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## **Performing a difficult past in a museum: The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Introduction**

History museums have traditionally been conceived as research and educational institutions that aim to critically interpret and historically contextualize past events (Simine, 2013, p. 76). The past few decades have marked a shift in the paradigm of memory and an experiential as well as performative turn in the humanities, and the role and function of museums have substantially transformed. Many museums have sought to redefine themselves to provide a platform where people, often focusing specifically on the local community, can engage in a dialogue about the past and negotiate between different historical narratives. New museums have been viewed as promising places for dealing with difficult memories and mediating more inclusive narratives about the past. Art works and performances are used as carriers of these museums'

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transformations more and more since artistic performativity that generates bodily and emotional engagements and re-enactments of the past is also increasingly valued for paving the way for reconciliation.

This paper examines the case of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina (History Museum of BiH) in Sarajevo in order to explore the entanglements of the somewhat contradictory concepts of history museums (where one comes to learn about past events and understand their trajectories) and artistic performativity (which provides sensory engagements and reliving of past moments). Given these two different approaches to the past, this paper seeks to address some questions that arise from the inclusion of artistic practices when performing difficult memories in history museums. How do narratives conveyed by exhibitions and artworks interact and influence the overall narratives constituted by history museums? Does their entanglement open up ways for reconciliation and more inclusive narratives about a difficult past?

This paper explores these research questions through the case study of the History Museum of BiH, which has recently sought to transform itself into a space for community in order to open up a dialogue about the past; in the process, it has applied some approaches and practices that are typical of new museums. Its location in the present-day Bosnian context makes it a suitable testing ground. Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has remained a deeply divided country with an institutionally fragmented memory space that is dominated by three ethno-nationalist memory frameworks. The History Museum in Sarajevo attempts to position itself outside these dominant frames, de-ethnicize its narratives and cater mostly to the local Sarajevan community. The paper scrutinizes its work by looking through the prism of performative memory with a special focus on the function of art in this museum.

By examining how artistic installations and temporary exhibitions interact with the narrative of the permanent exhibition in this museum and influence the overall experience of visitors, I aim to contribute to the debate on the promises and limitations of new museums in relation to reconciliation and dealing with difficult memories in post-conflict societies. I suggest that artistic performativity enhances visitors' attentiveness and sensibility and contributes to their understanding of museum exhibitions in universalistic terms, not necessarily leading to reconciliation but instead opening up ways for the multidirectionality of memories (Rothberg, 2009).

The first part of this paper outlines the theoretical underpinning, drawing from the performative turn in memory studies and its consequences for a redefinition

of museums' work and function. I then briefly discuss how new trends in museology have been applied in the History Museum of BiH and consider the spatial aspects of performing memory. Subsequently, I explore the research questions in a case study of the entanglements of the museum's central exhibition, "Besieged Sarajevo", which has one permanent and one temporary artistic installation: the sound installation called "Bedtime Stories" by Adela Jušić and Lana Čmajčanin, and Brian Eno's multimedia exhibition "77 Million Paintings". In the summer of 2018, all three exhibitions were on display in the museum's central exhibition space – the cube. Furthermore, I investigate the thematic focus of the museum's temporary exhibitions and its other activities, assessing how they come into play regarding the inclusiveness of the museum's narratives. The conclusion summarizes the main findings and observations and links them to the research questions.

## **Performing memory in a museum – a theoretical framework**

To follow Plate and Smelik (2013, pp. 2–12), memory is not only social and cultural but also performative in the sense that it links the present with a past and a future and creates an embodied and mediated experience of the past's present moment. The concept of performativity, coined by philosopher and linguist John Langshaw Austin, has in the past twenty years advanced from linguistic theory into other theoretical fields, including memory studies and the arts. What the notion of performative actually points to is a shift from a focus on depictions and representations to the effects and experiences that they produce (von Hantelmann, 2014). Von Hantelmann suggests that this shift is related to the recent "experiential turn", thus resulting in a new "performative paradigm". Viewing memory through this lens requires us to reorient our focus from sites to processes, looking into the ways in which the body is made to participate in memory acts. Performing memory is thus essentially about making the past into the present in ways that facilitate experiences.

