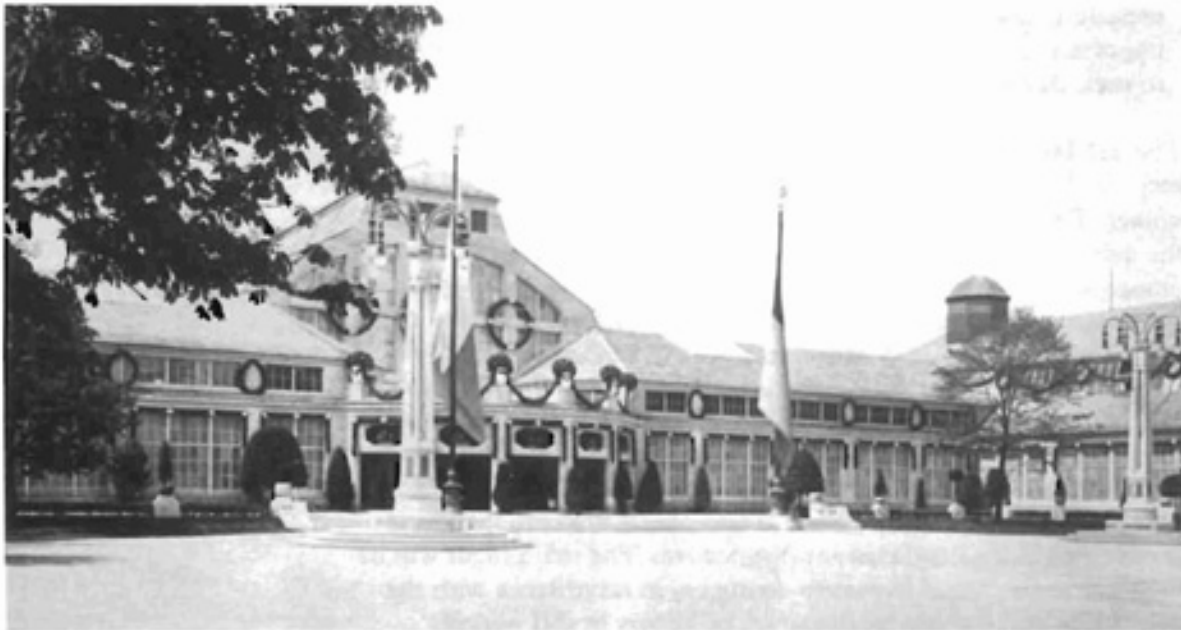


## *Deutsches Museum Verkehrszentrum: a new museum for transport and mobility in Munich*

The Deutsches Museum has been given the opportunity to open a new branch on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. Thus it can partly solve the problem of restricted space on the museum island and expand substantially its treatment of land transport. The city of Munich has donated three historical trade-fair halls (about 12,000 square metres of exhibition space) located in central Munich, close to the Oktoberfest grounds (Figures 1 and 2). These three halls, built in 1908, were among the earliest Bavarian examples of concrete construction and thus played an important role in Munich's architectural history. They are protected by law as historical buildings and are currently being renovated and restored. This renovation process is scheduled to be completed in 2005 and is financed by the state of Bavaria and the city of Munich.<sup>1</sup>

*Figure 1 The largest of the three trade-fair halls from 1908. (Deutsches Museum)*

The Verkehrszentrum (transport centre) of the Deutsches Museum will be opened in stages, starting in 2003. The current land transport

