

# SECRET LIFE of the Museum





МУЗЕЈ САВРЕМЕНЕ УМЈЕТНОСТИ  
РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ

# SECRET LIFE of the Museum

Written by: Jelena Kojić Tepić

Illustrated by: Dragoslav Malinić

Museum of Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska

dijalog  
za budućnost  
Ujedinjene  
nacije





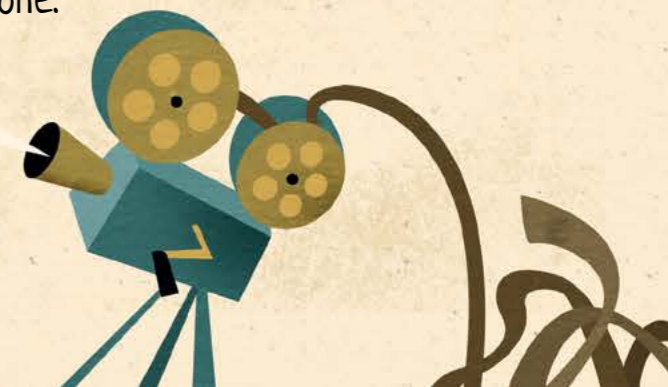
It was a lovely day, just the kind of day that was needed for a most extraordinary lesson about to take place at the fine building of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Srpska, in one of the corners of its Documentation Department, under the left shelf precisely. Mouse Sarah, an old-timer at the museum, began her first lesson in front of the next generation of mice curators, restorers and conservators, designers, technicians and other prospective museum workers. With a half-toothpick in her hand, she pointed at the intricate pictures projected onto the wall:

“Dear mice, welcome to our first lesson, which will prepare you to join our expert team! As of today, you will be working as employees of this museum, and there are pretty serious tasks ahead of you. You will collect, preserve, study and exhibit contemporary art. This probably sounds confusing, but don’t worry, I’ll explain everything. Prick up your ears, stiffen your whiskers, and let’s start!”

Ten beady little eyes watched in amazement. Five little hands jotted down notes in unison. Mouse Sarah went on:

“First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Sarah von Bahnhof, and I’m the leader of this colony of mice.

I’m the oldest and most experienced curator here, and my family have lived in this building since the year one.”



“In this case, ‘year one’ was 1891, when the first railway station was built in Banja Luka. You’re probably wondering what a railway station has to do with this museum. Well, let me tell you. At that time, Banja Luka was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, a vast empire that needed a good network of roads and railways, so people and goods could travel from one end to another. Thus, they built a railway in Banja Luka, and with it also this fine edifice. One of the passengers to hop onto the first train to arrive at the train station was my great-great-great-grandfather Hans.”

“Family legend has it that when Grandpa Hans saw this majestic building, he decided to stay in Banja Luka forever. He married a local mouse, my great-great-great-grandma Sarah, who I was named after, and that was the beginning of our lineage. At first, we nibbled at the grains they transported by train and lived typical mouse lives. Years passed by, the empire disappeared, and a new country called Yugoslavia was born. As for us, we kept nibbling at the grains and made nests in the two towers of this splendid edifice and everywhere around it.”



“After almost a century, something strange happened. Banja Luka was struck by a severe earthquake; many a building was razed to the ground, and as a result, both people and mice lost their homes. This building had the good fortune to survive it, with only very little damage. Artists from that country, Yugoslavia, and from around the world, sent their paintings as gifts to help the destroyed city. Now, it was at this point this story took an unexpected turn. The city decided not to sell the works but to keep them instead, keen to show them to Banja Luka citizens and whoever visited the city in the future.”

“In 1971, the Art Gallery was founded, and nearly one hundred years after the building was constructed, the former railway station was adapted into a place where artworks have been exhibited ever since.”

“Excuse me, could you be mistaken? What do you mean by gallery? This is a museum!” one of the mice, a future curator, asked in dismay.

“Bravo, that’s a very good question! You’re both attentive and curious, and you have excellent chances of becoming a fine curator! However, I’m not mistaken.”

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



## EXHIBITION ROOM

is where exhibits are put on display. An exhibition may be from the collection of that particular museum, or a visiting one; it may also be solo or collaborative.



“What they opened here first was the Art Gallery. In time, as more and more artworks arrived and its employees gained more knowledge, the Gallery grew. Finally, it became the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Srpska in 2004. Today, it holds more than 1700 works of art — paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints, along with other kinds of works on paper, objects, installations, photographs and videos. Each of these pieces has an identity card.”

“Pay attention to what I’m saying, because it’ll be your duty to take care of them. These identity cards are called index cards here. Each of them holds data about the origins of a work, the artist, its exhibition history, and other important information.”

“What have mice got to do with all of this?” asked a teeny-weeny girl mouse.

“Let me explain,” said the red-tailed mouse Lana, head curator at the Documentation Department. “Like everywhere around the world, the role of mice is both great and mysterious! Humans have a world of their own, and so do mice. It is the same as that of humans, only miniature. Like humans, there are also mice curators, conservators, librarians, designers and technicians at the museum.”



## CURATOR

takes care of the works held at a museum and designs exhibitions. Each curator has special duties. One may be in charge of the collection, another of the museum documents, the third of training and education, while the fourth may be the one designing exhibitions.



“Now, tell me, do you need a break?”

Five tiny mouths squeaked in unison:

“No!”

