kazanskogo universiteta. Serija: Gumanitarnye nauki, 156, 2014, 3, pp. 223-231.

¹¹ CHISTOTINOVA, S. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Moscow, 1994, pp. 48-50.

rooms of the museum, suggested the necessity of a search for certain generalizing patterns on a theoretical level. In any case, he carried out his museum duties with great enthusiasm¹². With the beginning of the Civil war (1917–1921) the activities for the protection of cultural monuments and antiquities were added to his museum work. Shmit became a member of the all-Ukrainian Committee for the protection of monuments of art and antiquities¹³. He not only worked out and implemented various projects related to the restoration and preservation of monuments, he developed a number of projects designed to implement new forms of the museum fitted to the needs of a new culture. For example, his project “museum town” included the old buildings around the central cathedral square of Kiev Pechersk Lavra, the creation of the museum of St. Sophia Cathedral and museum of the cults on the territory of Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra¹⁴. However, unpublished materials of the archival fund of Schmit provide additional information about the museum’s activities of that period. In particular, they afford the opportunity to see the development of Shmit’s concept of a “social museum”, one of those new forms, which had to comply with the demands of the new soviet culture.

A typescript report “On “the social museum”, dated 31 January 1923, remained in Shmit’s archive¹⁵. The typescript contains handwritten edits and, according to the text of the report was delivered in Kharkiv¹⁶. While it is likely the text was prepared for dissemination, it was ultimately never published.

His reflections on the nature and tasks of the new museum Schmit began with a general introduction designed to determine the place of museum in the new society: “Who wants to influence the will of masses, ought not to convince the mind, but to impress the imagination.” Any system is based not on violence, but on “the faith of the masses in the reasonableness and necessity of this order. Faith is not a matter of abstract logic, but of imagination, of heart.” That is why the previous ideology, still influencing the masses (highlighting ideas of morality, property, and honor), cannot be rejected by means of the mind. It is necessary not much to prove abstractly, but to “ show clearly and plausibly: first, that “there are no absolute and eternal truths and norms of life – that being determines consciousness”; second, that the changes of being/consciousness occur naturally, “with complete necessity against which there is no opportunity and no reason to fight “; and third, that communism is not a chimera, “caused by immoderate appetites of unscrupulous demagogues, but a new form of consciousness, the absolute need, coming from the new conditions of existence.” Therefore, historical materialism, evolutionism and communism were inseparably bound with each other.

But how should these ideas be disseminated? If effectuated by means of the books, newspapers, and lectures, then such ideas would remain the property of the few persons, would not become “an effective force of life of the masses¹⁷.” To achieve practical results, “we need to show it all with things and through things.” That is why the museum does not simply become a means of political and educational propaganda, but gains a special importance as one of its most important methods.

Strictly speaking, Shmit admitted that this specific function of the museum (e.g., a tool for propagandizing) wasn’t new in its history: it had been always so, but the earlier museum had

¹² CHISTOTINOVA, ref.11, p. 50.

¹³ CHISTOTINOVA, ref. 11, p. 67.

¹⁴ AFANAS’EV, V.A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, p. 65; CHISTOTINOVA, ref. 11, pp. 79-81.

¹⁵ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 7.

¹⁶ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 6.

¹⁷ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 1.

promoted the sanctity of the old world. Now, however, with the goal of the promotion of a new system paramount, it became necessary to "reform radically the whole museum and create an entirely new type". Therefore, the tasks of propaganda were directly connected with the forms in which it was carried out. In August 1922, in the documents of the Ukrainian Soviet government, this new type of museum was named the "social museum". What was the difference between this new type and its predecessor?

