

The museum. What goes in? What goes on?

The preserved

„Everything lies in the hands of time, and in its expanse the worlds pass by underneath the sky” – says the inscription on one of the bells at the Main Town Hall in Gdańsk, dating back to the 16th century.

Passing is a natural process. Museums go somewhat against nature and try to challenge this order of things. The Museum of Gdańsk attempts to collect what has been preserved. We believe that by doing so we protect objects that without our care would have been forgotten.



The most!

Museums like to boast about elements of their collections that are "the most" – most valuable, the largest, most interesting. They promote their great collection of mummies, most expensive painting, the biggest collection of dinosaur bones.

The Museum of Gdańsk can compete with others in terms of the age of its collections. The amber housed in the museum is about 40 million years old. Our collection also includes the biggest amber nugget found in the Baltic sea – weighing almost three kilograms!



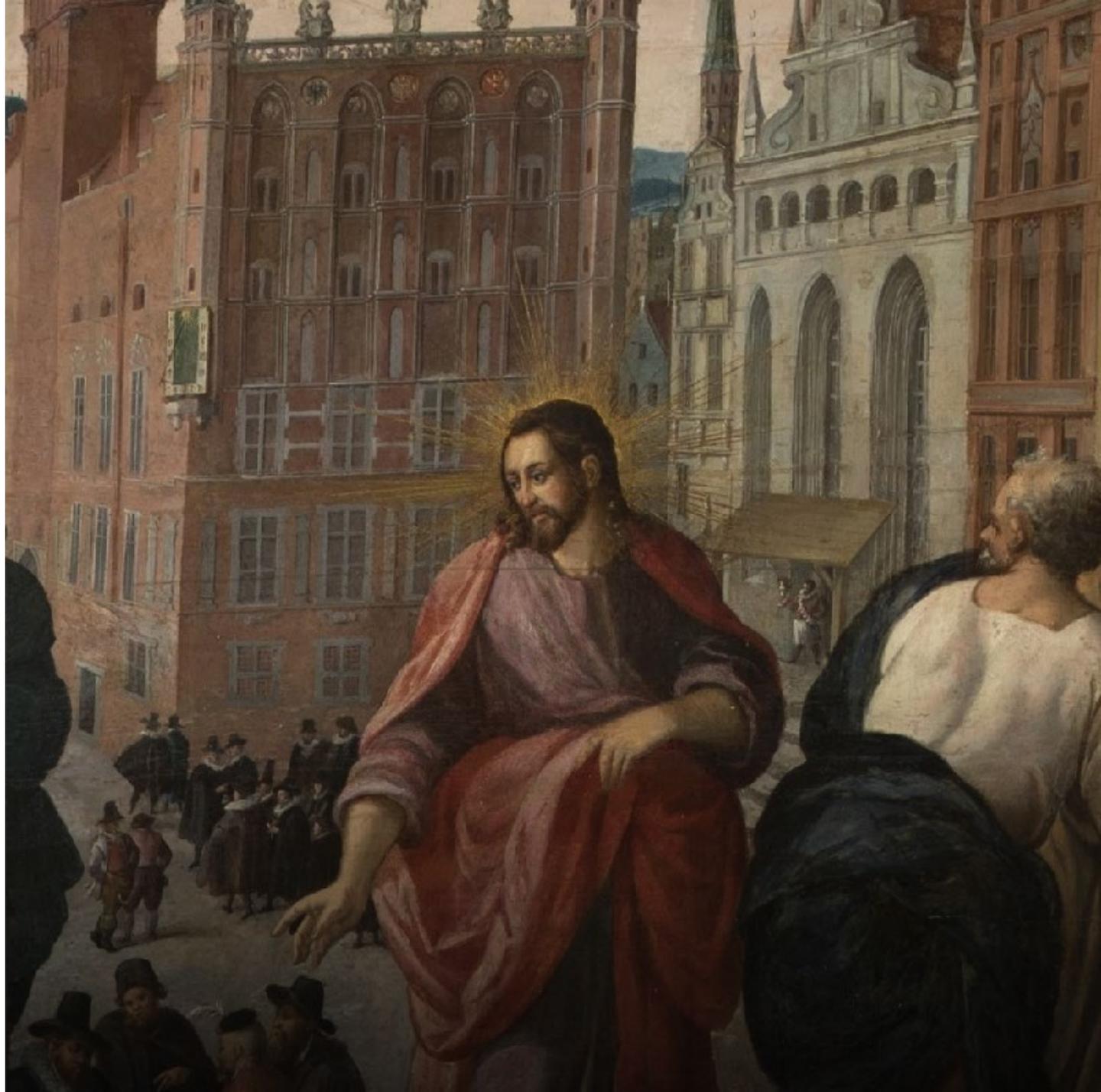
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Museums are not only about silent objects - they are also about carefully selected contents worth sharing. What you pay attention to depends on what the museum chooses to tell you. What stories lay hidden in the painting "The tribute money" by Anton Moller, finished in 1601?