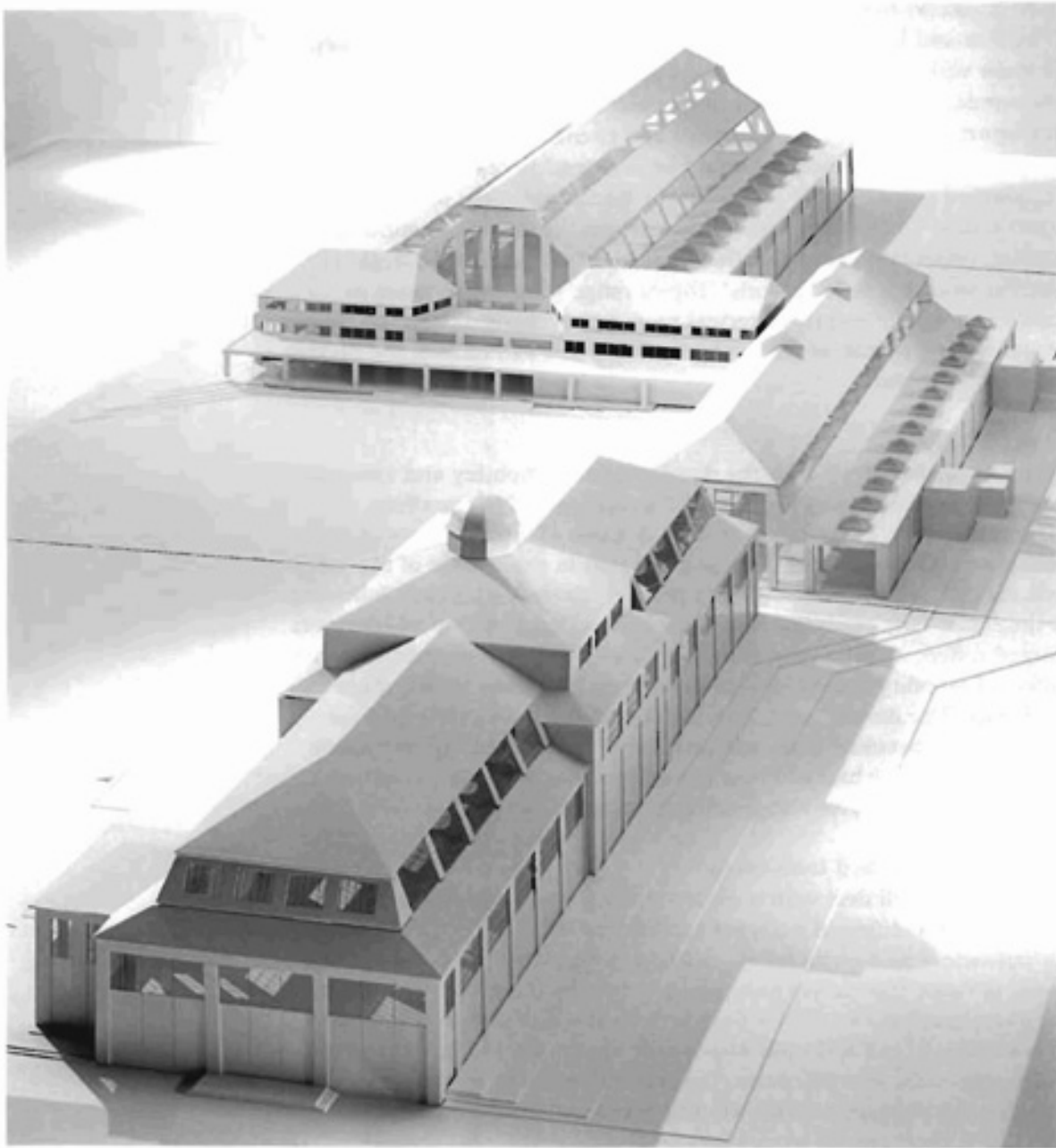


exhibitions will be abolished in this process. Most of the objects will be moved and redisplayed as part of the new exhibitions in the three trade-fair halls.

The overarching concept is formulated in the 'Vision 2003' report of the Deutsches Museum:<sup>2</sup>

- It is designed to be a place of education and information, where visitors can learn about both historical developments and current topical issues related to transport in all its complexity.
- It is to be a place of meeting and dialogue, a forum for topical discussions, where contemporary witnesses have an opportunity to be heard, where lectures are held, and where politicians, scientists and planners are invited to give talks and to debate.
- The exhibitions are considered places for entertainment and sensory experience as well as for the exploration of well-known and unusual objects. They are to satisfy the hunger for knowledge as well as simply to be fun. These goals will be reached through a mixed offering of conventional exhibits, animations, interactive media, demonstrations, period settings and artistic installations. Under current economic circumstances, not all of these goals can be reached at once, and indeed some may have to wait for a considerable time.
- Finally, the Verkehrszentrum is designed to 'open a window' through which visitors will see contextual backgrounds for the land transport collections of the Deutsches Museum. The exhibitions will present a comprehensive view of transport history and mobility. They will include social and technical systems of transport together with important political, economic, social and cultural forces that have led to their development.

The exhibits of the collections – bicycles, cars, coaches, rail vehicles, etc. – will thus be presented in contexts which go far beyond technology. The move to the new branch offers an opportunity to transfer the exhibits to a much larger space, where the former strict separation along the lines of transport modes can be converted into a system of interconnected exhibitions. An integrated presentation will be derived from contexts associated with transport and mobility. The development and importance of individual means of transport and vehicle categories will not be ignored, but the focus will have changed. The individual means of transport or the technical object will not be at the centre of the presentation, rather attention will be on the historical development of transport modes in a network of competing systems, including social implications and current perspectives. The main focus will lie in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in accordance with the collections and the special dynamics of history in this period.



*Figure 2 Architectural models of the trade-fair halls. (Deutsches Museum)*

As a first step, the contextualisation of exhibits requires thematic rearrangement, which we plan to accomplish with the help of transport scenes (a crossing, a square, a platform, a street). Each hall is assigned a topic. In this framework, the history of transport vehicles as well as the development of systems of transport and mobility can be presented as a series of case studies. Furthermore, this allows us to use existing collections, a factor of no small importance.