The task of new museum was "to show by means of the monuments of the past, how the being had gradually changed, and how the changes of being had caused the changes of consciousness, and a result of regular evolution, at first, our revolution occurred, opening a new page in the history of mankind, and after it world social revolution that would safely end up lingering too long class struggle". According to Shmit, changes of being are universal, having the character of general laws, and therefore the new museum, revealing them, should inevitably be a universal, world museum. Such a museum would have the ability thus, "to embrace the whole history of mankind and, moreover, from the very beginnings of culture to the current moment." Moreover, it should have a "preface" or "introduction" that situates humanity in the "proper place in the overall world evolutionary scheme", and the museum should be closely linked to the physical-chemical and biological museums. Here it confronts the theology that cuts mankind off from other organic and inorganic worlds."¹⁸

In this aspect, Shmit followed the ideas presented in his theory of the cyclical development of art, where the first cycle was reconstructed only hypothetically; in Shmit's view, this primary cycle "was experienced by the animal ancestry of mankind", in line with his denial of any fundamental difference between human art and the phenomena of the animal world that reminded it. In the early 1930s, under pressure from the totalitarian state, he would dismiss such representations, and "understand" their "monstrosity"¹⁹, but in the early 1920s, as is clear, the idea of human involvement in the organic (and even inorganic) worlds —(perhaps influenced by the ideas of prominent Russian geochemist and philosopher Vladimir Vernadsky, a founder and first president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences), was reflected in the views regarding how the position of the individual and development of society could be expressed in museums. It was clear that the creation of such a museum would be possible only after several generations, but it was necessary to lay the foundation at that moment.

The social museum should be divided into five "large departments": 1) primitive ("herd") culture; 2) the culture of the family-clan life; 3) caste culture; 4) the culture of the city-states; 5) capitalist-imperialist culture. However, now it would be easier to create a latter department (as there was abundant material for it), and therefore it was necessary to start the work with this department. Shmit suggested calling this department "the museum of European culture". But its creation would pose substantial difficulties, insofar as it was necessary to erect new buildings; and to collect the exhibits. According to Shmit, "The most practical way out of this situation is the gradual construction of the museum, and the current moment should be taken as a starting point". Thus not only would the giant social museum splits into several "departments," (each of which, in fact, could become an independent museum), but these departments, in turn, are broken up into component parts.

¹⁸ АИМКРАН, ф. 55, оп. 1. 1925, д. 7, л. 2.

¹⁹ SHMIT, F. I. *Iskusstvo. Osnovnye problemy teorii i istorii*. Leningrad, 1925, p. 97; AFANAS'EV, V.A. *Fedor Ivanovich Shmit*. Kiev, 1992, p. 83.

The first of the museums, which would become part of the future museum of European culture, would be the museum of revolution, insofar as the failure to collect the objects related to the history of the revolution, would inevitably lead to their being quickly lost: “Our revolution was most clearly expressed in newspapers, leaflets, brochures, bills, posters, i.e. in such material that partly has already perished. So, I think that firstly it is necessary to expand the program and increase the existing museums of the revolution.”

Parallel to this, a museum of the XIX century could be established. Such a museum should be devoted to carrying out a new task: it “had not to strive to become a complete (from the point of view of the history of art) art gallery, or a rich museum of porcelain or a museum of machinery, or something like that”. The specificity of the social museum is that it must possess “the most characteristic” items of each of the series (or types), but “in such quantities that would correspond to the value of each of this industry’s creativity at any given period of time, and in such total mass, that the non-specialist can assimilate it, so that the museum visitor does not, by scrutinizing the details, forget about the whole”²⁰.

This museum should be constructed strictly according to the class principle: “to show a perfect detachment of the “top”, to show the wavering bourgeois mass, retaining much of the general public folk traditions, but stretching to the “top”, to show the backward peasant masses, and finally to show the birth of an active and united proletariat”. This comparison should be carried out in all areas of material and spiritual life: household items, clothing, painting, etc. It ought to demonstrate that their difference is not the difference in quantity (cheaper versus more expensive, e.g.), but in quality – that is, “lies in the fact that the needs and the tastes of various classes are quite different, so things needed by the ruling class, are not the things for oppressed class, and vice versa.” The conclusion is thus reached that “the historical process has made the abyss between the ruling and ruled, exploiting and exploited, insurmountable “.

