The University Archaeological Collections from their Inception until Today. The University of Graz as a Case Study for teaching

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Abstract

Archaeological collections are closely linked to institutes of Archaeology at Universities, and have a long tradition. Since the 18th century, but especially since the beginning of the 19th century archaeological artefacts as well as casts have been consciously acquired for teaching. Thus, numerous highly valued archaeological collections were formed. The Second World War was followed by a decline, which is now superseded by a significant upturn. Over time a lot has happened and changed. The rapid development of technology in the recent decades has left its effects also in the field of archaeology and has contributed to its modernisation.

In this paper the role of the University of Archaeological Collections, in teaching, research and public, will be presented. This will be demonstrated with the case study of Graz. Further it will focus on the function and activity of such collections such as a didactical tool today.
Most University Departments of Archaeology in Europe are connected to related collections. The Archaeological Collections of Graz include two parts: the original artefacts and the plaster casts. The "archaeological cabinet" of the originals, reproductions and photographs was constituted in 1865 in order to support the teaching of the classical studies1.

Figure 1. Archaeological Collections, University of Graz

The term museum (Greek μουσεῖον, mouseion) was originally associated with the sanctuary of the Muses, the protective goddesses of arts, culture and science. A museum was part of a philosophical institution and a place where the teaching material was stored². During the Renaissance the terms "museum, studio, studioso, galleria, cabineto or raccolta" were equally used for collections of paintings, books and other works of art. Since the foundation of National Museums though, only the term museum has been established.

2About a review of the term and the history of a museum, see François Mairesse, "The Term Museum," in What is a Museum?, ed. Ann Davis et al. (München: Verlag Dr. C. Müller-Straten, 2007), 19–25; Wolf D. Heilmeyer, "Mouseion – Museum: Kleiner Überblick zum Namen und zur Geschichte der Museen" ["Museum: Brief Introduction to the name and the history of museums"]. In Erst erfreuen, dann belehren. Museologie und Archäologie, ed. Wolf D. Heilmeyer, (Berlin: G+H-Verlag 2013), 22–24. Diog. Laertius 5.51; Paus. 1.30.2, Andreas Glock "Museion", Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike VIII (2000), 507–511; The "Mouseion" of Alexandria, founded in the early Hellenistic period, was one of the most important research institutions of the ancient world (Strabo 17.1.8; Suet. Claud. 42). It was equipped with roofed and open plan function rooms (exedra and peripatos) with a restaurant (oikos), presumably with official residences and gardens too, but also with the famous library. Collecting significant objects, however, was associated with shrines. In Treasuries, the thesauroi, precious objects were stored. There were objects that were permanently placed in the shrines and temples or others that were shown in special cases during certain festival (special exhibition). In the Pinacotheca – at the left wing of the Propylaea at the Acropolis of Athens – were kept pictures of renowned painters (Paus. 1.22.6–7).
In the following we will look at these tasks using the University Collection of Graz as an example. According to the ICOM-definition "a museum is in charge of accomplishing four tasks: acquire, conserve, research and exhibit"\(^1\).

**Acquire**

The collection of the Archaeological Institute of Graz holds more than 2000 original artefacts, containing pottery, whole vessels or fragments, as well as objects made of bronze, glass and other materials. The cast collection contains over 400 sculptures from the Greek Archaic to the Roman period\(^2\). An interest towards the classical period of art can be noticed here just like in other cast collections\(^3\). Plaster casts were already known in antiquity\(^4\) when they were used for the production of marble or bronze sculptures, as copies or as artworks themselves\(^5\).

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\(^3\)The casts were intended to support the aesthetic and artistic education, on account of this plaster cast were produced mainly in the tradition of classicism, which considered as exemplary, see Johannes Bauer, "Gipsabgussammlungen an deutschsprachigen Universitäten" ["Plaster Cast Collections at German Universities"], *Jahrbuch für Universitätsgeschichte 5* (2002): 121, not. 15.

