



MUNICIPAL
MUSEUM
IN ŽORY

OUR IDENTITY

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Who am I
an identity
closed
in a drawer

the land of drawers
you have to
make a decision
open something
see

read
find an answer

in a drawer
pieces of identity
exhibits
time capsules



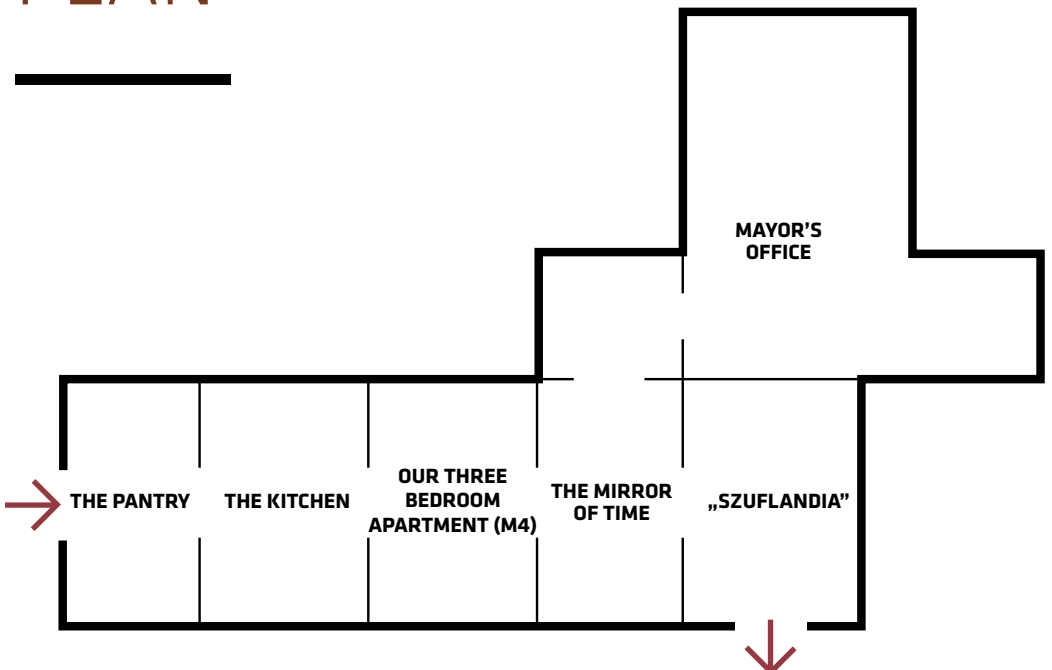
A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The keynote of the “Our Identity” exhibition as well as of the related catalogue is the desire to focus attention on the issue of the identity of people inhabiting the eastern part of Silesia, today’s Silesian voivodship and the eastern part of the Opole voivodship. The exhibition is multi-layered and draws attention to the complicated history of the Silesian region as well as to the fact that its multicultural character constitutes our wealth. It does not provide ready answers to the visitors, instead it urges them to reflect and it tries to break down stereotypes. Its basic goal is to present the culture and the history of Żory, starting from the medieval times up to modern times, to interest people in the history of Żory as well as of the entire Upper Silesia and to attempt to answer the question of who are the modern inhabitants of Żory and Silesia. Where do we come from, where are our roots and where and where are we going to?

According to the substantive assumptions of the exhibition as a whole, it is divided into two independent parts: ethnographic and historical. The ethnographic part involves the presentation of rooms in a typical Silesian house as well as of a modern M-4 apartment (3 rooms and a kitchen) located in a block of flats. The main goal of the historical part of the exhibition is to present Żory’s history starting from the end of the 13th century up till modern times, highlighting the major turning points in the city’s history.

A small exhibition area composed of one hall allows for the presentation of a few characteristic rooms, such as a pantry, a hallway (“sien”), a basement and a larder, which used to have similar functions. This arrangement complies with historical and architectural standards. Due to the diverse nature of urban buildings it was hard to unambiguously differentiate all those spaces, all while attaching specific characteristics to them.

EXHIBITION PLAN



THE PANTRY

The pantry or “komora” is usually a small, dark place which has the function of a pantry, a handy workshop or storage for kitchen and house utensils used only occasionally.

In peasant homes, on warm nights, this chamber was used as a sleeping place for young adults, especially for young girls. It was also used as a storage place for undergarments and clothes.

In the pantry, which also serves as a hallway and a larder, one can find groups of items related to corn growing (a scythe, a sickle, flails) and its further processing (stone quern, braided bread tins), production of butter (a separator, a churn), devices related to washing and ironing (washboards – a glass one and a metal one, a wooden washing machine and a mangle), as well as those related to food preparation (e.g. a cabbage shredder and a poppy seed grinding machine).

Despite the fact that Silesians cherish tidiness, there was usually an ostensible disarray in utility rooms. The location of certain items or tools was most often accidental and depended on the utilitarian character of a given room.



