



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Hans Ulrich Glarner: When Girls Dance Paintings

I feel that cultural mediation is of the highest quality when it allows me to go forward: Towards something new and towards myself. Ideally, that should apply to everyone involved, to me as a member of the public, to me as the mediator, to me as the client. Only practices anchored in a cultural policy strategy can achieve this full effect. It is not only the people being targeted, who want to be pleased, not only the institutions, which seek higher visitor rates, not just the policies, which need to win the backing of the majority. One has to see cultural mediation which is anchored in a strategy of cultural policy as a reciprocal system which puts forth stimuli for improving state support for culture and the conservation of culture. Its purpose is to enable as many people as possible to engage with cultural issues, participate in cultural processes and enjoy access to works of art. This effect can be sustainable only when quality is consistently high. Success in cultural mediation is by no means inversely proportional to quality. Anyone making that suggestion is wilfully holding fast to an elite understanding of art aimed at drawing distinctions rather than encouraging cohesion.

At one event in the art gallery Aargauer Kunsthaus, a 9-year old participant expressed her experience non-verbally. It was towards the end of the event called the "Kunstspirsch" (art stalking); the children were asked to talk about one picture that they particularly liked. The schoolgirl, her name was Albana, told the mediator in broken German that though unable to talk about the picture, she could dance it. Standing in front of the picture, the other children forming a half circle around her, Albana expressed her impressions of it through movement. Her classmates rewarded the surprising performance with spontaneous applause.

A girl, one with no understanding of art in the traditional sense of that term, and who, moreover, was barely able to speak our language, embraced the message of the work of art and shared her response to it with other children. This episode perfectly illustrates the effect of cultural mediation. The art had the power to blast through the habitual conventions of observation and communication, the participant in the mediation programme was willing to take a risk and the arts mediator provided the environment that made this interaction possible. The group identity of the participants was reinforced and at the same time, their horizons were expanded as individuals. That is quality.

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CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Felicity Lunn: Arts Education as Intensified Engagement With Art

From the perspective of an art institution, education has a range of impacts on the organization-audience-educators triangle.

Art mediation intensifies engagement with art by uncovering hidden connections. This kind of engagement, which requires more time and commitment than an (anonymous) visit to an exhibition, brings various different perceptions, influenced by cultural background, age, gender and education to the foreground. Programmes that present the opportunity to react to an exhibition to a range of target groups who give feedback to the host organization about how its exhibitions are perceived is an example of such engagement. Cultural mediation allows organizations to perceive other attitudes, reactions and world views. This allows them to learn more about their audiences, but also about the effects brought about by the art they show and how they show it. This knowledge can make an organization think more carefully about the needs of its visitors and see them more as individuals and less as an anonymous mass.

Art mediation is the greatest form of marketing. Compared to conventional forms of communications and publicity, which fail to overcome the initial inhibitions of many people, art mediation encourages participants in a direct and concrete manner to continue visiting the organization and to bring other people with them. The concept of the mediator as host, implying that children and young people invite and can guide their relatives and friends, expands the circle of visitors. This demonstrates that the personal approach to art is more important than “understanding” it.

Considering exhibitions as spaces for genuine communication, art education has the function of a conductor who initiates and encourages the dialogue between an exhibition and the public. Far more than providing purely conventional knowledge or consolidating a traditional understanding of art, art mediation offers new ideas about ways to perceive art, to see it as part of one’s own life. When viewers are genuinely involved, treated as partners, stakeholders or collaborators, art education functions as an engagement with art which accommodates a wide variety of views and interpretations.



Active participation in art mediation fosters a wealth of abilities that are important in the lives of both children and adults in our time: seeing and reacting to visual images, analyzing and communicating content, presenting one's own opinion, listening and debating and respecting the views of others.

Felicity Lunn served as a curator at London's Whitechapel Art Gallery from 1990 to 1998, from 2005 to 2008, as the director of art association Kunstverein Freiburg (Freiburg im Breisgau) and, from 2009 to 2011 as Regional Curator of the UBS Art Collection. She has been the Director of the art centre Kunsthaus CentrePasquArt in Biel since January of 2012.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Irena Müller-Brozovic: Ask your Mediator about Risks and Side Effects

Cultural mediation in a multiple-month → *participative project* is not a one-dose miracle pill; it is a process which changes everyone involved.

Host organizations and policy-makers often call for cultural mediation as though it were a measure which had immediate (hopefully long-term) effects and expect to receive confirmation of its efficacy in the form of a list of people it has reached: number of “converts” per event, per Swiss franc. The more people involved, the better. This attitude equates cultural mediation with audience development.