“Well, then, let me take you around the museum! What’s coming next is a unique mouse adventure, and at the end of the lesson, it’s a surprise party for you,” mouse Sarah said proudly. “Make sure you move carefully around the building, as we’re not supposed to be seen by anybody. This building is quite big and we’ll need to walk on foot for a long time. For starters, I’m taking you to see the exhibition rooms.”

The mice walked on and on. After all, the museum was built to man’s measure, and when you are very small, like mice are very small, it takes a loooooong time to get from one end to the other. And when you don’t only need to walk, but also see an exhibition, you get even more tired.

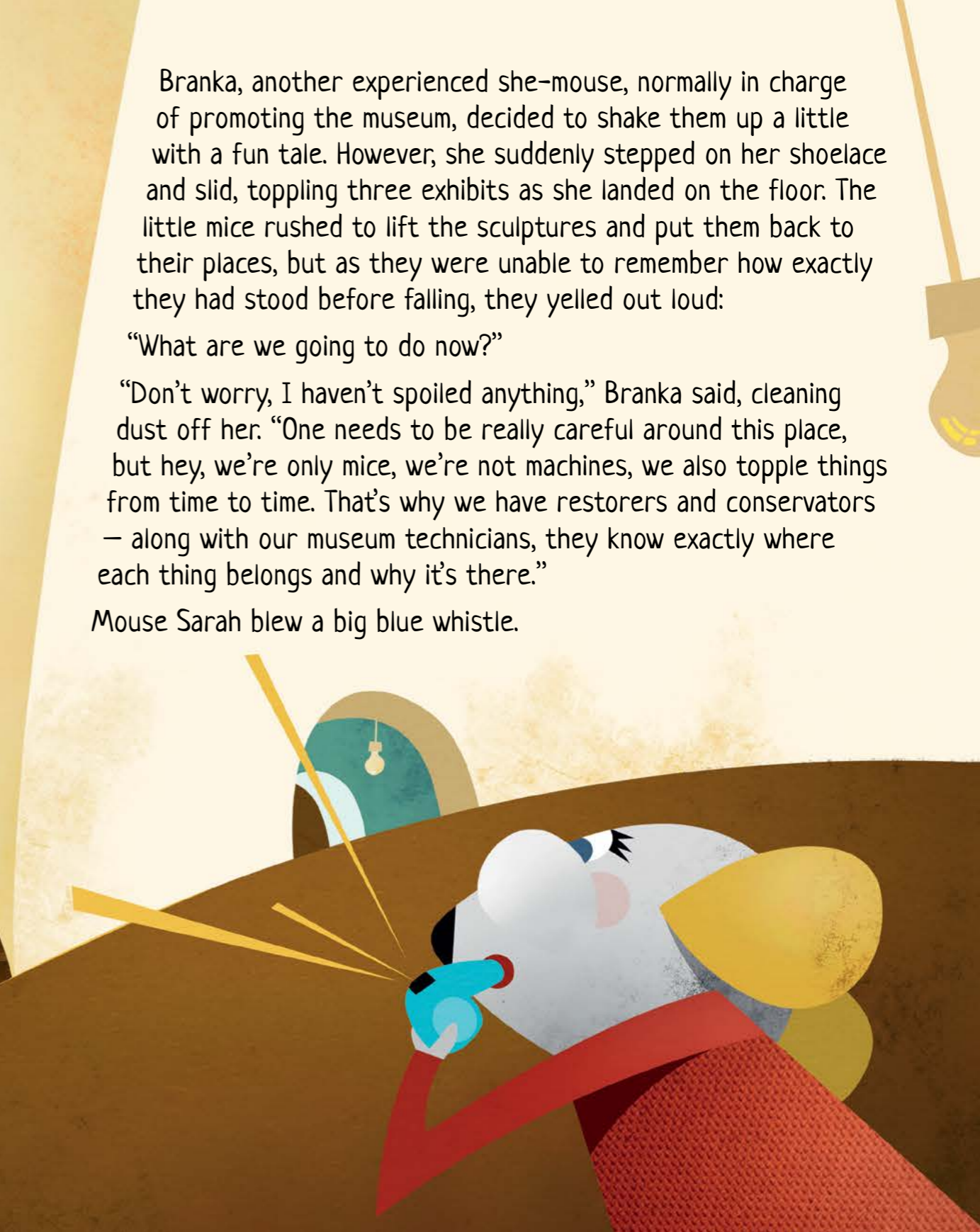
Their whiskers were now hanging from exertion and they were obviously exhausted.

Branka, another experienced she-mouse, normally in charge of promoting the museum, decided to shake them up a little with a fun tale. However, she suddenly stepped on her shoelace and slid, toppling three exhibits as she landed on the floor. The little mice rushed to lift the sculptures and put them back to their places, but as they were unable to remember how exactly they had stood before falling, they yelled out loud:

“What are we going to do now?”

“Don’t worry, I haven’t spoiled anything,” Branka said, cleaning dust off her. “One needs to be really careful around this place, but hey, we’re only mice, we’re not machines, we also topple things from time to time. That’s why we have restorers and conservators – along with our museum technicians, they know exactly where each thing belongs and why it’s there.”

Mouse Sarah blew a big blue whistle.







## CONSERVATORS AND RESTORERS

repair damaged artworks and protect them using special methods so they could last for a long time.

In a flash, five big mice wearing overalls jumped out of nowhere, it seemed — they came hopping from the ceiling, from holes in the floor, from behind paintings on the walls, and furniture joints.

