



# EXHIBITION ENHANCEMENTS

Best Practice document based on  
My Armenia Program's projects  
with regional museums in Armenia

# WHY ENHANCE YOUR EXHIBITION?

Enhancements can improve the visitor experience by supporting enjoyment and understanding, helping individuals look more closely at the objects or see the objects more clearly or providing information that helps them appreciate and learn more about what they're seeing.

Enhancements might also help keep the objects safer for their long-term preservation. Exhibitions are educational experiences outside of the traditional academic setting, sharing information about history, science, the arts, and culture, all grounded in research. Good exhibitions contextualize the objects not only within the historical period during which they were used/made, but also draw connections to today. They allow visitors to connect with the content and the objects on display. Making improvements to your exhibitions can lead to longer visits, repeat visits, and increased visitation.

## THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDES INFORMATION ABOUT:

- 01 How to start – creating a plan
- 03 Methods for enhancing an exhibition
- 04 Curatorial planning
- 05 Roles and responsibilities
- 07 Examples of exhibition enhancements (object-based, thematic, full-scale)
- 17 Ideas for fundraising for an exhibition enhancement



# HOW TO START?

When carrying out exhibition enhancements, it is useful to create a plan and timeline that allow you to phase your work logically and consider budget needs and/or limitations. Understanding what you would like to achieve will help you develop your plan, which is the first step. The timeline will depend on your human and financial resources and the scale of your enhancement plans, but be sure to leave time for feedback, revisions, and necessary approvals.

This graphic outlines several key steps to executing an exhibition enhancement. ►►

Consider needs/gaps  
Conduct research  
Select objects  
Develop narrative

## DEVELOP A CURATORIAL PLAN

## DESIGN THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition path/flow  
Furniture & mounts  
Lighting  
Paint  
Interactives

Identify fabricators and suppliers  
Create a renovation/installation timeline  
Design and develop interpretive materials

## DEVELOP A PRODUCTION PLAN

## PREPARE FOR LAUNCH

Conduct renovation  
Install exhibition  
Finalize and install exhibition texts  
Prepare branding and marketing materials

# WHAT ARE SOME METHODS FOR ENHANCING AN EXHIBITION?

Exhibition enhancements can be conducted at different scales and over time depending on a museum’s priorities and available resources. Improving an exhibition may seem daunting, but many types of activities support exhibition enhancement, from conducting additional research on one or more objects in your collection through executing a full-scale redesign.



Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum

Enhancing an exhibition could entail:

- Creating or adding new dimensions to the curatorial plan or framework (such as creating or updating the narratives or themes addressed in different rooms or areas of your museum; adjusting the selection of objects on display to tell new or different stories)
- Increasing the amount of research and information you share with visitors and how you share that information (adding new interpretive materials such as labels, wall panels, focus texts, youth-oriented content, multilingual content, etc. with a variety of audiences in mind)
- Conducting design upgrades and/or employing new or more attractive display methods (such as new or improved lighting, frames, hanging methods, cases, mounts, technological installations)
- Considering the overall visitor experience (such as adding benches, improving wayfinding to indicate the optimal exhibition path)

# DEVELOP A CURATORIAL PLAN

## CONDUCT RESEARCH

Begin with taking a closer look at your collections to identify research opportunities. What stories do the objects tell? Are any objects especially significant to the museum, the region, the nation, or the scholarly community? Does your collection contextualize a particular moment in history? Consider working with local scholars or research organizations to access additional information, archival materials, or related objects.

## SELECT OBJECTS

Think about what object(s) best tell or contextualize the story, stories, or themes identified in your preliminary research. Once you have selected objects, you may need to conduct additional research to fill in any gaps in information.

## DEVELOP NARRATIVE

Use your research and selected objects to begin to arrange information to tell the best story. An outline may be a helpful first step. The story may be thematic or chronological. Your research will inform the interpretive text that can be used in the exhibition to aid in visitors’ understanding. Begin drafting exhibition texts that could support the displays to support your curatorial plan.