Role model

The protagonist of this painting is Jesus. The scene comes from the Gospel of St. Matthew, which speaks of giving God what is godly and rendering to Caesar what is Caesar's. It is a call to the people of Gdańsk to obey civil duties.



Man's best friend

Dogs were common pets in early modern Gdańsk. Stray ones were caught by the town executioner and killed by the gallows on the outskirts of the city.



Fashion

The people in the background are townspeople of Gdańsk. They are portrayed in black outfits fashionable since the 16th century, adorned with stiff white collars. These were meant to look dignified, but also to mask skin problems caused by the poor hygiene of those times.



Elusive

Receipts, cards, leaflets, notices - they surround us far and wide. If we were to collect them, we would not be able to contain their quantity. In the past they were handled in the same way and often simply discarded. Today such souvenirs of the past are considered treasures.

When Johann Carl Ernst Uphagen's son was born on December 6th, 1803, the father proudly shared the good news with friends and family. Carl Wilhelm will become heir to the Uphagens' estate in Gdańsk.

Through collections of personal items, museums depict small stories, often set in the context of family relationships. These stories often help us have a closer look at the past and our ancestors' lives than we would have by studying the city from a general perspective.



Returning to early memories is called the reminiscence effect. It explains why we recall our younger days when we are older. This phenomenon gives access to memories - also ones of a city that is long gone. The Museum of Gdańsk collects recordings of memories to preserve them.

[Listen to Christiana Herbaschs relations on YouTube.](#)

Common experience

A toy found during archaeological research at the Wisłoujście Fortress is a reminder that since the 18th century, apart from the military crew, it was also inhabited by the families and children of the servicemen stationed there.

After the last war, when the Fortress was abandoned, once again it became a playground for the children of Polish families who settled nearby. We can just imagine that both in the 18th and 20th century it was an ideal place to play hide and seek. Now it is a part of our Museum.



Popculture

Is there a place in a museum for comic book characters, cartoons or tv series? According to 19th century concepts, at museums one was to admire great artwork and valuable antiquities. Modern museums draw from popculture, which entertains, inspires and carries a message as well.



Sexy

Can a museum exhibit be considered sexy? The purchase of this painting to our collection prompted comments that it will look good on Instagram, where "life goes on today".

According to social media, for which sensual pleasures rank very high, Edward Dwurnik's painting is very sexy: intriguingly intense, perversely luxurious and unconventionally attractive. Added to that, it photographs great in a selfie.



Ugly or pretty?

The Fabergé egg is quite controversial. Some are drawn by the legendary name, others by its great value. Some admire the craftsmanship, others criticise the excess or question the purpose of such a purchase. Museums listen to guests' opinions. They help us in our daily work.

The exquisite object was described by the media as the most expensive Easter egg in the world. It's made of gold, amber, diamonds, rubies and sapphires, with an enameled coat of arms of Gdańsk. When the price is of no importance, the artistic value becomes a secondary issue.