In the end, the social museum has its own goals and objectives, and it “cannot and must not abolish all other museums”, because in addition to political-educational museums, designed “for the active promotion of Marxism”, there a need for other types of museums: “that set themselves either educational tasks according to industrial (in the final correction replaced by “technical” – V. A.) characteristics (museums agricultural, technical, handicraft, etc.), or objectives of scientific research, or training”. All these museums have to be “coordinated” with the social museum, as if they are its “private “digressions” illustrating and supplementing” it²¹.

Here Shmit adheres to the classification of museums offered in his 1919 volume “Historical, Ethnographic, and Art Museums”. Analyzing the structure of the museum audience as the main differentiating criterion, he then proposed to divide the museums into three major groups: public (for everyone), scientific (for scientists) and educational (for students), and this division was reflected in the selection of objects for exhibition and display²². The social museum was placed above this structure, acting as a special metasystem.

The selection of objects for a museum of the XIX century should be produced in such way as to show the inevitability of “October” – “October revolution” of 1917, that is – “a radical breakdown of the social order”. But it is important to show not only the inevitability and the fact of the breakdown (change), but also to show that “change was produced without the possibility of return to the old (restitution of the old), but also without a turning, in the only

²⁰ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 3.

²¹ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 4.

²² SHMIT, F. I. *Istoricheskie, jetnograficheskie, hudozhestvennye muzei. Ocherk istorii i teorii muzejnogo dela*. Kharkiv, 1919, pp. 39-52.

possible and necessary direction." And this, in turn, required "to show that now we are standing on the threshold of a new historical cycle of evolution – the communist cycle", so there was the need to start creation of a third museum: the "museum of the origin of European culture."

The museum of the origin of European culture, via its very structure, probably reflected most fully the Shmit's overarching ideas regarding the cyclical development of culture: there were to be presented the key stages of European history in its inevitable motion to the era of communism. The museum was thought to consist of two global parts. The first part would show "the class division of the society in the late Hellenistic-Roman evolutionary cycle, the growth of Communist (but: utopian) consciousness of the ancient proletariat and slaves" and the isolation of the upper from the lower classes²³. The second part would show the young barbaric culture of the "primitive communist Gallic, Germanic, Slavic and other nations, standing on the ruins of ancient magnificence, having destroyed all that was not vital <...> who were to start building a new world, which was standing on the shoulders of the old, and therefore could go beyond the previous". The first culture was located in the city-state, the second had already managed to create an empire, and the third would make the next step, "from empire to world commune". This would occur "when Europe would collapse, when all that wasn't needed for later life; would be swept away by the world social revolution."

A typical feature of the Shmit's museum research was its close connection with the practical work, with museum as establishment, so it wasn't strange that in this case, he not only set out general propositions about the nature of the new museum, but also proposed concrete steps to bring this project to fruition. From the very beginning he warned from "just simple bringing together all the exhibits of the existing museums in the building of any abolished bank" and thus to organize the new museum. It was impossible for two reasons: first, in Kharkiv there was no suitable building; second, Kharkiv museums were missing almost everything that was needed for a social museum, and, on the contrary, a lot of things completely superfluous to its aims were in abundance. The exhibition of the new museum couldn't be mechanically composed of various elements of the exhibitions of several old museums. The new aims of the new museum required new (not only in form but also in substance) exhibition.

The collections of that museum should "be picked up anew and systematically", taking into account that this museum should be destined, first and foremost, for the mass visitor. Shmit mentioned the rules that "had been long worked out of the museum practice", but, in fact, he meant the rules of organization of the exhibition which had been proposed by himself, defined by contemporary researchers as an ergonomic²⁴, as they were correlated with the physical and psychological characteristics of the human organism. Shmit distinguished three basic rules: 1) only the required exhibits are selected, so "that they did not overwhelm by their quantity"; 2) they are placed spaciouly, "so that the visitor could examine each of them separately and without interference"; 3) they are exhibited "in a strictly systematic order", so that even an untrained visitor could understand the meaning of each of the items from the general idea.

