

**How to make an everyday object possible in a museum?
In other words, how to make people want to pay to see
objects that surround them on a daily basis?**

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1 Introduction

The Broken relationships Museum is a global participatory project that exhibits personal objects representing a broken relationship (of any kind). Contributors attach to their object an explanatory text that will appear on the cartel anonymously.

The purpose of this exhibition is therefore to cherish and share heartbreak stories and symbolic possessions. Through this, it helps donors to overcome a complicated event and create a collective emotional story. It is a museum about 'how we love and lose'.

This original creative art project conceived by Olinka Vištica and Dražen Grubišić in 2006 has since been traveling the world. With 58 past exhibitions, the project has made stops on every continent, including for example exhibitions in China, Germany, Mexico and South Africa.

During each temporary exhibition, the universal collection has grown and evolved. As the site says, "the temporary exhibitions are always universal but also unique, colorful with local culture, people and history. ». This makes it possible to have a varied, original and constantly evolving collection. In 2010, the museum won the EMYA Kenneth Hudson Award as the most innovative and daring museum project in Europe.

Today, there are two permanent museums, the first in Zagreb (where the objects are stored) and the second in Los Angeles (currently closed due to Covid-19).

We will see through this museum, **how to make an everyday object possible in a museum? In other words, how to make people want to pay to see objects that surround them on a daily basis?**

In a first step we will approach the theoretical aspect by focusing on the concepts of musealia and "ready-made" and in a second step we will deal with the case under study by looking at its original concept, its communication within the exhibition and its external communication.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Musealia

To begin with, when talking about everyday objects in a museum it is interesting to look at the concept of Musealia.

According to André Desvallées and François Mairesse in *Key Concepts of Museology*, "musealization is the operation tending to extract, physically and conceptually, a thing from its natural or cultural environment of origin and to give it museum status, to transform it into a musealium or musealia, "museum object", or to bring it into the field of the museum ».

The change of context and the selection and presentation process leads to a change in the status of the object. It is no longer intended to be used but to deliver "an authentic testimony about reality". The object is disconnected from its primary function.

In the text *Key Concepts of Museology*, it is said that "A museum object is a musealized thing". The difference between a thing and an object is that a thing maintains a relationship of utensility and symbiosis with the subject.

An object, on the other hand, is "what the subject places in front of it as a distinct from it".

And this transformation of a thing into an object takes place via museums. The museum is, as the text says, "one of the great instances of the 'production' of objects, that is, of the conversion of things around us into objects. »

An example of museumization is The Museum of Innocence of Omar Pamuk. It is based on the museum described in the book *The Museum of Innocence* and brings together many of the objects discussed in the story. So, it is about things that become objects. Objects to which stories, memories, moments are attributed.

We can also see this musealization through the ikea museum where, unlike the store, the staging separates the spectator from the objects. The public can't use them anymore.

It is this separation, this distance between the public and the object that creates the musealization of the objects.

2.2 Ready-made

We will now discuss the "Ready-Made" concept. The subject chooses questioning what is art, if an everyday object can be considered as a work of art, it can be interesting to make a parallel with the "ready-made". According to André Breton, the ready-made is a manufactured object that an artist appropriates as it is, depriving it of its utilitarian function. The artist adds a title, a date, possibly an

inscription, and can perform a generally summary manipulation on it (turning it upside down, hanging it, fixing it to the floor or wall, etc.), before presenting it in a cultural place where the status of a work of art is then conferred upon it. In the field of art, when we think of ready-made, we think of Marcel Duchamp and his work "Fontaine". This work posed new questions: "Does art have limits? Does a work have to meet precise criteria? Or is everything a work of art from the moment it is presented (and therefore looked at) as such?" (Beaux Arts magazine). Through this work, Duchamp shows that only the artist's gesture and idea count, which is what we call conceptual art. The artist is no longer considered as the one who created the object but the one who gives it meaning. A banal object can therefore be a work of art through what it transmits.

Moreover, as Aurélie Brayet's text "Reflection on the medium "exhibition": exhibiting everyday household objects" points out, an everyday object can find its place in a museum for different reasons. They can be used as "witnesses (of an era, an aesthetic trend, industrial diversification) or as a pretext (to illustrate a discourse without necessarily taking into account the complexity of the object). »

3 Case under study

3.1 Original concept

When we ask ourselves: How can we make people want to pay to see objects that surround them in their daily lives, we must first look at the concept of this museum. Indeed, the concept is very original and for various reasons.

First of all, it is the spectator who creates the museum. The exhibition exists only thanks to the public of the museum. So this museum is collaborative. The history of the public becomes a work of art. The idea of going to a museum where we ourselves can exhibit a work attracts curiosity and awakens the public.