Since museums are deeply linked to essential societal concepts and developments, the experiential turn and the "memory boom" in social sciences has in many cases resulted in a radical redefinition of the role of museums. New trends in museology have been labelled with different terms such as memory

museums (Andermann & Simine, 2012), post-museums (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007) or experiential museums (Landsberg, 2004). Although notable differences exist between these conceptualizations, what all of them put forward is that not only have museums' narratives transformed, but so have their aims, processes of narration, communication with the public and social functions.

New museums try to overcome overarching national histories and aim to democratize their narratives and become open spaces for contestation; they move beyond the text-heavy disciplinary displays typical of nineteenth century museums and rely less on objects. Rather, they prioritize personal stories and encourage visitors to empathize with them and emotionally respond to them by using artistic strategies and audiovisual material (Landsberg, 2004; Simine, 2013). Many museums have embraced the cosmopolitan memory approach and prioritized the narratives of trauma and victimhood, ascribing a sense of purity and innocence to victims. Consequently, they often adopt patterns typical of memorials and facilitate the reliving of past traumas (Williams, 2007). Their relation to visitors has also substantially changed over the past few years. New museums better understand the complex relations between culture, communication, education and identity; they do not treat visitors as mere consumers but encourage them to become active participants (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Simine, 2013). Some museums have recently set out on a new mission of community formation and actively approach the community as both the addressee and the facilitator of the museum experience (Andermann & Simine, 2012, p. 6).

## **The Community/History Museum of BiH**

The History Museum of BiH has become an exemplary case of this radical redefinition of the museum's role. Established as a museum of Tito's communist revolution in 1945, it became the main museum institution in the Socialist Republic of BiH, focusing on the legacy of the partisans' national liberation war – a founding myth on which the ideological legitimacy of Socialist Yugoslavia rested. This museum was officially converted into the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the war in BiH (1992–1995) (Kaljanac, 2010). However, since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which ended the war in BiH, the museum (together with a few other state-level cultural institutions) has not legally been anchored to any state structure but has stayed in a legal vacuum

between the state and the entity level, thereby lacking a formal governing body and a regular source of funding (History Museum of BiH, 2012).

A severe lack of funds and financial insecurity have resulted in a consistent fight for survival and have forced the museum to close its doors to the public several times. At the same time, however, it has inspired the creative resourcefulness of the museum staff. Testing different ways of attracting various target groups, the museum has opened its doors to international cooperation and civic activism. More recently, it has aimed to become a “community museum” and a generator of a cultural change by providing a space for social engagement with the community.<sup>1</sup> In official materials, the museum is presented as a public open space that aims to “decolonize” museum narratives and enable the development of a critical dialogue about heritage and the past (Hašimbegović, 2017; Museum: About us, n.d.).

In practical terms, such a vision was translated into the opening of the museum’s space for many workshops, seminars, lectures, art exhibitions, dance performances, music concerts and audiovisual shows projected onto the façade of the building. The museum’s staff has also actively encouraged visitors to think about objects and changes in their representation, most notably in the exhibition entitled “Open Depo” (Karapuš & Hodžić, 2017). They have also invited school children or students to actively take part in the conceptualization and creation of several exhibitions. Thematically, its central focus has been to stage historical events considered crucial for the interpretation of today, particularly pertaining to the siege of Sarajevo, other instances of human suffering and trauma around the world and, to a lesser extent, the legacy of the Socialist era.