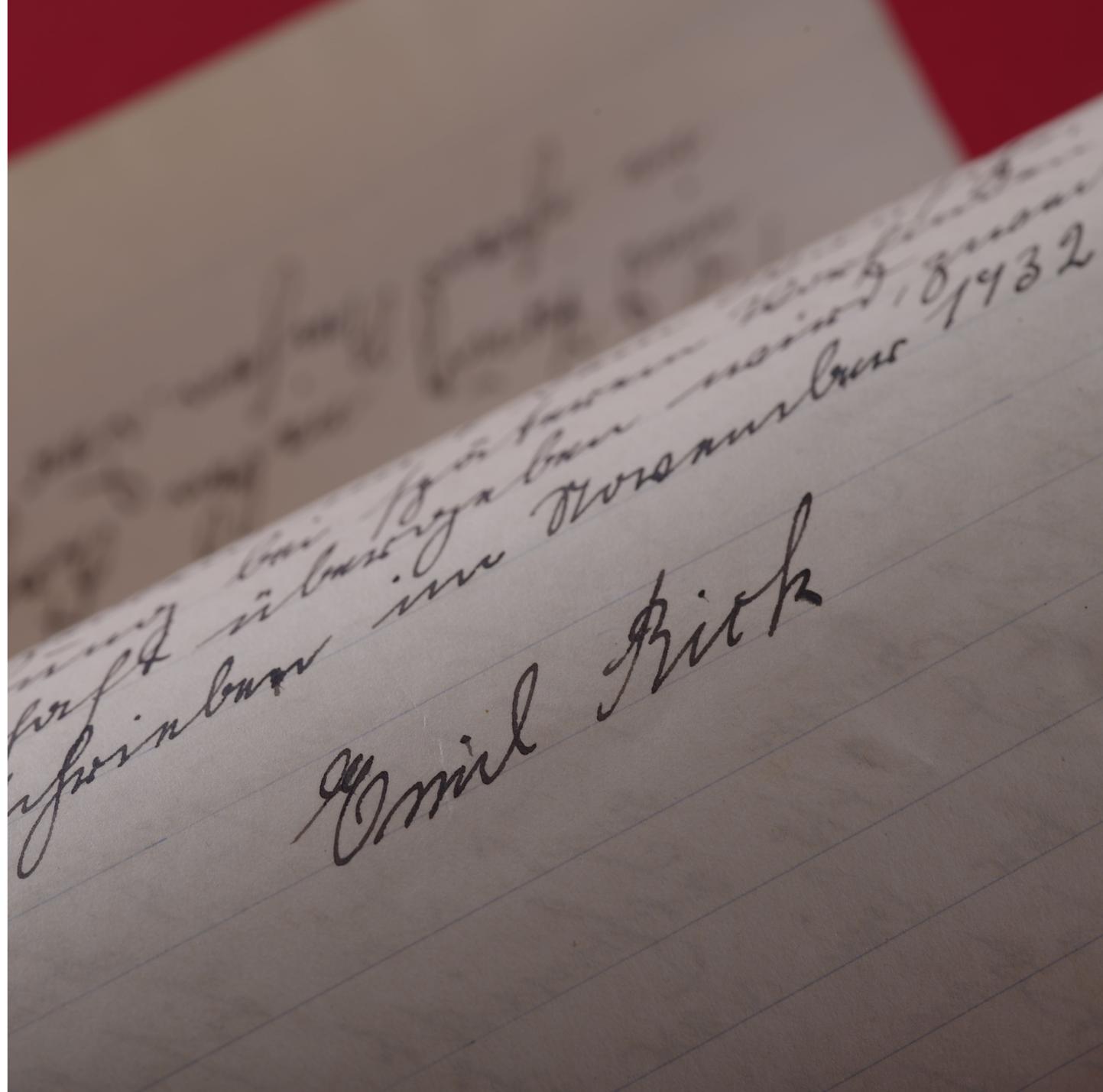


Prophetic

In 2012 the windows at the Artus Court in Gdańsk were being renovated. Under a window frame a restorer from the Museum of Gdańsk found a small case with a letter from 1932... written to her!

Emil Rick, the author of the letter, was a carpenter during the renovation of the Artus Court. In his message to his successors he described the course of the works as well as details of the situation in the city - social problems, unemployment and radicalization of attitudes.

The letter describes the terror spread by the Nazis, who in just a year will take over power in Gdańsk and ultimately cause its destruction. Rick names the reasons of the Nazis' success. He also cautions against ignoring warning signs. At some point it just might be too late.



Terrifying

Museums display many objects that are evidence of the great achievements of our predecessors: outstanding works of art and craft, important documents and creations. Nevertheless, there is no shortage of the record of evil that the human being can cause.

The ruins of midtown Gdańsk in Jerzy Głowczewski's photograph are an icon of the destruction of the city and the fall of man, capable of destruction, rape and murder. All of this actually happened in 1945.



Lubmer room

A lumber room is a different name for a storage space. Museums in some ways serve a similar role by taking in things that are old, damaged and useless, but also forgotten, abandoned or unwanted. That is the case, among others, with objects related to past political systems.

Once omnipresent, symbols of the communist regime were pulled down, discarded and often destroyed after the political changes of 1989. Some, like this bust of Lenin from his namesake shipyard in Gdańsk, ended up in museums as evidence to a difficult past that cannot be erased.



Ambiguous

Thumbs up! Thumbs down! An inextricable element of websites, social media and multimedia platforms. Do you agree with an opinion or do you disagree with it?

„Decide!” – the poster from the partially free elections for the Polish parliament in 1989 seems to call. How do you interpret it? Does the red thumb down signify disapproval of the communists holding power? Or maybe turning the poster upside down will change everything?



The exhibition "The Museum. What goes in? What goes on?" was presented at the Museum of Gdańsk from June 6th to October 25th 2020 as part of the celebrations of the 50 years of the Museum of Gdańsk.

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