The spectator collaborates both through the donation of the object and also through the writing of the cartel, which is unusual because cartels are usually written by the museum. So there is a total participation of the donor who creates the work from A to Z, the public becomes active. This relationship that is created between the public and the museum is very interesting. Contrary to the one-way relationship found in most museums, here it is not only the museum that brings something to the public but also the public that brings something to the museum. An exchange and a dialogue are created. Moreover, as we have seen through the notion of "ready-made", the donor becomes the artist. Because even if he is not the creator of the object, he appropriates it, deprives it of its utilitarian

function by giving it a meaning, gives it a title and a description, and chooses to present it in a museum.

Secondly, this collaborative creation means that the collection is in perpetual evolution. In 10 years, we cannot know what the exhibition will look like.

The collection evolves with time and this means that we can find moments of History through it. This is what can be seen in the museum in Zagreb where a part is dedicated to objects whose history is part of the context of the Second World War. We can therefore think that in 5 years, the exhibition will surely be composed of objects related to the current global pandemic which has had a strong impact on human relations, both through the loss of a loved one and through the end of loving and friendly relations. The museum has also organized temporary exhibitions dealing with current historical issues, as was the case with the exhibition "what we left behind" which was a collection of 'artifacts' and stories from refugees living in Croatia. This exhibition, which took place in 2016 on World Refugee Day, told the story of refugees through meaningful objects.

Thirdly, its international character makes it all the richer because it brings together different cultures. Because to each temporary exhibition is added local history. Moreover, despite the common concept, the exhibition will be different depending on where it is displayed. Indeed, when comparing the different exhibitions around the world, we realize that they generally use the same staging of the object concerning the stage, the lighting and the cartel, but the space and the arrangement of the objects in it varies. The impression created will therefore be different.

Fourthly, what is interesting is that the concept is transposable to all countries. Because the subject under discussion affects all human beings. The exhibition highlights that whatever our differences due to our origins, we all have broken relationships. The exhibition brings together people from all over the world and speaks to everyone.

Fifthly, this exhibition is unique because it brings together unique objects, not physically but in the stories they carry. Most of the objects on display are mass-produced objects, but here, within the exhibition, they acquire a unique character.

Finally, what is very interesting in the concept of the exhibition is its purpose. Because the main purpose of this museum is mourning. The museum can then be seen as a therapy. As this sentence on the website emphasizes: "In contrast to the 'destructive' self-help instructions for recovering from grief and loss, the Museum offers the possibility of overcoming emotional collapse through creativity - by contributing to its universal collection". The Museum of BrokenRelationship wants to establish a new form of relationship between the museum and its public, to create a special bond. It acts as a support, a helper for the public: like a friend you confide in, a diary. The public feels taken into

account. What is also interesting is that the primary goal is therefore not destined to the visitors but to the donors, which is unusual. Its second goal is to create moments of deep human connection through a collective emotional story. The exhibition takes the viewer through sadness, love, hope, anger, pain, sorrow and joy. It is a journey through our emotions. In addition, everyone who has experienced a broken relationship can find themselves in other stories and feel less alone.

To conclude, we can say that what makes this museum original is at the same time its collaborative aspect which makes the public active, its constant evolution, its international dimension, its transposable concept, the uniqueness of its collection and finally its purpose. The concept therefore plays a very important role in the public's attraction to this museum. And in order to strengthen this appeal and to make an everyday object in a museum possible, communication plays an important role.

3.2 Communication

Indeed, the museum of broken relationship relies heavily on its communication. We will therefore analyze two aspects of its communication: the one present within the museum in Zagreb and its external communication.

3.2.1 Communication within the exhibition

First of all, concerning the communication within the Zagreb exhibition:

One of the first aspects that makes everyday objects possible in a museum is the staging, the way the museum presents its works. As we have seen, it is the separation between the object and the public that creates the musealization of the object. In the museum of broken relationships this is translated by several processes: the arrangement of the objects on platforms, sometimes they are even presented under glass, the way in which the objects are lit but also the cartels that accompany them. All of this enhances them and creates a break with their everyday usefulness. As André Desvallées and François Mairesse point out in *Concepts clés de muséologie*, "The artifices that are the showcase or the picture rail, serving as separators between the real world and the imaginary world of the museum, are only guarantors of objectivity that serve to guarantee distance and to signal to us that what is presented to us no longer belongs to life but to the closed world of objects".



