

A Museological Proposal for a Maritime Company Museum

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Abstract. This article focuses on company museums, which are a new dynamic presence in the museum world in Europe and specifically on the new museum of AGEMAR SA a major Greek maritime group of companies. It aims to highlight the main conceptual museological idea, by presenting the collection, the museum space, the environmental specifications and the framework of the museums activities. It also sets the purpose and the objectives for this museum as well as the museological approach which is followed in the design of the exhibition.

Keywords: Conceptual design, ship models collection, permanent exhibition.

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INTRODUCTION

The landscape of museums has changed a lot in recent years with many qualitative and quantitative changes. Part of this spectacular scene is the ‘*company museum*’, a new dynamic presence in the museum world in Europe and the United States. [1] Various large companies set up such museums either to highlight the value of the company brand, such as the BMW Museum in Munich or to highlight the owner's collection, such as the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein. Some major Greek companies, mainly banks (National Bank, Bank of Greece, etc.) have established such museums, seeking to illuminate and highlight their history. Possible reasons are to preserve a collection, illustrate the company's history, capture the entrepreneur's family or personal history, utilize an existing listed building or space, highlight and share core values of the company with the special conditions of a museum environment and also to provide the company with a space for the arrangement of cultural and other non-profit events. These reasons usually coexist in the establishment of a new company museum, such as the Maritime Company Museum recently created in the new headquarters building of AGEMAR SA in Athens.

AGEMAR SA is the major Greek maritime group of companies, family-owned and run, with offices in London and Piraeus. Antonis I. Angelicoussis founded the business in 1947, acquiring the first cargo vessel in 1948. His son Ioannis Angelicoussis joined the company in 1973 and run it until his death in 2021. The company owns a fleet of 153 ships, including 15 vessels on order across three sectors of operation – dry bulk, tankers and LNG carriers of as total 26m DWT. The company's new headquarters 30,000 m² building in Athens, designed by the architect Rena Sakellaridou SPARCH, was finished in 2018 and apart from administration

and office spaces includes complementary spaces open only for the staff and guests, such as library, amphitheater, restaurant, café, the ship-owner's vintage car exhibition space and the company museum on the ground floor. The following is the museological proposal for the creation of this museum with emphasis on the conceptual design of the exhibition.

THE MUSEUM

The main purpose of the museum is to highlight the history of the I. Angelicoussis group of companies while telling the story of its founders. Its core is the collection of ship models which are currently scattered in the offices of the three companies of the group. From ancient times people made small idols of ships because of their great symbolic value. Some of them have been discovered in archeological excavations and belong to the time of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Phoenicians and were made of clay, stone, metal or wood. In modern times it is customary, together with the real ship, to build its model in scale and offer it to the ship-owner. Ship-owners often decorate their houses with the model of their sailboat carved by a folk craftsman or their offices with models of the vessels in their fleet. [2]

Apart from the models, the ship-owner's original intention was to display also various other items such as the awards awarded to the group and to the ship-owner himself from *Lloyd's List* and other international organizations, and gifts from shipyards confirming the close relationship that the group has established with them.

This museum may be seen as a cultural institution, a place visited by people or students related to the maritime industry or are visitors/partners of the group. Located on the ground floor, directly visible from the main entrance lobby, it will definitely catch the eye and interest of those who enter the building. At the same time the museum, in combination with the library, could be a nucleus of knowledge and scientific study. This display is intended to be a permanent and not a periodic exhibition.

The Space

The museum is located in the southern part of the ground floor of the new building, in direct contact with the entrance lobby. Access to the space is through two doors from the lobby or alternatively, for the disabled, it is proposed to enter through the secondary entrance between the two parts of the complex. The exhibition room is defined by a perimeter of a glass curtain-wall, except for the side towards the lobby, where a boundary is formed by a marble wall. Outside the glass curtain-wall, at a distance of 85 cm, the museum is surrounded by a self-supporting perforated system consisting of reinforced concrete panels with rectangular holes of variable cross-section, through which natural light enters the space. The material of the floor is gray marble of Crete while the ceiling is lined with white sound absorbing panels.

The Collection

The collection in question includes only items that are located in the administration offices and were indicated by the executives as desirable to be included in the exhibition. For the most part the collection consists of ship models which have either been built by the shipbuilding company of the respective ship and have been offered to the ship-owner as a representation of the ordered ship, or have been manufactured from photographs provided by the ship-owner to an independent modeler. There are no models for all the vessels in the fleet, the existing ones

are considered to represent the most important acquisitions, not only in terms of the size of the respective ship but mainly in terms of its importance in the evolution of the group. It should also be borne in mind that the number of models will continue to increase as there are new vessels under construction, some of which will be considered important and their models will have to be exhibited in the future.