The museum has also hosted a large number of often-international art exhibitions over the years. Recently, it has set out to work more closely with artists, encouraging them to utilize the museum’s space as their atelier and the collections as inspiration. For example, the incorporation of “Bedtime Stories” into the permanent exhibition was an outcome of such cooperation. According to one of the curators, the most important role of art in the museum is to provide a medium for dialogue since communication is a key asset of art.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, collaboration with artists (both local and international) enables the museum’s curators to discover new ways of relating to the community and the collections, which through the artists’ work are remediated and re-presented.

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<sup>1</sup> Personal interview with Elma Hašimbegović, director of the History Museum of BiH, July 13, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Skype interview with Elma Hodžić, curator at the History Museum of BiH, July 27, 2018.

## **A spatial aspect of performing memory – modernism, the destruction caused by war, Yugonostalgia and neglect**

Spatiality is a crucial aspect of performing memory as memory always takes place in a space which mediates it: a specific site, a social context and a cultural location. The architecture and moving history of the History Museum of BiH is a major element of the overall experience of the museum visit. The museum staff is aware of the building's mediating role and actively works with it, stressing that the museum is both a place of memory and a monument in itself (Hašimbegović, 2017).

The museum, which was established earlier but opened in the current location in 1963, is located in one of the most representative modernist buildings of former Yugoslavia and was designed by the architects Boris Magaš, Edo Šmihem and Radovan Horvat specifically for the purpose of the museum (fig. 1.). It starts from an elevated plateau with what once used to be a transparent, light ground floor “that gives a ‘floating’ look to the main body of the building – the cube” (Kreševljaković, 2016, p. 123). During the war, the museum suffered severe damage due to its proximity to the front line. Even today, it shows traces of the war and its subsequent years of financial struggle for survival. Harrington, Dimitrijevic and Salama (2017, p. 180) nicely capture its current state by noting that “all speaks of neglect. The weary body of the building is bitten by rain and frost, and its once-sharp edges and smooth volumes are deformed”.



Fig. 1. The museum building, 1963; source: <http://muzej.ba/collections-research/the-bulding/?lang=bs>

Despite not being thematized very often in exhibitions, the legacy of the Socialist era figures prominently in the spatial aspects of the museum's work and in its visual identity. The aesthetics of the architecture are deeply rooted in the Yugoslav past, appealing to emotions and leading visitors to "indulge in nostalgic longings for times gone by" (von Puttkamer, 2016, p. 790). As von Puttkamer suggests, the museum thus provides a site "for residual narratives and practices, which undermine or even openly challenge the dominant nationalist approach" (von Puttkamer, 2016, p. 790).

The Socialist legacy is most visible in the exterior parts of the museum, which still exhibit Socialist-era tanks, arms and other military equipment as well as Tito's statue (fig. 2). The popular and lively Tito Café located in the museum building explicitly works with Yugonostalgic sentiments, and though not directly connected to the museum it interestingly frames its overall perception. The emotional impact of the museum building, which in itself is a historic site and exhibit, is also clearly reflected in the popularity of its aesthetics on social media, particularly on Instagram (Harrington, Dimitrijević, & Salama, 2018; Location: History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.).



Fig. 2. The museum courtyard. Photo by Barbora Chrzová

Therefore, the architecture and aesthetics importantly affect how the space is lived and experienced, but at the same time it is a product of the audiences'

knowledge of history, their state of mind and the stories they have heard (Plate & Smelik, 2013, pp. 14–15). The importance of the epistemological dimension of the visitors' perception of the space is manifested by dissonant reactions on Trip Advisor to the museum building. A clear distinction can be found between the evaluations of visitors who are familiar with the difficult institutional and financial situation of the museum and who praise the staff for their hard work, and those who see it as a neglected place with little to offer (History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.-a). The spatial aspect is therefore a crucial component of the following debate on the interplay between the museum's permanent exhibition, the artistic and bodily installations, and other temporary exhibitions.

