



EMEE

EuroVision: Museums Exhibiting Europe


Culture-Project

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**One object – Many visions – EuroVisions
Workshop 1 – Making Europe visible**

Input A



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Please note: The text you find here is a proposal, you are free to change and shorten it. It is nearly identical to the text from the Toolkit, which provides further information, so it is important to read the Toolkit carefully.

Slide 1: Title

- Input A will be all about making Europe visible.

Slide 2: Working session A

- In working session A we will brainstorm together and think about objects that could mediate European/ trans-regional perspectives.
- After this, I will introduce eight ways of identifying and categorizing objects with European/ trans-regional perspectives to you.
- Afterwards we will see which categories the objects you suggested could fit in.

❖ Task A1, use worksheet A1 ‘Brainstorming’

Slide 3: Change of Perspective

- You heard about the Change of Perspective in the first presentation, so I just will shortly repeat and sum up the most important points for working session A.
- There are three parts of the Change of Perspective, the re-interpretation of objects, the Change of Perspective between museum experts and visitors (that will play a role in working session B) and the international cooperation.

Slide 4: Change of Perspective as European re-interpretation of objects (COP 1):

- What is most important for us in working session A is COP 1, the European re-interpretation of objects. This means, that by re-interpreting objects from a European point of view complex diversity of historical meanings will be revealed. Visitors are enabled to discover that one and the same object can be perceived in various ways and thereby can change its meanings. COP 1 works as a ‘school of perception’ that enables visitors to actively be engaged in the construction of different levels of meaning and to develop a transnational understanding of history.
- In this Input you will get to know the EMEE system of eight categories that will help you to identify and classify European/ trans-regional references in objects from your museums’ collections.

Slide 5: Categories

- The EMEE project developed different search directions for the research, which will be called categories in the following.

- The eight main categories shown here offer various approaches which are supposed to facilitate the identification of objects with trans-regional European references, because some of the trans-regional or transcultural aspects are not always obvious. Just by engaging with the categories, new perspectives on the collections in your museum may arise.
- When applied to a specific object the categories may overlap repeatedly, meaning one object can indeed belong to several categories at the same time. Occasionally, it may be useful to run the object through all categories in order to find out which references may exist besides the ones already apparent. Thereby, the categories are not to be understood as clearly distinguished fixed classes to which the objects should be allocated, but they rather serve as practical tools for a multi-perspective approach to the objects. They are an auxiliary means, which is supposed to facilitate the research into trans-regional references.

Slide 6: Construction of meaning/ requirements:

- Identifying trans-regional European references is the first step towards being able to present objects from multiple perspectives. The aim is to show the visitor several meanings of one object – reaching from the local significance to meanings in more expanded connections on an international and European level. At the same time, the aspect of the construction of meaning is supposed to become apparent – in this way, it can indeed be possible that, for instance, the local categorisation is questioned and no longer seen as unambiguous if the object is placed within new contexts.
- In addition, in the context of the Toolkit it is important to have a wide understanding of the notion of ‘object’. It implies all ‘museum things’, not only three-dimensional artefacts, but also, for example, paintings and graphics as well as texts. Some of the categories can also be applied to ‘half-material’ or immaterial cultural heritage such as typefaces or musical pieces.
- It is very important to keep in mind that in order to implement this form of object identification the ‘object biographies’ of a collection either have to be already well established – or sufficient time is required to be able to research and categorise the objects within the new European context.

Slide 7: Eight categories

- Those are all the eight categories at glance, we will now go through every single one, and sometimes I will present an example.
- In the grey box at the right side of the slides, you will find questions that can help you to identify objects that could belong into this category.

→ It is suggested to go through the text of every category first and after this sum up the content by shortly going through the questions in the grey box.

Slide 8: Category 1: The object as ‘migrant’

- *Is the object a ‘migrant’?* The question regarding the origin of the object provides the first starting point to uncover trans-regional European references. This is based on the prerequisite that the ‘object biography’ is already known or its essential features can at least be reconstructed. In this

way, it can be determined, for example, whether the object was produced at a location other than the city or village in which the museum is situated.