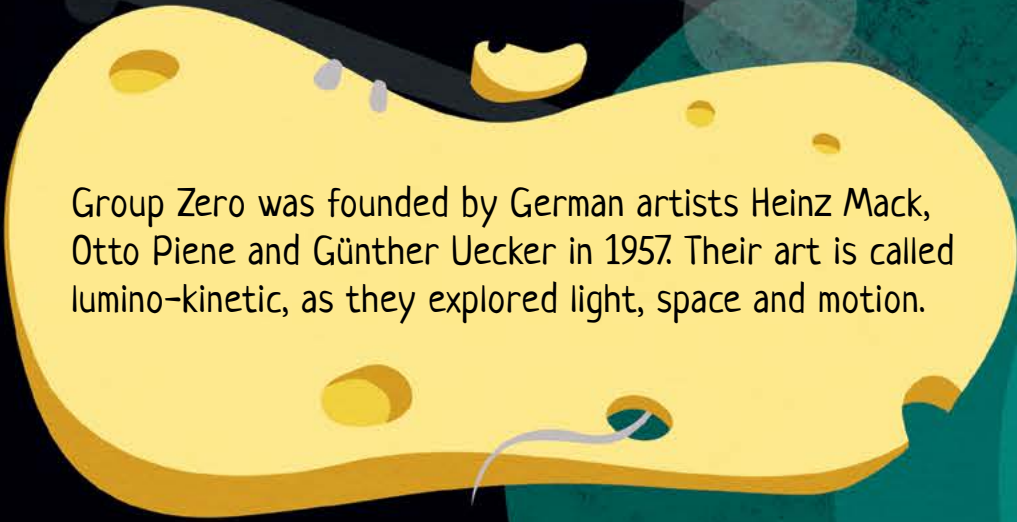
“No worry, consider it fixed!” said Mlađo, a smiling, nimble mouse, the gang leader.

Indeed, they put all the exhibits back in their places in the blink of an eye!


“Let me introduce our special team of museum technicians,” Sarah said, visibly proud. “You’ll be just like them in no time — absolutely ready to do everything that has to do with artworks — safeguard, exhibit and show them to visitors — all in record time.”

## MUSEUM TECHNICIANS

The duty of museum technicians is to mount artworks for an exhibition, securing them to be safe for visitors.



Group Zero was founded by German artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene and Günther Uecker in 1957. Their art is called lumino-kinetic, as they explored light, space and motion.



All of a sudden, the lights went out. The youngest among the little mice yielded a squeal or two; then there was music. A ball came alight – it was surreally beautiful, and the little mice saw shadows dancing a magical, gentle, light choreography across the walls.

“Wow, this is cool!” the little mice let out shouts of astonishment, marvelling at the ball and music.

“This is the most valuable piece in our collection; it’s called ‘Ballet of Light for Banja Luka’. It was a gift from the Group Zero, and it is the jewel of our crown,” explained Maša, the museum curator in charge of education and training, addressing the group of mice gathered around her.

13.

“This is a museum, right? Aren’t museums supposed to be quiet places?”

“It’s always lively and cheerful in here. Contrary to popular belief, museums aren’t such quiet places, where everybody looks like a swagger. Especially this museum, which is all about contemporary art. People come here to enjoy art, learn something new, but as well as have a good time. It’s perfectly okay to be relaxed at a museums. The ball you see here is also part of our rich collection!” rambled on curator Mladen, head of the team

of mice in charge of exhibition design. “People don’t know we mice throw mice parties, that much is true.

But if they found it out, maybe they would have their own as well,” interjected mouse Nešo, one of the technician specialists.

14.



The fun lasted long enough for everybody to regain their energy after an arduous time of seeing around the museum. Then, a dressed-up mouse joined the mice, carrying a laptop in one hand, and a camera in the other. The lights came back on, the music stopped; then the mouse said:

“Hello, everyone! My name is Nemanja, and I’m the museum designer. I need to design our next catalogue, and it’s a matter of urgency! It needs to be done by yesterday, I mean, by tomorrow!”

An itty-bitsy mouse put up his arm courageously, and Nemanja left with him.

## DESIGNER

designs catalogues, invitation cards, posters and other materials to be printed or published on social media; these materials are used to promote exhibitions and museums.



The mice resumed their fantastic exploration adventure. It took them to endless rooms, and they admired the artworks, which seemed to be all around.

“Wow, a playground!” the mice lifted their eyebrows and whiskers.

“That’s right, it’s a playground! This mouse playground is a great work of art, for the record,” responded mouse Maša. “It was painted by Branko Miljuš. Like you, he was born and grew up at a railway station, except that this was in Prijedor, not in Banja Luka! The name of the painting is ‘Forbidden Land’, but Branko being Branko — he’s such a nice guy! — let us, the museum mice, use it as a playroom.”





The little mice kept playing and jumping around until they got so tired they could barely keep their eyes open. It was time to go to sleep.

“Is there somewhere here we can get a nap?” asked one of the little ones.

“Well, this is your home, of course there is,” said mouse Lana.

“Museum mice, that is, us, spend our entire lives here. See this snail? That’s our dormitory under it! We’ve exhibited the snail here at the museum because of its restorative effects. We conducted research and found out the snail can help visitors relax and improve their sleep quality. It was made by artist Dušan Otašević, around the time we were renovating our private rooms, and we loved it the second we saw it. We have made beds for you there — feel free to choose one, each of you, and get some rest.”





“Look, this one was painted by a mouse, not a human!” came a she-mouse. “This canvas is the right size for a mouse; I’m sure one of our species had a talent for painting and made this portrait!”