The mediator’s focus is on class, not on mass. Qualities like this cannot be quantified. Nonetheless, mediators, artists, the directors of institutions and cultural policy-makers need good arguments to justify and fund cultural mediation. Because good cultural mediation comes at a price.

In traditional art formats, one tends to find a clear division between artist and audiences. Although performing artists do sense the reaction of their audiences, they can hardly be said to come into intense contact with those perceiving their works. In our long-term, participative Education Projects, by contrast, artists are thoroughly scrutinized as they act. They produce stimuli for creative action, take up the ideas of participants and undergo crises with them, and their exchanges with non-artists let them experience a new aspect in their artistic work, a social-political aspect. In participative projects, this open process is at least as important as the product. Those who are involved feel its effects almost physically and see the mediation work as challenging and meaningful. There is a risk entailed in the fact that an open process is one that can neither be planned nor predicted, and can, in fact, end in failure. Side effects can appear: a change in the artist or institution from the inside out may be detected. At the express request of the artists, the next generation of Education Projects

are being designed to ensure that collaboration between lay-people and professionals is even more intensive. Mediation plays a role in the planning for each season, and an idea for an education project can form the basis for one of the institution’s productions – a paradigm shift! This requires a commitment to mediation at the highest institutional level, and that a cultural mediation project be appreciated both by the public and by decision-makers.

→ *participative projects*
<http://www.educationprojekte.ch>
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The aim of the “Education Projects” is not to convey knowledge but rather to have lay people and professionals work together to carry out a collective artistic project. Active engagement with art fosters personal development and – particularly in the case of dance projects – a feeling of self worth. After an intensive rehearsal process, the participants move around in the cloakrooms, cafeteria, backstage spaces and on the stages of theatres and concert halls as a matter of course – a conquest of interior and exterior worlds.

Irena Müller-Brozovic studied piano and music education and music/concert pedagogy in Basel and Detmold. She directs the “Education Projekte Region Basel” for the Department of Culture of the City of Basel. She was awarded the “Junge-Ohren” [Young Ears] prize in 2007. Her clients include Sinfonieorchester Basel and Theater Basel and she teaches music education at the Bern University of the Arts.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Federal Office of Culture, Culture and Society Section: Why does the Swiss Confederation Support Cultural Mediation?

This text also serves as a Changing Perspectives text for section 6. Cultural Mediation:
Why (Not)?

There are many good reasons to fund cultural mediation from the public coffers. Arguments for doing so can be framed along economic, fiscal, pedagogic, didactic, artistic and social lines, depending on one's point of view.

For the Swiss Confederation, societal dimensions take centre stage. The legislature pointed the way forward by declaring in the Swiss Culture Promotion Act that one of the objectives of the Confederation's cultural promotion is to allow and facilitate access to culture (art. 3(d) KFG: Kulturförderungsgesetz). Projects with that objective receive preferential status for Confederation support (art. 8(a) KFG). The official message [Botschaft] accompanying the legislation directly links the promotion of access with cultural mediation (explanatory commentary on art. 8 KFG).

The emphasis on the aspects of participation and inclusion is explained by the level of importance that the Federal Council attaches to culture: "...culture is an essential factor of political and social life, an effective instrument of integration and social cohesion. Therefore, active cultural policy is not restricted to promoting artistic creation or safeguarding cultural heritage. It is also aimed at encouraging as far as possible participation of all groups of the population in cultural life. [...] The arts sharpen our perception and enlarge our consciousness. There is no better school than art to teach us to see, to enhance our awareness, our capacity to differentiate. Careful and critical listening, watching and thinking teaches people to be alert, to express themselves and to discern. Once a sensorial perception makes the transition to become emotional or intellectual realization, it takes on significance for a broader society. The intrinsic value of culture lies in its ability to allow people to understand themselves and their surroundings and to make themselves understood" (Message on the Promotion of Culture [Botschaft zur Förderung der Kultur] 2012 – 2015).

Participation of a broad and diverse audience has relevance for the legitimacy of cultural promotion: in past decades cultural offerings available in Switzerland (and in other countries as well) have expanded dramatically while the level of audience interest has not kept pace. Thus if this expansion



is to be sustainable, cultural promotion cannot be restricted to subsidizing providers of cultural offerings (expansion and consolidation of offerings). It must also encompass measures to develop future users of arts and culture.

The primary tools used by the Confederation to improve access to culture in the 2012 – 2015 period are language promotion, promotion of musical education, promotion of literacy (measures of the Federal Office of Culture) and the support of arts mediation projects (measures of Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council).

The Culture and Society Section addresses issues of cultural mediation and participation in culture, specifically in the areas of promotion of language skills, literacy/reading, musical education and lay and folk culture.