In addition to the models, the collection includes items that have been offered to the company or the ship-owners as gifts or souvenirs of trade agreements and launching ceremonies, and have mainly emotional value. There are also some important awards for the company's achievements as well as a small number of photos and personal items.

All the objects of the collection have been recorded in detail in *Object Records* sheets that were created especially for this project. [3] The items in the collection are divided into 5 categories:

A. Ship models

There are a total of 39 ship models representing all types of fleet ships:

- a) Liquefied gas (LNG) vessels owned by Maran Gas Maritime (5 models).
- b) Cargo ships (Bulkers) owned by Anangel Maritime Services (21 models).
- c) Oil tankers (Tankers) owned by Maran Tankers Management (13 models).

Among them there are ship models that no longer belong to the fleet of the group of companies as well as older ships that belonged to Antonis Angelicoussis in the past. Finally, there are some models in double, i.e. there are two models of the same ship on the same or different scale.

The model scales vary from 1:100 to 1:500, the majority of them in 1:200 scale. All models are housed in glass showcases with or without a frame (metal or wooden) and are mounted on a wooden surface with the help of supports. Their origin from different manufacturers has created, of course, non-uniformity in the construction of showcases.

B. Gifts

This category includes 12 items of various kinds which have been donated to ship-owners as souvenirs of corporate agreements or ship launches. They are a heterogeneous group of objects whose form and material vary.

C. Awards

This category includes 7 objects, 2 in the form of paper document, 3 small sculptures and a medallion accompanied by a document and the American flag.

D. Photographs

There are 4 photographs, all in a frame with glass.

E. Personal objects

This category includes 4 photographs in a frame and a bronze bust of Antonis Angelicoussis.

Environmental Specifications of the Exhibition Space

The nature of the objects to be exhibited is such that it does not require special climatic conditions. Special care should only be taken for dust settling as the models are difficult to clean, for the relative humidity of the room and to avoid UV radiation. In general, models should not be exposed to direct sunlight or be subject to large temperature fluctuations (i.e. near a heat source).

The construction of the new showcases should be done in such a way that will allow the circulation of air into them through holes in their base which will be protected by appropriate dust filters.

Environmental specifications for the space: [4]

- Relative humidity RH: 45% to 50% all year round.
- Air filtration for dust, pollen, cigarette smoke, bacteria: 90-95%
- Light intensity (projects of medium sensitivity): 200-250 lux.
- UV radiation limit: 75 μW / lumen
- Temperature: 21 d.C. in winter, 24*d.C. in summer.
- Stability within the ± 0.5 * C limit is important for the constant value of RH

If the models are not placed in glass showcases then the room air must be filtered for absolute protection from dust and other microparticles, and the above values must be considered absolute. In this case, the lifespan of the objects will be influenced to a greater extent by the climatic conditions of the space.

Natural lighting: Natural lighting should be diffused and the direct entry of sunlight into the exhibition space should be prevented. Ultraviolet rays of sunlight cause damage to objects and therefore, if the orientation of the room is such that allows direct sunlight to enter, special UV filters must be installed on the exterior curtain-wall.

Artificial lighting: Artificial lighting is very important in the design of the exhibition and should be studied by a specialized lighting designer who will convey the wishes of the architect and the feeling she wants to give to the objects and the space. For example, low general lighting, more intense in objects (allows better viewing of details), or general lighting that does not emphasize the exhibits except in the places that the designer wants. Ship models have details that should be adequately lit. [5] In addition, the extensive use of horizontal glass surfaces in showcases favors the limited use of general lighting due to reflections, a problem that can be overcome with the use of anti-glare glass.

The Framework of the Museum's Activities

The management of the collection and the exhibits includes the research, the maintenance and restoration of the exhibits and the information material of the exhibition. Also, especially when new acquisitions are added, the texts of the exhibition as well as the Object Records should be updated. An important part in the management of the collection is the production of printed material such as an informative brochure (leaflet) which will be available at the entrance of the exhibition. It is also suggested to publish a directory as well as create a website.

Significant advantages can arise from the museum's presence online. The digitization of the collection and the accompanying material will make it available to the public online. Also through the internet the language borders are being demolished and access to the museum's information property is accessible to a large number of users remotely. Thus the museum guarantees the quality of information and plays an important role in the ongoing information process which is a feature of the knowledge and information society.

One of the key features of a museum that communicates with visitors in a friendly way is to leave them free to follow their own path in the exhibition. At the same time, however, for the convenience of the visitors, it would be very helpful to have a person present, informed and available, whom the visitors can ask for more info.

