

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES André Grieder: Contemporary Art is Where the Magic Lies

→ *Schule und Kultur* [http:// www.schuleundkultur.zh.ch](http://www.schuleundkultur.zh.ch) [14.2.2013]

A magician writes to me. He wants to be included in our programme. I saw him perform once. Between the main course and dessert he approached my table, made cards vanish and coins appear. I was impressed. I regret, I answer the magician, that we cannot include you in our programme. Our cultural mediation deals with the arts, not variety show acts. He responds: I do not do only magic, I do theatre and tell the stories of a dynasty of magicians.

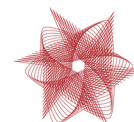
The magician performs at a primary school. I am also there. He entertains the pupils well and makes them admirers of his art. Days later I contact him again: we program chiefly contemporary associative theatre. Your piece does not fit in with our programme. I'm sorry, again, I must say no.

Why do we not include primarily traditional, canonized, appealing, entertaining, nice art? I mean art that lights up the eyes of children and offers young adults an escape from reality?

Modern art is subjective, complex, associative. It reflects our world. Young people are supposed to participate in our world: for instance, by seeing Junge Theater Basel's production of "Strange Days Indeed". In it, young people dance this theme: you have to scream if you want to be noticed today – in politics, in advertising, in the media, in ordinary life. The production does not give any answers, it only asks questions, calls for reflection and criticism. "Strange Days Indeed" is open, disturbing, surprising: contemporary art in fact. By engaging with it, young people construct their identities along the principle of otherness. Variety acts, on the other hand, tend to confirm what is already known; they can hardly be said to promote self-reflection or self-criticism.

We trust our taste and our experience and make subjective judgements about what constitutes art that is worth conveying to people. We endeavour to avoid instrumentalizing that art or turning it into an educational exercise, in order that it continue to be art. In our work we engage in self-criticism, self-reflection and flexibility. That is our attitude. It gives us positions from which to argue why we bring "Strange Days Indeed" to young people. The magician did not have sufficient theatrical presence, there were dramaturgic weaknesses in his piece and his technique let him down at key points. As a result, his magic suffered: making things disappear and reappear. Without those formal flaws, we might have offered the piece to the schools as modern magical art.

André Grieder leads the section → *Schule und Kultur* in the Office of Elementary Education of the Department of Education of the Canton of Zurich.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Urs Rietmann: Art + Business

“One cannot tie a knot with one hand.” (Mongolian proverb)

There are several ways to parse the title of Creaviva’s format for business, teaching or administrative teams. You can make art your business. Managing a business responsibly, collectively and in a way designed to promote solidarity is a challenging task.

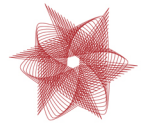
When we consult with people who are interested in our programme, we – who in no way consider ourselves to be experts in organizational development or supervision – explicitly describe its features. We are not selling Creaviva as a centre for the promotion of personality traits that are attributed to artists or understood to be engendered through engagement with art. Nor are our workshops intended to analyze the strategies of artists as independent entrepreneurs either, although that would be interesting.

We are interested in creating a framework that permits a team to break out of pre-existing patterns and habits for a few hours by engaging in creative workshop activities. In this context, art is an excellent means to the stated end to the extent that immediate exposure to art in a museum generates a productive sense of disorientation and a willingness to let oneself become involved which would be almost impossible to attain in a more familiar setting. The fact that the people who work in Creaviva are primarily artists with a talent for teaching rather than educators with an affinity for art enhances this aspect.

We have defined a range of missions for which we think our offering is appropriate. They encompass primarily visualization (e.g. of a company’s vision), reinforcement (e.g. of a core message), promotion of team spirit and creative teamwork within an existing or newly formed team.

We try to avoid articulating in greater detail the effects our workshops are intended to produce. One of the primary aims of our practice-oriented cultural mediation is to allow participants the opportunity to experience their own abilities. This does not mean that we try to convince our guests that they are artists. The collective work that they take home at the end of a team workshop does have a discipline-specific value though, to the extent that it encourages an appreciation for art and respect for artistic endeavour.

