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## THE ‘DESIGN MUSEUM’ CONCEPT IN RZESZÓW: COMBINING SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN IN THE CREATION OF AN EDUCATIONAL SPACE

This article presents selected issues on the role of design in everyday life and in the social context, from its historical roots, through the development of different styles to the present day. Design plays a key role in shaping spaces and everyday objects. The creation of design is not only an aesthetic or functional act, but also a social one, affecting the quality of life of different groups of people, including people with disabilities and the elderly. This article describes the process and results of exploratory survey research related to the creation of the design concept of the ‘Design Museum’ in Rzeszów. The results suggest that the public sees great educational potential in such an endeavour. Most respondents are in favour of the museum offering various forms of education, such as workshops or lectures. Based on these results, the concept of the Rzeszów Design Museum was designed to be an educational and accessible place for all.

**Keywords:** Design Museum, Programme Diversity, Education and Accessibility, Rzeszów

### 1. Introduction

We live in a world where we encounter design on a daily basis, in cars, in the interiors of our homes, or in grocery stores. Design, which is visible in space and in everyday objects, is an indispensable part of our lives [2]. Design is also a process that manifests itself in interiors, where we deploy, consciously or unconsciously, everyday objects. When arranging our own space, we want the world to present itself and function as we want and are comfortable with. However, on a day-to-day basis, each of us is engrossed in our daily duties

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and we rarely give a thought to the form and aesthetics of our immediate surroundings and utilitarian objects. The presence and accompaniment of design in everyday life, including the design of objects, communication, environments, services and even manifestation and thinking (design thinking), has forced reflection on its social dimensions [4].

Of relevance to design is the fact that users are diverse. They may be healthy or with specific health problems, active or passive, socially engaged or isolated, young or old, they also may be foreigners, immigrants, travellers, parents with children, blind, etc. Designing beyond objects is synonymous with finding solutions to individual and social problems. This is why it has recently become a particularly important element in the sphere of urban action and the creation of urban identity, designing a variety of solutions to benefit society and solve social problems such as helping the elderly and disabled or overcoming various types of limitations.

A museum dedicated to design could play an educational role and provide an attractive place to spend time in the city. It could also contribute to the renewal and revitalisation of certain parts of the city, and by offering a broad educational programme and exhibitions on sustainable design, it could influence the development of more sustainable practises in the city. This article reflects on the design and architectural concept of the Rzeszów Design Museum. It is based on the master's degree project by Agata Tur, a student under the supervision of Anna Martyka at the Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, Rzeszow University of Technology.

## **2. A brief history of design**

The term design refers to broad issues in architecture, urban planning, or fashion [5]. In addition, it also refers to the design of events, interactions, and services. Design emerged because of the development of industrial production in the second half of the 18th century, initially in England, then in Europe and North America. Innovative production methods were not only the result of innovative production solutions, but also of the latest generation of technological processes and machines. They were also a response to an unprecedented increase in demand. The acquisition of new articles in the form of furniture, clothing or appliances resulted in an increase in status. Manufacturers wanted to produce goods with an eye on aesthetics to reach as many customers as possible [8].

The art of designing functional and beautiful objects has been with us since the cave walls were decorated or the first clay pots were made. However, it was not until the Baroque period (1640–1715) that the concept of design itself emerged, with the first designs and works by craftsmen. The unusual furniture as well as the richly decorated interiors themselves defined the prevailing style of the time. The naming of styles was often linked to the names of monarchs. For example, the Louis XIV style in France, and the William and Mary Style

in England. Excellent craftsmen who made their work with their own hands were called ebenists (ébenè – ebony). An example of an ebenist who distinguished himself by his style and craftsmanship was Andréa-Charles Boulle – designer of ornaments. Classicism (1774–1791), on the other hand, was characterised by the geometrization of forms and ornaments. Special attention should be paid to Classicism in England, where prominent furniture designers and manufacturers were Thomas Chippendale, George Hepplewhite, and Thomas Sheraton. The mentioned artists-craftsmen popularised their designs and production methods [1]. When sketching the history of the most important achievements in design, it is difficult not to mention Michael Thonet (1796–1871), the Austrian designer and maker who was the first to introduce steam bending of wood into industrial production [3]. Thonet's furniture remains a recognisable brand to this day, selling well thanks to its timeless and ergonomic forms.

Modern design had several origins: the English Arts & Crafts movement, the American Mission Style, and the German Lebensreform, a moral revolution involving environmental protection, healthy food, natural medicine, and nudism. However, the most famous style of modern design in was the Arts & Crafts movement. Its origins begin with the work of John Ruskin, the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood and William Morris. The Viennese Art Nouveau, also known as the Wiener Sezession, was also a well-known stage in the development of design and art. Its members, including Gustav Klimt and Josef Hoffman, sought to create new forms and structures, inspired by geometry and floral ornaments. This style influenced the development of art-deco, which was the heyday of design in the past, but later evolved into a luxury style. The next major development in design was Bauhaus. The legendary Bauhaus school, although it officially existed for only 14 years, is considered one of the most important institutions in the development of 20th century culture, including design [10]. Symbolic markers of this style in design are the chairs made of bent steel tubes by Marcel Breuer and Mart Stam.