“Haha, as unbelievable as it may sound, that picture was painted by a human! His name is Vojo Stanić and he lives in Montenegro, by the sea. There, he made friends with a colony of mice, and he painted the miniature in their honour. As a gesture of goodwill and because of the respect they have for our museum, the mice sent the painting to us, and now it holds a place of honour here, as the smallest painting in the collection,” curator Maša was quick to explain.

“Everybody, over here!” they heard the voice of one of the little mice. “There’s a fairy here!”

Everybody scampered to where the voice came from and saw something absolutely fantastic!

“Gosh, it’s huge! To me, it looks more like a manikin than a fairy. Maybe there are creatures bigger than humans, you know, as bigger than them as they’re bigger than us? Maybe they also exhibit their work at the museum?”



“Maybe it’s just a doll that a giant forgot here?” came a precocious one. Žana offered an explanation:

“No, humans are definitely the tallest beings working at the museum. There are no giants bigger than them, or if there are, they don’t visit our museum. This is indeed a work made by humans and it really does remind of a fairy.”

“That’s a great story! I say we publish it right away!” said Branka the spokesmouse.



35.

36.

37.



“Contemporary art is not only paintings and sculptures. In the past, that was what we called art – paintings, which were hung on walls, or sculptures, which people admired in space. But as times changed, the understanding of art changed along with them. For example, people didn’t use computers before, while today they are everywhere. It is quite normal for an artist to want to use a computer to create a piece of art. Or make a video, or do something completely new, use an existing object in a brand new way. If he or she manages to inspire or provoke visitors to think, pay attention or simply feel something, that piece of work is art, more precisely, contemporary art,” Žana explained.

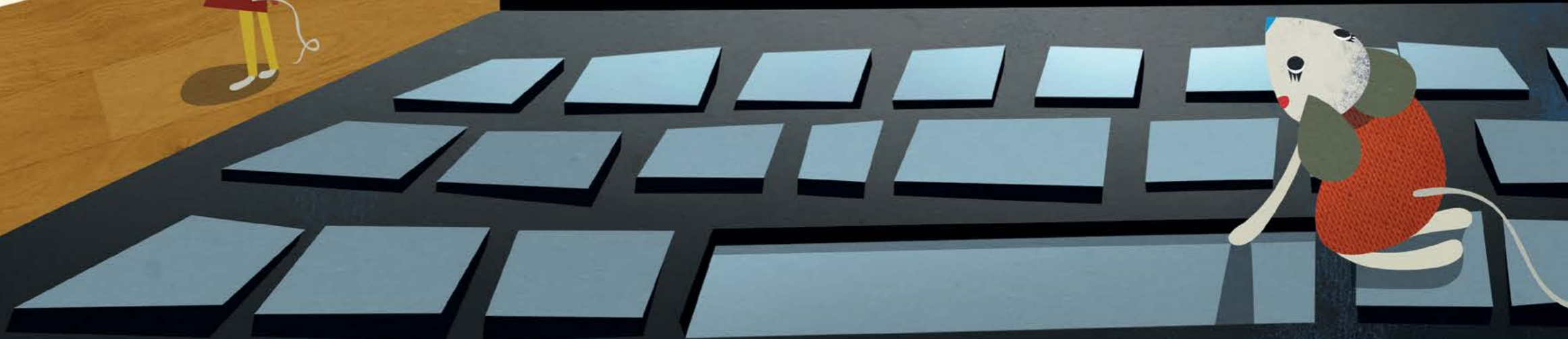
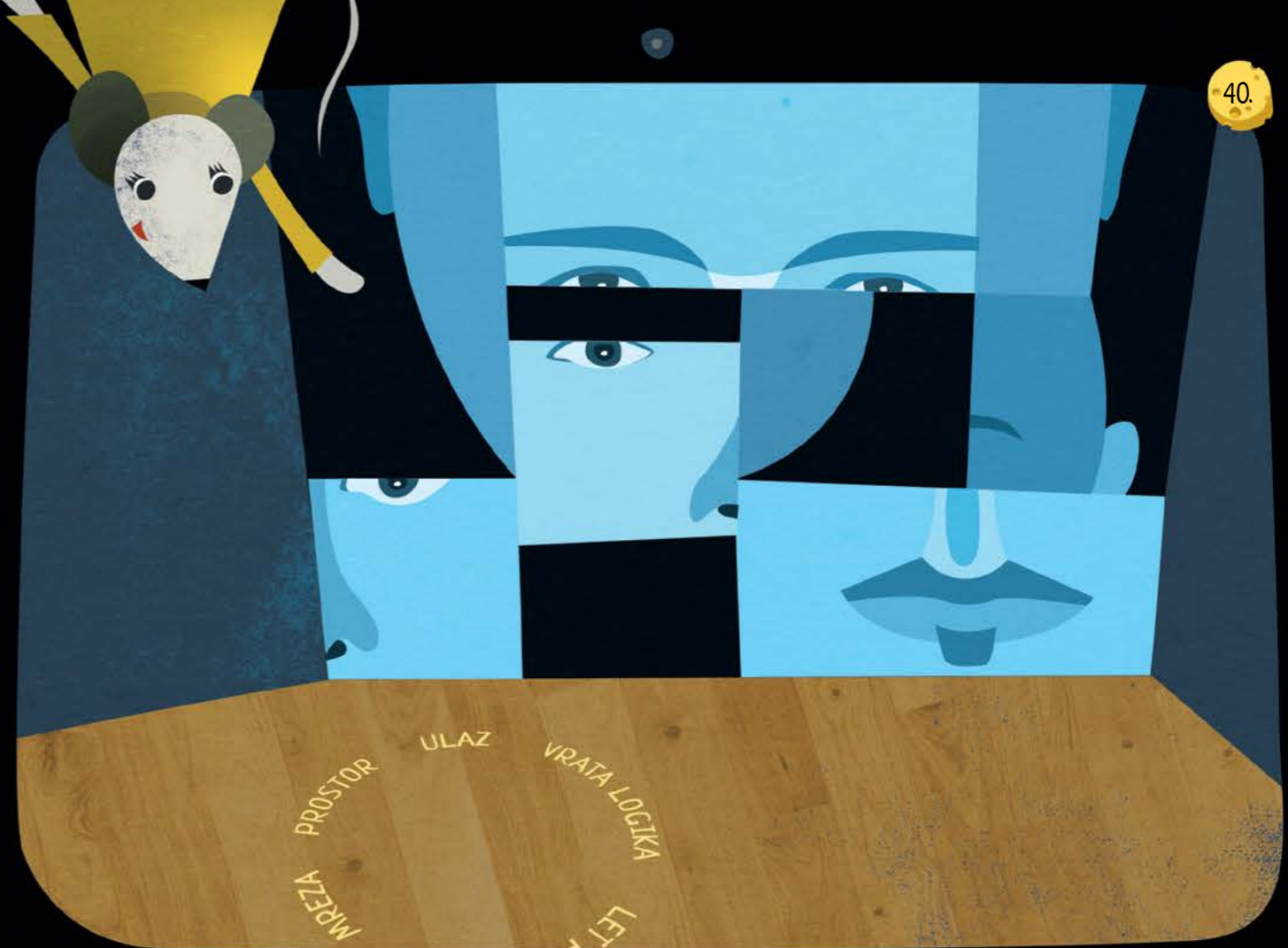
38.