*Hall 1: urban transport*

The first and largest hall is dedicated to the field of urban transport. It deals with transport and mobility in urban agglomerations, their economic, political and social causes and the development of public transport systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the centre, a part of the collection will be arranged to represent a highly frequented square in the 1950s. From there, sequences of exhibits form a time line to the past and the present. In the area around the square, important aspects of transport in urban centres are dealt with in so-called 'topic islands'. Topics range from the increase in commuter traffic and its historical roots to questions of city and traffic planning and rescue services. The design of the hall reflects the rhythm of urban transport.

*Hall 2: travelling*

The second hall deals with the development of mobility and transport technologies from the perspective of travelling and of travellers. The exhibits will be grouped around displays of coaches, cars, two-wheelers and rail vehicles. Two pairs of rails in the middle of the hall will run 'in competition' with two parallel 'streets', with each following a time line. This exhibition will show how different means of transport forged different cultures of travelling; it will also demonstrate that they affected mobility behaviour and the perception of the world, space and time. The development of railways and the automobile and the competition between them will be integral to the thematic treatment. The design of the hall will be inspired by the atmosphere of a large railway station, to give a suggestion of wanderlust.

*Hall 3: mobility and technology*

The last hall will deal with mobility in a physical sense, from both a human and a technical perspective. Starting off with human pleasure in movement and acceleration, it will show how people conceived of ways to move themselves and their goods in faster, more economical or more comfortable ways – from a skate made of bones to the basic innovations of rail and road which have revolutionised movement and transport in the last 200 years. Towards the end, the corresponding reactive developments in vehicle and transport technology and of the accelerated growth in mobility will be demonstrated through selected examples. It will be suggested that the reactive effects may have substantial limiting effects on the urge for mobility in future generations.

In our exhibits we want to appeal not only to those who have a special interest in the history and technology of transport, but also to reach out to new target groups. We want to attract visitors who are interested not only in technical details, but also in the usage,



*Figure 3 Express train S 316 of 1912, produced by Maffei, Munich. (Deutsches Museum)*

further development and interpretational context of technical objects.<sup>3</sup> We purposely do without a fixed path through the three exhibition halls. Instead, we offer our visitors a range of thematic units that complement but do not necessarily depend on each other. Variations in the themes will show differences in perspectives and interpretations of transport developments.

After this brief presentation of our concept, let us turn to questions of special interest to readers of this volume: What is the role of artefacts in context-orientated exhibitions? How can they convey our messages? To what degree should we use period settings? How can we communicate themes and messages without an overdependence on photographs and charts and depictions of objects in graphic forms?

We have a fundamental belief that objects, from the impressively huge complete machine to the intriguingly tiny fragment, can be very effective as message carriers. Initially we want to try to convey the central meaning of our exhibitions by using original objects either alone or in special arrangements to tell stories. We will not try to create exact historical or technical environments, but rather settings that suggest these contexts.

For example the express train S 3/6 (Figure 3), which is currently displayed under 'Locomotives', will in future be shown as a part of a railway system carrying passengers and their luggage. It will be seen as incorporating special technological advances compared to other

locomotives, but also as having been of particular importance in regional and cross-regional public transport in the first third of the twentieth century (it was, for example, used as a locomotive for the 'Rheingoldexpress'). Another example is the presentation of objects together with elements of the physical infrastructure, for instance, a train on tracks, with overhead cables and a station platform. In similar ways, equipping vehicles with luggage, goods and accessories from a specific time period will show the nature of its use, the era it was used in and the status of its users. These are, of course, not new methods of presentation in the museum world, but they are departures from the way exhibits on transport have been displayed in the Deutsches Museum.

Other exhibits describe the composition of traffic and the competition between methods of transport in specific time periods. The most important example of this is the 'Place and crossroads' scene in the 'Stadtverkehr' (city traffic) hall. The exhibits will be designed to suggest a congested area in the 1950s, the beginning of mass motorisation in Germany. The selection of vehicles – from bicycles, horse-drawn carriages, vans, two-wheelers, small cars and taxis of an earlier period, through trams from the late 1930s and luxury vehicles from the 1950s – will illustrate the composition of inner-city traffic in Germany during the postwar years and the broad spectrum of vehicles that filled the streets during the take-off phase of German mass motorisation. It permits conclusions about vehicles and the various vehicle types that this form of motorisation featured, and it also illustrates the different consumption patterns of the various road users.

This setting will portray the density of city traffic and show how shortage in capacity is a constantly recurring phenomenon, something that experts will recognise from their experience with both public and private transport systems. The display will highlight strengthening competition between public and private transport systems since the 1960s and the decline of trams as the 'automobile community' took shape. This historical representation will be contrasted with personal observations of current city traffic patterns, thus posing questions about further development (including city planning, changes in traffic volume and street capacity, effects of increasing use of the automobile on public transport, consequences for the environment, etc.). Certainly, not all visitors will comprehend the full spectrum of these messages. But the setting will offer a good starting point from which to deal with individual problems presented on the adjacent theme islands.