But what should these actual objects be, placed in the museum in accordance to these rules? It was in the answer to this question that the innovation of the museum form was clearly expressed, including its difference from traditional museums.

²³ АИМКРАН, ф. 55, оп. 1. 1925, д. 7, л. 5.

²⁴ CHESNOKOVA, M. Problemy muzejnoj jekspozicii: aktual'nost' idej F.I. Shmita. In: *Sobor lic*. Saint-Petersburg, 2006, pp. 55-64.

First, cartographic material was mandatory: for example, maps; showing the growth of colonial powers and the formation of the empires, chronological tables of the wars that were waged in the XIX century, and charts showing the growth of armaments in peaceful time. Parallel to this, and also with the help of maps and diagrams, the growth of capitalism should be demonstrated in all spheres of life (accompanying the growth of imperialism): the development of cities, of railroads, of industry, trade, exchange and banking transactions, state debt, tax burden, etc²⁵.

Second, charts showing “the relationship between classes, as with regard to ownership, and with regard to rights and obligations, education, health, etc. (mortality, fertility, etc.) were necessary. Additionally, materials relating to presenting “the history of labor and history of the organization of workers in the nineteenth century < ... > the growth of professional organizations, party organizations, the history of the strike movement, the history of consumer cooperation”, and also, albeit in small amounts, the success of technology would be required according to Shmit’s plan. Understanding there were no such exhibits in Kharkiv Shmit proposed a simple, straightforward solution: “They have to be fabricated”. In his estimation they would cost “far less than the purchase and the arrangement of a mediocre art gallery”, but “specialists in social sciences and draftsmen have to work hard”. The choice of professions that have to “work hard” over the “production” of future museum exhibits, is very significant.

Of course, it was impossible to create a museum; using only maps and charts, and Shmit understood this. He suggested the inclusion of the originals in the last department, devoted to everyday history, but there the situation was rather complicated. On the one hand, the necessary objects could be found in any of the already existing museums of Kharkiv²⁶, but on the other hand, they were only a small part of what such a museum actually needed. They could give an idea of only one fragment of the general picture, the national fragment. After all, if we abandon the “narrow national (and even nationalist) statement of a problem <...> as soon as we start to consider the history of the nineteenth century, as the period of preparation of the world and not just the Russian or Ukrainian social revolution, it will appear that we have only a small fraction of what we need.” But it is necessary to give the overall picture in the museum. In Shmit’s estimation, “after all, it ought to be clear to everyone who knowingly lived the last years, and who lives knowingly now that the Revolution is ours only if its stays only ours, there is a relatively small and sad joke: the question of the communist system can be solved only on a global scale!”²⁷

In addition to a global outlook, the selection of objects for the future museum was to be determined by other criteria. The rejection of “a method of maximum achievements”, whereby only the best was selected; (as was customary in the old museums), was to become one of them. This method wasn’t applicable for the social museum, as it needed not the best, but most representative objects. If the social museum simply exhibited all collected pieces of folk art, its “maximum achievements”, “visitor of the social museum would just sigh ... over the “good old days” when an Ukrainian villager had lived so beautifully, so richly, with so much culture! And he would curse ... everything that had happened during the past half-century, would curse revolution with particular zeal, because the villager, of course, no longer lived so well!” This museum would only “distort completely the socio-historical picture.” Therefore,

²⁵ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 8.

²⁶ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 7.

²⁷ AIIMKRAN, f. 55, op. 1. 1925, d. 7, l. 9.

in the new museum "the art and life of different classes have to be shown – or, if not classes, then at least legal and economic strata, not just the nobility and the peasantry and not only in the maximum achievements, but also in medium and minimum"²⁸.