Museum of Broken Relationships Zagreb

Concerning the cartels of this museum, on each of them we find the title of the work, the duration of the relation it represents, the city/country of origin and the history of the object. These cartels therefore do not meet the standard because we find neither the name of its creator, nor its size, nor the materials used...etc.

Moreover, these cartels do not deal with the primary function of the object but with its history. They are there to guide our point of view towards the object, they impose a sense of reading. The object, in spite of its history, will be contextualized via the cartels in a precise moment, our perception will only depend on this part of the object's life. They allow us to make a mass-produced object unique. They bring an added value to objects, whose meaning they invite to understand. Indeed, what makes these everyday objects attractive is the meaning given to them, this adventure into the secret world of others. In this museum it is not the beauty of the objects that attracts but the stories they tell and the meanings they contain. Moreover, we can perceive the cartel as a support for personal confession, participating in the mourning of the relationship.



Object and his cartel into the Museum of Broken Relationships Zagreb

Concerning the construction of the exhibition, in order to link the objects together it is organized in a coherent way. When the spectator enters the exhibition, he has to follow a path. It is a stroll through the lives of others. This path takes the audience through different rooms dealing with different subjects. Each room has its own atmosphere created by the lighting. For example, the darkest room is the one with objects related to World War II. This creates a heavier and more serious atmosphere. The light therefore allows a deeper immersion in the stories of the works.

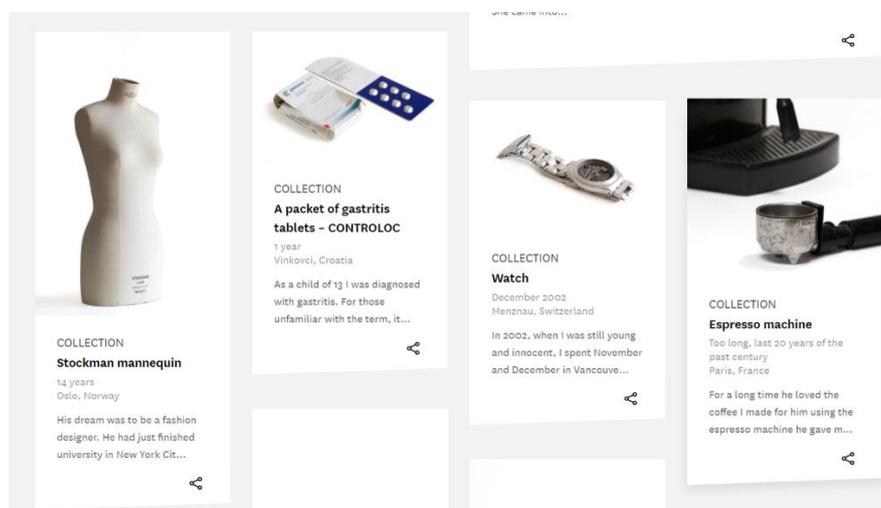
Moreover, in order to make the viewer feel closer to the story he is discovering, the museum exhibits the real objects that these stories are about and not photos of these objects for example. As the text, *Key Concepts in Museology*, points out on page 62, when it deals with the object and its substitute. Not having to deal with substitutes gives value to the object. We have, moreover, dealt with this question of the substitute in class. When the sepectateur is in the presence of an original work (i.e. not in the presence of a replica), he feels more touched, impressed and close to this work. The sensation is different. In the museum of broken relationships, it is the same sensation, facing the object the story deals with, the spectator realizes more the power of this object and its uniqueness, he is more impressed. The object arouses much more emotions than if it were a substitute. An example that can illustrate this idea is the parachute in the Zagreb museum. Indeed, within the museum there is a parachute. The story attached to it is that of the death of the donor's boyfriend in a parachute. The spectator thus faces the real parachute with which the person died. The relationship that humans have with death being complex, the fact of finding oneself in front of this parachute creates a very strong feeling within the spectator. He projects his ideas and feelings onto the object. The spectator can even imagine himself in the place of the donor. The bond that is created is therefore much more powerful and strong than if the spectator had faced a substitute. Moreover, he feels privileged to see such a personal object. He feels as if he is entering into confidentiality and feels connected to the donor.

To conclude, concerning communication within the exhibition, the staging of the objects creates a distance between the public and the object, which no longer perceives the object as something that can be used, it detaches it from reality. Moreover, this staging makes the objects unique, allows a real immersion in the stories and generates many feelings. So, we can say that the communication within the Zagreb museum helps to make everyday objects possible in this museum. And we will see that external communication also plays a role.