- In a second step, the entire 'life story' of the object before it reached the museum can be examined. The physical migration movements of the object are particularly interesting. Where was the object crafted, where was it used or stored, did it often change its owner? Was it distributed via familiar trade routes? Did it witness migrations (such as pilgrimages, refugee movements, immigration)? Not only does the mere change of location play an important role, but also the respective context. In this way, potential Changes of Perspectives on an object may perhaps already be detected in the object biography. Was the object used in a different way after the change of location? Was it thematically re-interpreted? Was it physically changed?
- Also the transfer of the object into the context of the museum can include trans-regional references – if, for instance, a collector bequeathed their collection to a faraway museum or if the museum acquired new objects from exhibitions or auctions abroad. Perhaps it is known why especially this object can be found in this particular museum – and why possibly considerable distances were accepted for the transfer.
- Finally, also the 'museum biography' of the object may reveal trans-regional starting points. The following exemplary questions serve to explore the museum contexts of the object: Did the object belong to other collections before and was it sold resulting in a change of location? Was the object already exhibited in different travelling exhibitions, which also toured internationally? In which thematic context was the object placed by the respective organisers of the exhibition? Did it experience new interpretations? Did the object cause special reactions with the visitors in other exhibition venues?
- If an object has already been examined with regard to its history of migration, it can additionally be very fascinating to see how the object is currently presented in a permanent or special exhibition (provided the object is currently exhibited). Is the topic of migration considered in the presentation? Which objects surround the examined object? Are there any references to their biographies? Even if the object is not currently exhibited parallels within the collection can be researched. Do similar objects exist in the collection, which have travelled the same roads? These examinations may serve as the foundation for new mediating approaches.

Slide 9/10: Category 1: The object as 'migrant'- Example: Ice glass goblet with case

- The ice goblet was a diplomatic gift, state gifts or diplomatic gifts throughout the history were used on different occasions and with various intentions: to ensure the goodwill of influential persons, for example or to show one's appreciation of already received kindness. Gifts were not only used on the highest, but also on all other levels for diplomatic purposes, which is why many of these objects can be found today not only in national, but also in regional museums and due to their special 'object biography' can be interpreted as 'migrants'.
- Objects that were passed on as diplomatic gifts often have a very complex 'history of migration'. The pieces of art, which were intended to have a splendid effect, were made of valuable materials such as precious metal and gemstones, which in many cases first had to be supplied from other regions. Especially with gifts for high-ranking persons, the material

Feel free to shorten the information about the examples. There is provided as much as possible but not everything is inevitable for understanding.

value was very important and, with precious metal for example, could easily be reconstructed by means of the weight. The objects furthermore had to meet high quality demands in their workmanship, which is why the elaborately manufactured pieces were not necessarily commissioned for local production, but were – especially for the highest ranks of power – ordered in the European art centres of the time. Further trans-regional European references result from the act of giving itself, since diplomatic gifts were either brought as a present by travellers or delivered by an embassy, or the recipient was travelling himself and was presented with a gift, which he then brought back home. Not least, also the passing on of the object from the possession of the recipient to a museum collection can be an interesting aspect of the ‘migration history’.

- In the 17th century, not only emperors, kings and counts practiced the diplomatic custom of giving or receiving, but also free imperial cities such as Nuremberg participated in this ‘interplay of powers’. In the case of the city of Nuremberg the diplomatic gifts, which the city council presented to important persons, are comparatively well documented in ‘gift books’, which are still preserved today. Besides very expensive silver works, often in form of goblets and filled with coins, which were, for instance, presented at the first visit of a king, also relatively inexpensive gifts are listed there, which were intended for visitors of lower rank.
- The object presented here is such a gift, an ice glass goblet with case. The goblet was handed over to the Swedish warlord Carl Gustav Wrangel as a gift in 1648, who resided in Nuremberg with his troops. It is due to the material that this object was relatively cheap, since in terms of craftsmanship the object is a quality product. It was manufactured by the notable glass engraver Georg Schwanhardt the Elder. Schwanhardt, born in Nuremberg, learned the ‘art of cutting crystal and glass’ in Prague, which then was the most important centre of art. He later returned to his hometown, where he refined the technique by, amongst others, further developing the tools used; moreover, he passed on his knowledge. For some decades Nuremberg became the most important European centre for the art of cutting glass especially due to his work.
- Accordingly, the goblet is artfully crafted. It consists of an urn-shaped goblet vessel with a corrugated stand and a rounded, flattened base whose edge is decorated with gold-plated silver. The cup is designed with a craquelé pattern; additionally, ‘WILLKOMM IHR HERREN’ (‘WE WELCOME YOU, GENTLEMEN’) is engraved in capital letters in the top rim of the glass. The lower rim of the lid of the goblet is refined with an elaborate, open ornament made of gold-plated silver; towards the top, it is tapered to a semi-oval curvature with a silver figure on it. The figure is painted with varnish and represents a nobleman dressed in clothes typical of that time, armed with a sword, and holding his hat, which he has taken off as an act of greeting. The function of the object is therefore visually obvious – the goblet was made to welcome important people.
- However, there are two reasons which suggest that the goblet was not particularly made for Carl Gustav Wrangel. Firstly, the goblet was presented to the Swedish warlord one year after its completion, which indicates that the Nuremberg city council could have bought the object for their stock. Secondly, the inscription on the glass is in German and not in Swedish. Carl Gustav Wrangel nevertheless seems to have liked the goblet: After the end of the Thirty Years’ War he returned to his homeland – presumably carrying the valuable glass vessel with him – and later began to build a castle, the Skokloster Slott. Today, the ice glass goblet is to be found in the collection of exactly this castle.

