



The educational function of the Terra Sancta Museum

The pedagogical approach followed by the Terra Sancta Museum and the educational orientation it intends to offer are based on the following instruments:

- a. **museum-based education** – multiple instruments for communicating the high-voltage pedagogical contents. To assist in understanding the heritage on display we are planning to have captions, panels, photos, videos, 3D reconstructions, artistic contributions, music and fixed equipment. Both the history and archaeological sections will have a strong didactic element. The multimedia section, in its entirety, will serve as a pedagogical instrument for a dialogue, at a more elementary level, with a heterogeneous public.
- b. **educational services** – activities directed towards a diverse audience, to be put in place beginning with the fitting out of the museum. We are planning for encounters and workshops for schools, events for the public, conferences for scholars and temporary exhibitions. Several of these initiatives have already been tested with great success with both groups of pilgrims and the local Jewish and Muslim communities.

The context

Recent decades have witnessed a substantial evolution in thinking regarding the nature of museums and their social and educational utility. Much work has been carried out, both of a theoretical and practical museum nature, to define the specific contribution museums can make to the cultural policies of developed societies. The notion that a museum exists solely for purposes of preservation is now considered to be outdated.

Museums in the past have traditionally carried out an important role in terms of safeguarding works of art and memories of ancient civilizations that were sources of inspiration for poets, artists and patrons of art. Also now outdated is the task, assigned to museums in more recent times, of ideologically rewriting the past in favor of a presumed and innovative vision of the world of an encyclopedic nature.

Today the museum is a living cultural organism that collaborates with all of the educational realities of the territory in order to promote consciousness and education of youth and adults.

A museum normally participates in this shared cultural mission through its interpretation of the historical and artistic testimonies linked to the past: exhibiting and explaining the discoveries and works of arts in order to foster a deeper understanding through the power of beauty.

In recent years, museological reflection has focused on museum professions, among which a position of honor has been accorded to that in charge of educational services. The educational task of a museum is carried out through the actions and events organized by the museum with the aim of communicating the contents of its collections to the various types of visitors. Taking into consideration the needs of the current and potential audience has increasingly become the task of each museum that justifies its existence and economic support through promotional activities, both public and private.

Important in this regard are both the narrative and interpretive instruments offered by the museum (fixed and other museum signposting, videos, photos, multimedia displays, digital tools, multimedia guides, augmented reality, etc.) and the continuous educational activities that represent that basic essence of a museum: guided tours, creative and experiential workshops, multicultural experiences, temporary exhibitions, training courses and conferences, publications, concerts and cultural events in general.

Our orientation

The Terra Sancta Museum was born and developed from these reflections. Accordingly, all tours to be offered in the History Museum and the Archaeological Museum will make clear their educational vocation. The tours will provide coherent narratives by means of a continuous interweaving of works of art with interpretive tools. The panels, videos, large posters and the interactive installations will introduce visitors into an active cognitive experience that is entirely new and absorbing, without losing the thread of the narrative aimed at illustrating the Franciscan presence in the Holy Land (History Museum) and the authenticity and antiquity of the Christian sanctuaries in Palestine as confirmed by archaeological investigations (Archaeological Museum). Finally, the Multimedia Museum will in its entirety serve as a large educational and didactic tool able to portray via animations and 3D reconstructions the development of the city of Jerusalem from the time of Herod to today. A type of time travel enabling one to see – reconstructed – the city in Jesus' time and the principal modifications it has undergone in the ensuing two millennia of its tormented history. This powerful tool will be at the service of the general public that winds its way through the streets of Jerusalem seeking to immerse itself in that human and sacred event which changed the course of history. A human event that took place in a specific country, in a particular culture and a specific urban area, and at a special moment in time.

In this manner the Terra Sancta Museum will be part of the cultural system of the Jerusalem community, conscious of its own identity and using interpretive language that will also fulfill a role of cultural mediation with respect to the diverse public that passes through its rooms.

A natural consequence of the strong educational orientation of the Terra Sancta Museum will be

an intensive activity on the part of the Department of Educational Services, which is producing proposals suitable for a wide range of publics, as is customarily the case in projects to preserve and enhance the Holy Places and to provide training in schools in the Holy Land, both public and private. We have envisioned display solutions aimed at promoting dialogues with the different ethnic and cultural groups, expressed in the appropriate language. Dedicated spaces will be reserved for schoolchildren for workshops, and innovative tools will be made available to the public of every language and culture.

Meeting the needs of these diverse groups will require the maximum commitment of the educational resources of the Terra Sancta Museum; indeed, the special place the museum will occupy (in the heart of the ancient city of Jerusalem) and the contents it will transmit require that programs be managed with special care in terms of language and cultural models.

There are numerous resident communities who will be interested in the contents of the TSM: Arab-speaking Palestinians, both Christians and Muslims, and Jewish-speaking Israelis, who in turn are identified with different cultural groups and religious movements.

Cultural and religious tourism comes from all parts of the world, including the large international Jewish community, the diverse secular-cultural tourist community, the Muslim community and Christian communities of all denominations who come to Jerusalem on pilgrimage. This latter element, to whom the TSM is particularly aimed, is rapidly changing: the number of groups coming from Eastern Europe, Latin America, Africa and the Far East is continually increasing. The multimedia museum, which will be aimed at a mass audience, will make a special effort not to assume any preexisting knowledge, be it of a historical, artistic or religious nature. All visitors will have available to them tools that will allow them to “enter” into the contents and feel at ease throughout both the museum tour and the associated cultural events offered by the museum.

In this multiethnic and multicultural situation, the educational commitment of the Terra Sancta Museum will have an extraordinary field of action and will have the possibility of empirically confirming the contribution that culture can make to dialogue and the construction of peace.

Finally, the museum will make a not insignificant contribution to the **economic development of the resident community**, as its operation and the preservation of its collections will require the availability of historical and artistic guides as well as professional and specialized personnel in the fields of cultural communication, and archaeological and historical-artistic restoration.