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The National Museum Project

Richard Van Herwijnen

Underground storage building and exhibition project

This coming year, the National Museum of Yemen in Sana'a will see a new project by the Social Fund for Development. With the help of Richard van Herwijnen, an independent interior design and exhibition consultant from the Netherlands, the goal is to make the new underground storage building operational and to create a new permanent exhibition in the South Wing building. As the SFD adopted the construction of the underground storage, it is at present their wish to make the new storage space operational. And with good reason, for since the moment in time that the construction of the underground storage building started, the collection of the museum has nearly doubled in size.

Cultural infrastructure

As an annex to the storage building, a new conservation department will be realized. This will allow for the professional conservation and restoration of new archaeological findings and the necessary care for the existing collection. Also, as a part of this department, workstations will be created for visiting archaeologists and specialists to consult the museum's collection and to study objects. Underlying these plans is the National Museum's ambition to become a national facility, providing services and expertise to other museums. In the long run this ambition also includes the wish for a cafeteria and a library and to become a cultural centre, tying into the local community and the historic city of Sana'a.

Passive climate control

In order to make the buildings appropriate for the conservation of objects consisting of various organic and in-organic materials, special measures will have to be taken to maintain climatic conditions at required specifications. The orientation here is to apply passive principles requiring low energy and as little maintenance as possible. In practice, this means stabilizing both the temperature and the relative humidity by means of the existing walls and building structure and with materials such as plaster, silica gel and possibly wool. Also, the air ventilation system will be equipped with filters to keep the dust out. And in the exhibition, extensive use will be made of low energy, long life LED lighting.

Information management

This project will also witness the installation of a server in the National Museum. This will finally allow for the disclosure of the collection database to the public. At the same time, security and climate monitoring can be obtained in real time and 24 hours a day by using battery operated wireless technology. Furthermore, the server will greatly improve working conditions for both researchers and staff and opens future possibilities for the National Museum's presence on the internet with an as yet unscheduled website.

Local talent and ambition

The transfer of knowledge and having

the National Museum's staff and local workers carrying out as much tasks as possible is project policy. For example, Mr. Adnan Bawazir, an archaeologist attached to GOAM, has been appointed as a counterpart to the project's interior design and exhibition consultant. The aim is to provide hands-on learning and opportunities for gaining much needed project experience for the talented and ambitious. In order to successfully imbed foreign technology and working methods, final decision making is done by the SFD and Mr. Abdul Aziz al-Gindary, director of the National Museum. This is a Yemeni project, both in origin, funding and realization. However, as yet unscheduled additional training of staff members may still prove necessary.

Bridging cultures

For the new permanent exhibition, a specific scenario will be developed by the content team of the National Museum, assisted by numerous specialists in the field. The aim will be to provide a meaningful presentation for both tourists, children, students and the common public. Through the development of a sense of beauty an important contribution will be made to the educational goal of building personalities. And instead of aiming for encyclopedic completeness, the exhibition will provide an inspiring introduction to the past by highlighting key moments in the history of Arabia Felix. The exhibition will not only focus on objects but will also provide context by using scale models and multimedia whenever appropriate. By promoting and raising general awareness for Yemen's impressive and valuable cultural heritage, the mutual understanding and respect between cultures will be enhanced.

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