3.2.2 External communication

Now about the external communication of the museum:

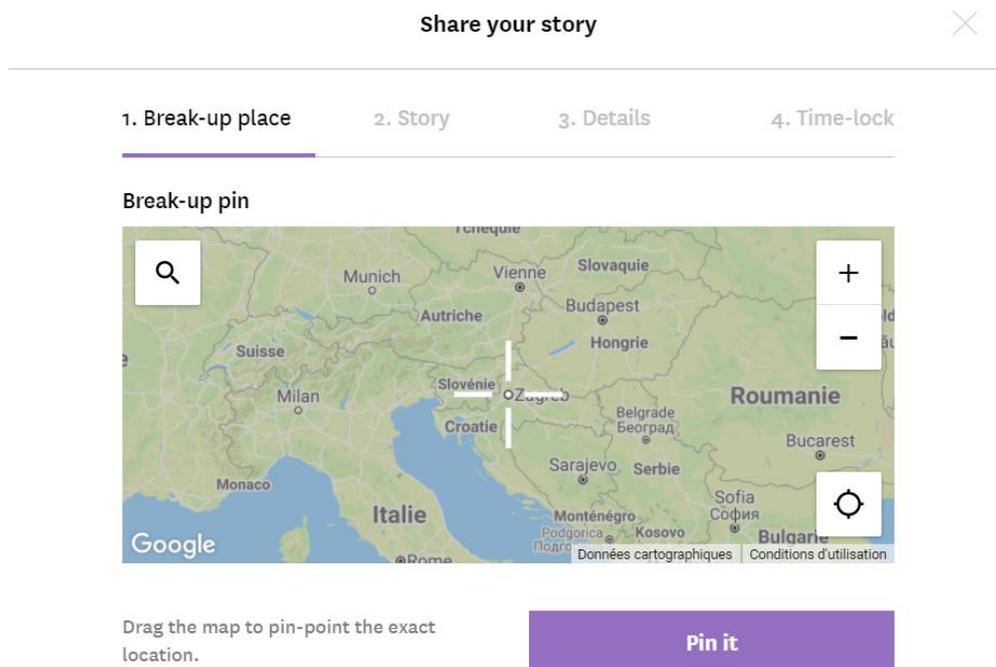
First of all, communication makes everyday objects possible in a museum by museifying these objects also online. The purpose is, via communication, to make the public understand that the object is no longer a banal everyday object but a work of art. The goal of the communication will be here to change the viewer's point of view on the object and to make them think about the notion of art. We can, for example, see this on the website, because the Broken Relationships Museum is not only a physical public space, it is also a virtual space. Indeed, part of the exhibition (as well as an exclusive online collection) is also online, on the website. There, the objects are presented as in the museum, i.e. well presented, illuminated, taken out of the daily context and accompanied by their cartel. The structure of the exhibition on the website is such that it is reminiscent of the museum. It allows the spectator to "wander" between the works and to stop on the one that attracts his attention. To make the viewer want to know more about the object, the beginning of the cartel is visible and serves as a teaser.



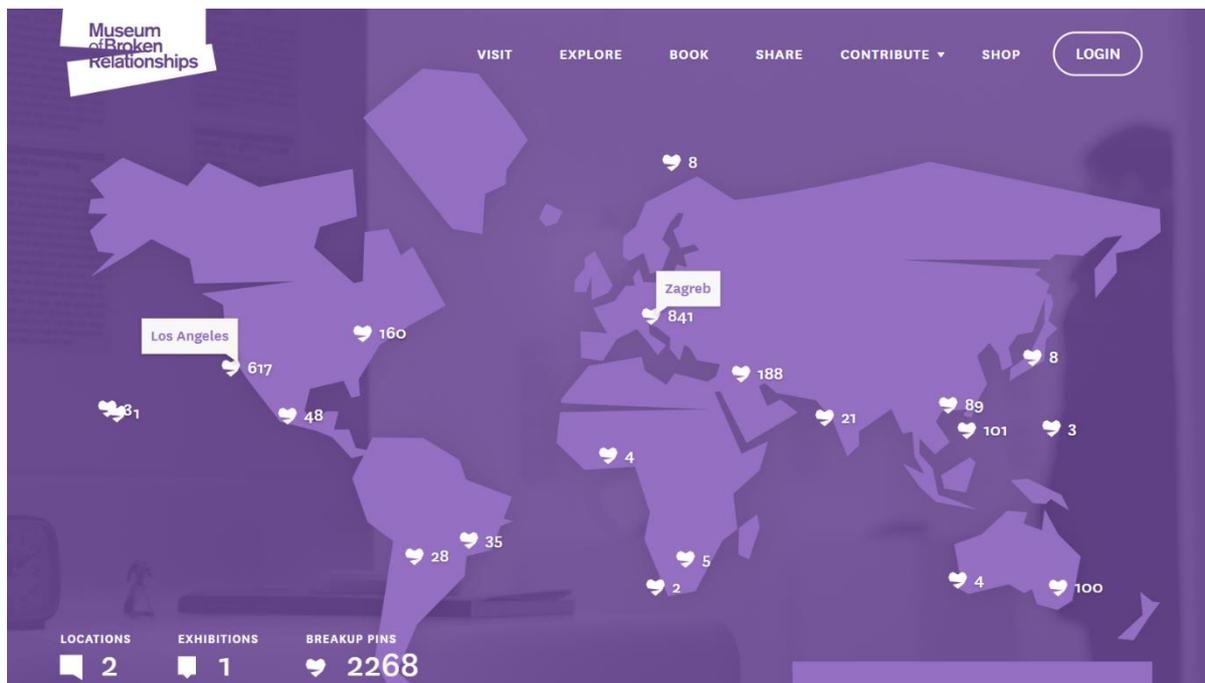
Collection on the website of the Museum of Broken Relationships

