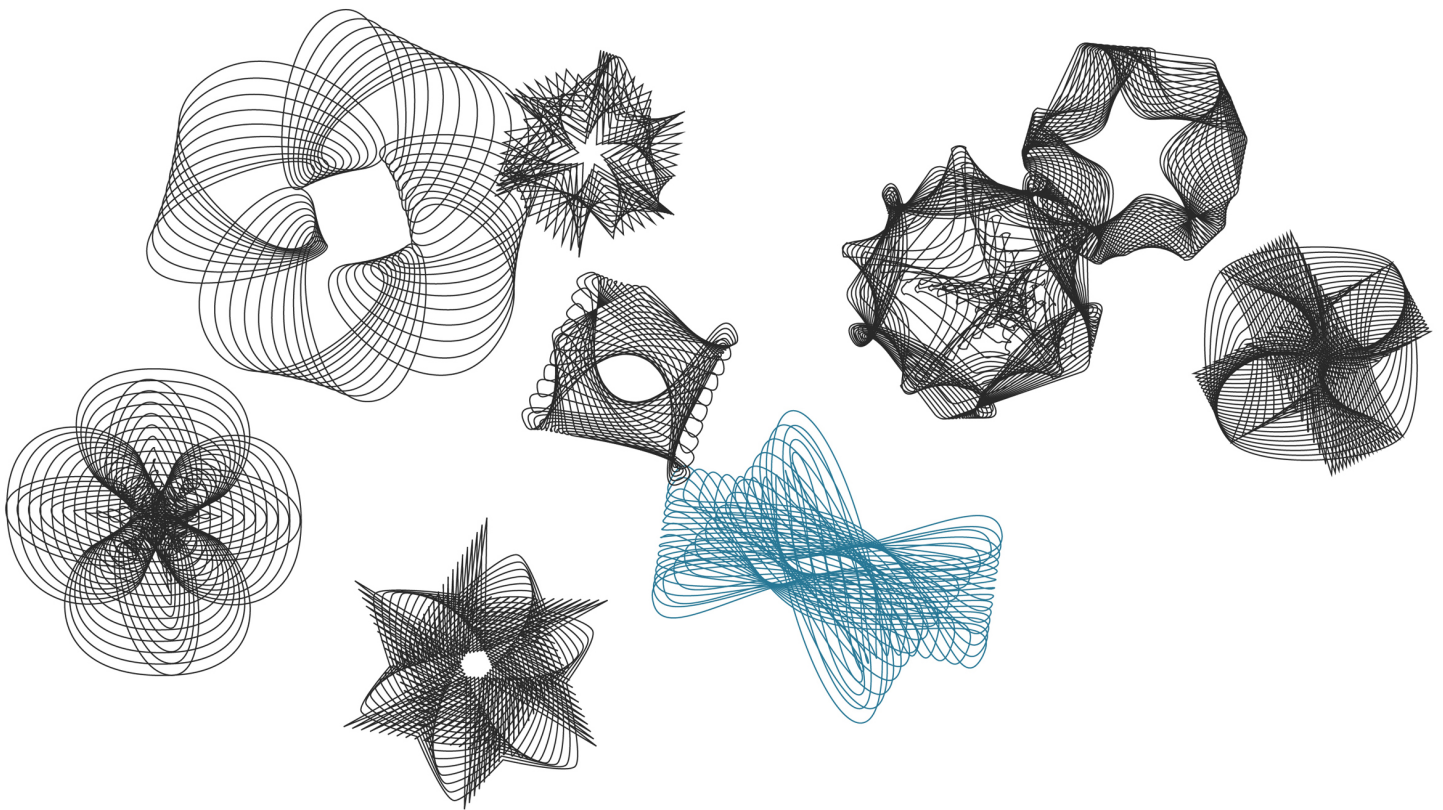


Time for Cultural Mediation

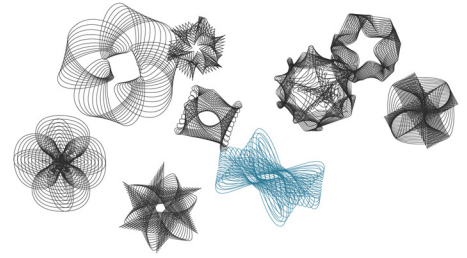
- 1 What is Cultural Mediation?
- 2 Cultural Mediation for Whom?
- 3 What is Transmitted?
- 4 How is Cultural Mediation Carried Out?
- 5 What Does Cultural Mediation Do?
- 6 Cultural Mediation: Why (Not)?
- 7 Who “does” Cultural Mediation?



- 8 Good Cultural Mediation?
- 9 Transmitting Cultural Mediation?