## CONTINUE RESEARCH

Additional research may be needed at this stage to ensure your narratives are complete.

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Identifying what team members can contribute to the process is essential. Determining the strengths, roles, and responsibilities of your team will help encourage participation, ownership, and accountability.

Many museums have a small number of staff, so individuals may bear many responsibilities of an exhibition enhancement project. Having an individual fill each of the team roles described here may not be possible, but these descriptions can help you determine the best path forward for your museum and your exhibition enhancement.

Please note, these are not formal definitions of these roles, but rather descriptions to support your exhibition enhancement activities.

**Curator:** the person responsible for the collection and who leads the effort to have the collection tell a narrative (or many narratives) in the exhibition. S/he often has a particular content area expertise.

**Researcher:** a team member who is responsible for discovering or finding information about the collection and exhibition, as well as verifying existing information and ensuring it is complete.

**Educator:** someone who considers both the informal and formal experiences that visitors have in the exhibition spaces for learning about what is on display.

**Project manager:** an individual responsible for overseeing the project from start to finish. This person should help create the work plan with a breakdown of the activities, the timeline, and the budget. S/he can oversee any project teams you have (including any contractors you may need to hire) and serve as the bridge between different aspects of the work.

**Architect:** someone who can create plans for any structural changes that need to take place in the exhibition and that accounts for the safety of visitors, objects, and the building structure.

**Graphic Designer:** a person who can help bring the curatorial plan to life by considering different visual devices and the overall aesthetics of the space. This could include everything from the color of the walls to the size and location of exhibit cases.

**Editor:** an individual who reviews all text that will be shared with the public to ensure it is accessible, engaging, and grammatically correct.