\(^4\)Terms: Abguss-Sammlung or Gipsmuseum (ger.), cast collection (engl.), musee des moulages (fr.), gipsoteca (it.). Ancient terms of the plasters were: apomagma, sphragis, apomaxasthai, later following terms were also applied: gypsoplastes, gypsoplasia. The use of plasters is recorded both by the ancient sources (Theophr. On Stones 64–69) as well as by archaeological findings. Funerary masks, wigs, reliefs, statues, and even portraits have been preserved in plaster; Ingeborg Kader, "Abguß/Abgußsammlung", *Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike XIII*, (1996): 1–6; Rune Frederiksen, "Plaster Casts in Antiquity", in *Plaster Casts. Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, ed. Rune Frederiksen and Eckart Marchand (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 13–15. At the gulf of Naples, in Baiæ more than 400 fragments of plaster casts of statues were found placed in a basement in the area of the Sosandra thermal baths, see Christa Landwehr, *Die antiken Gipsabgüsse aus Biaia [The ancient plaster casts of Biaia]* (Berlin: Mann Verlag, 1985).
The history of the collections is linked to the general interest in the ancient world. In the Renaissance we see a first approximation, commitment and admiration of antiquity\(^1\). In the 18th century some collections (e. g. Dresden Art Academy) were declared as academies and were open to the public from the 19th century on. In the following years intensive excavations in the Mediterranean Sea were carried out. The transport of antiques from the archaeological sites abroad though was prohibited by law\(^2\). As a result an intensive production of plaster copies arose and the need of them as teaching materials at universities increased. At the last quarter of the 19th century the casting collections have had their heyday along with the establishment or extension of collections at universities\(^3\). At the beginning of the 20th century

\(^1\)Claudia Danguillier, "Abgußsammlungen" ['Molding Collections '], in Gips nicht mehr. Abgüsse als letzte Zeugen antiker Kunst, ed. Johannes Bauer and Wilfried Geominy (Bonn: Köllen Druck und Verlag, 2000), 34.


\(^3\)There are also University collections with a different focus, thus the Uniseum, the University museum of the Albert-Ludwigs-University in Freiburg presents the development of the University since its founding (Uniseum Freiburg, Universität Freiburg Corporation, accessed July 3, 2015, http://bit.ly/1GtTyUQ).
and into the 1970s the cast collections were not highly appreciated in contrast to the original artefacts. But since the 1980s the cast collections receive an upturn, which will hopefully remain 1.

Conserve

The term "conserve" is related to security, restoration and conservation of the museum’s objects. At the University of Graz the original artefacts as well as the plaster casts undergo such procedures 2.

Research

The University Collections in Graz are closely linked to research 3. The figured Greek and Italian vases were scientifically examined and published in a recent volume of the Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum (CVA) series 4. The documentation of the objects is connected mainly to “research” but it refers also to other functions of a museum. In case of the Graz collections, the


2 Preservation is a major function of museums in order to communicate what each museum has retained as evidence worthy of interest, see Andree Desvallées, "Definition of Museum" in What is a Museum? ed. Ann Davis et al., (München: Verlag Dr. C. Müller-Straten, 2007), 127. The restaurateurs R. Fürhacker – A.K. Klatz were in charge to restore several vessels in course of the publication of M. Christidis et al., "Originalsammlung des Instituts für Archäologie der Karl-Franzens-Universität Graz 1" ["Original Collection of the Institute of Archaeology of the Karl-Franzens-University of Graz 1"] in Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum, Österreich, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000).

3 It is a place of universities and museums to conduct research and it is the place of museums as public institutions to disseminate that research and make the results understandable to the public through publications, exhibitions and public programmin, see Irene Bald-Romano, "Scholarship in Anthropology, Archaeology, and Ethnography Museums", in Scholarship and museums. Roles and responsibilities, ed. Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. (Newark 1988), 63.

4 The original collection of Graz possesses pottery (whole vessels or fragments) from all kinds of classes, concerning chronological and geographical criteria. It is significant the difference between a University and a private collection. A private collector acquires objects after his personal taste. The primary purpose of a University is the teaching and the original collection is incumbent of this function.
original artefacts have been entirely digitally inventoried and the inventory of the cast collection is in progress. The objects are presented at an online portal of the University of Graz along with other University collections. Further the plaster casts are subject to research to certain aspects like artist’s assignments, techniques or production, i.e. the researches in order to identify the authenticity of the Satyr Group, a plaster of which is situated in Graz.

Exhibit

Collections provide the foundation for museums or exhibitions, but they are not themselves a museum. The museums are obliged to not only collect and investigate the works of art, but also to present them to the public. In this regard the objects set up the basis for each activity of the museum. Through exhibition museums disseminate their own research or that of others to the public. The Archaeological Collections of the University of Graz were accessible to the public from the beginning. In recent years additional public activities take place, like the participation in the Children’s University or in the Night of Museums.

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The Archaeological Collections in Graz Today

When we think about museums, we think about great buildings with quiet, tidy rooms and spotless floors, where the objects are the only things in place. This is the popular view of a museum. Regarding our museum at the University of Graz we are confronted with a different situation: there are also desks, chairs, computers, people who work, make research, write papers etc. Therefore the rooms of the archaeological collections are a place where students or staff and the objects build a symbiosis. This is not a "museum" where everything remains quiet and untouched but it is a working area, a place for academic discourse, were knowledge can be gained every day¹. Lectures with material from the original and the cast collection take place on a regular basis. In addition, lectures of other faculties like the University of fine arts, or drawing lessons are included in the daily program.