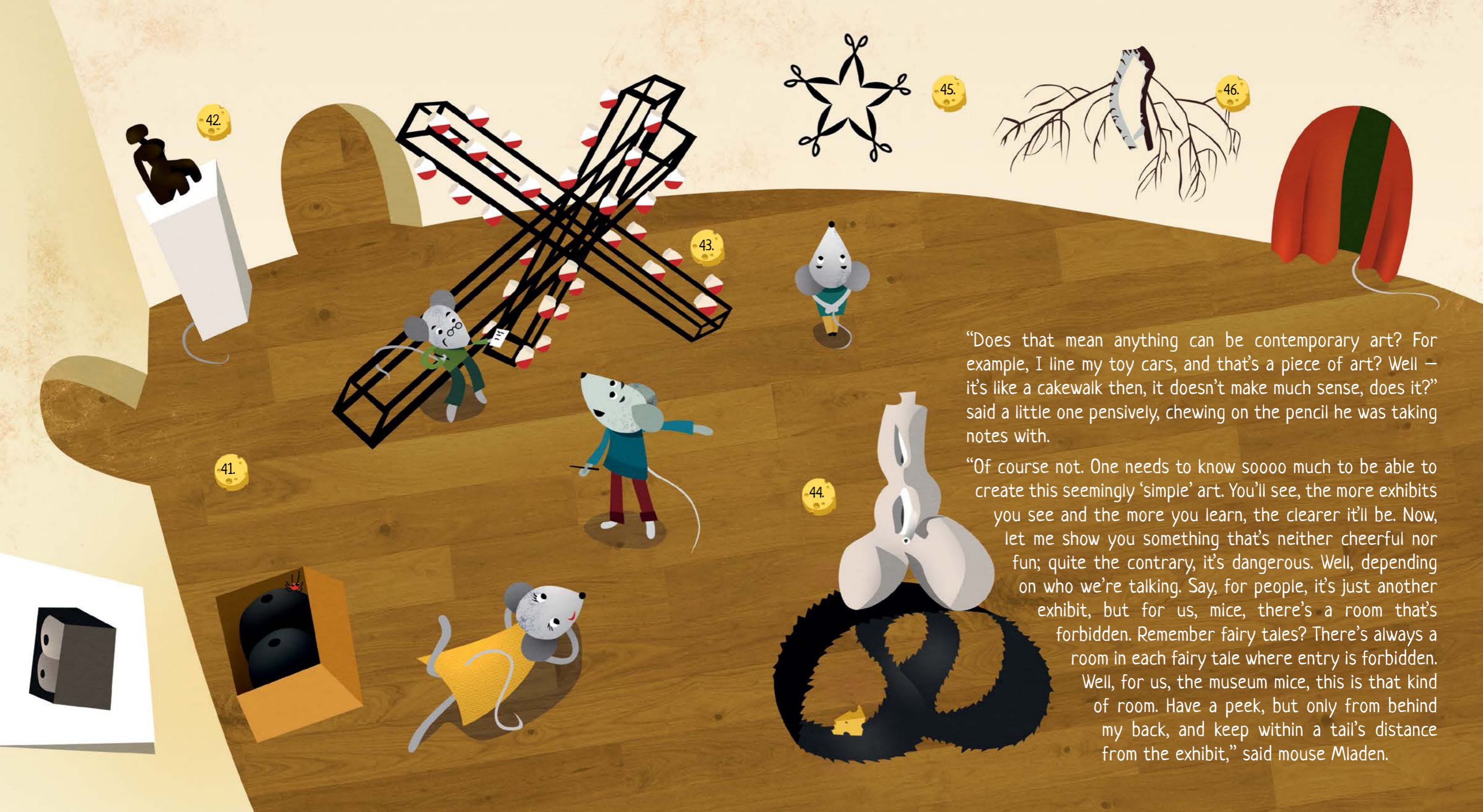


39.