## **(Bedtime) Stories from Besieged Sarajevo**

The “Besieged Sarajevo” exhibition has become the museum's trademark. It first opened in 2003 but has constantly been in development – its collection growing thanks to donations of wartime memorabilia from citizens. Also, its conception is the subject of an ongoing cross-disciplinary international review (Moll, 2017). It relies on personal objects that remind visitors of several aspects of everyday life in Sarajevo under siege (fig. 3.), which turned out to be the longest siege in the history of modern Europe. As Harrington, Dimitrijević and Salama suggest, “These objects and souvenirs of personal experiences of the war [...] represent a *heritage of destruction*, pieces of shattered life and trauma” (Harrington, Dimitrijević & Salama 2017, p. 183). Although the displayed objects evoke the senselessness of the siege and show its horrors, they also represent a very positive testimony to Sarajevans' resilience, survival skills and willingness to preserve their dignity and maintain a normal life (Goodman, 2014, p. 55; Makaš, 2012, p. 11).

The material objects are accompanied by photos and newspaper excerpts, but there is only a minimum of accompanying and explanatory texts. Visitors learn little about the specific political, cultural and societal reasons and causes leading to the siege or the context and internal dynamics of the war that it was part of. Mostly as a result the curators' attempt to avoid ethnic categorizations and escape dominant ethno-nationalist interpretations of the Bosnian war, there are very few references to the front lines and almost no mention of the other side. As von Puttkamer puts it, “As if in a horror film coming true, the evil is omnipresent, but invisible” (von Puttkamer, 2016, p. 792). Such an approach, which prioritizes the testimonial



to an epistemological level, thus frames the traumatic event in cosmopolitan and universal terms as an attack on civilization and humanity by evil forces opposing it, as is typical of many memory museums (Andermann & Simine, 2012; Violi, 2012). As several scholars have asserted (Andermann & Simine, 2012, p. 8; von Hantelmann, 2014; Hobuß, 2011, p. 3; Violi, 2012, p. 70), it runs the risk of historically decontextualizing the traumatic event, as will be elaborated upon later in this paper.



Fig. 3. The “Besieged Sarajevo” exhibition. Photo by Barbora Chrzová

The “Bedtime Stories” sound installation, which was an award-winning project of the “Reconciliations” exhibition (Reconciliations, 2018), was incorporated into the “Besieged Sarajevo” exhibition in July 2018. It is “made up of 3 enclosed ‘bed’ cubicles in which visitors lie down to listen to stories of people talking about what happened in their basements during the war” (Bedtime Stories, n.d.). The installation provides a direct bodily and sensory experience otherwise not accentuated in the permanent exhibition, which still lacks the audiovisual component that is characteristic of other memory museums. The cubicles remind one of the confined spaces of cellars while at the same time being comfortable and peaceful. The voices of the six narrators sharing their (most often childhood) memories associated with

life in basements are quiet and calm. The lack of visual incentives allows visitors to imagine the described scenes and stories through the eyes of the narrators, thus reliving their experiences and empathizing with their emotions. The performative aesthetic technique therefore casts a new more personal and deeply felt memory of the past (Chidgey, 2014, p. 1222; Landsberg, 2003, p. 149).

The “resilience narrative” of the permanent exhibition also strongly resonates in the stories recalled by the narrators: they are full of humor and sarcasm and testify to people’s ability to adapt even to the most traumatic situations. The underlying notion of fear, suffering and destroyed lives and childhoods is, however, inescapably present. The museum’s space encompasses personal objects (providing a material testimony to life in besieged Sarajevo), pictures (presenting a visual testimony of endured horrors and tragedies) and a bodily and sensory sound installation (providing oral testimonies), all located within a building that itself was damaged by the war and which still bears its traces. Such a blend creates a powerful experience and even a physical sense of discomfort that strongly appeals to the visitors’ obligation to remember (Simine, 2013, p. 10). As the museum’s visitor book and some reflections in the press and social media testify, foreign visitors are mostly confronted with feelings of guilt for their countries’ failure to prevent or stop the bloodshed in former Yugoslavia, whereas the local population is confronted with their own or their families’ wartime memories (History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.-b; Location: History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.; Lawnicki, 2013).