The Museum as Education Place in General

A museum was originally a synonym for a place where collections were stored, exhibited and presented. But nowadays a "museum" is also considered to be an educational place². In the ICOM definition of museums the term "education" is mentioned more than one time implicit or explicit, which points out its importance. The word “education” refers not only to academics but to everybody.

Thus learning constitutes a major part of the museum’s service to the public³. This was detected since the beginning of the 20th century through visitor studies, museum associations and new journals⁴. Out of this need a relatively new field of study, "Museum Education", developed as a discipline

³Learning resp. Teaching is a major function that a museum must fullfill and this was the case in ist original form with the Mouseion of Alexandria, see Andrée Desvallées, "Definition of Museum", in What is a Museum? Ann Davis et al., (München: Verlag Dr. C. Müller-Straten 2007), 129.
of its own right within pedagogy\(^1\). The term pedagogy comes from "pais agein" and deals with any actions of education\(^2\).

Since the beginning the "Museum Education" was marked by a variety of methods and approaches without having any general structure. Due to the increasing involvement of museums in school and preschool education and the stronger promotion of adult education, "Museum Education" has become an organized branch of pedagogy\(^3\). Weschenfelder and Zacharias claim that "Museum Education" is the general term for all didactic, methodological and media issues concerning communication and education feature at museums. "Museum Education" should be understood as a conscious and intentionally staged process, which takes place actively between the subject (observer) and object\(^4\). It distinguishes itself from simple preparation and presentation of the museum’s objects. In this sense, all relevant object-related information is to be conveyed. During the process of museumization the objects lost their initial contexts and were separated from their social and historical environment. Therefore it is necessary to reconstruct these backgrounds as far as possible and to reveal them to the visitor\(^5\).

Teaching is a part of pedagogy that deals with forms of scheduled learning in several educational situations. Teaching is called a situation, in which


\(^{2}\text{An educational theory requires a theory of knowledge (epistimonology), a theory of learning and a theory of teaching, see George E. Hein, }\text{Learning in the Museum} (New York: Routledge 1998), 16–40.


learning is initiated, encouraged and facilitated within a specific institutional framework, with pedagogical intention by professional teachers. Teaching is thus focused on the transfer of new information giving importance to the acquisition of knowledge and skills as well as their application. However, museum didactic differs from museum education. Museum didactic is used to transfer certain contents and is responsible for their selection. Museum education intends to link this knowledge with contents of museum objects and aims for a personality-promoting effect as well.

The main goal of museum education is to present museums as a place of learning and providing clear and understandable messages. Museum education permits the visitors to enjoy the exhibitions, which teach them information and values at the same time.

In the recent years it is common that museums are connected to school lessons. Teaching can be supplemented by visiting a museum, but there should be a distinction between learning in the museum and in the classroom. However, imparting knowledge in a museum can be guided by the principles of learning theories and these can be used as a foundation for an adapted education theory to the needs of museums.

In the case of "University Collections", it is important to use both, the traditional teaching and didactic methods and the study field of the museum education. The first and most important goal should be the enhancement of the

6Museums fit into an educational sector and need to define appropriate roles in relation to both classroom-based instruction and various forms of non-didactic and learner directed education.
the learning. This depends on the framework conditions of a lecture, for example, through examination, presentation etc. Further, the way of the presentation of the objects should be considered, in order to keep in mind as much information as possible. The objects of museums should be regarded as an important aid for teaching, a visual support that extends the theoretical part of a university lecture.

Collections as Tool for Teaching

With the archaeological collections as a part of the lectures, students have the opportunity to look at objects up close, in original size and dimensions and to study them undisturbed. Concerning ceramic fragments or other small finds of the original collection this means the students are able to take the artefacts in the hand, touch, feel, measure, draw them, classify them and make comparisons. Through this procedure the various materials can be examined and interpreted. Vividness results from visibility, from looking at something directly. For example, materiality, proportion, colour, shape and treatment are visible. The field of archaeology is based on observing, so both archaeology and museums create the ideal conditions for the learning process by looking.

In this case the approaches of "Museum Education" are important, because in museums it is mainly about watching and knowing. However the "Museum Education" aims to transport information of abstract objects clearly and haptically, so they can be understood by the visitor.

