



MUSEUM SHOPS

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

WHY A MUSEUM SHOP?

At the end of a museum visit, visitors often wish to buy products to remember their experience and the museum collection, share with friends and family back home, or simply support the museum. A good museum shop offers a variety of products, from toys/games and books for children, to jewelry or clothing inspired by the collection, to museum-branded tote bags and notebooks, to scholarly publications about the collection or related disciplines and much more. Items made by local artisans are also excellent complements to other commercial items. A shop can be a dedicated room in your museum, or a dedicated corner of a larger room with a simple, but clean display. The museum shop should cater to audiences of diverse ages and interests and offer products at a variety of price points.

Museum shops are an important part of the visitor experience and can also be an excellent source of revenue generation. Funds generated through shop purchases can be used toward critical museum functions or to fund a new initiative that furthers your museum's mission.

Whether you're looking to enhance an already-existing museum shop or introduce something completely new, it's important to consider the overall design and presentation, the product lines, operations, and ways to fund your renovation, if needed.

THIS DOCUMENT INCLUDES INFORMATION ABOUT:

- 01 Designing a museum shop
- 02 Considering furniture and merchandizing
- 11 Preparing supplies and equipment
- 12 Developing a product line
- 18 Branding a museum shop
- 19 Developing a marketing strategy
- 22 Funding a renovation



DESIGNING A MUSEUM SHOP

For a full-scale museum shop, you may consider employing an interior designer to visually conceive the space and design or recommend custom-made furniture.

You may wish for the shop to reflect the same aesthetic as the rest of the museum or the spirit of the museum collection itself (historical or fine arts collections), or you may wish to evoke a different kind of look and feel that a designer could help create.

For a smaller shop corner, you can take a simpler approach and introduce a few pieces of shelving for merchandise and display.

CONSIDERING FURNITURE AND MERCHANDIZING

No matter the size of your museum shop, it is important that the product display is aesthetically pleasing, clean, organized, and safe. Different products may call for different types of shelving - for instance, small ceramic pieces will need to be placed on a shelf whereas clothing may need to be hung or neatly folded and stacked. Museum shop furniture will vary depending on the footprint of the space and the merchandise you are selling.

The following renderings were created for the Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters and the Sisian History Museum. Callout boxes describe the elements and/or the selections to help you consider what might work best for your shop space.

The shop at the Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters has a light and modern feel to reflect the modernist approaches of the sisters' art, while the Sisian History Museum's shop is warmer and more rustic, complementing the museum's collection of traditional, ethnographic and archaeological artifacts.

Color palette and style

The modern aesthetic of this shop is reflected in its use of primarily grey and white paints and furniture. Clean lines and modern furniture are juxtaposed with more traditional accents in the space, the carpet and table, grounding the space in local history and tradition.

Lighting

Just like your exhibition spaces, proper lighting is important in a museum shop. A museum shop needs to be well-illuminated to make it easy for visitors to comfortably see items on display. This design uses a combination of track lighting for the wall-mounted shelves and pendant lighting for the countertop, specially designed by a contemporary artist.

Seating

Give visitors a place to sit and browse books or other printed materials or simply take a break. This bench has additional storage below.

Shelving and cases

Free-standing, wall-mounted, or built-in (not pictured) shelving provides multiple surfaces to display a variety of products. Place breakable or more fragile items higher up and out of reach of children for safety. Closed shelves with glass next to the counter allow safe display of valuable pieces, such as jewelry.



Shop rendering from Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters

Mirror

Planning to sell clothing or other accessories? Make sure your shop has a mirror so visitors can see the items they try on. A handheld or tabletop mirror is also useful if your shop sells jewelry or other small accessories.

Paint

A fresh coat of paint can make a space feel brand new and enhance the overall museum shop environment. Consider selecting a neutral paint that will keep the space feeling bright and clean and not detract from the merchandise.



Decorative and Functional Accents

Choose functional accents to introduce color and additional display surfaces. This shop design includes a vintage table and traditional rug, both from the local region.

Shop rendering from Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters

Suspended lighting

Here, rectangular light fixtures are suspended from the ceiling to brighten up the space. These fixtures diffuse light to create a comfortable and well-lit environment for browsing items.

Color palette and style

Given the Sisian History Museum's collection of ethnographic, archaeological, and archival artifacts, this shop uses natural woods and darker accent colors to create a cozy and warm space for visitors to shop before or after visiting the exhibitions.

Wall-mounted shelving system

This wall-mounted system provides different types of displays for different products. It allows for shelving for products like ceramics or neatly folded linens, a hanging area for clothing, and more compact shelving for books. The peg board allows that section of the shelving to be easily reconfigured depending on the merchandise.