## **Arts and reconciliation – or multidirectionality?**

In the summer of 2018, Brian Eno’s multimedia installation “77 Million Paintings” was on display in the other half of the cube behind a heavy black curtain. The installation was first exhibited in 2006 and has since been displayed at several different locations worldwide. Bringing to the museum an artwork by such a globally renowned artist who is very popular in Sarajevo for his support during the war in the 1990s and afterwards<sup>3</sup> was seen as a major success by

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<sup>3</sup> Brian Eno, the globally known musician, was labelled a “great friend of Sarajevo” by a Sarajevo news portal for his connections to the region (his cooperation on the famous “Miss Sarajevo” song with U2 in 1995 and his later involvement in fundraising and awareness-raising for those suffering from the consequences of the war in BiH).

the museum's staff. Being accompanied by a series of lectures and other events, the exhibit also significantly increased the museum's visibility.

Eno's large-scale installation of shifting ambient music and lights was an abstract piece with no thematic connection to Bosnia, Sarajevo or the museum (fig. 4.). Its presence in the History Museum, therefore, took some international visitors by surprise (History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, n.d.-a). This paper, however, argues that the artistic performativity of the installation influences how visitors experience other museum exhibits, while the installation's own effect on visitors is heavily influenced by the rest of the museum.

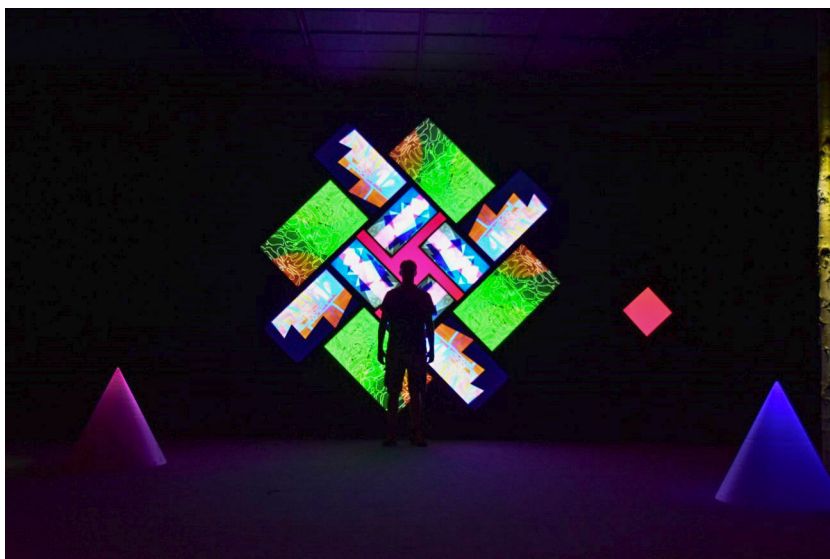


Fig. 4. "77 Million Paintings" installation. Photo by Barbora Chrzová

The audience could explore "77 Million Paintings" as it slowly evolved around them, thus "creating an immersive and meditative experience," (Brian Eno: *77 Million Paintings in Sarajevo*, n.d.). The everchanging images and forms attracted one's attention to temporality – to ephemerality and the ever-forward-going passage of time. After the traumatic experience and the sense of discomfort evoked by the "Besieged Sarajevo" exhibition, this immersive and meditative effect provided an ideal space for contemplation. The installation's impact could be likened to the function of a cold water pool after a sauna – cooling down the heat and at the same time elevating the overall experience. The purely aesthetic installation in a dark, encapsulated space

within the museum – being there but being separated from it – created a healing and transcendental space that allows for a peaceful reconciliation.