An essential function of the museum is the training of sensory perception. Museums are generally places which provide aesthetic perception and sensual experience. For the visitors it is more important to experience the museum through exhibitions or other activities based on the museums collections, see Evelyn E. Douglas, "Scholarship in the History Museum: New frontiers of doing the job better?" in Scholarship and museums. Roles and responsibilities, ed. Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. (Newark, 1988), 42.

Through visualization Information can be understood and memorized better and easier, Brigitta K. Päffli, Lehren an Hochschulen. Eine Hochschuldidaktik für den Aufbau von Wissen und Kompetenzen [Teaching at universities. Teaching for building competences] (Stuttgart: Haupt Verlag), 217–224. Some writers assort two types of education, the "formal", which takes place in the school and the "informal education" that is to be provided in a museum, George E. Hein, Learning in the Museum (New York: Routledge, 1998), 7.

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objects directly and on site, than to receive information about them indirectly, based on foreign observations and testimonials\(^1\). Museums create experience at first hand\(^2\). Only in a cast collection one has the opportunity to see the sculptures three-dimensional, from all perspectives and this intensive study enables the training of visual learning and perception\(^3\).

In an era of image flood, the museum allows the objects to stand still and enables us to make them understandable by comparison\(^4\).

The objects of the archaeological collection are also objects of art and therefore their analysis requires learning aesthetic education. One can therefore consider the dimensions of the statues in the room in comparison to the human proportions accurately. The viewer can interact with the objects. The juxtaposition as well as the comparison of the artefacts of several categories, such as sculpture, architecture and ceramics contributes to achieve a nearly complete picture of ancient art. Additional information of the objects such as aspects of material, technology and manufacturing demonstrate social issues of the ancient cosmos and are relevant to other fields of study, such as history.

Working with pictorial material can be more difficult than working with documentary material. The main reason for the difficulty, however, lies in the fact that pictorial materials are more open for investigation than the written word as they contain more information in a less defined form. If we see the statues and not their pictures we come closer to their context.

Another parameter of didactic, also provided in the archaeological collections, is authenticity, originality, and uniqueness that cause an aura of museum objects. Authenticity means that an object stores a testimony about itself and about the time and place remote conditions\(^5\). The role of the casts is double and ambivalent: They are replacements of the original objects but they are also individual objects or else original objects themselves. They represent museum objects as they have a certain age and are


considered to be documents of a past epoch\(^1\). The authenticity is not missing in this case too.

For students it is important to leave the classroom for a while and to visit the museum for the forthcoming of their lecture. There is no doubt that in museums knowledge can be provided in a different way, i.e. they can learn actively, and according to educational theorists, active learning is more efficient than passive learning. In addition, a museum is related to lifelong learning and not to a certain curriculum, so that the information transfer promotes the widening of students knowledge through educational approach\(^2\).

Using the collections as a mean for teaching has another advantage: After getting to know and analysing the objects the students can move around freely and easily. As a result the museum becomes a closer and more familiar place for them, a place of approach rather than rejection\(^3\).

Conclusions

A museum is an institution that educates. The cultural heritage defines the museum as an essential component of education. Especially for students and future graduates of human sciences, this parameter is essential\(^4\).

Since the digital world has conquered our lives today, it is important for archaeology to follow this development. In this sense, the online portal of the University of Graz has been founded and includes all University collections. Both of the archaeological collections, the originals and the plaster casts, are

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\(^1\)Christine Bäumler, *Bildung und Unterhaltung im Museum. Das museale Selbstbild im Wandel [Education and Entertainment ]* (Münster: LIT, 2014) 22–27, Museums are considered to be places of dealing with the past and with a view to the present and the future.


Despite the importance of the web presentation however it cannot replace the visit of a museum itself. Digital world, technology and museums are not inconsistent; they meet different aims and depend on each other. Only in a University teaching collection like the archaeological collections in Graz didactic and museum educational approaches can flow and complement each other1. My personal wish is that the collections will be used further on and more intensively as a living work and research location.

Bibliography


1"That people learn in museums is easy to state, harder to prove", see John H. Falk et all. Learning from Museums. Visitor experiences and the making of meaning (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2000), 149. Concerning the archaeological collections of Graz, there were not occurred studies about the learning process up to today. Though on a basis of a personally observation of the last lectures kept in the museum, the behavior of the students changed in course of the semester, from a shy behavior at the beginning to the active participation at the end of semester. Additionally, the fact that most of the students completed successfully the lecture points out the importance of the museum as part of the lecture. In the future especially "visitor studies" are intended in order to document the learning process of the students in the didactical collections of Graz.


Karl, S. and Trinkl, E. Studie zur Relevanz archäologischer Reproduktionen für Universitäten, Museen, Denkmalschutz und Forschungsvorhaben [Study on the