Slide 11: Category 2: The background circumstances of the making of the object

- Can the object's production history provide information about trans-regional references? Even if the object is still in the city/ village where it was made it is nevertheless possible that the producer was of foreign origin or, for instance, working as a travelling craftsman. Especially foreign artists were often commissioned to locally produce a work of art using their own working method. If trans-regional European references can be found in the biography of the producer then it can be asked whether trans-regional aspects can also be found in the object (an art style typical for other regions, 'unfamiliar' decoration, new crafting techniques).
- Possibly, the producer came from the same place where the object was crafted, but had travelled before and gained new impressions, which found their way into the object. Are there any indications for this?
- The question about production networks may also be fruitful: especially when it comes to highly specialised (technical) products, often several producers worked together. In this case, it might be useful to examine how the network developed, who was involved, where the raw material came from, where the individual parts were manufactured and where all parts were put together to the final product.

Slide 12: Category 3: Cultural transfer by means of trans-regional networks

- *Which cultural influences shaped the object?* In the first two categories, trans-regional European networks already play an indirect part when asking about the migration history of the object or the (commercial) connections of the producer. Nevertheless, trans-regional networks should have their own category, because they were able to additionally exert great influence. Moreover, this changes the point of view – it expands the horizon, since one no longer looks at merely one object, but sometimes close connections can become apparent which span several continents – and which then were manifested in one object.
- The trans-regional networks were able to exert important influences on the creation of the product as well as on the contemporary distribution and reception of the object. By means of cultural exchange and adaptation processes sometimes even hybrid combinations were created, if, for instance, patterns from foreign countries were used to decorate familiar local products (see the example of the chinoiserie). Already at an early stage, specific trade routes were used for an active exchange of products, which often also helped spreading the knowledge about new crafting techniques.
- Trans-regional networks, moreover, made it possible that people who never travelled themselves nonetheless intensively participated in, for instance, artistic, political, literary or natural scientific discourses (by readings or correspondences) or learned about new techniques and new knowledge of any kind from other travellers. An exemplary question hereto may be: was the producer or client influenced by trans-regional aspects, which lead to the object being produced in this specific way?
- Besides researching possible cultural adaptation and transfer processes it may be a good starting point to ask questions about the relevance of the own region for trans-regional networks: Is or

was the village/ city known for specific crafting techniques or certain products? Was the product possibly distributed from this location to faraway regions?

- This category is ideal for examining the objects in their various layers of meaning reaching from local to regional to national to European and eventually also to global. If both local as well as European meanings can be attributed to an object in the collection then this object is a very good starting point for mediating approaches.

Slide 13/14: Category 3: Cultural transfer by means of trans-regional networks – Example: Lord Mayor’s State Coach

- The annual procession of the Lord Mayor of the City of London originated in the Middle Ages leading from the City to the Palace of Westminster, to pledge loyalty to the monarch. For a long time, the procession was carried out on ships, later on horseback. From 1711, after the Lord Mayor had fallen off his horse and broke his leg, the procession used carriages. Initially, this carriage was hired for this special occasion until in 1757 the banker Sir Charles Asgill could convince the city council members to order a carriage to be manufactured specifically for the purpose of the procession.
- As the carriage was mainly used for representative purposes, it was richly endowed. Many artists and craftsmen were involved in its production. The architect and sculptor Sir Robert Taylor had designed the coach. It was constructed in Joseph Berry’s workshop in London; however, the construction was of ‘Berlin style’. The coach was decorated in French rococo style. The painting of the panels is attributed to the Italian artist Giovanni Cipriani, who had come from Rome to London two years earlier. Therefore, the coach can in fact be considered as a shared European work of art.
- The city fathers of London also commissioned the decorative design of the carriage which was supposed to demonstrate confidence of political power not only by the splendour but also by the features shown: the importance of the trade port as well as colonial ambitions were represented for example by tritons, mythical sea creatures; moreover, one of the paintings shows exotic objects and animals such as elephant tusks and lions. Cherubs represented the then-known four continents. The global aspirations of the city are therefore perfectly understandable in the decorative elements of the coach.