Seating

Two simple chairs paired with a small table and a lamp create a comfortable place for visitors to sit in this shop to browse one of the books for sale or reflect on the museum visit.



Shop rendering from Sisian History Museum

Storage

Built-in storage behind the counter provides space to store additional shop materials and merchandise, as well as an area for visitors to hang their coats or leave their bags during their visit. The close proximity to the museum counter allows museum staff to keep an eye on visitors' belongings.

Mirror

A wall-mounted mirror gives visitors an opportunity to try on clothing and accessories before purchasing. Mounting the mirror frees up valuable floor and surface space for merchandise and visitors to easily walk through the shop.



Counter

This shop is located near the museum's entrance, so this counter is both a welcome point for visitors to purchase tickets, as well as a place to purchase items from the shop. By being co-located, visitors cannot miss the shop. The shelving below and glass case on top make this counter multi-functional.

Shop rendering from Sisian History Museum

PREPARING SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

In addition to furniture, you will also need supplies and equipment for safe display, packing/bagging, and general operating needs. Equipment needs could include:

Payment terminal: a device that can be used to accept payment via credit card. This is important as many visitors and tourists do not carry cash and rely on credit card transactions for purchases. Today, many of these payment terminals even issue electronic receipts.

Cash register: this can be used to accept cash payments, allowing you to make change and safely store cash in the shop. It is important that cash amounts are recorded in a ledger (electronic or paper) for reporting and bookkeeping.

Laptop: software that allows you to create spreadsheets is helpful to oversee merchandising, maintain inventory, track sales, and more.

Consider having these supplies in stock:

Bags, bubble wrap, packing paper, and tape: these are important items for safely and carefully packaging purchases. Breakable items should be wrapped in bubble wrap or with packing paper or newspaper and secured with tape to prevent damage. A bag with your museum’s logo helps promote word-of-mouth marketing and makes others aware of your museum. Consider using a stamp or stickers if you do not wish to purchase branded bags.

DEVELOPING A PRODUCT LINE



Museum shop product lines can be developed through a series of steps, each outlined below and explored further on the following pages. It’s important to note that product lines can be developed in myriad ways. The below provides suggestions based on MAP’s experience, which demonstrated that establishing strong relationships with local artisans and artists and drawing inspiration from your museum’s collection are key to success.



DEFINE YOUR MUSEUM SHOP VISIT

The collections and the themes represented in the exhibitions can help you develop an overall concept for your museum shop and the products you wish to develop. The concept can be accompanied by photographs of some key artifacts and/or artworks from the museum collection you wish to highlight. This information will become part of the design challenge explored more on the next page.

Here is an example from the Aslamazyan Sisters Gallery:



Celebrating Women's Art

The museum, located inside a house built in 1880 that belonged to a wealthy trading family, is close to Gyumri's central square and easy to find with its colorful signage. The Gallery was established in 1987 by the sisters themselves, and by the time of their deaths, they had donated about 620 of their original paintings, ceramics and graphic works, which are now proudly displayed there. It is notable that this is the only museum named after female artists – and devoted to female artists – in all of Armenia. The Aslamazyan sisters were born near Gyumri and moved there (then called Alexandrapol) when they were young. The ground floor features the younger sister, Yeranuhi, who was particularly known for her ceramic work, while the second floor features the elder sister, Mariam. Both sisters traveled extensively and their work reflects this global exposure - a lovely watercolor of Venice and colorful painting of a Japanese woman in a kimono by Yeranuhi and portraits of women in India by Mariam are but some examples.

LAUNCH A DESIGN CHALLENGE

To raise awareness of the product development initiative and provide opportunities to engage artists and artisans from various parts of the country, the museum may wish to issue an open call design challenge. The Design Challenge could be announced on social media and serve as the first touch point with the public to build enthusiasm and support for the museum shop project.

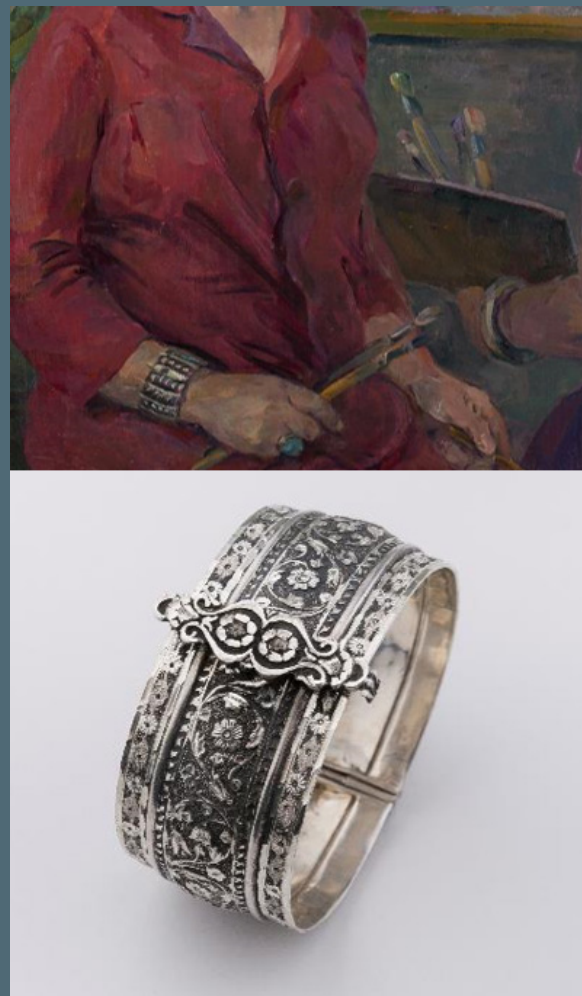
A design challenge or open call should include the following:

- An overview of the project, including the design concept and museum collection visuals
- An explanation of the design challenge
- Guidelines for submissions: biography, portfolio, draft narrative and sketches for new product collection

ORGANIZE A FAMILIARIZATION ('FAM') TRIP

Invite selected artisans who participated in the design challenge to visit your museum to become more familiar with the museum's collections. This is also an opportunity for the artisans to learn more about your museum's mission, goals, programs, and have a better understanding of the communities located around your museum.

It is during these trips that an artisan may be inspired by a particular work of art or object, drawn to a specific color palette, or influenced by the museum building. You never know when inspiration will strike!

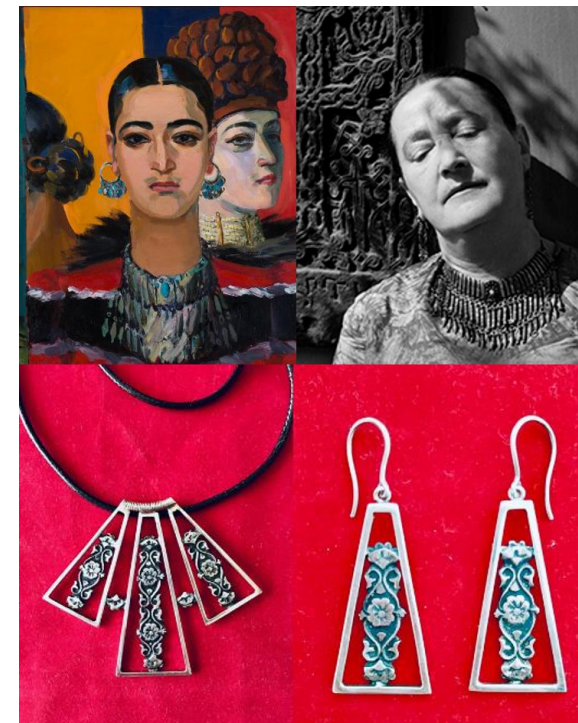


Images of artisan products inspired by the Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters

DEVELOP A PRODUCT LINE

The museum can work directly with artisans to conceptualize, prototype, and produce a collection for the shop. Ideally, products in your museum shop should be inspired by the collections, rather than copies or reproductions of works on display.

Products may draw from shapes or motifs, materials, colors, craft and/or artistic techniques, subject matters, period of history, etc.



Steps to develop a product line:

- generating ideas
- prototyping one product
- reviewing the prototype
- developing the full product line

Product types include, but are not limited to:

- Print materials (posters, postcards, notebooks, stickers)
- Publications (catalogues, booklets)
- Glazed ceramics (functional items like cups, bowls, plates, coasters)
- Jewelry (silver, glazed ceramic, beadwork, etc.)
- Hand-painted, embroidered or otherwise embellished accessories (scarves, handbags)
- Carved wooden objects (decorative or functional)
- Decorative carved stone objects (paper weights, book ends, decor)
- Woven or embroidered textiles
- Screen-printed items (t-shirts, tote bags, etc.)

STOCK MUSEUM WITH MERCHANDISE

Display items from the new product line in your museum shop by carefully arranging a few of each product on shelves, in baskets, or hanging on clothing racks or pegs. Keep a few of each item carefully stored as additional inventory and restock the shelves and displays as items are purchased. Doing this ensures that you’re not overcrowding the museum shop displays. Periodically check your inventory to make sure you have enough products to restock your shop, especially for items that sell quickly.



Merchandise on display at the Sisian History Museum

BRANDING A MUSEUM SHOP

Once your redesign or renovation is complete, you can launch the new shop with dedicated branding, using the opening as an opportunity to promote visits. Branding for your museum shop may include the creation of a specific image giving a strong, positive, and inspirational perception of the shop and products on display. Branding elements can include a logo, typography, visual imagery, color palette, all of which should be consistent across all marketing materials and which should align with your museum's overall branding assets.