THE CONCEPTUAL DESIGN OF THE EXHIBITION

After the industrial revolution that changed the world maritime exchange system, the development of international trade in the world's seas is rapid. The Greeks became the main carriers of the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea to the West. For the last 170 years, six generations of sailors and ship-owners have been traveling in international waters serving maritime transport in the 19th and 20th century global economic systems. Owing almost 18% of the world's tonnage, Greeks today manage the largest merchant fleet in the world, larger than that of the United States and Japan. [6]

Greek shipping developed thanks to a network of merchant shipping communities scattered in the main ports of the Mediterranean, the Black Sea and northern Europe. More than thirty islands and ports of the Ionian and Aegean seas developed great shipping and shipbuilding activity, reaching their peak in 1870 with 2441 sailboats. It was at that time, specifically in 1880, when Captain Antonis Angelicoussis (1885-1927) buys the *Taxiarchis* brig of 750 tons and until 1914 he has under his management 4 other sailboats. [7] After 1885 the gradual shrinkage of the sailing fleet and the gradual replacement by steamships, especially during the 1870s, becomes apparent. However, sailing ships are still used for about 40 years, despite the competition. Since 1890 there has been an impressive increase in the number of Greek steamships which will continue to rise until the First World War. On the eve of World War I, the main Piraeus-London axis was formed, around which Greek shipping operates, but at the same time a significant number of Greek ships regularly cross the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. With the outbreak of the Balkan Wars and World War I, Greek ships due to the closure of the Dardanelles Straits left the Mediterranean market to operate in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, transporting mainly grain and coal. In 1946, with the end of World War II, the Greek merchant fleet had lost 70% of its vessels. However, in April of the same year, the Greek government guaranteed the purchase of 100 Liberty-type merchant ships from the United States, a move that is considered to be the "cornerstone" of the post-war Greek shipping evolution. [8] The grandson of Captain Antonis, Antonis Angelicoussis (1918-1989), the founder of the modern company, in 1950 buys his first Liberty ship, the *Astypalea*, and establishes with Efthymiou and Kaloudis the company "A. Angelicoussis and D. Efthymiou". It is the time, from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s, when Greek shipping is experiencing rapid growth. They continue to carry bulk cargo but are also involved in the fast-growing international oil trade. [9]

Antonis Angelicoussis, who was twice awarded a medal by the Greek and twice by the British government for his actions during World War II, is considered one of the leading Greek ship-owners. But unlike most of them who bought second-hand ships, A. Angelicoussis turned to the new shipbuilding market, creating a "new age" fleet. From 1965 to 1985 he built 42 ships at the IHI shipyards at Japan, an indication of the close relations he established with the companies with which he collaborated with. After World War II and until the mid-1960s, the main centers of management of the Greek merchant fleets were in London and New York. At the beginning of 1960, A. Angelicoussis collaborated with the families of Peratikos, Xylas, Andrianopoulos and Igglei in the creation of the "Pegasus Ocean Service" from which he left in 1969 and founded in London, in collaboration with D. Efthymiou, the "Agelef" and in then in 1972 after the departure of D. Efthymiou, "Anangel Shipping Enterprises SA". Pioneer as we have already noted in the new shipbuilding, he created a fleet of modern and young vessels. It is indicative that the average age of the Anangel fleet in 1975 was seven years. [10]

He was also the first Greek ship-owner to take advantage of the opportunity to raise funds from the international capital markets by founding in 1987, in collaboration with American Express Bank, the company "Anangel American Shipholding Ltd", listing its shares on the Luxembourg and New York Stock Exchanges. Another key feature of A. Angelicoussis' activity in shipping was the choice of the Greek flag for all the ships he managed.

The successful course of Anangel Shipping Enterprises was continued by his children, Ioannis and Anna who in 2000 decided to operate separately dividing the family business between them. Ioannis Angelicoussis has been managing since 2002 through Anangel Maritime Services Inc a significant number of cargo ships, through Maran Tankers Inc the oil tankers and through Maran Gas the LNG ships. He continued to his recent death (2021) his father's strategy of building new vessels, raising the Greek flag on all of them. [11]

Through this brief review of the history of the Greek merchant navy and the Angelicoussis family, we were able to formulate the main conceptual museological idea of the museum's permanent exhibition. As already mentioned, our target is the expression and promotion of corporate memory of the group and the representation in a systematic and experiential way of its trace in history and society.