Slide 15: Category 4: Culture-spanning contexts

- *Can the object be assigned to a greater connection?* Objects can also be researched with regard to their possible categorisation as part of a culture spanning connection – regardless of their origin and their producer. In this way, a regionally crafted product can be assigned to a general style of art (e.g. impressionism), a certain cultural practice (e.g. Christian rites), an epoch in the history of ideas (e.g. Enlightenment) or an epoch in the history of mentality (e.g. public opinion on the eve of the First World War).
- It can be very insightful to examine how the region/ the place participated in general historical phenomena especially so as to, in comparison, draw conclusions for the manifestations of local

features. In order to compare objects of, for example, the same art style, but from different places of origin, it is useful to use online databases for research.

- Possibly interesting conclusions can be drawn from comparing the own object collection to other collections with the same topic: Are there, for example, objects or groups of objects which do not exist in the own collection? Can this ‘lack’ perhaps lead to trans-regional background information?

Slide 16/17: Category 4: Culture-spanning contexts – Example: Cross-cultural context: Art Nouveau

- Art Nouveau is a great example for a style of art, which spread all over Europe. It originates from England, where in the mid-19th century the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement turned to crafts as a response to their unease with the inferior goods from industrial mass production. The own demand to not only create art but to possibly remodel all aspects of life in the new style – in the sense of a holistic aesthetic concept – was derived from that and shaped the Art Nouveau.
- Besides being inspired by organic forms of nature, which can be seen in diverse floral motifs, also the study of Japanese art had a great impact on that newly emerging style of art. While Chinese art had already been known in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries and adapted by European crafts, Japanese art did not get increased attention until the mid-19th century, after the end of Japan’s isolation. Two particular exhibitions in London in 1854 and 1862 were decisive for that development, which were the first European exhibitions of Japanese art. As a result, a great number of Japanese works of art were imported into Europe in the second half of the 19th century, at the same time the new form language entered the work of European artists and artisans what also shaped the Art Nouveau, which had its climax at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century.
- Art Nouveau spread not only as a result of private exchange of artists but also through regional arts and crafts exhibitions and not least through world fairs which were popular at the time of the turn of the century. Not only did the style develop diverse characteristics in different countries, it also had different names. In Germany it was named *Jugendstil* after the arts and crafts magazine *Die Jugend*, in France and Belgium it was called *Art Nouveau*, in the English language area *Modern Style*, in Italy *Style Liberty*, in Austria *Secessionsstil* and in Spain *Stile Modernista*. The artists often worked in different countries, which enabled an active international exchange. The Moravian graphic artist and painter Alfons Maria Mucha for example worked in Paris and other cities and later even in the U.S. The Belgian architect and designer Henry van de Velde worked among others in Paris and later in Weimar, where he was co-founder of the *Deutscher Werkbund* and thus a pioneer of the *Bauhaus*; and the Austrian architect, designer and graphic artist Joseph Maria Olbrich worked in Darmstadt after his time in Vienna.
- Two objects that are presented in the virtual exhibition *Art Nouveau* of the European online database *Europeana* illustrate the regional differences of this style of art. The objects can be classified as representing two branches: while the style in Belgium, France and Germany was characterised by a rather organic, curvilinear expression, the centres Glasgow and Vienna tended to a geometric form language. Henry van de Velde’s desk from 1898/99 originated from Brussels and can be classified as the first branch; despite its massiveness, it appears curved, elegant and light in itself. Van de Velde’s form language was strongly influenced by the study of the Pre-

Raphaelites to William Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. His desk, of which four specimens were made, has a clear design despite its organic, slightly playful lines, but it does not lose itself in decorative floral elements, as it was common for many other products of the time. ‘Everything is ornamental and functional at the same time,’ says Klaus Jürgen Sembach about this desk.