Museum shop branding
Example 1: Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters

Branding materials developed that combine both the paintings and ceramics of the sisters, with a specific color palette and typography, reflecting their modern aesthetics and vibrant legacy.

MUSEUM SHOP BRANDING



Museum shop branding

Example 2: Sisian History Museum

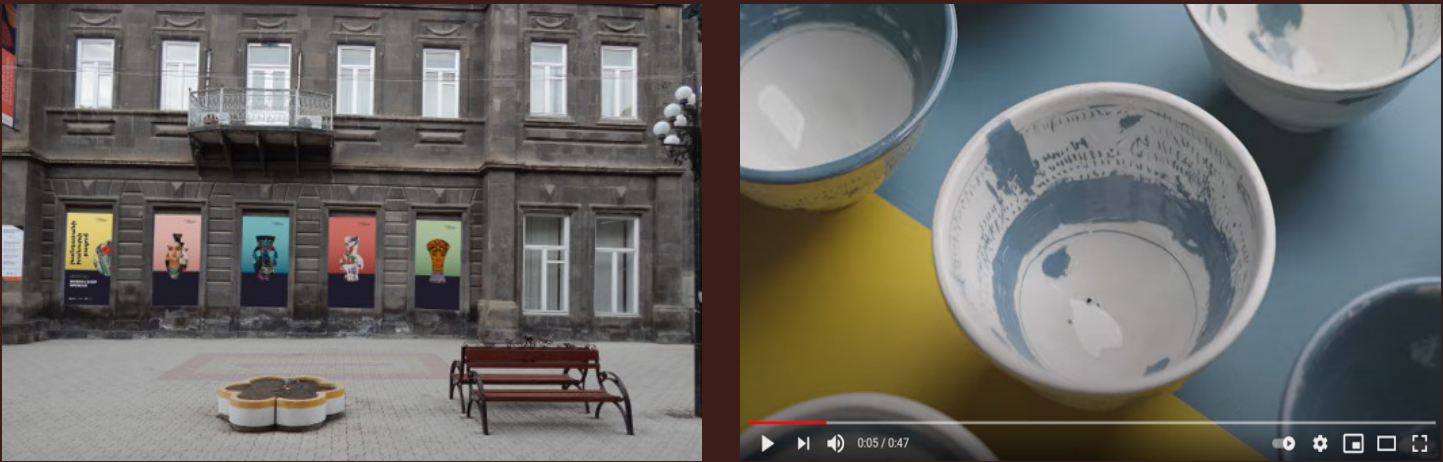
Branding based on one of the highlights of the museum collection (traditional salt container) and one of Sisian's cultural heritage sites (statue of Sisian's princess from the 5th century), specific color palette and typography

DEVELOPING A MARKETING STRATEGY

A strong marketing strategy (offline and online) can support the launch of the new museum shop. Your goal is to reach prospective consumers and entice them to visit your museum and shop.

Various marketing materials can be designed for physical dissemination in your city or village (posters, flyers, billboards, in-situ installation, etc.) and digital distribution (website, social media accounts).

Through the marketing materials, you can generate excitement about your shop opening by counting down the days until your launch. A special campaign (photo, video, interview, teaser, etc.) to create even more interest and suspense can be developed around the new product lines developed by the artists and artisans.



Marketing strategy

Example 1: Gallery of Mariam and Yeranuhi Aslamazyan Sisters

Outdoor installations: museum building, street, bridge
Marketing collateral: posters, flyers, invitations, stickers
Online campaign: short video teasers

FUNDING A MUSEUM SHOP RENOVATION



Marketing strategy

Example 2: Sisian History Museum

Outdoor installations: museum building, street
Marketing collateral: posters, flyers, invitations, stickers
Online campaign: short video teasers

Depending on the scope of your museum shop initiative, you might need to secure funding for the following expenses:

- interior design
- product development
- renovation
- marketing

Possible funding organizations to send a proposal to:

- Ministry of Culture
- Local municipal government
- ICOM
- International organizations
- Diaspora donors



The Renovation Project

In order to install the custom-built furniture and shelving to display the handcrafted artisan products specially created for the museum shop, the museum needs to renovate its 30sqm space, including much needed repairs to the walls, electrical work, lighting, and window maintenance.

The renovation project will cost **500 000 AMD (\$2000)**, which will cover all supplies, materials and labor. The renovation will be completed by an Armenian-owned business from Sisian, selected for its experience conducting similar work.



You may also wish to adapt your funding proposal materials for use in an online or in-person crowdfunding campaign. During this type of campaign, the museum raises small amounts of money from a large number of people to meet a fundraising goal.”



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