If the “Bedtime Stories” installation stimulated the experiential and testimonial aspects of “Besieged Sarajevo” at the expense of the epistemological, the abstract form of Eno’s installation without a thematical connection to the museum further reinforced this shift. The artistic performativity enhances visitors’ attentiveness and sensibility and contributes to their understanding of this museum’s exhibitions in universalistic terms, thus sidelining the historical rootedness of remembered events. As Violi suggests in her case study of the Ustica memorial in Italy, “What might be missing in this flow of immediate sensory experience is, paradoxically, a more detailed understanding of [...] the historical, cultural and political network of reasons and causes that underlie these events, as well as their internal dynamics” (Violi, 2012, p. 70). Artistic performativity and embodied sensory experiences instead provide new types of discursive dimensions and enable one to go beyond a pure fixation on the past and the production of potentially counterhegemonic public spheres (Landsberg, 2003, p. 149; Violi, 2012, p. 71).

The focus on cosmopolitan memory and the universal narratives of human suffering is also mirrored in temporary exhibitions which often deal with instances of trauma and oppression in many places around the world. The lack of not only material and human resources, but also collections that are almost exclusively composed of artefacts from the Socialist period undermine the museum curators’ capacity to create their own exhibitions. This situation forces the museum’s management to rely to a large extent on networking and establishing partnerships in order to attract exhibitions. As a result, the composition of temporary exhibitions is very diverse and does not follow any coherent thematic cycles or intent. At the same time, however, certain underlying patterns in the thematic interest of the museum can be identified and become more pronounced when looking at the events and happenings taking place in the museum (History Museum of BiH, n.d.).

To stick to its ambition of generating social change, the museum has taken an activist stance on several occasions over the years; for example, it organized an event to support refugees coming to BiH and celebrated international LGBT day. Appeals to human values and fights against oppression, atrocities and suffering are the most frequent unifying elements of the hosted exhibitions, which cover very diverse instances such as the bombing of Guernika, the recent flight of the Rohingas, the Holocaust, the suffering of the Bosnian

civilian population during World War II and the latest war. The transnational and transtemporal cross-referencing and the connections in this museum's open and democratic space generate creative synergies in which the awareness of one event increases one's attentiveness to others, as described by Rothberg in his concept of "multidirectionality" (Rothberg, 2009). Performative elements of memory are a crucial component of this process. It is through performing the memory of suffering and trauma that they are relived and re-enacted, which is how this museum aims to work towards "a better future".

The paper has already discussed the risks of decontextualizing past events as well as some of the drawbacks of the cosmopolitan human-rights and victim-centered approaches that overlook perpetrators, their motivations and the causes and sources of violence in society. Yet, there is another concern regarding the aspirations of new museums to provide the grounds for new forms of collectivity and to overcome divisions. Although this museum has tried to establish regional networks and cooperation and has hosted some exhibitions created by partner institutions in the region of former Yugoslavia, it has had only limited success in providing a space for dialogue between Bosnian communities and for bridging divisions between entities. It must be noted that the museum lacks the necessary human and financial resources and faces rigid institutional barriers, which makes it very difficult to reach out to the Republika Srpska entity and, for example, bring school children from there to the museum. Also, inter-ethnic reconciliation has never even been the museum's stipulated aim; this is because the prospect of reconciling Bosnian communities and bridging their memory spaces seems a long way off, and what reconciliation really entails is a rather abstract idea.<sup>4</sup>

Although attempting to de-ethnicize its narratives, the museum is rooted in the Sarajevan intellectual environment and narratives that pertain to the liberal Bosniak community. Even when the democratization of approaches to history is put into place, the beliefs and ideas conceived in advance by curators or artists set the stage and, to a certain extent, are what a visitor's experience is subjected to. This process takes place both intentionally and unintentionally, being informed by the curators' beliefs, worldviews and intellectual frames. Besides the other previously given reasons, this rootedness in the Sarajevan intellectual environment has contributed to the museum's work being strongly

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<sup>4</sup> Personal interview with Elma Hašimbegović, director of the History Museum of BiH, July 13, 2018.

