

Making the Virtual Exhibition “They Shared their Destiny. The Women and the Cossack’s Tragedy in Lienz 1945” with FOSS

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Historical Background

During the centuries, the Cossacks turned from outlaws, pirates and robbers into loyal servants of the Tsars and played a central role in the process of the expansion of the Russian Empire. During the Russian Civil War Cossacks fought on both sides and after the end, thousands emigrated to Yugoslavia, France, Germany and other places but maintained their Cossack identity. During World War II Cossacks and Caucasians volunteered for the Germans to fight against the Soviet Union out of different reasons.

Cossacks, Caucasians and their families followed the German retreat and fought later in Yugoslavia and Italy, where the Germans promised them a new homeland. At the end of war they feared being handed over to the Soviet Union when surrendering the Italian and Yugoslav partisans. Therefore, Cossacks and Caucasians troops and civilians marched north to the Drau valley in East Tyrol and Carinthia where they lived as Surrendered Enemy Personnel of the British still in their units. About 25.000 arrived near Lienz.

Although the British promised them to be moved to British overseas territories, the Cossacks officers, soldiers and their families were handed over to the Soviet Troops (about 22,500 persons, including approximately 3,500 women and children). 4,100 were able to hide in the mountains and forests, and quite a few chose to commit suicide. Some women jumped with their children into the river Drau or gave their children to local families. The events became known as “the tragedy on the river Drau”. At least 1,350 were recaptured. But most of them were not handed over to the Soviet Union. They lived in a Displaced Persons Camp in Lienz together with refugees mostly from Yugoslavia.

Exhibition Background

Until today, the Cossack tragedy of Lienz in 1945 has been and still is mainly focused on the perspective of the men. Bold deeds, the magic of uniforms, medals, parade and other weapons as well as fateful comradeship were the focus of interest. The women in the retinue, who were not only of Cossack descent, but also came from many different countries, were left out. Many had joined the convoy in the hope of a better life in freedom. The exhibition tells the fates of these women, most of whom have remained behind the curtain of history .

The exhibition was planned to open on the 75th anniversary on 1 June 2020 but needed to be replanned as a virtual exhibition within a short time due to the restrictions during the Covid-19-crisis.

Virtual Reconstruction

After discussing several possibilities of realisation, it was decided to reconstruct the room in which the exhibition originally should have taken place to provide a genuine “feeling” of visiting an exhibition to the visitors. Based on a plan and some fotos, a reconstruction of the room in Blender (2020) was made (Fig. 1).