**Fabricator:** An individual who manufactures elements of the exhibition, such as safe mounts or brackets.

**Installer:** An individual who installs various elements of the exhibition according to the exhibition space plan.



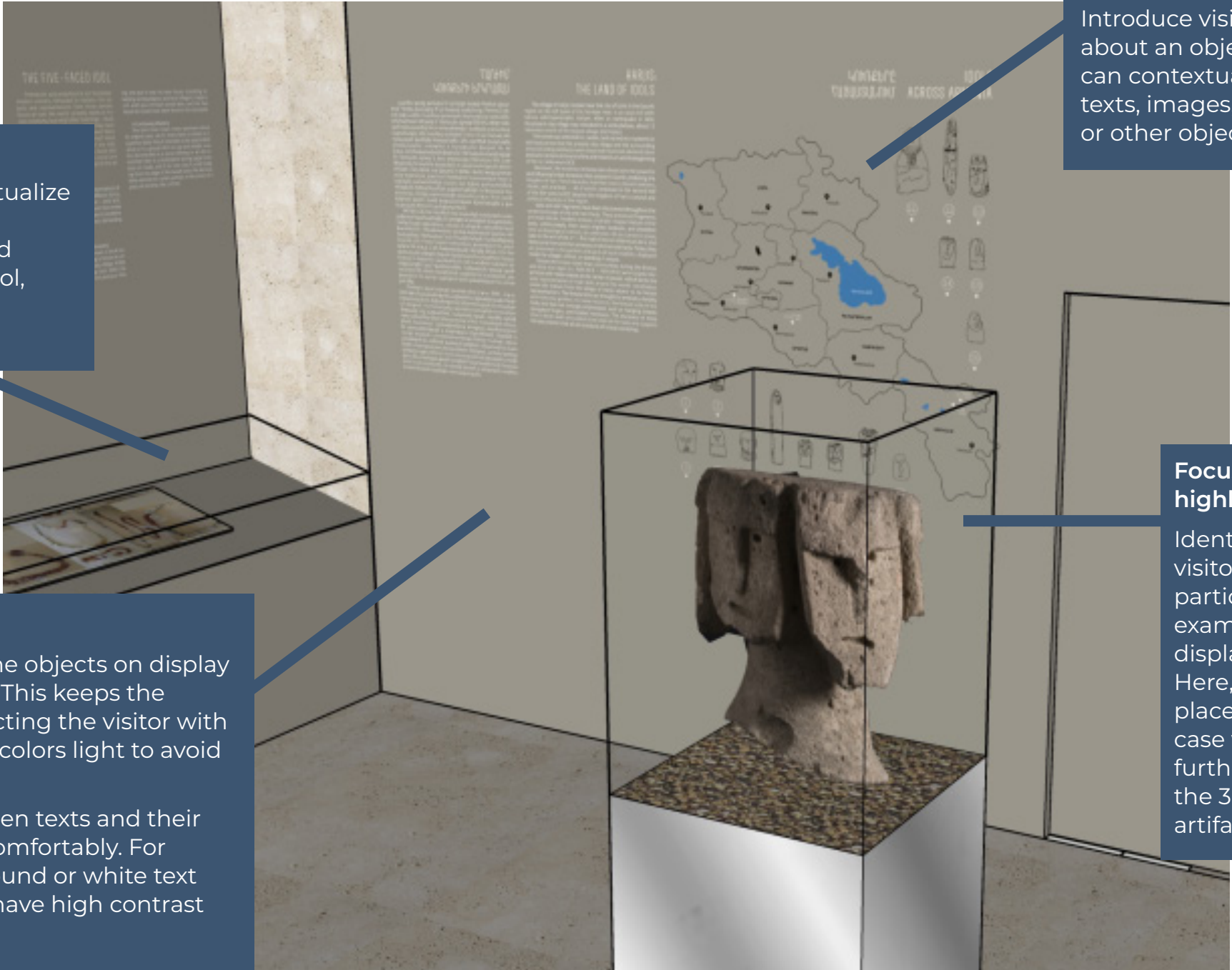
# EXAMPLE OF AN OBJECT-BASED EXHIBITION ENHANCEMENT

**Incorporate more of your collection**  
Utilize your collection to help contextualize a story for visitors. Here, jewelry from the same region and the same period as the main artifact, the five-faced idol, accompanies the new exhibition.

**New research**  
Introduce visitors to new information about an object in your collection. You can contextualize the object through texts, images, maps, diagrams, media, or other objects in the collection.

**Color palettes**  
Select paint colors that complement the objects on display and the overall museum environment. This keeps the focus on the objects rather than distracting the visitor with bold or jarring colors and visuals. Keep colors light to avoid the space feeling small and cramped.  
Make sure there is high contrast between texts and their backgrounds to allow visitors to read comfortably. For example, black text on a white background or white text on a tan/gray background (seen here) have high contrast and make the text easy to read.

**Focus on a collection highlight**  
Identify new ways to draw visitors' attention to a particularly special object, for example by enhancing the display method and lighting. Here, the five-faced idol is placed in a freestanding case without other objects, further drawing attention to the 360-degree details of this artifact.



Design rendering, Goris Local Lore Museum

# EXAMPLE OF A THEMATIC-BASED EXHIBITION ENHANCEMENT

**Lighting**  
Ensure that museum texts and objects are well illuminated to allow visitors to comfortably read and examine details. This exhibition uses spotlights directed on the texts and objects.

**Enhanced and safe display**  
Objects are held in a museum's trust for future generations. This priceless khachkar received more stable mounting and was moved from a previous position near a stairwell.

**Utilizing space**  
An exhibition does not need to be crowded with cases and objects to be effective. This “focus” exhibition takes advantage of a previously underutilized, but high-traffic, space in the museum with just a few objects and texts.

**A thematic approach**  
Highlight just a few objects from your collection by focusing on a particular theme, in this instance, the art of khachkar. In this exhibition, a particularly special artifact is highlighted in the center (Momik’s khachkar). Other objects and texts around it support and contextualize Momik’s masterpiece and talents, stone carving, and the tradition of khachkar in the Middle Ages.



*Design rendering, Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum*

# EXAMPLE OF A FULL-SCALE EXHIBITION ENHANCEMENT

## Curatorial Plan

Full-scale exhibition enhancement can be an overwhelming but rewarding undertaking. This type of enhancement requires a more substantial curatorial plan.

