István Bordás

My Favourite Artworks – An exhibition and knowledge dissemination programme organized using artists' favourite artworks

1. Best practice selection criteria

In the course of the information dissemination programme the fine artists invited to cooperate choose items from a fine arts collection. These selected works of art are presented at an exhibition. Within the framework of the opening of this exceptional exhibition, the artists speak about the artworks presented as well as the artists who made them. The programme helps to present cultural values (e.g. artworks stored in warehouses or private collections) that the general public does not have access to. These works of art are parts of the cultural treasures of the country and town concerned; by their presentation the volume of values that may reinforce the visitors' identity grows. The implementation of the programme is not very complicated because already existing fine arts collections and private collections – even several of them simultaneously – can be used. The information dissemination/exhibition programme can also be implemented with just a few works of art, i.e. artworks from the collection of one artist or private collector suffice for the high-level implementation of the programme. It is easy to adapt to the community of any country. The only requirement is that there should be a fine arts collection available in the closer or wider neighbourhood. This should not necessarily be connected to a professional museum as public institutions, civil organizations or even private persons own artwork collections, too.

Results to be measured may include the number of artworks presented, the number of attending visitors at the event and the number of exhibition visitors later on.

2. Organization(s) / person(s) the best practice can be related to Sárospatak Gallery, House of Culture and Library Sárospatak

The programme is organized by István Bordás, director of the Gallery.
The artists joining the programme and delivering informative presentations are: István Fazekas Balogh painter, László feLugossy artist, Irén Molnár painter, Zsuzsa Sándor painter, István Stark painter.

3. Stakeholders and beneficiaries of the best practice

The programme is targeted at the inhabitants of Sárospatak interested in art. It was they who participated in the knowledge dissemination part of the programme. In the course of the temporary exhibition, two groups of visitors can be considered to be interested: audience arriving with the purpose of visiting the exhibition, in this case primarily organized school groups and, furthermore, visitors attending other programmes of the House of Culture and Library who look at the exhibition e.g. in the interval of a theatre performance.

4. Objectives and activities of the best practice

The overall objective of the programme is to familiarize people with artists living in a certain settlement whose art is not public. Another overall objective is to make the general public familiar with the work of artists of local or national scope. By all these the programme aims to contribute to the development and enrichment of cultural consciousness and local and national identity. Another objective beyond these can be to familiarize the audience with local artists so that their activities and thoughts could contribute to shaping local cultural identity.

The activities of programme implementation start with selecting the works of art to be presented. In this case, the cooperating artists chose paintings or drawings related to respective artists from the works of art of Sárospatak Gallery not exhibited, i.e. kept in the storeroom.

In the next phase, the staff of the gallery arranged the exhibition. Simultaneously, the cooperating artists prepared informative short presentations in relation to the artworks they had selected explaining about the art historical era of the selected works of art and the artist who had created them. An important aspect to observe in preparing the short presentations was to be personal. In several cases the artists holding the presentations had chosen the works of art of their former masters.

In the next phase of the programme, the informative presentations were held. The artists invited to cooperate delivered their presentations while the works of art concerned were being observed. In what followed, there was opportunity for personal conversations after the fixed programme, which opportunity was highly popular with the audience present.

In the later phase of the programme there was only chance for looking at the artworks exhibited. This could be made more varied by adding descriptions about the respective artists.

Thus the programme offered the opportunity to get to know cultural values to which there had been no access before and by their presentations delivered in a personal tone, local artists known and renowned by the public reinforced the audience's connection to the artists of local or nationwide importance.

It can be established in general that an important tool for attaining the objective was to put an emphasis on informal tone and personal bonding.

5. Area(s) affected by the best practice

The form of activity presented can exercise its influence in the area of non-formal learning primarily. It can, however, provide information in the form of facts and data on the segment of art concerned. At the same time, the broad interpretation of cultural learning is the most important aspect of this programme. On the one hand, beyond providing information, it reflects strong emotional bonding experienced by participants – primarily by being personal. At the same time, the unique perspectives of the invited artists draw participants' attention to new approaches, which is impossible in the course of formal learning or formal art historical evaluations.

In addition to all these, the community shaping force of artists renowned locally may also become apparent during the programme. One approach to this is that artists working in various genres and with various attitudes participate in the programme as one 'team'. This is to give the message to the audience that approaches based on various life perspectives, too, can form a single platform. In this case, what is common in the approach of lovers of various genres is love for art in general.

6. Territorial scope of the best practice

The scope of the described activity is primarily local; its major approach is to further strengthen local cultural identity. Under other organizational conditions the scope of the programme can probably be extended to other settlements as well. This can only be efficient, however, if the settlements

concerned share the same cultural identity or have the same, regional cultural identity.

7. The conditions (human, financial, technical) required for the best practice

The implementation essentially requires one or more fine arts collections that represent value at a local or national level. This does not have to be a vast collection comprising many pieces. The programme can be implemented by involving just a private collection with a few high-quality works of art, too. Another alternative is to present the artwork of a single artist. In the latter case, the different approaches of the speakers to the same artist may be exciting experience for the audience. It is more practical and has a greater impact, however, if several works of art by several artists are involved in the programme.

As regards the material conditions, space suitable for housing an exhibition – which is big enough and has the necessary installation tools – is required. In some cases, the exhibition of the artworks requires installation. In practice, however, artworks are most often framed, suitable for presentation at an exhibition; less frequently, passé-partout framing is needed for drawings. Graphic glass can be used considering the former.

The programme can be easily organized by a member of the staff knowledgeable about fine arts. As regards the artists to be invited to speak, it is important by all means that they should be renowned locally. In theory, one artist suffices for the programme, but involving several artists – considering the differences in their respective approaches – makes the programme more efficient and enhances its impact.

As regards finances, the following costs may arise: the rent of the exhibition hall, the costs of making potentially missing installation, the fee of the cooperating artists, marketing costs, delivery, insurance costs. Practice shows, however, that these costs do not all arise at the same time. In the case of the programme described, the artists invited to speak did not charge a fee; delivery was easy considering the short distance and there arose no rental cost certainly.

8. Results and short-, mid- and long-term impact of the best practice

As an immediate result of the programme, the audience interested in fine arts familiarized with works of art that had previously not been displayed for the public. The widening of knowledge as a result of knowledge dissemination can also be considered an immediate result.

As an indirect mid-term result the cultural identity of the local community is reinforced. The artistic value concerned is added to the consciousness of cultural bonds that ties locals to their settlement.

Beyond all these, the personal thoughts and direct relations help strengthen the connection between the local public and local artists. This is turn contributes to strengthening the general identity of the settlement.

9. Sustainability of the best practice

As the implementation of the programme requires very little financial investment, the primary condition of sustainability is the commitment of those implementing it. If there is a considerable volume of fine arts value at a settlement, long-term implementation can also be attainable. Sustainability is also ensured if the programme can be relatively easily "shifted" in the direction of other artistic values, e.g. public statues, films or literary works. In every case building a connection between local artists and the public is important, where the method of information transfer can be identified as a tool. Where possible, this should be based on being personal and having a versatility of ideas.

10. Adaptability of the best practice

The implementation of the programme is easy to adapt to any settlement or groups of settlements that have local artistic value. The best practice presented is based on the presentation of works of fine art, however, it is relatively easy to adapt to the presentation of other areas of art. Basic conditions of the implementation of the programme are that artistic value is available locally and artists able to talk about these personally and authentically are also found.

The programme can also be transformed to other local values that can be involved in the programme in a way presentable to the public, i.e. interesting books or probably industrial artworks to be found locally.