Purpose and Objectives

The main conceptual museological idea is to demonstrate the importance of the I. Angelicoussis group and its participation in the creation of the "miracle" of Greek merchant shipping. Secondary goals are to promote the participation of members of the Angelicoussis family and of dedicated executives and collaborators who contributed to the business evolution and also to highlight the fact that the main reason why this company currently holds this position worldwide is largely due to the continuous construction of new ships resulting in not only to a large number of privately owned ships but also a fleet consisting of 'young' ships, almost exclusively under the Greek flag.

Summarizing the individual objectives, we state that our intention is to formulate an exhibition that is comprehensible and accessible, which can be approached cognitively by the whole range of potential visitors of the museum. Both the museological and the architectural discourse must be understood, in direct connection to each other, arousing the interest of the public through an experiential approach.

The Museological Approach

The museological study aims to implement in space the multiple interpretations or methodologies of approaching, reading and finally receiving the objectives set by the proposed exhibition sections, following basic principles of contemporary museology. It is necessary to give the objects the opportunity to tell their story in order to expand the initial framework and to include, in addition to the promotion of the corporate memory of the group, its connection with the modern history of the Greek merchant navy but also the modern shipbuilding aiming at the development of maritime trade.

Every museum initiative is born from its collection. However, the implementation of the idea is not entirely determined by this component. In fact, the conceptual approach and the basic idea of this exhibition may include additional material such as registers, photographs, excerpts of publications but also information material, captions, short texts that will accompany the sections and sub-sections. The proposed museological sections will essentially function as a

single interpretive web, which runs through the space while structuring the conceptual sections. The interpretation of the past and present is expanded on overlapping levels, through the scientifically documented organization of modern and historical material and thus forms the code of communication of the public with the exhibits, which will be accompanied by the appropriate additional information. It is suggested to use, as much as possible, ship models that are in the same scale (1:200), which will contribute to the process of interpreting the exhibits, will release the possible 'stories' they contain and make them understandable to the visitors.

The Conceptual Design

Based on the above, the museum's exhibition should be treated as a thematic exhibition, which develops a story (story telling). The development of such an exhibition should be rather linear, with branches where it is appropriate. At the same time the exhibition should be didactic and experiential, informing the visitor and at the same time provoking his participation.

The exhibition will be organized around two poles: the fleet and the history of the group. As we have already said, the core of the museum is the collection of ship models. It is proposed to create a route which will start from the entrance and will follow the perimeter of the space where selected ship models will be exhibited, representative of the various types. The models will be displayed individually in uniform showcases designed by the architect and which should be consistent with the general style of the space. The models will be divided into subsections and at the beginning of each subsection there will be an accompanying text (approximately 50-70 words) which will tell the story of the group. Inside the showcases the technical characteristics of the relevant ship will be displayed. At the end of this route, in a banner on which there will be in abstract form a world map marking the sea routes of the ships, a short text will present the status of the Angelicoussis group today.

In the center of the space, in a specially designed showcase of corresponding aesthetics and analogy with the showcases of the models, through texts, photos, registers, publications and awards, the story of the Angelicoussis group and its founder will be narrated, along with the history of Greek shipping. At the same time, the human resources of the group should be promoted - ship-owners, captains, executives, sailors - who have actively contributed to shaping its history and current image. In collaboration with the historian and the ship-owner photographs of first ships, launching ceremonies, snapshots from life on ships, etc. should be selected and used from the existing photographic material.

As the spatial capacity of the exhibition space is limited and the models that will be exhibited will be minimal compared to the size of the fleet, it is proposed to write all the names of the ships belonging to the fleet around the base of the main showcase to highlight their large number. The models exhibited at the exhibition will be part of the history of the group. At the same time, space should be provided for the models of the future vessels. It is therefore suggested that all these new models be placed outside the museum, in the sitting area in front of the marble wall. The placement of the new acquisitions of the fleet at this point will make it easier to switch models, something that would be more difficult inside the museum. Existing gifts as well as new ones is suggested to be exhibited in a specially designed space in the library.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing the design solution, the narrative emerges from the two 'parts' that constitute the exhibition. The protagonists of the exhibition are the models. They are placed in parallel and slightly oblique to the perimeter glazing, into visual contact with the water around it, giving the image of a fleet sailing in the sea. In this way, the aesthetic and emotional effect that the models will exert will be enhanced, highlighting the experiential character of the visit. The central element creates a second 'space' where all the necessary information about the history of the group is given through objects and mainly printed material. The two different ways of narration help to arouse the interest of the visitor and push him to 'participate', enriching the suggested experience. The exhibition of the new acquisitions that continues outside the museum space but in visual contact through the glass wall to the lobby, diffuses the information throughout the main entrance area, removing the spatial restrictions of the museum. A fact which in turn conceptually contributes to the continuous evolution of the I. Angelicoussis group over time.

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