The pop art joke was to break all the boundaries set by previous styles. The best examples are the furniture designs of Scandinavian architects such as the Finn Eero Aarnio, the Swede Eero Saarinen, the Dane Arne Jacobsen and Verner Panton, or the American George Nelson. Postmodernism, introduced into design by the Memphis grouping and its leader Ettore Sottsass [6], has become a complete negation of practical aesthetics. The designs of the postmodernists should be regarded as statues or artistic installations rather than typical utilitarian objects for the masses.

From the beginning, the idea of modernism in design has been about people [10]. This situation persists today, except that people's needs have changed dramatically. The evolution of design began with the active intervention of designers in shaping the lives of ordinary people. By imposing ease of use on objects and situations, designers began to actively intervene in shaping people's lives. Thus, giving them more freedom to choose how to use them. The current trend shows

that everyone wants to 'use' not only objects, but also life and create themselves with these objects. Today, design is also used to construct a person's appearance, identity, and environment.

But the contemporary design dimension is also moving towards social sensitivity. Social design is associated with concepts such as ergonomics, sustainability, eclecticism, minimalism, aesthetics, and safety. An example of socially responsive design is the creation of products and services that respond to the user's needs and have a positive impact on society. Programming spaces and objects that consider the needs of society and environmental conditions, enhances safety, minimises inappropriate impacts on nature and improves accessibility for people with different types of disability [4].

It is widely accepted that the work of designers, architects, and engineers ends when the facility is put into use. However, this is when the facility begins to fulfil its most valuable role, its social role. It is therefore important, at a given design stage, to anticipate how the facility can influence people's behaviour and plan how to achieve this. Whether it is a small non-residential space, an office building, or a museum building, it is important to take care of the public and social spaces that form an integral system of urban infrastructure. This helps increase contact between people and can increase positive attitudes towards each other. This is already an important step in building positive relationships. However, it is worth remembering that too much exposure, too much interpersonal contact or not being able to get away from it can have negative consequences, so a balance between public and private spaces should be ensured every time [7].

### **3. Design concept for the 'Design Museum' in Rzeszów**

The creation of projects in architecture and urban planning is a complex field that consists of many aspects and phases. There are several main phases here, which usually follow a similar sequence but differ in detail. The initial phase, called conceptual, is fundamental and dynamic. This is where the main ideas of the project are shaped. It is important to use both creativity and expertise during this process, including the public [9]. Therefore, to better understand the public's opinions on the role of the design museum, a short online survey was conducted. An online survey was created using Google Forms ([docs.google.com/forms/](https://docs.google.com/forms/)) and a link to it was distributed via social media in November 2022 to approximately 80 people. Ultimately, 50 respondents (N=50) participated.

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn from the results of this survey that are useful for the museum design process. Firstly, the majority of respondents (94%) believe that museums should be accessible to everyone, regardless of education level and social status. Second, most of the respondents (90%) believe that design museums can help educate the public. Many respondents (82%)

also believe that museums should offer various forms of education in the form of workshops and lectures, which they themselves would be happy to attend if such an offer came to their place of residence. 86% of the respondents believe that organising project workshops could be a good way to involve and integrate different age groups. In general, it can be concluded that museums and cultural institutions must strive to provide accessible and diverse forms of education. Museums should be a place where people can acquire knowledge, learn about history and culture and develop their interests and passions.

After analysing the sociological research, the main objective in the conceptual design process of the 'Design Museum' became to develop a space and a programme that develops and educates in addition to its exhibition function. It is envisaged that the museum will be open to everyone throughout the year and will offer different types of attractions according to a schedule available online. Exhibitions will only take place in the atrium during the summer, but a variety of events and presentations will be organised throughout the year. Special occasions, such as festivals and opening days, will attract even more visitors.

Behind the main entrance, a representative *foyer* has been designed with a spiral staircase, an open exhibition and a waiting area with unusual interior furnishings and furniture related to the function of the building. The very interior of the *foyer* is intended to encourage visitors not only to explore the exhibition, but also to take advantage of the programme offer. The winding staircase not only plays a vertical communication role, but also a decorative one. In addition, the furnishings in the waiting area encourage visitors to visit the exhibitions, but also serve as a relaxation zone. A very interesting element of the museum is the atrium through which an interior garden designed carefully can be viewed from each floor of the building.