- The same could be said about Josef Hoffmann’s armchair, although it has a completely different form language. Hoffmann, whose works were characterised by a floral style before 1900, more and more developed a style with geometric ornaments, which was particularly inspired by the study of works of the Glasgow artist Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The armchair, which had been produced industrially in Vienna roughly between 1905 and 1916, also has a clear but at the same time a playful expression. It uses forms that also serve the construction of the armchair (apart from the ornament on the back and the side parts) – the balls under the armrests for example are used for support while on the backside they enable adjustment. The armchair, which in its design had to meet the requirements of mass production, has itself a machine-like aesthetic – therefore it later got to be known under the name ‘sitting machine’.

Slide 18: Category 5: Cultural encounters as theme of the object

- *Does the object depict trans-regional facts or does it describe them in texts?* Trans-regional aspects can be contained in statements on the object, either in textual or pictorial form. Typical themes are cultural encounters, such as trade contacts. But also armed conflicts captured in pictures or texts provide access to trans-regional references. Further topics may be temporary or long-term migration – such as refugee movements due to war, labour migration, and emigration. The topic travelling and tourism – either for study purposes, recreation, research, health improvement or in form of pilgrimages, provide additional starting points.
- The following questions help with interpreting the depicted cultural encounters: Why was the illustration/ description of the cultural encounter created? Why was specifically this moment or scene of the cultural encounter captured – was a particular message intended to be conveyed? Is the encounter of representatives of different cultures portrayed as an encounter between equals or are hierarchies recognisable? Is more known about the ‘foreign’ culture today so that mistakes/ misinterpretations in past cultural perceptions can be emphasised? Was the object used in a particular way after its manufacturing – for example, was it used for official representational purposes or was it a very personal souvenir?
- This category provides the approach with good links to the visitors’ lifeworld. The visitors’ positive cultural encounters and experiences of foreignness – gained through travel and/ or migration – can be addressed.

Slide 19: Category 6: Aspects of the perception of the self and the other

- *Can conclusions be drawn from the depiction on the object regarding the self-perception of a civilisation or does it indicate how the civilisation was perceived from the outside?* This category also deals with the content of the object, but with a focus on how the own civilisation or foreign civilisations are depicted in texts or pictures. How are neighbouring or foreign peoples portrayed or described?

- The question about the self and foreign image is especially interesting if also comparisons between European and Non-European civilisations are depicted or illustrated. How do the Europeans present themselves – especially as opposed to the native inhabitants of other continents? As of the second half of the 16th century, after America had been discovered and other continents were further explored, allegories of the continents were very popular in Europe, which, for example, ideally allow the examination of the self-presentation in contrast to the depiction of the then known other three continents (cf. object example 1).
- Moreover, other objects depicting the view of other continents on Europe are also very interesting. Especially during the era of colonization, there were many cultural encounters, which were artistically processed by the natives. This foreign perspective on Europe or the Europeans makes the Change of Perspective possible – the foreign view on the past European civilisation. The comparison of both sides may be especially exciting: in how far do the perception of the self and the perception of the foreign differ from each other.
- Besides the presentation of cultural encounters, an object can also function as illustration or description of the ‘foreign’, meaning faraway ‘exotic’ civilisations (also exotic flora and fauna). Thereby, it is interesting to explore whether the knowledge about the ‘foreign’ is of a rather mystical nature, based on solid evidence or whether it is perhaps a mixture of both. Also, conducting research into the motivations of why the ‘foreign’ is depicted in this way may be illuminating, since it usually reflects both the image of the self as well as the image of the ‘foreign’ civilisation, for instance, if it was experienced as threatening or enriching.
- On the basis of this category, it is useful to address the century-long tradition of the Eurocentric world view. Clichés about the people from other continents can provide starting points to question how much present-day Europeans are still tied up in old patterns of thought.

Slide 20/21: Category 6: Aspects of the perception of the self and the other – example: Allegories of the continents

- The discovery of the ‘New World’ in 1492 shook the foundations of the previous worldview held by the Europeans according to which the earth was divided into the three hitherto known continents Europe, Asia and Africa. A new continent, which was explored by and by, had to be added to the old worldview. Accordingly, it is not surprising that the from then on four known continents soon found their way into the world of art – as of the middle of the 16th century allegories of the continents were very popular motifs. Initially, personifications of the four continents spread primarily through prints. Later the topic was readily used – due to the number of four continents – for the artistic decoration of four-sided rooms. An especially high density of such architecture-related presentations of the continents can be seen in monasteries and residences in Southern Germany. However, the topic also found its way into many other forms of handicraft such as, for example, sculpture or reverse glass painting.
- In accordance with Europe’s self-image, the personifications of the continents were for the most part not depicted as equal, but as standing in a hierarchical relation to each other. In almost all implementations of the motif, Europe occupies a pre-eminent position whereas Asia ranks second and Africa and America share the lowest rank. This hierarchy is expressed in manifold ways: in some depictions it is expressed by the kind of clothing – Europe is most of the time fully dressed, Asia merely partially whereas Africa and America are almost naked. The gradation can often be understood through the weapons given to the personifications. Whereas Europe, for