centered around the siege of Sarajevo, thus disregarding the museum's official mission and name. Among other BiH-related topics that are frequently reflected in temporary exhibitions and happenings are the museum's Socialist legacy and the history of Sarajevo, with emphasis on their relation to and relevance for today, as well as other instances of Bosniak victimhood during the war in the 1990s, most importantly in relation to Srebrenica. As a result of the museum's embedding in the predominantly Bosniak Sarajevo context, the overall cosmopolitan framing and the moral economy inherently associated with it – ascribing to victims the status of purity and innocence and equating suffering with goodness – becomes a divisive rather than connecting aspect. Although antagonism is not present in the museum's rhetoric, in the fragmented and otherwise highly competitive memory landscape of BiH the moral economy associated with the Sarajevo context represents a barrier to appealing to Bosnian Serbs and Croats. It thus restrains the multidirectional synergies on the local level while making them pronounced towards outsiders.

## Conclusion

This paper explores the case of the History Museum of BiH in Sarajevo in order to assess the effects of the inclusion of artistic practices when performing difficult memories in a history museum. Drawing on the performative paradigm, it focuses on embodied engagements in memory acts and the ways in which a past is made into a present to facilitate an experience. The performative turn which instigated new approaches to memory studies has also resulted in a redefinition of museums' goals and functions, of which the History Museum of BiH is a model example. The museum has sought to become a community museum by opening a space for dialogue about the past and social engagement. Being left in an institutional vacuum within the decentralized post-Dayton BiH, it has strived to position itself outside the three dominant ethno-nationalist narratives within the fragmented memory landscape.

Over the past few years, the museum has increasingly worked with art and artistic performativity as carriers for communication and mediation. This paper considers the spatial aspects of performing memory and examines the entanglements of artistic installations and performativity with the narratives conveyed by the permanent exhibition; it focuses on the impact of their interplay on the over-

all experience of visitors, in particular with regards to the potential for opening up ways for reconciliation and more inclusive narratives about a difficult past.

Looking specifically at the interplay of the permanent “Besieged Sarajevo” exhibition, the two young Bosnian artists’ “Bedtime Stories” sound installation that was recently attached to it, and Brian Eno’s temporary multimedia installation “77 Million Paintings”, this paper argues that artistic performativity opens up visitors’ attentiveness and sensibility and contributes to their understanding of museum exhibitions in human-centered universalistic terms. Adding the “Bedtime Stories” installation to “Besieged Sarajevo” stimulated its experiential and testimonial aspects at the expense of the epistemological ones. The purely artistic and abstract form of Eno’s installation, which has no thematical connection to the museum, further reinforced this shift. The inclusion of artistic performativity thus seems to open up ways for – to use a term coined by Rothberg (2009) – the “multidirectionality of memories”, which enables the creation of synergies between worldwide instances of trauma in which memories of one group are not exclusionary of the memories of others.

At the same time, however, by strengthening the universalistic and cosmopolitan framing, the artistic performativity and aesthetic forms sideline the historical rootedness of remembered events. Consequently, it blurs our understanding of not only historical trajectories, but also the specific social, political and cultural causes of events as well as their internal dynamics. Furthermore, the cosmopolitan human-rights and victim-centered approaches inherently cause one to associate victims with a moral superiority, implying the purity and innocence of victimhood and suffering, which can become a divisive element in the local community if not everyone feels included among the victims.

The absence of antagonism and the multidirectionality of memories on the global level is unique in the Bosnian context, and is promising for the creation of new forms of solidarities. However, it has so far mostly catered to the local liberal Sarajevan community and has limited aspirations to bridge the entity divides and appeal to other Bosnian communities in a society that is still largely divided along ethnic lines. Changing the Bosnian space of memory from a competitive one to a multidirectional and inclusive one remains a major challenge, and further development in this field and alternative and creative ways of dealing with difficult memories offer interesting avenues for further research.

