

**International workshop at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum:
Chinese decorative walls and a house model from the Skušek collection
12–13 February 2020**

Bilateral Project: Application of new technologies for the presentation of East-Asian collections in Slovenian museums

One of the main goals of the VAZ project is to bring East Asian collections held at various Slovenian museums, which have never been thoroughly researched and displayed, to both experts and the general public. In doing so, we often face the challenge of how to present those extremely valuable pieces of furniture and architectural elements, such as those from the collection of Ivan Skušek (Slovene Ethnographic Museum), which are difficult to put on display, especially due to their large size.

In order to find inventive solutions to this problem, we established cooperation with the Institute of Architecture and Media (IAM) at the Technical University from Graz. They have been conducting an outstanding research project for the past three years, called *FWF-Project: Nagara Architecture of Himachal: Form, Geometry, Construction*. During the course of the project, they have developed a website, focused on digital 3D-models of architectural objects, and managed to successfully present the material heritage of the respective Himalayan region. The aim of the bilateral exchange is to explore the possibilities of using their technology in order to present certain East Asian objects from Slovenian museums, starting with several Chinese decorative walls and a Chinese house model from the Skušek collection kept by the Slovene Ethnographic Museum.

We agreed on four work visits between the two participating project teams. The first of our meetings took place on 12 and 13 February 2020, when the research team from Graz paid us their first visit to Ljubljana. We organized the meeting in the form of a two-day workshop attended by members of both project teams.

Day 1:

On Wednesday morning, 12 February, the members of the Nagara Project team visited us at the Department of Asian Studies (Faculty of Arts, UL). We presented them the VAZ project, the collections we intend to research and the emerging database. A special emphasis was put on the Skušek collection which contains the Chinese decorative walls and the house model to be reconstructed. This introduction was followed by the presentation of their project and of the ways they create 3D models or reconstructions of architectural objects such as Indian temples in Nagara.

After lunch, we took the visiting team to the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, more precisely to the Asian part of the museum storage rooms, where they could first view the rich collection Asian objects. The rest of the afternoon was dedicated to the examination and photographing of the above mentioned decorative walls and the wooden architectural model from the Skušek collection.

Day 2:

On Thursday morning, 13 February, we met at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum again and headed to the storage room, where the visiting project team continued with close-up photographing of the walls and the house model. They will use the photographs to prepare 3D models of the photographed objects. While they have already undertaken the process of digital reconstruction, we found numerous sources in the form of various publications containing specimens of similar decorative walls, some of them originating straight from the Forbidden City in Beijing. Together we came up with several discoveries that will be used during the 3D digital reconstruction project.

We concluded the workshop over lunch, when we summarized our findings and discuss the further steps of the joint project. We are already looking forward to our next meeting and further fruitful exchange of knowledge that we have laid out in the course of this two-day workshop.

The dissemination of the partial results of the joint bilateral project will be presented at the 3rd EAAA conference that will take place in September 2020 in Ljubljana. The results will also be shown to the public as a special museum exhibition, dedicated to the decorative walls from the Ivan Skušek collection.

Goals and long-term perspectives of the bilateral project

The cooperation between the two research parties extends to the academic fields of Asian studies and digital humanities (DH). The idea of digitization has grown prominent in all academic fields, especially within the fields of humanities as well as social and cultural studies. The virtual models, created by the Nagara Project team, come closest to the real objects, much closer than any textual description and even a photograph can. For this reason, their approach might provide a solution for museums, especially in cases where the objects are not suitable for physical presentation. The joint project will enable both research teams not only to develop new methods to preserve Asian collections but also to reconstruct the original context of individual objects or entire collections. The long-term goal of the project is, among other things, also the creation of a digital visual archive of museum collections that will be accessible to the general public.

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

Wednesday, 12 February 2010	
10:30–12:00	Presentations of both teams (Faculty of Arts, Aškerčeva 2, lecture hall 2-Rim)
<i>Lunch</i>	
13:30–18:00	Slovenian Ethnographic Museum collection (Slovenian Ethnographic Museum, Metelkova ulica 2) Nataša Vampelj Suhadolnik: <i>Project of East Asian Collections in Slovenia: Chinese Decorative Walls from the Skušek Collection</i> Gerald Kozicz: <i>Project: Nagara Architecture of Himachal: Form, Geometry, Construction</i>
Thursday, 13 February 2020	
9:00-12:00	Slovenian Ethnographic Museum collection
<i>Lunch</i>	
13:30–16:00	Concluding meeting (Slovenian Ethnographic Museum)