The curatorial plan for the Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters was created using PowerPoint and allowed the curatorial team to understand the thematic groupings with visuals. The curatorial plan was revised and artworks rearranged, based on feedback from the curatorial team. See the next pages for excerpts from this curatorial plan.

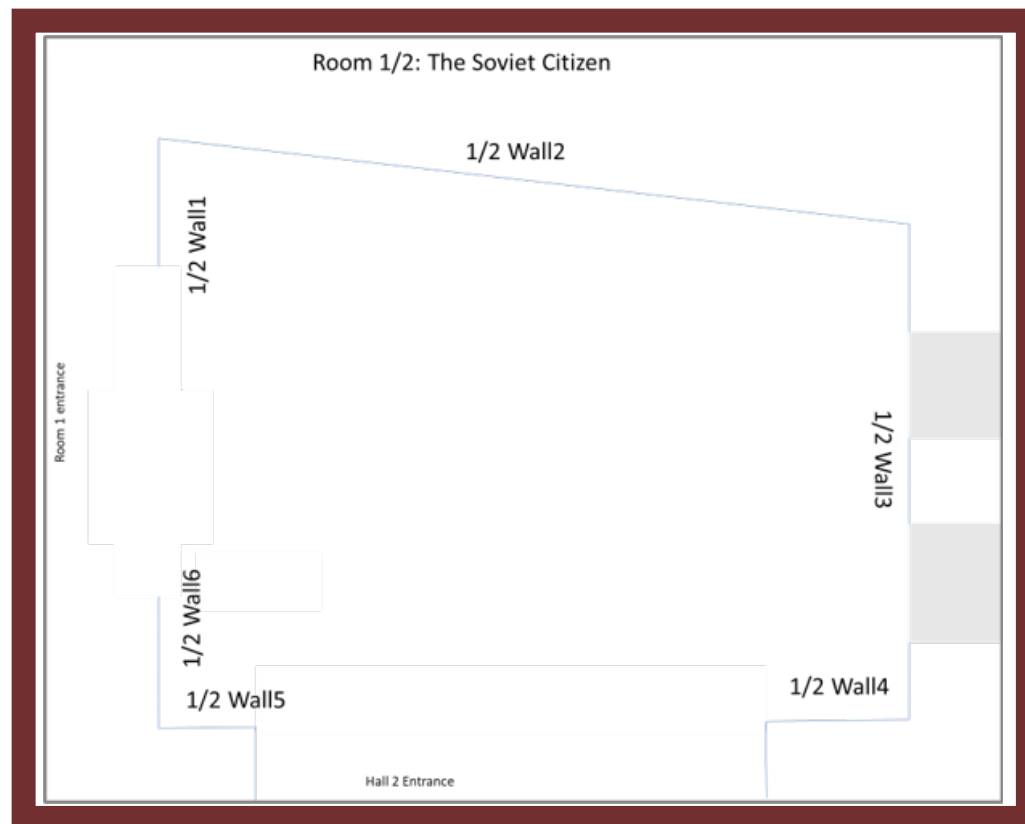
The Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters curatorial plan outlines eight key themes across the two-floor gallery. Each room is dedicated to a specific theme and highlights the work and accomplishments of both sisters. The themes are:

- The Soviet Citizen
- Finding Modernity
- Landscape and Nation
- Color, Object, Form
- Memory
- Picturing the World
- Womanhood
- Togetherness

While grouped thematically, the exhibition is also roughly organized chronologically to allow the visitor to go on a journey through the sisters' lives via their works. Works are sometimes grouped because they are similar and sometimes because they are in juxtaposition to one another, creating a lively "dialogue" between them.