We also find this museification of the object on the various social networks of the museum (instagram, facebook, twitter, pinterest, tumblr). These everyday objects are also cut from the everyday life in the book "Modern Love in 203 Everyday Objects on your bookshelf" sold by the museum. In this book you can find some of the objects and stories from the exhibition. The presence of these everyday objects in a book places them directly to the status of a work of art and legitimizes the stories of the people who deserve their place in a book.

Secondly, to make everyday objects possible in a museum, the Museum of BR attributes them, through communication, powers, that of mourning and that of uniting. Indeed, we can see this through different communication mediums. First of all, concerning the power of mourning, this is notably via the "shared breakups" section of the website. In this section, it is possible to share a breakup without sending an object. All you have to do is send a photo, accompanied by a description and the location of the breakup. All the breakups are then listed on the "world map of broken hearts" that appears on the home page of the website. This map helps to show the public that they are not alone and therefore plays an important role in the mourning phase. In addition, it is possible to share one's story directly or to lock it, thus allowing the person to take the time needed to overcome their break-up. The website therefore represents another alternative (other than sending an object) to grieve. This section is a space where people can grieve by relying on their object. The object becomes a basis for therapy.



Shared breakups section on the website



World map of broken hearts - website

The museum of broken relationships also attributes to objects, through its communication, the power to unite. Indeed, the Zagreb museum does not simply represent an exhibition but rather a community. And the creation of this community is achieved through communication, especially through events and goodies. Concerning events, the museum is a lively meeting place. During the summer, the museum organizes many concerts, especially outside on the terrace. This allows the museum to gather its public for an evening. A moment of sharing and good humor that helps to unite the community and strengthen the link between the museum and the spectator. The museum also organizes other events, such as the "green story". For a short time, the museum hosted spectators' plants accompanied by their story. For the launch of this rather special exhibition, a day, the "green gathering", has been organized. This day had several highlights: exchange of plants, conferences and concert. Through these events, the museum thus manages to bring its public together and once again overturns the norms concerning the bond that a museum maintains with the spectator.

Concerning the store now, in the store most of the objects sold are goodies, i.e. advertising objects. Indeed, we can find tee-shirts, tote bags, pencils, bookmarks, umbrellas, notebooks... all in the museum's colors. Objects that allow to create a community that can recognize itself in it but also to advertise the museum.



Farewell 2020 - A fresh start
€18,00



Farewell 2020 - It's laughter's turn
€27,00



Farewell 2020 - Time heals
€40,00

Goodies of the Museum of Broken Relationships

This idea of community is also present on the website via the break-up map on the home pages. Directly when arriving on the site, the spectator no longer feels alone and wants to share his story to confide in and be part of this community as well.

To conclude, we can say that by museifying objects through external communication and granting them powers (mourning and union), the museum of broken relationships further legitimizes their presence within a museum.

4 Conclusion

To conclude, to make an everyday object possible to be exposed in a museum is thanks to two main things: the participative concept but also the communication of the museum. The concept brings people interest. The idea of communitarianism, participation, uniqueness, international are making the everyday objects totally different than they usually are. Nevertheless, the concept of helping a person going through something hard in his/her life bring a strong meaning of each object.

Furthermore, the everyday objects are possible to be included in this museum like a piece of art thanks to the communication. As we saw just before, the communication within the museum help to create a distance between the spectator and the object, separating the object from its primary purpose. And the external communication also helps to present the object as art but also to attribute powers to this object, that of mourning and uniting.

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