40.





42.

45.

46.

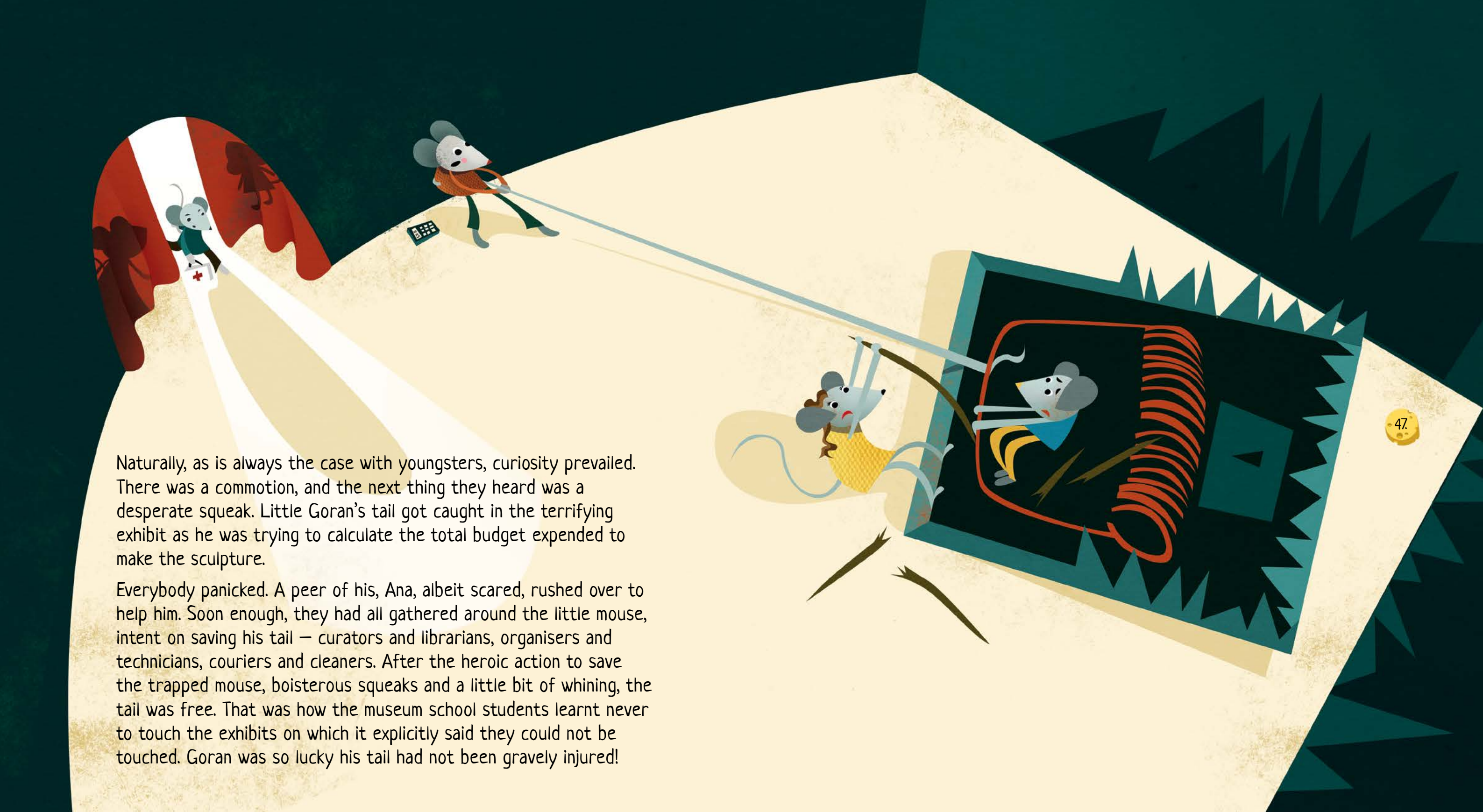
43.

41.

44.

“Does that mean anything can be contemporary art? For example, I line my toy cars, and that’s a piece of art? Well – it’s like a cakewalk then, it doesn’t make much sense, does it?” said a little one pensively, chewing on the pencil he was taking notes with.

“Of course not. One needs to know soooo much to be able to create this seemingly ‘simple’ art. You’ll see, the more exhibits you see and the more you learn, the clearer it’ll be. Now, let me show you something that’s neither cheerful nor fun; quite the contrary, it’s dangerous. Well, depending on who we’re talking. Say, for people, it’s just another exhibit, but for us, mice, there’s a room that’s forbidden. Remember fairy tales? There’s always a room in each fairy tale where entry is forbidden. Well, for us, the museum mice, this is that kind of room. Have a peek, but only from behind my back, and keep within a tail’s distance from the exhibit,” said mouse Mladen.



Naturally, as is always the case with youngsters, curiosity prevailed. There was a commotion, and the next thing they heard was a desperate squeak. Little Goran's tail got caught in the terrifying exhibit as he was trying to calculate the total budget expended to make the sculpture.

Everybody panicked. A peer of his, Ana, albeit scared, rushed over to help him. Soon enough, they had all gathered around the little mouse, intent on saving his tail – curators and librarians, organisers and technicians, couriers and cleaners. After the heroic action to save the trapped mouse, boisterous squeaks and a little bit of whining, the tail was free. That was how the museum school students learnt never to touch the exhibits on which it explicitly said they could not be touched. Goran was so lucky his tail had not been gravely injured!