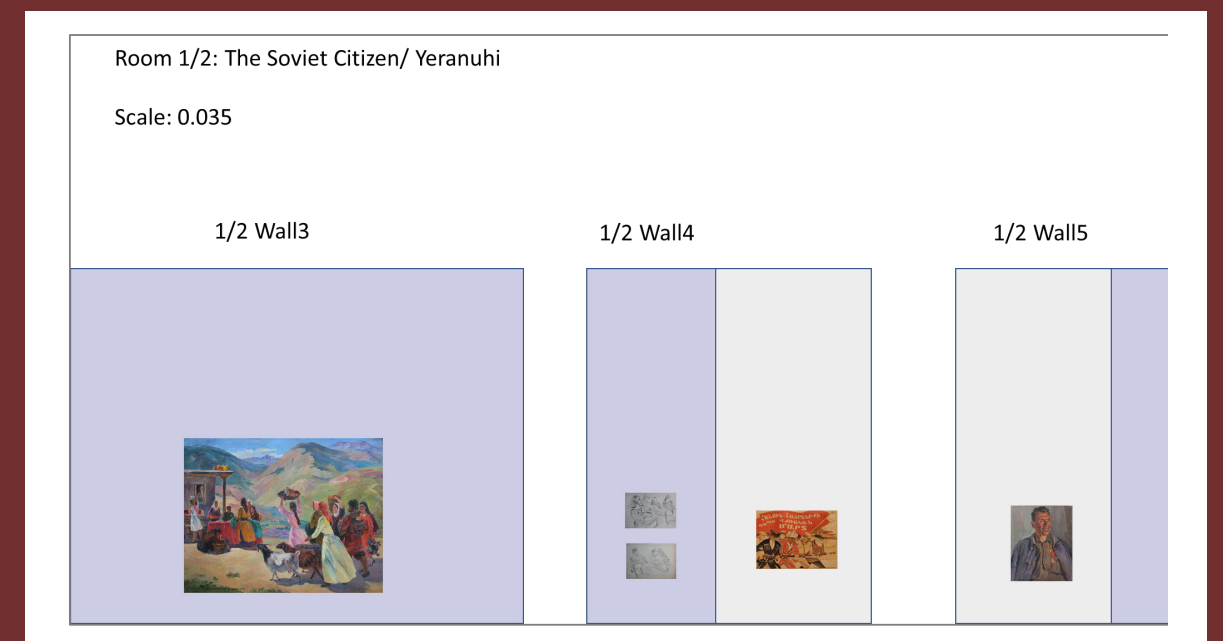
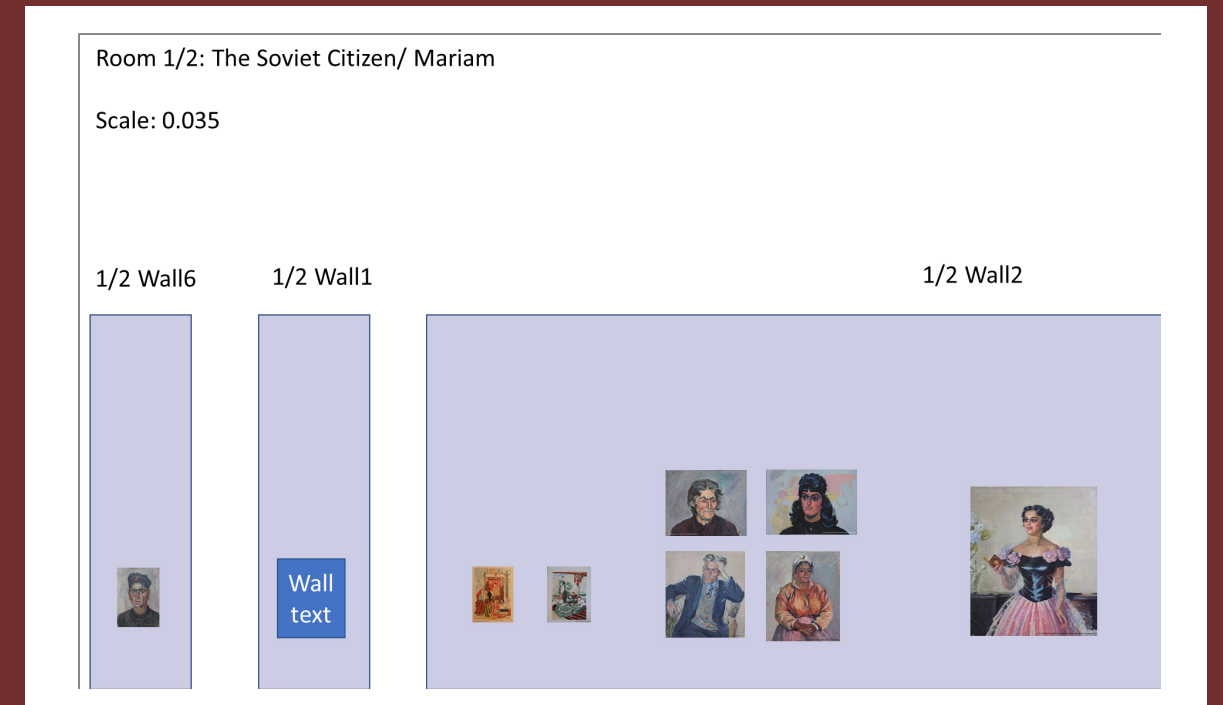


