

Time for Cultural Mediation

This publication was created as part of the → Arts and Audiences Programme of Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council. This programme, which ran from 2009 to 2012, sought to strengthen the practice of cultural mediation in Switzerland and encourage the assignment of higher priority to cultural mediation in approaches to the promotion of the arts and culture. The programme was also intended to stimulate the creation and exchange of knowledge in the professional field of mediation and contribute towards improvements in the quality of cultural mediation practices.

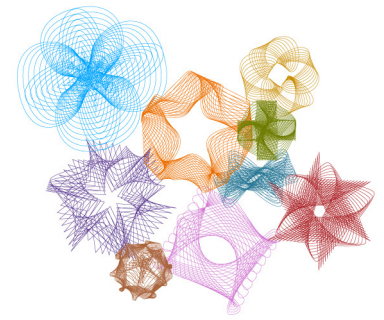
Against this background, Pro Helvetia commissioned the → Institute for Art Education of the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste [Zurich University of the Arts] to conduct research that would support the programme. In that context, the Institute was asked develop a tool which cultural mediation practitioners, institutions and funding bodies could use in the course of their daily work to help them place cultural mediation activities in context and assess their quality.

This publication is intended to be such a tool. It explores key questions in the professional field of cultural mediation in nine chapters. The short introductory texts labelled “Quick Reads” discuss key aspects of cultural mediation: relevant terms and concepts used in different linguistic areas, whom it is intended to reach, its content and subject-matter, its functions, the people and institutions involved in it, its quality and the ways it is presented and documented. These short texts also raise issues for further exploration and describe the controversies associated with this professional field. The “Quick Reads” were written by Carmen Mörsch, the Director of the Institute for Art Education, with editorial support from Eva Richterich, the Director of the Arts and Audiences programme, and Christian Gyger, the Coordinator of Pro Helvetia’s working group on Mediation. The texts reflect the perspectives of the researchers who supported the programme and were created in the context of intensive dialogue between themselves and Pro Helvetia. The texts labelled “Quick Reads” were designed to enable a reader (even one new to the field), to gain a good overview of the main topics, practices and issues associated with this professional field. In each of the nine chapters there is also a text under the heading “For Reading at Leisure” which explores the subject in greater depth. Adopting an example-based approach, these longer texts delve into the questions raised in the

→ Arts and Audiences Programme
http://www.prohelvetia.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/customers/prohelvetia/Programme/Kulturvermittlung/2010_Factsheet_Programm_Kulturvermittlung_E.pdf
 [12.2.2014]

→ Institute for Art Education
<http://iae.zhdk.ch> [13.2.2013]

- 1 What is Cultural Mediation?
- 2 Cultural Mediation for Whom?
- 3 What is Transmitted?
- 4 How is Cultural Mediation Carried Out?
- 5 What Does Cultural Mediation Do?
- 6 Cultural Mediation: Why (Not)?
- 7 Who “does” Cultural Mediation?
- 8 Good Cultural Mediation?
- 9 Transmitting Cultural Mediation?



“Quick Reads” texts from the angle of what a critical and analytical approach to cultural mediation might be. They are intended for readers who want to explore the topic of cultural mediation in greater depth. Carmen Mörsch is the author of the texts “For Reading at Leisure” and is solely responsible for their content (with the exception of Text 9.RL, which was written by Stephan Fürstenberg).

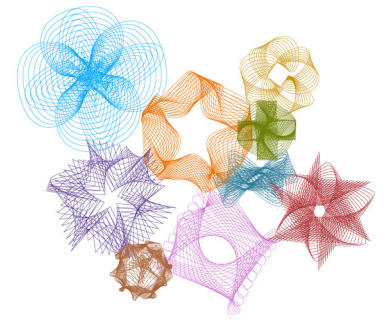
In addition, under the banner “Changing Perspectives”, professionals from relevant fields in Switzerland – mediation, promotion of the arts and culture and the directors of cultural institutions – were invited to express their views on the nine questions addressed. Their positions and attitudes augment the perspectives provided by the researchers and their voices lend additional dimensions to the publication.

To illustrate the topics discussed in the nine chapters, Anna Chrusciel, co-director of the programme’s research track, compiled two comparative case studies, each analysing two projects. Examples of mediation in the area of the literary arts were chosen as the subject of these studies because that area tends to be underrepresented in the world of Swiss mediation. Drawing their examples from Germany, France and England, the case studies illustrate how people can use the questions posed at the start of the nine chapters to evaluate cultural mediation projects in a more differentiated light.

The format of the online publication, available in four languages, permits the texts to be read in the order of their presentation or in a sequence or selection of the reader’s choice. A clear and simple outline displayed to the left of the texts facilitates navigation through the publication. Should a need or interest arise, readers can follow links to entries in the glossary or to other texts in the publication. Other links lead to the resource pool, which contains additional materials, which cover certain subjects at greater detail or in greater depth. It is also possible to download the entire publication as a printable PDF file, for those who prefer reading texts on a printed page to reading on a screen.

We hope that the title of this publication “Time for Cultural Mediation” will be understood in multiple ways. It refers, in one sense, to the growth in recent years of interest in cultural mediation, both in Switzerland and internationally, not only among cultural and educational policymakers and in the public at large, but also in the artworld itself.

The last two decades have seen the institutionalization of cultural mediation as a well-established professional field: it is associated with a



range of discourses and occupational profiles, is the subject of scholarly research and it has its own professional associations. Thus it is now time to examine this professional field more closely and take a position vis-à-vis the questions that arise in it. This publication proposes to do that.

In view of the variety and complexity of cultural mediation practices, the aspiration to define a position which can serve as a basis for individual decisions (in mediation work, in funding, etc.) suggests another way of reading the title: "Finding Time for Cultural Mediation", in the sense that concentrating on cultural mediation and developing the knowledge that entails requires time. Here, too, we hope this publication will be helpful, by providing a time-saving and structured survey of the field, which encourages its readers to think further.

Finally, the title is also intended as an appeal: "Giving Time to Cultural Mediation". Advances in the field of mediation will require investment of the resources necessary to create the kinds of working conditions that provide leeway for experiments and productive failures. It is our hope that this publication will provide a great many stimulating ideas in the light of which such an investment will appear worthwhile from many different perspectives.

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