Relieved, the mice could go on with the tour.  
“There’s a train in that film! Is that the same train your ancestor mice took to arrive in Banja Luka?” exclaimed one of the little mice, overjoyed.

“No, the train was part of our exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 2017, called ‘University of Disaster’, by artist Radenko Milak. The Venice Biennale is one of the world’s greatest art events, and to appear there is a huge success! Many countries from around the world have buildings and houses in this beautiful Italian city built in the middle of the sea, where they stage unbelievably interesting exhibitions. And as for our museum, it has already taken part in the Biennale twice, presenting truly great shows each time.”

48.



49.

“Look! There’s a sports field here we play on, but it’s really ‘Stone Garden’, by artist Mladen Miljanović, whose exhibition ‘The Garden of Delights’ we staged in Venice back in 2013,” Sarah told them, beaming with pride.



After the Venice adventure, there was another surprise awaiting the little mice.

“This is a great day for you too. Now that you’ve completed this training with flying colours, it’s time we proclaim you members of our museum team of experts,” said Sarah, holding a golden painting brush in one paw. Together with her colleagues, she solemnly approached the little mice, who were standing together, lightly touched one shoulder of each one of them with the brush, and repeated before each of them:

“We, the Mice of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Republic of Srpska, proclaim you a curator. With this act you become a member of our expert team and vow to study and protect contemporary art to the best of your ability. Welcome aboard!”

The mice’s whiskers trembled with pride. However, this was still far from the end of what awaited them that day.





МУЗЕЈ САВРЕМЕНЕ УМЈЕТНОСТИ  
РЕПУБЛИКЕ СРПСКЕ

“Remember the party I told you about when we first started?” Sarah asked, and kept on. “The best party at the museum takes place on the Night of Museums. You’re so lucky that’s tonight! All over Europe, it is a special night for museums. That night, visitors have a fantastic time. Some choose to see exhibitions, which are especially good, while others see music concerts staged in front of museums.”

“Our goal is to keep our visitors here as long as possible, even past midnight, so they can see museums can be so much fun!”  
The merry little mice felt like one — they joined the throng in front of the museum and danced until morning, celebrating the Night of Museums.

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATED ARTWORKS



1. HANS HARTUNG (GERMANY)  
*L* 1974-19,  
1974, lithograph



2. FRIEDENSREICH HUNDERTWASSER (AUSTRIA)  
*Crusade of the Crossroaders*  
(from the *Regentag portfolio*),  
1971, serigraph



3. PIERRE ALECHINSKY (BELGIUM)  
*Roterdam*,  
1974, lithograph



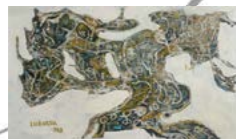
4. JO DELAHAUT (BELGIUM)  
*Black-and-Green Relation*,  
1967, oil on wood panel



5. IMRE BAK (HUNGARY)  
*Composition*,  
1968, serigraph



6. MILAN KONJOVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Green-and-Red Table*,  
1974, oil on hardboard



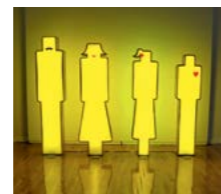
7. PETAR LUBARDA (MONTENEGRO)  
*Old Olive Tree*,  
1963, oil on hardboard



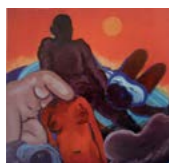
8. STOJAN ĆELIĆ (B&H)  
*In Honour of Piero della Francesca*,  
1976, oil on canvas



9. BORA ILJOVSKI (SERBIA)  
*Rhythmic Exercises*,  
1977, oil on canvas



10. BORIS GLAMOČANIN (B&H)  
*Family*,  
2007, installation



11. KOSA BOKŠAN (SERBIA)  
*Drunken Ship*,  
1967-1974, oil on canvas



12. JULIJE KNIFER (CROATIA)  
*Untitled*,  
1979, serigraph



13. OTTO PIENE (GERMANY)  
*Light Ballet for Banja Luka*,  
c. 1970, lumino-kinetic object



14. GÜNTHER UECKER (GERMANY)  
*Light Plate*,  
1972, lumino-kinetic object



15. MUSTAFA SKOPLJAK (B&H)  
*Remains of a Nude VII*,  
1984, sculpture



16. DRAGAN MOJOVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Detemporalization*,  
1980, installation



17. BRANKO MILJUŠ (B&H)  
*Forbidden Land*,  
s. a., oil on canvas



18. DUŠAN OTAŠEVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Looping* (from the *Ilija Dimić series*),  
1933/2015, sculpture



19. MARIJA DRAGOJLOVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Pattern 2: Pierrot in Moonlight*  
(from the *Nostalgia series*),  
2002-2005, acrylic and silver leaf on canvas



20. RADOŠ ANTONIJEVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Innocence without Protection*,  
2013, sculpture



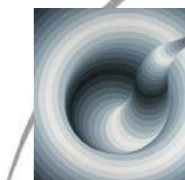
21. GASTONE BIGGI (ITALY)  
*Continuo 86*,  
1963, acrylic on canvas