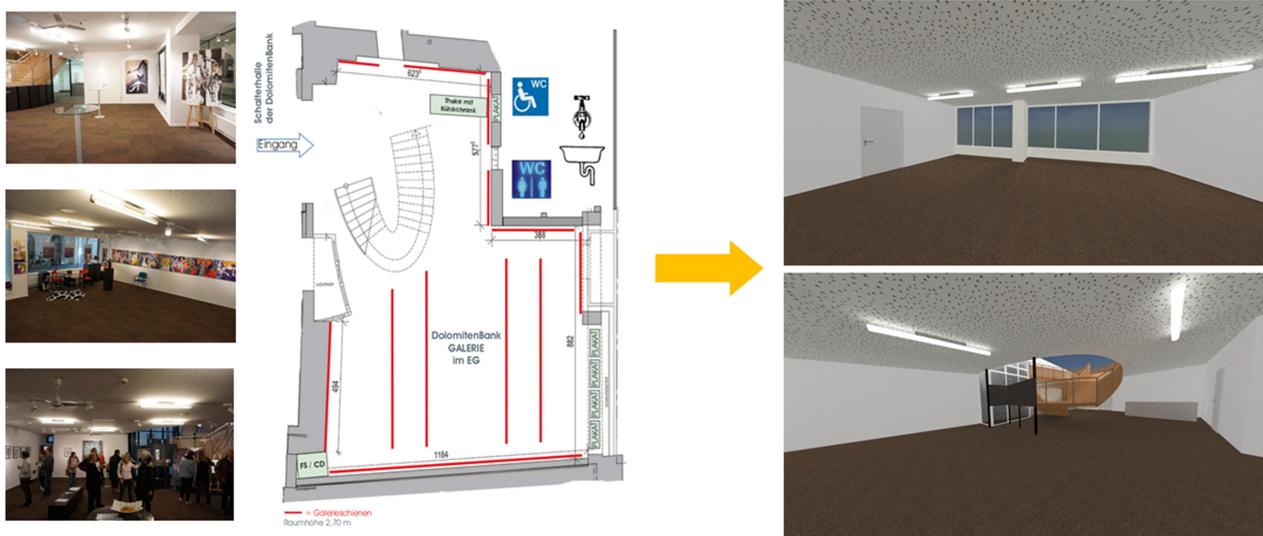


Fig. 1: Reconstruction of the exhibition room

Inside this reconstructed room, the posters with all the informations as well as two virtual vitrines with findings from different surveys and excavations were placed. The extraordinary find of a ceremonial kindshal was reconstructed based on two pictures completely as 3D-model with photographic UV-Texture (Fig. 2).

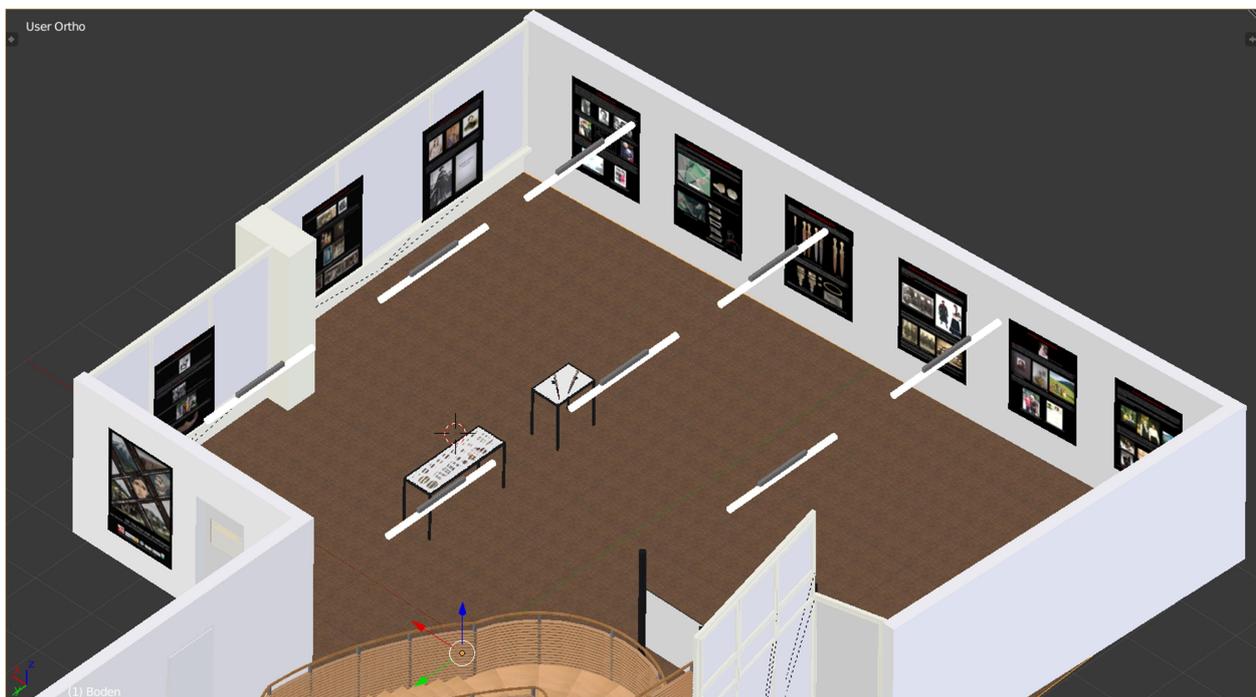


Fig 2: Reconstructed Museum in Blender

Virtual Exhibition

In order to provide the visitors a tour through the museum-room with full 360° view, several 360° pictures were rendered with Cycles Render of Blender. They were put together to a “walkthrough-tour” with Marzipano - an Open Source 360° media viewer (2020) and the Marzipano Tool. By clicking linked Hotspots, the visitor can move from one cameraposition or scene to the next and by this “walking” through the room. To each poster on the wall and find in the vitrines hotspots are assigned, with informations. Through a svg-

