



Museu da Ciência
Universidade de Coimbra

2008



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The Science Museum provides visitors of all ages with an entertaining environment to interest them to science while presenting the scientific University collections. Specimens and instruments are shown in a series of exciting exhibits and hands-on experiments in the unique Laboratório Chimico, with an intense programme of activities. The programme includes several established science educational events, workshops and demonstrations for schools and children alone, as well as for families. The Museum keeps an active schedule of scientific presentations and meetings, engaging scientists and visitors in a dialogue with science and society.



The University owns the oldest and most important scientific collections and spaces in Portugal, dating back to the last quarter of the 18th century, when the enlightened Reform by the Marquis of Pombal took place and established the basis for modern science teaching and research. New faculties and new premises were created, such as the rare Cabinet of Natural History and the Cabinet of Physics in the College of Jesus. The restored Laboratory building, a milestone in the history of Chemistry, is the first stage of the project that aims to become a centre for the promotion of science and scientific heritage. The second stage of the Science Museum project will be the redevelopment of the College of Jesus.

Installing the Science Museum in the Laboratório Chimico allowed a better understanding of the space through archaeological work, identifying its link to the previous 16th century Jesuit dining-hall. The project restored the historical lecture theatre, created space for a modern permanent exhibition and for temporary exhibitions, and combined the presentation of the collections with the site heritage interpretation.



The permanent exhibition, “Secrets of Light and Matter”, follows a cross disciplinary approach linking the discovery of objects with the history of science. Starting with the recreation of the chemical atmosphere of the place in the Great Laboratory, the visitor crosses a series of scientific discoveries that explain phenomena such as the rainbow, the sunlight, the evolution of animal eyes, the neurobiology of vision, and the use of colours. In the last space, the Memory room, which retains 18th century stone floor, chimneys and tiles, one can explore the Earth and the Solar system through a large spherical multimedia installation.



The Impact of the Micheletti Prize

Winning the Micheletti Award had a real impact on the Museum, which became very successful throughout the year. There was a tremendous coverage by the press and the public became increasingly interested. The media image is the one of an active museum, with a very qualified science offer. The number of visitors had a boost of 70%, from 2007 to 2008. Educational activities more than doubled in 2008 and the museum achieved a very good level of feedback from the public through the webpage, www.museudaciencia.pt. Scientists are now very keen on collaborating with the Museum, which is a key for success.