THE KITCHEN

We walk into the kitchen directly from the pantry called "komora" / hallway called "sień". On the left side on the entry wall, there is I set of items used for storing food, in which the most important one is the cupboard for storing loose products. When looking a little further, on the left side just by the wall, one can notice a II set of items with a centrally placed kitchen sideboard called *byfj*, which is not only connected with the storing of comestible products, but also kitchen plates and pottery. III set of items located towards the end of the wall on the left, opposite to the I set, presents items connected with keeping and maintaining cleanliness. IV set of items in front of the kitchen sideboard are the items that facilitate everyday kitchen tasks, e.g. a stool or a small chair called *ryczka*. V set of items concerns food preparation. The main exhibit here is a metal stove heated with coal or wood, with metal and clay dishes on top of it, used for cooking meals. VI set is located by the wall with a window and it concerns the preparation and consumption of meals. VII set is located at the right side of the entry wall and it involves items connected with the storage of loose products, similarly to I set, but with the exception that here, items such as ceramic containers for solid products and condiments are displayed on a hanging, wooden shelf. VIII set is composed of random pieces of kitchen equipment, such as a hanging kitchen lamp, wedding souvenirs and decorative kitchen cloths.



OUR THREE BEDROOM APARTMENT (M4)

From the kitchen, we go directly to a typical interior living space of a large panel building. In this small space of a connecting room, a model interior of the classic M4 was arranged – a fragment of the main room (the dining room) and the small room (for children). To the left from the entrance, a teenager's room was arranged with the dominant role of a wall unit with an integrated, folding bed, the so-called divan bed, popular back in the day.

On the right side of the room, there is an arranged dining room (the main room) with some typical furnishings from that period, such as highly-polished unit furniture, armchairs and a coffee table. This room was furnished with typical domestic appliances, such as a color TV, glass, crystal, glasses and family mementos.

In both parts of the exposition the floor is covered with a characteristic linoleum with carpets on it. This design is complemented by pot plants which are typical for this period, i.e. a potted fig tree and a hare's foot fern.



THE MIRROR OF TIME

An inseparable constructive element of any identity is the history of a place and its people. We often do not realize that Żory is a classic city where people intermingled – not only the locals from generations but also those who came there looking for a job, but above all, it's a city where various cultures and identities intermingled and mixed. In order to see yourself better and clearer, one can look into the mirror “made of others”. “The mirror of time” is another component of the exhibition and it is a historical and social glance into our identities. It makes people remember them, it describes and builds, leaving the visitors with a strong sense of self. It says: this is where we are from, this is who we are, we are different but we live together because we are bonded by a place on a map - our city.



SZUFLANDIA

The name of this part of the exposition directly references an iconic movie from the mid-80s of the 20th century called “Kingsajz”, directed by Juliusz Machulski. The main goal is to present and display collectibles which do not form a thematically coherent group or set of collectibles. They do, however, have cognitive value, which is important from the perspective of the city's history, substantive assumptions and narrative of the exhibition. The only exceptions are consistent, yet still open collections of art, postcards or archival materials which are displayed mostly as digital images, not real-life objects.



MAYOR'S OFFICE

As you walk from the corridor into the office waiting room, you can see a set of objects on the right, where an upholstered sofa features most prominently. Over the sofa, there are hunting trophies mounted on the wall (animal skin, medallions, antlers, etc.) as well as souvenirs from exotic travels to Africa or Asia (melee weapon – spears, bows, sculptures, etc.).

A little further, there is the proper part of the exhibition, that is an office decorated in Art Nouveau style. In front of the entrance there is a set of exhibits connected to work, among which the most dominant are a grand desk and an upholstered armchair. The complete set of items is supplemented by desk equipment; that is, a lamp, bibulous paper and a telephone. On the left side of the desk, there is a big, oak bookcase covering the entire surface of the wall.

Another set of items is located in a room that one can enter directly from the office waiting room. It is a small, glass orangery with a recreational function where a host can welcome his guests with a glass of brandy or a game of bridge.



Identity is an additional specification of being. I am, therefore I am conscious of who I am. However, such a statement is not so obvious when faced with the reality of everyday life. Our identity is most often additionally specified by everyday needs and our closest surroundings. It is only when we face the outside world, regardless of how distant, that our attention is brought to the fundamental question: Who am I? We start to wonder when a "different one" appears. Europe is changing and is facing problems with migration - it is the Europe of our closest surroundings. When faced with the unknown, the different, we begin searching for our designatum, an explanation of our existence.

The "Our Identity" exhibition is an attempt to make a step towards this research. It presents the identity of a place and of people, but it also tries to capture the historical and social aspect of identity. The exhibition travels through time, it shows the most interesting features of the daily life of successive generations. The narrative sees contemporary times as a reference point - the starting point for all contemplation is here and now.

Jacek Struczyk

A FEW WORDS FROM THE CURATOR OF THE EXHIBITION

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