overlay over pictures, weblinks with further informations to different terms, events or persons are given (Fig. 3).

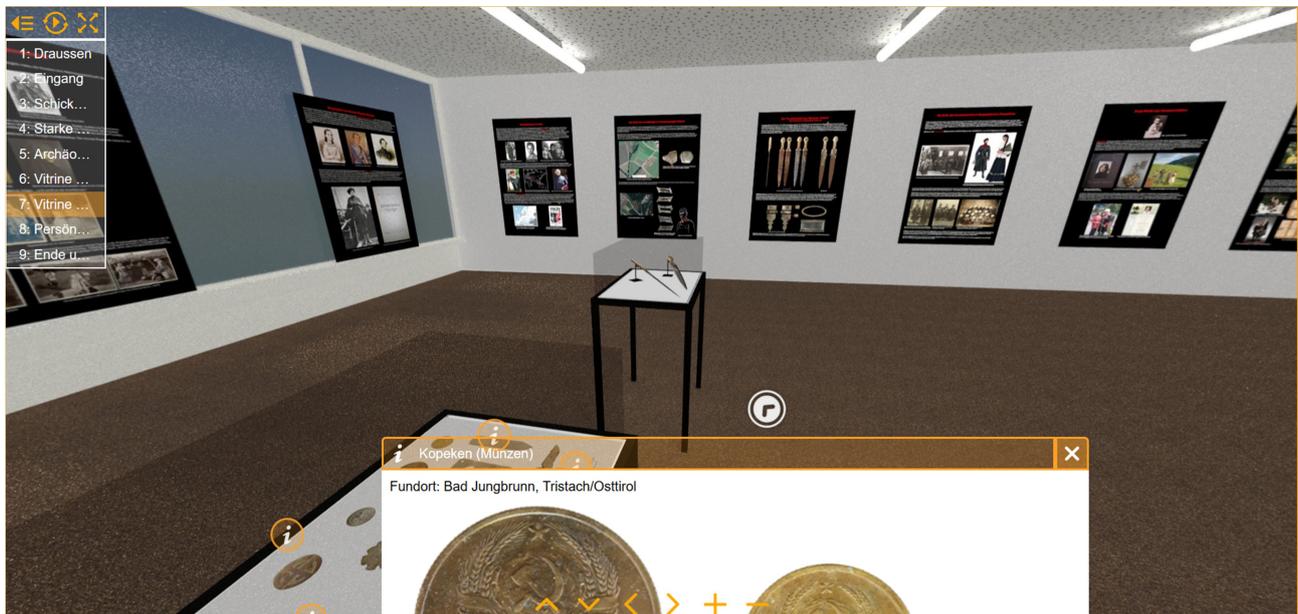


Fig. 3: Insight into the virtual museum

The 3D-model of the Kindshal was uploaded to Sketchfab and embedded in the virtual tour as iframe. The visitor is thus able to observe the ceremonial dagger in full 3D inside the virtual museum.

The virtual exhibition is available in german, english, italian and russian and can be visited on <https://www.kosaken-lienz1945.com/virtuelle-ausstellung--63364468-de.html>.

References

Blender (2020): *Blender* (Version 2.74) [Computer program]. Available at: <https://www.blender.org/> (Accessed: 22 July 2020).

Marzipano (2020): *Marzipano* [Computer program]. Available at: <https://www.marzipano.net/> (Accessed: 22. July 2020).