instance, carries a sword America carries weaker weapons such as bow and arrow. The illustrations of the continents are often presented with animals at their side, which also indicate a ranking order. Accordingly, Europe and Asia are mostly depicted with horses or camels – both domesticated animals, which are supposed to refer to civilising achievements. In contrast, wild animals such as elephants, lions, monkeys or parrots are added to the personifications of Africa and America, which emphasise the ‘uncivilised’ character of both continents while at the same time providing the European observer of the Baroque period with exciting exoticism.

- The fact that Europe mostly occupies a prominent position becomes additionally apparent through special attributes. Accordingly, the figure of Europe often carries insignia of power and a cornucopia, which can be interpreted as a symbol for wealth and abundance. Moreover, attributes indicating an advanced state of scientific knowledge and exceptional artistic skills can often be found. The fact that Asia ranks second is shown by high-quality commodities such as incense pointing out the wealth of the continent. Furthermore, also added devices attest a similarly high state of development. Most of the time, the personifications of Africa and America do not carry any artefacts which refer to scientific or artistic achievements. Attributes such as gemstones or strings of pearls show that both continents were interesting for trade.
- In most presentations of the continents the different parts of the world are symbolised by female figures. The objects illustrated here, i.e. two painted groups of figures from the Meißner porcelain manufactory, present the continents in form of putti whereby Europe and America as well as Africa and Asia are juxtaposed against one another. However, even in this belittling presentation of the theme the European self-conception of its supremacy in the world is apparent: The boy symbolising Europe holds the insignia of power, the imperial orb and sceptre, in his hands, additionally, a helmet lies at his feet. ‘America’ – a boy kneeling on a crocodile dressed with a feather apron as well as a feather crown – is situated lower than ‘Europe’ and, obviously full of amazement and admiration, glances at the presented imperial orb, which can be understood as ‘Europe’s’ claim to world power. His reclined posture lets him appear in great reverence to ‘Europe’.
- Whereas ‘Europe’ and ‘America’ do not touch each other, ‘Asia’ and ‘Africa’ loosely embrace each other apparently absorbed in a game. ‘Asia’ with a frankincense burner in one hand and a golden half-moon in the other hand appears superior to the ‘savage’ continents ‘Africa’ and ‘America’ also in this depiction due to these attributes of trade and religion. ‘Africa’, a black boy wearing a hat, which looks like an elephant’s head, is sitting astride on a lion and offers his counterpart a coral branch, which has a playful effect. However, in their game ‘Asia’ and ‘Africa’ do not look at each other, but slightly upwards, which suggests that these two continents could also glance at the imperial orb if both groups were to be positioned accordingly.
- Regarding the allegories of the continents of the 17th and 18th century it can, in summary, be said: ‘They express a seemingly unshakable sense of superiority of the European’s towards the other continents [...]’

Slide 22: Category 7: The object as icon

- *Which objects can stand for important European developments?* This question is supposed to encourage examining the own collection for objects which can symbolize far-reaching cultural developments in Europe. For example, a church bell or a specific clock may be an icon for how the methods of precise time measurement spread across the whole of Europe, which made the later industrialisation with its synchronised workflow possible. Thereby, however, not only any random

time measurement object should be used, but only those that a special status can be assigned to due to their object biography (e.g. clocks from the local factory, station clock ...).

