

1.0 Intro

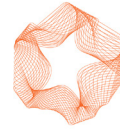
This publication addresses forms of cultural mediation. The term cultural mediation, translated here from the German term “Kulturvermittlung” and the French, “médiation culturelle”, while quite open-ended, generally refers to the process of gaining and negotiating knowledge about the arts and social or scientific phenomena through exchange, reaction and creative response. Though not necessarily a familiar term for English speaking readers, who are more likely to be acquainted with the use of arts education (and associated terms such as music education, gallery education, literature education etc.) to describe these processes, the term ‘cultural mediation’ is more precise, evoking questions of negotiation which are at the heart of working between artistic objects, institutions, their social contexts and the people who encounter them. Where ‘education’ or ‘educator’ more frequently connote involvement with the formal education sector, the term cultural mediation also allows practitioners to imagine themselves as part of a larger spectrum of cultural workers across artistic disciplines working in a variety of cultural and social realms.

Accordingly, the examples of cultural mediation addressed in the texts that follow, take place in art-specific settings, and deal with the problems and issues they face. They concentrate on cultural mediation activities in the context of established and publicly supported art, artists and institutions – in other words, on the programmes of cultural institutions of various types: exhibition spaces, museums, opera houses and concert houses and organizations in the literary and dance worlds.

The publication and the research that preceded it were commissioned by the Swiss Arts Council, Pro Helvetia, through its Arts and Audience programme. The Arts and Audience programme was designed to expand the knowledge base on cultural mediation and make it available to various individuals and institutions who are active in Switzerland and beyond, as well as to launch further discussion in an international arena. A parallel aim of the programme was to generate conclusions relevant to the spectrum of funding opportunities possible and appropriate for Pro Helvetia.

Though programme officers and supporting researchers worked with a broad spectrum of municipal and regional partners, the area of

- 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?



publicly funded activities in the arts and cultural arena was always the starting point. Despite this limited remit, the programme elicited an enormous variety of approaches and ways of framing problems and issues related to cultural mediation, making them applicable to other settings and activities in which cultural mediation takes place.

The publication's first chapter provides an introductory survey of the variations and uses of the German-language term "Kulturvermittlung" and the corresponding terms used by speakers of other languages. In none of the languages we address is there one single generally accepted definition of the concept represented by the word "Kulturvermittlung". As we will see, the German word encompasses several very different concepts and fields of activity. As we use the term in this publication [translated into English, as described above, as "cultural mediation"], learning remains of central importance. Across the examples discussed, however, this educational aspect of mediation is interlaced with artistic and social processes in addition to didactic methods employed to realize educational goals. Activities associated with marketing, art criticism or the presentation of works of art are outside the bounds of this term, as we use it in this publication.