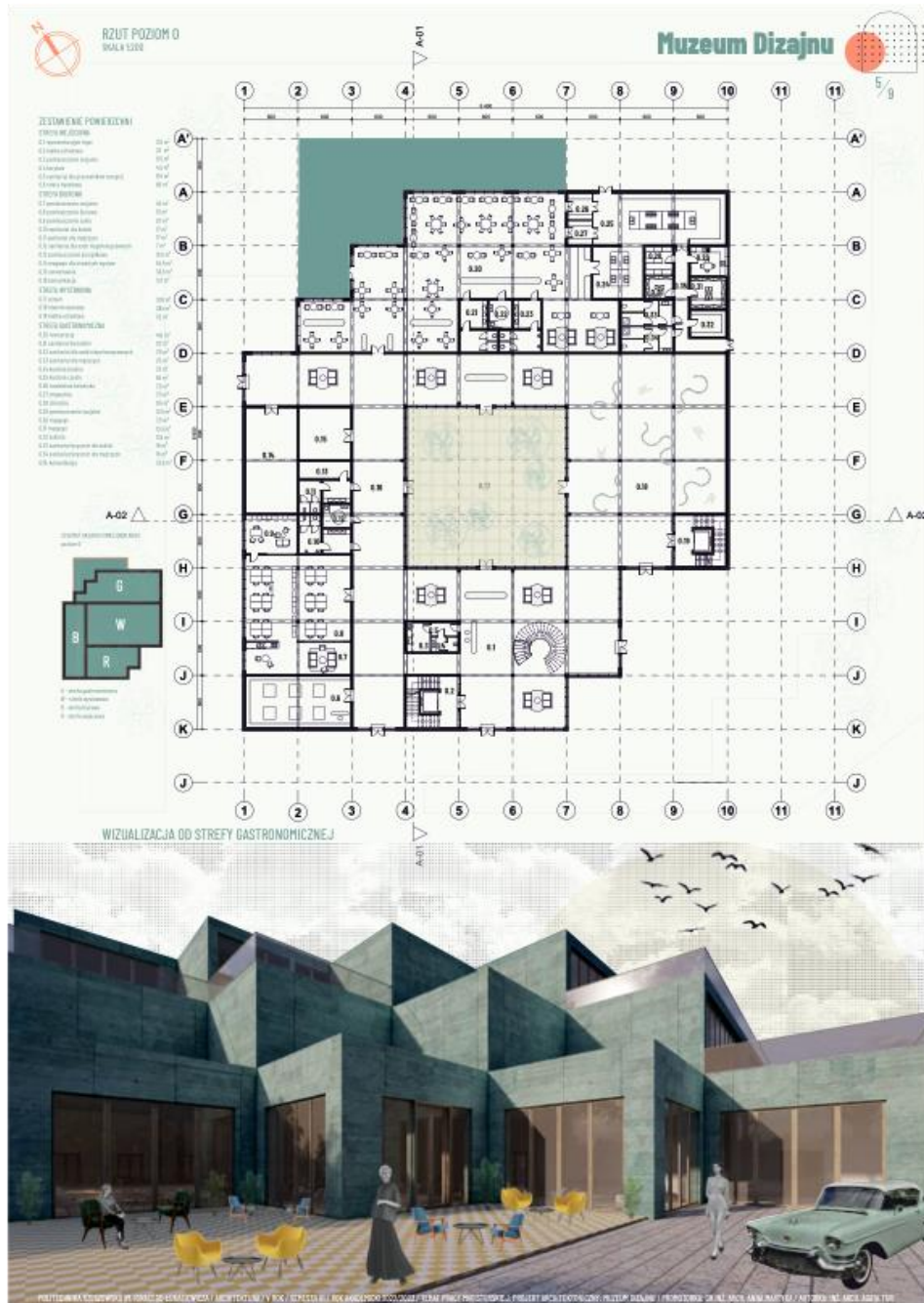


Fig. 1. Architectural concept of the Rzeszów Design Museum: ground floor plan and visualisation of the building from the side of the catering area. Source: elaborated by Agata Tur

The internal spaces are divided into several functional areas. On the ground floor, there are four zones: entrance, office, exhibition, and catering. The entrance area is flooded with natural light from a green atrium. The ground floor level is envisaged as a multifunctional meeting place equipped with designer furniture, while promoting the museum and educational functions. On the first floor, an exhibition area, an education area, and a cinema are located. The education area includes, among other things, workshop, creative and lecture rooms, which can be used to organise, for example, workshops for restoring furniture or designing innovative solutions. On the second floor, a café is located next to the exhibition area.

#### 4. Summary

There are no clear answers to how to design the ideal space, making the design process both fascinating and challenging. Therefore, it is important to develop and analyse different design alternatives [9]. In this case, the idea behind the architectural design of the Rzeszów Design Museum was to design a harmonious space for exhibition and education. The interior of the building was divided into zones that provided a variety of experiences.

Today's Design Museums can play a key role in the contemporary city space. A museum institution of this type can raise awareness of the importance of design in everyday life, from furniture and architecture to technology and media. It can also provide a platform for showcasing cutting-edge ideas and technologies, which can inspire the next generation of designers and innovators. Through a variety of exhibitions and events, a design museum can promote inclusion and understanding between different social groups. What is more, Design as an essential part of the creative economy, can serve as a hub, connecting designers, investors, and entrepreneurs. This fits the slogan that promotes Rzeszów as the capital of innovation.

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