The displays of the Verkehrszentrum will depict objects from the various exhibition areas in different manners, in classical museum fashion: as unique icons, or as representative pieces that provide historically valuable information about a particular technology. But at the same time, many vehicles in our collection are representatives of general transport and mobility history, suitable to assist in

telling broader stories. For example, from Switzerland we have the 'Pilatusbahn', as well as the 'Krokodil' from the Rhaetische Bahn, which includes a saloon wagon. In the exhibition we plan to have these vehicles tell the story of the development of transport in the alpine mountain region at a time of high tourism at the beginning of the twentieth century. They will be set in context by using background pictures, platforms and travel accessories. Other objects, such as a VW transporter, modified as a camping wagon and used by a German couple who travelled the world in the 1970s, present little stories; when put together, they will display the larger picture of the mobility culture of the last 200 years.

Relationships within exhibits will find creative expression in various ways: sometimes single objects will be emphasised, in other cases the objects will fuse with their surroundings, as in the above-mentioned scene. As the development of our ideas continues, additional choices will be made concerning the selection of objects and the context of their placement. This will be a complex process, involving reinterpretation of items currently on display as well as research on objects in storage.

The attempt to create a context-oriented exhibition of course includes new criteria for our collection policy, because the choices made in days gone by were focused more on technical characteristics and less on cultural aspects. We plan to broaden the collections by considering the specific needs of the Verkehrszentrum. Thus the locomotive collection will be complemented by travel carriages and the collection of street vehicles enhanced by adding mass-produced examples (including both two-wheelers and automobiles). Besides that, we are making an effort to expand our collections to include more objects related to public transport and to alternative energy. In addition to technical artefacts, we will pay more attention to objects which illustrate the sociocultural dimension of transport and mobility, including toys, tourist souvenirs, accessories, works of art, and objects that support exhibition themes.

Additional techniques are being planned which will illustrate in dramatic fashion some of the tensions inherent in our subject. An example is what we call an 'infrastructure cube', planned for the city traffic hall. It will take as its theme the underground traffic and communications network. One side of this large cube will be painted to represent a cross-section of space above and below street level, as if we had sliced through cars, concrete, cables, pipes and a subway tunnel. The sides of the cube will provide space for other visual information. The inside of the cube is designed to be accessible and will accommodate a showroom where themes related to the infrastructure of underground transport can be developed in detail.

As we only have limited funds for scenery and multimedia equipment during the first stage, we will rely on classical techniques,

using photographs, graphics and motion pictures. Large pictures, especially moving pictures, are especially effective in bringing exhibits to life and engaging the attention of visitors. We expect to make extensive use of documentary films.

The rather restrained media effort has the salutary effect of being consistent with our overall thesis. In our view, museum exhibitions – in contrast to theme parks – must now more than ever focus on those treasures which can only be found in a museum: the artefacts. In the concept of the Verkehrszentrum, the various media and demonstrations are meant to have an additive, supporting, partly theme-referring, partly exhibit-referring function. The graphics, videos and computer games will enhance and give additional meaning to the machines.

In conclusion, we must consider how to create a balance between unbounded (and potentially meaningless) context versus narrowly construed (and interesting to only a few) technology (something that is also discussed by William Withuhn<sup>4</sup>). The concept of the traffic centre endeavours to solve this dilemma by combining the classical museum with a thematic approach, using an abundance of artefacts in conjunction with a number of techniques through which the visitor will have the opportunity to delve deeper into themes. Subsequent visitor-evaluation surveys will show us if this attempt is feasible and where we can make improvements. The step-by-step process by which we are developing the museum will provide us with the opportunity to make these changes.

## Notes and references

- 1 In 2001 state and city approved a total sum of around €50 million. Close to 80 per cent of this sum is allocated to restoration of the three halls; the rest is for the interior architecture and exhibition project. In the future we plan to raise an additional sum of around €1.5 million from private partners, partly through in-kind contributions.
- 2 'Vision 2003. Grundsatzprogramm' (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 1995); 'Grundkonzept für das Deutsche Museum Verkehrszentrum. Zusammenfassung der Grundgedanken und konzeptionelle Leitlinien' (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 1998, published 2001).
- 3 The results of a research project dealing with visitors' interests confirm this approach in general and show differences between special target groups (e.g. male and female). See Klein, H-J *et al.*, 'Go West. Die Besucher des Deutschen Museums und ihre Meinungen über das Neue Verkehrszentrum' (Karlsruhe: 2000), pp29, 70f.
- 4 See pp167–72.