22. VIKTOR MAJDANDŽIĆ (B&H)  
*Kolo (dance)*,  
1966, oil tempera on canvas



23. YASSE TABUCHI (JAPAN)  
*Untitled*,  
1973, lithograph



24. TOMISLAV DUGONJIĆ (B&H)  
*Exodus II*,  
1973, acrylic and polymer on canvas





25. BERTRAND DORNY (FRANCE)  
*Small Tunnel,*  
1975, colour aquatint



27. FRANCESCO GUERRIERI (ITALY)  
*Collage No. 16/69,*  
1968, collage



29. HERMAN HEBLER (NORWAY)  
*Visual Signs I,*  
1970, serigraph



31. NENAD MALEŠEVIĆ (B&H)  
*Die Pflanzen,*  
2014, colour photograph



33. MILUN VIDIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Colorful Box,*  
1973, sculpture



35. BORIS GLAMOČANIN (B&H)  
*Identity,*  
2006, installation



37. JOŽE CIUHA (SLOVENIA)  
*Grievance,*  
s. a., combined technique



26. NENA SAGUIL (PHILIPPINES)  
*Rotating Painting*  
*(Sunset in the Tropics),*  
1969, oil on canvas



28. IRWIN (SLOVENIA)  
*Vade Retro,*  
1988, object



30. HEINZ MACK (GERMANY)  
*Rotors,*  
1971, lumino-kinetic objects



32. VOJISLAV STANIĆ (MONTENEGRO)  
*Portrait,*  
1972, oil on canvas



34. TEIMURAZ CHOGOVADZE (GEORGIA)  
*At the Table,*  
2000, oil on canvas



36. BILJANA GAVRANOVIĆ (B&H)  
*Totems,*  
1989, collage on paper



38. BOJAN STEVANIĆ, (B&H)  
*Mona Lisa Flirt,*  
2006, video animation



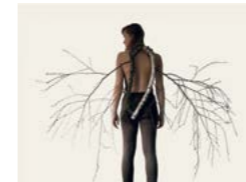
40. MIODRAG MANOJLOVIĆ (B&H)  
*The Presence of the Absent,*  
2007, video installation



42. KOSTA ANGELI RADOVANI (CROATIA)  
*Woman Up to Her Ankles in Water,*  
1970, sculpture



44. ZDRAVKO JOKSIMOVIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Once a Year,*  
2008, sculpture



46. BORJANA MRĐA (B&H)  
*Wings,*  
2008, object



48. KATA MIJATOVIĆ (CROATIA)  
*Unconscious: Canal Grande,*  
2013, colour photographs



49. RADENKO MILAK (B&H)  
*From the Far Side of The Moon,*  
2017, animated film



39. MLADEN MILJANOVIĆ, (B&H)  
*A Sweet Symphony of Absurdity,*  
2013, video



41. RADOVAN KRAGULJ, (B&H)  
*Apples in a Box,*  
1974, mezzotint and object



43. ŽIVKO GROZDANIĆ GERA (SERBIA)  
*Made in Banja Luka,*  
2008, installation



45. VLADIMIR PERIĆ (SERBIA)  
*Clipping,*  
2005, installation



47. VESO SOVLJ (B&H)  
*Mousetrap,*  
2005, object



50. MLADEN MILJANOVIĆ (B&H)  
*Stone Garden,*  
2013, installation

## COLOPHON

PUBLISHED BY  
Museum of Contemporary Art of  
Republic of Srpska  
Trg srpskih junaka 2, Banja Luka  
tel: +387 51 215 364  
faks: +387 51 215 366  
www.msurs.net

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF  
Sarita Vujković, PhD, Director

PUBLICATION  
101

YEAR OF PUBLICATION  
2019

WRITTEN BY  
Jelena Tepić Kojević

TRANSLATED TO ENGLISH BY  
Svetlana Mitić, MA

ILLUSTRATED BY  
Dragoslav Malinić

DESIGNED BY  
Nemanja Mićević

PRINT RUN  
700

SUPPORTED BY  
Ministry of Education and Culture  
of Republic of Srpska

UNESCO Regional Bureau for  
Science and Culture in Europe

This publication was made in the framework of "Dialogue for the Future", co-implemented by the UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF, in partnership with the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Dialogue for the Future" is financed by the United Nations Peace Building Support Office/Peace Building Fund (PBF).

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are its authors', and do not express the views and opinions of the UN agencies implementing the project, or of their project partners. The content of the publication is the sole responsibility of its authors.

CIP - Каталогизација у публикацији  
Народна и универзитетска библиотека  
Републике Српске, Бања Лука

087.5

КОЈОВИЋ Тепић, Jelena

Secret Life of the Museum / [written by Jelena Kojović Tepić  
; illustrated by Dragoslav Malinić]. - Banja Luka : Museum of  
Contemporary Art of Republic of Srpska, 2019 ([s.l. : s.n.]). - 50 стр.  
: илустр. ; 23 cm. - (Publication / Museum of Contemporary Art of  
Republic of Srpska ; 101)

"This publication was made in the framework of „Dialogue for the  
Future“, coimplemented by the UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF, in  
partnership with the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina."--  
>колофон. - Тираж 700.

ISBN 978-99950-01-6

1. Malinić, Dragoslav [илустратор]

## DIRECTOR

Together with curators, the director of a museum is responsible for the preservation of artworks. He/she is also responsible for the work plan and programme, as well as for everything else that is related to the work of a museum.



## PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

(PR) writes press releases about the events that take place at a museum.



## MUSEUM TECHNICIANS

are in charge of mounting artworks for an exhibition, securing them to be safe for visitors.



## CURATOR

takes care of the works held at a museum. Each curator has special duties. One may be in charge of the collection, another of the museum documents, the third of training and education, while the fourth may be the one designing exhibitions.



## DESIGNER

designs catalogues, invitation cards, posters and other materials to be printed or published on social media; these materials are used to promote exhibitions and museums.





ISBN 978-99938-45-99-7



9 789993 845997