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## **Performowanie trudnej przeszłości w muzeum. Muzeum Historyczne Bośni i Hercegowiny**

Autorka analizuje Muzeum Historyczne Bośni i Hercegowiny, badając powiązania w pewnym stopniu sprzecznej koncepcji muzeum historycznego, rozumianego jako instytucja badawcza, której celem jest edukowanie odwiedzających na temat przeszłości, oraz koncepcji performatywności sztuki, której zadaniem jest zaangażowanie zmysłów i umożliwienia ponownego przeżycia przeszłości. Korzystając z paradygmatu performatywnego, autorka koncentruje się na sposobach, w jakie przeszłość przekształcana jest w teraźniejszość, by umożliwić doświadczenie i cielesne odtworzenie tego, co minione. Muzeum Historyczne Bośni i Hercegowiny przyjęło niedawno nowe podejście do muzealnictwa, wynikające ze zwrotu performatywnego. Muzea uznano za właściwe miejsca do radzenia sobie z trudnymi pamięciami, zapewniające przestrzeń do spotkań i rozmów o przeszłości. Z kolei performatywność sztuki uznano z kolei za czynnik otwierający drogę do pojednania. Mimo to, biorąc pod uwagę różne podejścia do przeszłości, pojawiają się pytania dotyczące performowania trudnej przeszłości w muzeum, do których niniejszy artykuł próbuje się odnieść. W jaki sposób narracje przekazywane przez ekspozycje i dzieła sztuki korespondują i wpływają na ogólne narracje tworzone przez muzeum? Czy ich powiązanie otwiera drogę do pojednania i bardziej integrujących narracji o trudnej przeszłości? Autorka analizuje, w jaki sposób instalacje artystyczne, w szczególności multimedialna praca „77 Million Paintings” autorstwa Briana Eno, instalacja dźwiękowa „Opowieści na dobranoc” oraz wystawy czasowe korespondują z narracją stałej ekspozycji „Sarajewo obłązione” oraz w jaki sposób wpływają na ogólne doświadczenie zwiedzającego.

Autorka konkluduje, że performatywność sztuki zwiększa uważność i wrażliwość zwiedzających oraz wpływa na ich rozumienie wystaw muzealnych w kategoriach uniwersalnych, niekoniecznie zaś prowadzi do pojednania, zamiast tego zaś toruje drogę do wielokierunkowości pamięci.

**Słowa kluczowe:** performatywność, muzeum, Bośnia i Hercegowina, trudna przeszłość, pamięć, pojednanie, sztuka, ekspozycje

## **Performing a difficult past in a museum: The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina**

This paper examines the case of the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo to explore the entanglements of the somewhat contradictory concept of a history museum as a research institution that aims to educate visitors about the past, as opposed to an artistic performativity that provides sensory engagement and a reliving of past moments. Drawing on the performative paradigm, it focuses on the ways in which a past is made into a present to facilitate experience and bodily re-enactments. The History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina has recently embraced new museology approaches that stem from the performative turn. For providing a platform where people

can meet and talk about the past, museums have been viewed as promising places for dealing with difficult memories. Artistic performativity has also been valued for opening ways to reconciliation. However, given historical exhibitions' and artistic installations' different approaches towards the past, this paper seeks to address some questions that arise from performing difficult pasts in a museum. How do narratives conveyed by exhibitions and artworks interact and influence the overall narratives offered by museums? Does their entanglement open up ways for reconciliation and more inclusive narratives about a difficult past? This paper examines how Brian Eno's multimedia piece "77 Million Paintings" and the sound installation "Bedtime Stories" interact with the narrative of the permanent exhibition "Besieged Sarajevo" and influence the overall experience of visitors. It suggests that artistic performativity enhances visitors' attentiveness and sensibility and contributes to their understanding of museum exhibitions in universalistic terms, not necessarily leading to reconciliation but instead opening up ways for the multidirectionality of memories.

**Keywords:** performativity, museum, Bosnia and Herzegovina, difficult past, memory, reconciliation, art, exhibitions

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