# CURATORIAL PLAN



Using the museum's floor plan, the curatorial plan assigned one theme per room in the museum. For each room, the walls were labeled and numbered (see above) and then interior elevations created of each, using photographs of the collection.

# INTERIOR ELEVATIONS



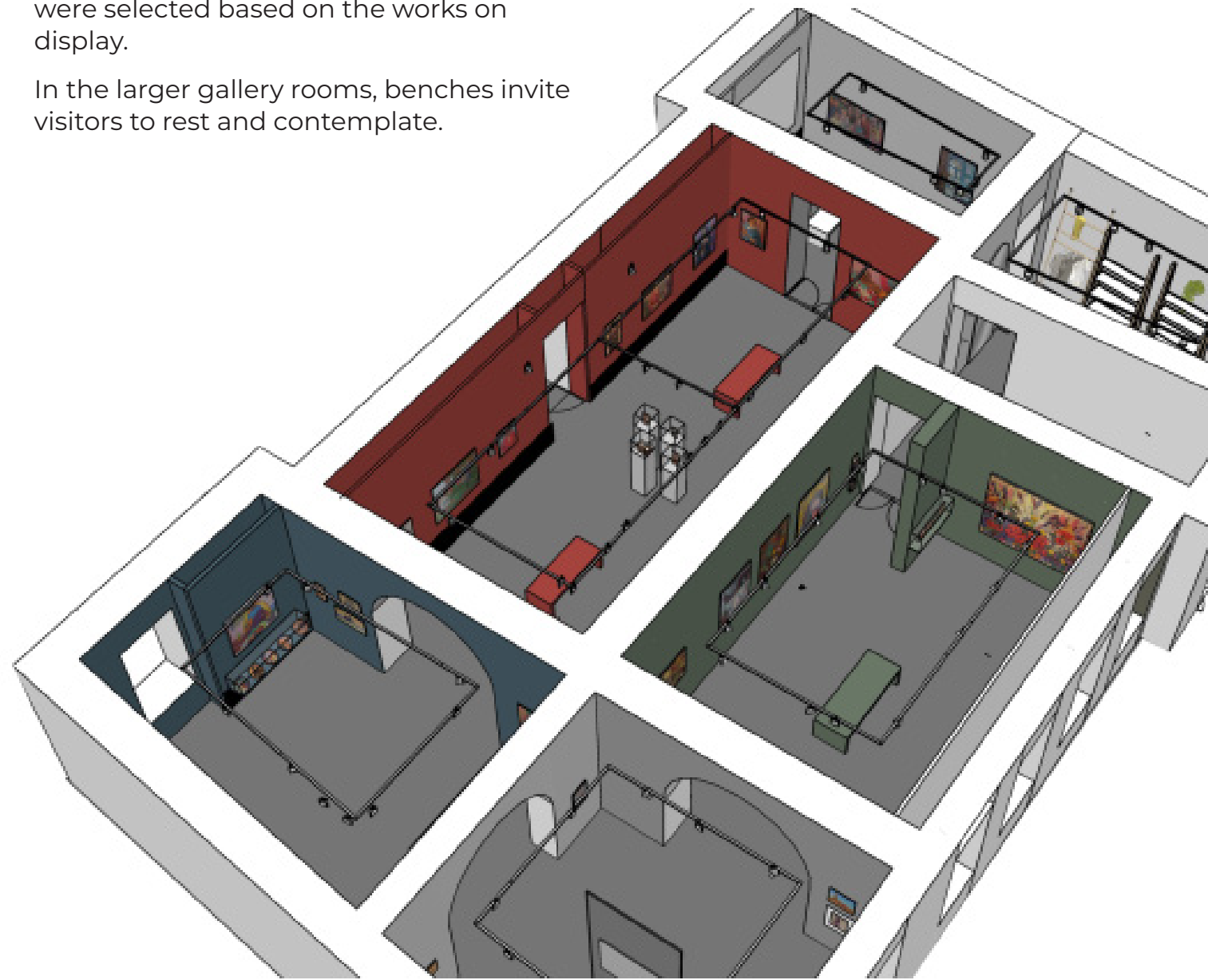
*Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters*