- If an object is shortlisted, then it has to be instantly asked whether the symbol can actually stand for Europe as a whole or merely for several regions of Europe. For example, the Latin script is for many countries something genuinely European and may be an icon for the expansion of the literate culture in Europe. When taking a closer look, however, it becomes apparent that the icon would exclude countries such as Greece or Bulgaria, which use a different script. Also those objects which were initially chosen as an icon may be useful for mediating – by means of their example presumed and factual European commonalities as well as differences can be addressed.
- An example for a Europe-wide icon is the compass without which the history of European seafaring would have turned out differently. Already in ancient times, it was known both in the Mediterranean area as well as in China that magnetite could attract metal. The Chinese, however, also found out very early that the direction could be determined with this tool; supposedly, they would have been able to invent the magnetic compass in the 1st century after Christ or even earlier. Nevertheless, irrefutable evidence for the compass in China was only found for the year 1040. Until today, it cannot be clearly said whether the compass in Europe was invented without influences of the Chinese compass or whether the knowledge of the technology was spread via the trade routes from China to Europe. Nevertheless, the first written mention of the compass in Europe dates back to 1187. In the 13th century, the seafaring nations in the Mediterranean area equipped their ships with this new technology. The advantage was that the ships could now be navigated even through cloudy weather when neither the sun nor the stars were visible for orientation. Between 1295 and 1302, the compass was ‘perfected’ in Amalfi in Italy where the compass received its familiar form still used today. The use of the compass did not only bring economic success to nations such as the city state of Venice, which were now able to make their journeys also in winter and thereby intensify their sea trade thanks to the navigation tool for cloudy weather. The increasingly refined nautical compass also allowed navigating through unfamiliar territories. Accordingly, the compass was an extremely important prerequisite for the expansion of the European seafaring (e.g. the discovery of America, the seaway to India) – and can therefore stand as an icon for a chapter in the history of Europe.

Slide 23/24: Category 7: The object as icon – Example: The Gutenberg Bible: Icon for the European-wide dissemination of movable-type printing

- In autumn 1454, after a long period of preparation Johannes Gutenberg completed his most significant printed work, a bible in the Latin language. It took him and his at least 20 assistants several years to print a run of roughly 180 copies. This venture was presumably preceded by many years of tedious attempts to find a method how to multiply books quicker than copying them by hand. Indeed, the so-called woodblock printing technique was already known whereby pictures and texts carved in wood were rubbed off onto paper. However, the production of the printing plates was extremely laborious and only small runs were possible, since the printing plates wore out quickly.
- The origins of Gutenberg’s revolutionary innovation of the printing trade lie in the dark due to poor sources; it is unknown whether his ideas were inspired. The only thing we know today is: his decisive invention was printing with movable types made of metal. The types were serially produced and could be put together to ever-new texts. Besides several other auxiliary tools and instruments, Gutenberg furthermore developed the composition of the printing ink and the

construction of the printing press. It is remarkable that these inventions were already highly evolved so that they were hardly altered until the beginning of the 19th century. The first bible printed, which found numerous buyers, with its balanced typeface testifies to the perfection which Gutenberg had already reached in this new crafting trade.

- This bible, of which 49 copies still exist today (even though partially incomplete), can function as an icon for the European-wide dissemination of movable-type printing – and therefore also as icon for the ‘foundation’ of our present knowledge society, since Gutenberg’s invention made it possible for the first time to create exactly identical reproductions of a text in large runs. In this way, the production of books was rapidly accelerated, which, consequently, resulted in the fact that books could be purchased much cheaper – already in the 1470s books were only one fifth of the previous price. An additional prerequisite for this development, however, was the increasing dissemination of paper production in Europe. Without having the material almost available in abundance, the printing trade could not have been expanded to later mass production.
- Movable-type printing quickly spread from Mainz across Europe. After a legal dispute with his investors, Gutenberg himself presumably no longer had the means to operate on a large scale; but many of his former assistants carried on the knowledge. The skills reached the great cities of Europe via the existing trade routes – initially passed on by German printers who established new workshops and locally handed on their knowledge. Until the year 1500 print workshops were already set up in 255 places – 62 printing locations were situated in the German-speaking area, 80 in the area of today’s Italy, 45 in France, 24 in Spain and 14 in the region of today’s Netherlands. Also in Switzerland, in Belgium, Portugal, England, Sweden, Denmark, Poland as well as in Bohemia and Moravia first print workshops already existed. Since running a print workshop initially posed a high financial risk, it was important to have plenty affluent clients and buyers. In this way, the early spreading of numerous print workshops in Italy can be explained. Publishers and printers encountered far more favourable conditions for their undertakings there than in the German society, which was still predominantly medieval. Trading, banking and seaport cities, which Italy had plenty, were attractive locations.
- The early letterpress printing, on the one hand, ensured a lively international exchange of knowledge, since most of the books were initially printed in the Latin language and could thus be understood by scholars across Europe. On the other hand, due to the expanded readership – groups of buyers who could read, but not understand Latin were now able to afford books – the need for books in the respective national language increased. Often the bible or other religious texts were the first to be translated and published in the respective national or regional language. In all probability, some of the regional languages were only able to survive until today, because they were already manifested in printed works, such as the Welsh, the Basque, the Catalan language as well as the languages in the Baltic region and the Balkans. Moreover, the dissemination of printing solidified the formation of national languages in increasingly standardizing the languages and freeing them from dialects. Efforts to introduce previously non-existent spelling rules were also made.
- The highlighted view on the early effects of Gutenberg’s inventions shows that Europe was well connected during the Renaissance period whereby new technologies such as the art of printing and the production of paper spread extremely fast given the circumstances at that time.