The importance of establishing such a museum was that it "had to affect and would affect consciousness, the persuasion of the masses, and any mistake in the planning of the museum and in its working methods would engender undesired consequences." So not only a thorough discussion of the plans and methods of the work was needed, but also a new attitude toward the very nature of the museum: "to build it, we should give up completely the usual "intellectual" collecting and aestheticism, the fascination with paintings and porcelain, Karelian birch and carpets, etc. If we fail to enter a new path, of course, we wouldn't create a new museum, we would only discredit the idea of a social museum. And this idea, is so politically, and scientifically valuable that it has to be handled to with care"²⁹.

These ideas weren't realized in practice. Shmit met certain opposition to his plans, due to political and nationalist reasons in both Kharkiv and Kiev. This largely predetermined his departure from Ukraine to Petrograd. However, the absence of any real attempts to bring to life the idea of a social museum cannot be explained by these factors alone. It was also important that this idea was too global – creating a new museum on new principles, with the widest chronological and geographical framework. Soon it became clear that the creation of a new museum was, to say the least, difficult, perhaps even impossible. Shmit himself wrote that now it was necessary to proceed by laying of its foundation only. In the mid-1920s many museum figures began to consider the reorganization of the exhibitions of existing museums in accordance with the new sociological principles. In 1931 Shmit was dismissed from the post of director of the Institute of art history; in 1933 he was arrested, and sent into exile in Kazakhstan the following year. In 1937 he was executed as spy and "enemy of Soviet people".

The new museum forms of Soviet Russia of the 1920s most diverged from traditional notions of the museum and approached archives and libraries in their conceptualization of the notion of museum object. This was due to the fact that the dissemination of the propaganda of the dominant ideology became the primary function of the museum. As it was formulated by Shmit himself in 1925: "... the museum is primarily a state enterprise. The people's money subsidizes the museum. Therefore, the museum ought to strictly propagate state ideology; the Soviet museum ought to propagate the ideology of the working class, or, in any case, ought to correspond to the requirements of this ideology"³⁰. Therefore, such a kind of object became a museum object (in the full sense of the word) that could "propagate", and as it had to "propagate" phenomena and processes, the material object inevitably gave way to the document.

In the end, museums found themselves in a paradoxical situation: on the one hand, it was necessary to prove new truths "with things and by means of things"; on the other hand, these things were copies and reproductions (i.e. not "real" things, but their imitations) or were replaced by graphs, tables, maps, and other planar material. The museum lost its own specificity and began to substitute the methods of other memory institutions (such as, for example, archives). This attitude toward the problem of the museum object would lead in the future, on the one hand, to a deep crisis within Soviet museum work, but on the other hand, would contribute

²⁸ АИМКРАН, ф. 55, оп. 1. 1925, д. 7, л. 10.

²⁹ АИМКРАН, ф. 55, оп. 1. 1925, д. 7, л. 11.

³⁰ АИМКРАН, ф. 55, оп. 1. 1925, д. 28, л. 35 rev.

to the attempts of museum professionals to identify the main characteristics, properties and functions of the museum object. Eventually, it would lead to the emergence of the concept of “museum object” in the works of Nikolay Druzhinin in 1930s.

The first half of the 1920s was a time when the museums of the Soviet Russia searched actively for new forms corresponding to their new tasks: the promotion of a new ideology. Through these pursuits a sociological method was recognized as one of the key methods of development of the collected materials. Museum projects, built on this principal, were characterized by an internal duality: striving to replace other memory institutions (such as archives and libraries), they, at the same time, lost their own internal specificities, abandoning their main constitutive element – the museum object. This, ultimately, made them unrealizable. It seems that this past experience can be useful today, in the era when different disciplines, including informational, have converged, and a new active search of differentiating features of their institutions is attempted.

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