# RENDERING OF A FULL-SCALE EXHIBITION ENHANCEMENT

Three-dimensional renderings were developed based on the curatorial plan and include overhead views of each floor, as well as multiple views of each room in the museum.

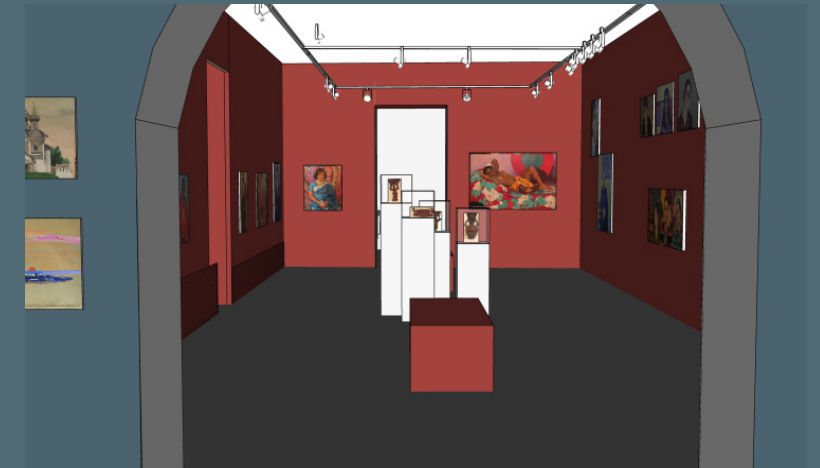
From this view, you can see that each of the rooms is painted a different color, cueing visitors into the different themes explored in each room. The paint colors were selected based on the works on display.

In the larger gallery rooms, benches invite visitors to rest and contemplate.



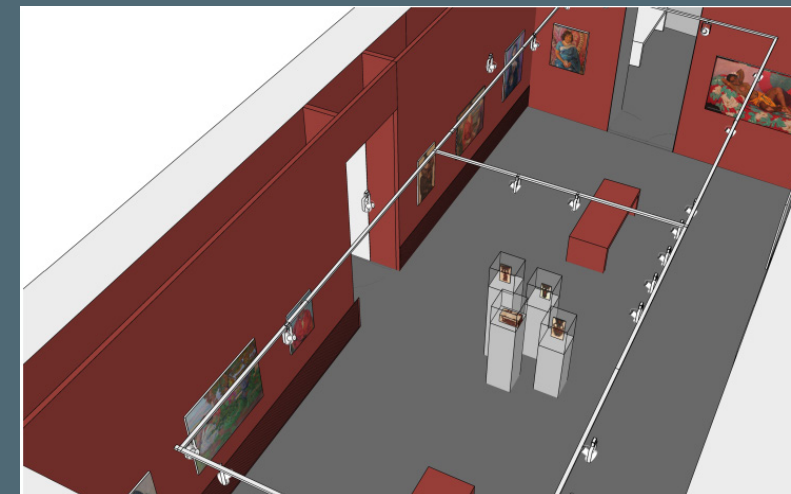
## New lighting

Track lighting can be positioned at different angles to diffuse lighting, as well as focus it on particular objects. Lights can also be moved on the track to accommodate different configurations in the room, should the display need to change.