Slide 25: Category 8: ‘Object-narration’

- *Can the story of a cultural encounter be told by the object?* There are objects, which have neither travelled far nor depict trans-regional circumstances on a thematic level; nevertheless, they can be very illuminating for a multi-perspective trans-regional object presentation. This includes objects that, like ‘witnesses’, were part of a special event or cultural encounter and thus ‘can tell the story’. It therefore has to be an object that was evidently present at a historical event; a substitute in shape of a similar object should not be chosen. It is important that the event which is to be illustrated by means of the object is sufficiently documented so that from this information one or more stories can be weaved that relate to the object and illuminate trans-regional processes.
- This category is easily implemented for mediating purposes. For an exhibition, the various perspectives of the people involved in the event can be examined and then presented in form of several, indeed also emotional, narratives whereby the authentic object serves as their common point of reference. It is also possible to understand the approach of ‘object narration’ literally and to recount the event from the point of view of the ‘neutral’ object, which can be particularly exciting for children.

Slide 26/27: Category 8: ‘Object-narration’ – Example: Mokick Zündapp Sport Combinette – Present for the millionth ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest worker) in Germany

- Since 1955, West Germany had recruited foreign workers since the economic boom of the post-war period caused a higher demand of labour than what could be recruited in the own country. In most cases, the workers got jobs, which many Germans did not want to carry out anymore, as they were rather unattractive regarding payment and working conditions. Originally, migrant workers from Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal, Turkey and other countries were supposed to stay for a few years only – therefore the term ‘Gastarbeiter’ (guest workers) soon became popular.
- For the arrival of the millionth ‘Gastarbeiter’ in Germany in September 1964, the Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände (BDA, in English: Confederation of German Employers’ Associations) organised a festive reception. A Portuguese migrant had already been selected from a list, to whom the honour of a special welcome should be given. Immediately after arrival of the two special trains that had brought new workers from the Iberian Peninsula to Cologne-Deutz, speakers called for the name of Armando Rodrigues de Sá. He first did not react, instead he sought protection among his colleagues – he thought that he should be sent back to Portugal. However, his colleagues urged him forward, and with the help of an interpreter, the initially scared Armando Rodrigues de Sá finally started to understand the situation. He received a bouquet of flowers and a Mokick (motorcycle) of the brand Zündapp Sport Combinette from the BDA. After the ceremony with welcoming speeches, songs and a flurry of flashbulbs, Armando Rodrigues de Sá travelled together with his gift to Stuttgart-Degerloch to a construction company where he continued to work for years to come. The welcome ceremony was a big media event in Germany and for the first time media showed the recruitment of foreign workers as not only a rather abstract economic phenomenon but also the ‘human side of European labour migration.’

- Today, the Mokick is presented as part of the permanent exhibition of the *Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (House of history of the Federal Republic of Germany), together with a photo of Armando Rodrigues de Sá at the welcoming ceremony with the Mokick and the bouquet. During the preparations of an exhibition for the 50th anniversary of the Federal Republic in Berlin 1999, the makers succeeded in finding Armando Rodrigues de Sá's family in Portugal. The family still had the Mokick, which could be acquired by Haus der Geschichte. Moreover, the family told the life story of Germany's millionth 'Gastarbeiter': Armando Rodrigues de Sá brought the Mokick to Portugal already on his first visit back home. After an accident at work, he returned to Portugal for good in 1970. With the money earned in Germany, the family could buy a house in Portugal; however, it turned out that Armando Rodrigues de Sá had a gastric tumour and the family needed all their savings for the medical treatment. He was not aware that he actually could have claimed sick pay, nobody had told him during his time in Germany. He died in 1979 at the age of just 53 years.
- Within the commemorative culture of the Federal Republic of Germany, the welcoming of the millionth 'Gastarbeiter' still has a great significance – the time-consuming search for the Mokick and its presentation within the permanent exhibition of the *Haus der Geschichte* is a proof for that. The brochure about this special object says: 'This significant exhibit is a symbol for the rapid economic growth in the Federal Republic of Germany and the role of foreign workers in this success story.'

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