Urs Rietmann is the Director of the Creaviva Museum for Children in Zentrum Paul Klee in Bern.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Nathalie Tacchella: Appeal for Catalytic Cultural Mediation

When Beuys said that “everyone is an artist”, he was not talking about artistic production or profession: he was thinking of the potential – a potential of thought and action and an intimate space of freedom – which individuals either leave dormant or cultivate. Cultural mediation interests me when it does not shield those potentials from one another and lets art be what it is: an open dialogue between human beings.

By positioning itself between art, artistic practice and works, or between artists and the public, cultural mediation isolates the object from “its” audience and renders intimacy between the person and the art impossible. Conceived after the work itself, but designed and put in place before the public has access to it, cultural mediation affirms its own necessity at a time when that necessity cannot really exist, regardless of how good or well-intended the offering is. What I mean by that is that art is not an isolated phenomenon: it is an integral component of the world of our imagination and social reality.

Arts mediation should not exist: but it does for most of the works preserved or produced in the closed spaces of theatres, museums and concert halls. And this because these works were appropriated by the dominant culture – a culture which will go to any lengths to open itself to an audience as wide as possible, lest it become a closed circle, spinning into oblivion.

The dominant discourse imposes models which inhibit, which level knowledge and skills. Cultural mediation therefore reconstructs a relationship between the individual and art, but this relationship is truncated – one could almost say rigged. There is a genuine danger that cultural mediation could lend support to the view that art is inaccessible by nature and can be rendered accessible only through the efforts of competent mediators.

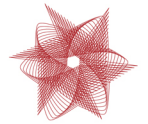
Cultural mediation also interests me when it tries not to neutralize the audience or prevent dialogue between human beings, no matter what its quality may be.

Cultural mediation interests me when it acts as a catalyst, something which “changes neither the direction in which a transformation unfolds nor the composition of the system in its final phase”. In my practice, I try to develop cultural mediation which is not an end in itself, but instead permits the renewal of direct dialogue among the artist, the artist’s actions, the work and the audience.

Nathalie Tacchella is a choreographer and dance mediator. She directs the dance troupe → [estuaire](http://www.estuaire.ch) in Geneva and is a co-founder of and is jointly responsible for Geneva-based theatre → [Galpon](http://www.galpon.ch). She also teaches contemporary dance at Atelier Danse Manon Hotte.

→ [estuaire](http://www.estuaire.ch) <http://www.estuaire.ch>
[25.1.2013]

→ [Galpon](http://www.galpon.ch) <http://www.galpon.ch>
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CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Cultural Mediation Working Group, Pro Helvetia: What is the Conveyed? Sociocultural Expertise in Cultural Mediation

At the focus of the Pro Helvetia's promotion of cultural mediation are the various artistic disciplines, their works, projects, techniques and institutions. However, cultural mediation activities also have ties to another sphere which frequently overlaps with cultural mediation in its vocabulary and practices: the sociocultural sphere.

Sociocultural projects and sociocultural animation do sometimes engage directly with art. When they do so though, they tend to be directed more towards social and societal aspects of engagement with art, and thus their aims differ from those pursued by Pro Helvetia in its promotion of arts mediation. Sociocultural projects and arts mediation can frequently overlap to a certain extent.

When carrying out cultural mediation projects which are based on interactive and participative approaches, familiarity with sociocultural processes can be crucial for a project's success. Is the target group being addressed in a way that is appropriate for that group? Is the project set up as a partnership? Do the mediators have the relevant knowledge and experience? Viewed in this way, sociocultural expertise is revealed as an important feature bearing on the quality of any cultural mediation project.

Pro Helvetia's interdisciplinary Cultural Mediation Working Group was responsible for developing the promotion criteria within the framework of the Arts and Audiences Programme.