## Color palette

Different wall colors can be a subtle, but effective, visual cue to visitors that they're entering a new thematic space.



## Mixing media

Sometimes exhibitions can benefit from mixing media – in this case paintings and ceramics. In addition to supporting a narrative, the differentiation can be a pleasant surprise for visitors.

# FUNDRAISING

Luke the Evangelist  
The Gospel  
Momik (13-14th centuries)  
1292  
Matenadaran

## ON THE MOVE *with* MASTER *Momik*

Sponsoring the safe  
reinstallation of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century  
khachkar piece by master  
***Momik*** in the Yeghegnadzor  
Regional Museum's new exhibition  
"The Art of Khachkar"

YEGHEGNADZOR  
REGIONAL MUSEUM



To support an exhibition enhancement, you may need to seek additional funding. Creating a compelling fundraising pitch will help potential donors understand what you're trying to do, why it's important, and how their financial or in-kind support will make an impact.

# FUNDRAISING CONTINUED

## *The Masterpiece*

The exquisitely carved khachkar (cross-stone) of Momik preserved at the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum is a unique masterpiece of Armenian medieval art. Momik (13th century-1333) is one of the most revered figures of Armenian medieval art, an architect, sculptor, writer, and painter of illuminated manuscripts - and an eminent professor of miniature painting at the University of Gladzor in Vayots Dzor, a prestigious medieval educational center in the region. He created the cross-stone in 1308 by the commission of Tamta Khatun, the daughter-in-law of Tarsayich Orbelian from the famous family of princes and feudal lords who ruled Armenia's province of Syunik and who were patrons of art.

Momik has left a rich legacy in architecture, miniature art, and khachkar art. Only three khachkars from the master are preserved today - two in Echmiatsin and one in the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum - making this khachkar at the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum even more exceptional and significant to this legacy. The khachkar in the museum is remarkable both in terms of craft and art, as its impeccable needlework-like sculptural elements resemble embroidery, and the sculpture is filled with inscriptions and figurative iconography, the latter being rare in the art of cross-stones.



## Develop your value proposition

Using text and visuals, provide background about your museum and its collection, as well as an overview of your plans for enhancing the exhibition. Describe what impact the exhibition enhancement will have on the museum, the community, scholars, and other local and international audiences to make a compelling case for your funding ask. Remember that in-kind donations of goods or services are another way you can receive support.

Be sure to include contact information to allow interested funders know who to contact and how to give.



Current location of Momik  
khachkar at the Yeghegnadzor  
Regional Museum



### *The New Exhibition*

The khachkar is currently located at the entrance of the museum next to the stairs going down towards the museum collections storage. The khachkar was placed in this unsecure and precarious location in 1983 and has never been moved to a proper exhibition area. This masterpiece is one of the museum's jewels, and of incredible significance to the Vayots Dzor region and the cultural heritage of Armenia. Having it installed right at the entrance is neither safe for the artefact and visitors, nor does it allow the piece to be professionally exhibited to highlight its uniqueness and context of creation.

### *The Impact*

Your generous contribution will help the museum open a dedicated exhibition to the Art of Khachkar and exhibit Momik's masterpiece along with other valuable medieval artefacts for local and international visitors in accordance with international museum standards of safety, preservation, presentation, and interpretation. The Momik khachkar will become an icon and brand of the museum and the region of Vayots Dzor, encouraging people to visit the museum and region, enjoying all it has to offer.

The donor(s) will be acknowledged in the exhibition room, and the sponsorship will be promoted to the museum's audiences and the media, per the donor(s) agreement.

**To contact the museum director to  
discuss how you can support the safe  
reinstallation of the khachkar**

Karen Azatyan  
**Director**  
Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum  
tangaran68@gmail.com



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