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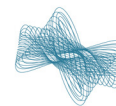


7.0 Intro

For many years, cultural mediation existed as an informal field of work but not as a defined occupational field. Around two decades ago, this situation began to change: universities launched programmes to train cultural mediators, associations were established in the various domains, new funding opportunities began to appear. A trend towards institutionalization has accompanied this evolution. People working in the area now see it as an occupational field, with profiles which, though heterogeneous, have been defined, with working conditions which can be described and which is associated with certain rights and requirements, as well as specific sets of issues. Network-building activities among cultural mediation professionals are intensifying at both national and international levels. The issues specific to the occupation and the identification of a professional discourse are giving rise to increased research activities. Cultural mediation, then, is also evolving as a scholarly discipline at the universities.

This chapter provides an overview of the various people and organizations involved in shaping the field of cultural mediation work.

- 8 Good Cultural Mediation?
- 9 Transmitting Cultural Mediation?



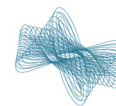
7.1 Occupation: Cultural mediator

Cultural mediation as a field of work is situated at the intersection of the arts, the scholarship associated with them and pedagogy. The mixture of knowledge and skills involved in it is correspondingly complex. While teacher training programmes in music or art instruction have long combined subject-specific studies (i.e. art studies or music studies) with pedagogic and artistic elements, it is only very recently that similarly specialized programmes have been established for → [cultural mediation outside of schools](#). For that reason, the field of cultural mediation has in many instances been greatly influenced by professionals from related scholarly, artistic and pedagogical fields. As a result, cultural mediation can encompass a wide variety of forms and contents, depending on the professional perspective the cultural mediator brings to the work. Many of those involved in art mediation in museums have a degree in art history, cultural and art studies or cultural pedagogy or are qualified school teachers, though more and more artists are working in the field as well. In the world of theatre, the professional profile of “theatre mediator” has a longer history. Many theatre mediators define themselves as artists as well as mediators, and have qualifications in subjects like directing and acting. Many also have backgrounds in the theatre arts. By contrast, others have backgrounds in social or cultural pedagogy with specializations in theatre or aesthetic education more generally. In addition, theatre mediation falls into the sphere of activities of many dramaturges.

In the domains of music and dance, which are traditionally associated with the instruction of instrumental and movement techniques, respectively, the mediation work is often done by artists. Even those whose chief employment is as cultural mediator and who have specialized in dance or music pedagogy tend to have a background in music or dance training. As the level of demand from institutions increases, new occupational profiles are being created, in concert or opera pedagogy for instance, positions sometimes filled by people who have studied the musical arts. In the domain of literature, it is largely scholars of literature or language studies who act as mediators, though it is not uncommon to find writers working as mediators as well, as for example in the “Schulhausroman” (Schoolhouse Novel) project, discussed in one of the → [case studies](#) included in this publication.

→ [cultural mediation outside of schools](#) see Text 7.2

→ [case studies](#) see Texts CS1 and CS2 under the heading Service



7.2 Conditions of employment in cultural mediation

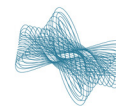
The conditions under which cultural mediators work are as diverse as the occupational backgrounds of the mediators themselves. Many cultural institutions do not have staff positions devoted solely to cultural mediation. In such institutions, mediation either falls within the sphere of outreach and marketing or appears as one responsibility among many in the job descriptions of individual staff members.

However, cultural mediation as a field of work is now undergoing a process of differentiation, primarily with respect to the programmes offered in institutions of musical and theatre arts, but also in museums. This process is accompanied by a gradual growth in jobs. Kunstmuseum Luzern, for instance, created multiple permanent staff positions in connection with a development project it set up called → *Kompetenzzentrum Kunstvermittlung* [Art Mediation Competence Centre]. Many of the publicly funded theatres in Switzerland have specialists in theatre pedagogy on their permanent staff. This trend is certainly related to the increasing emphasis on cultural mediation in funding policies, but it also has to do with the institutions themselves. The trend has already resulted in quality improvements in cultural mediation in many cases, since augmented time and financial resources can create a good basis for improved activities.

It must be noted that cultural mediation remains one of the more poorly paid and insecure fields of work in the cultural sphere. The increase in awareness of cultural mediation which could be observed over the past decade has not yet had a major structural impact. Most cultural mediators work as freelancers for a fee that is based on an hourly rate which can vary enormously. Also highly variable is the understanding of billable hours: while some institutions pay flat rates for preparatory and follow-up activities for projects and programmes, others will pay only for the hours in which mediators are actually working with participants. Cultural mediators often bear the entire risk of cancellation alone; i.e., when an offering is cancelled at short notice due to insufficient sign-ups, the cultural mediator may receive no payment at all.

As specialization and professionalization in the field increase, efforts to obtain better working conditions are intensifying, as Text 7.3 describes in greater detail.

→ *Kompetenzzentrum Kunstvermittlung* <http://www.kunstmuseumluzern.ch/de/kunstvermittlung.html> [1.5.2012]



7.3 (Swiss) Training options and professional associations of cultural mediators

→ [Teaching Artist](#), → [Trans](#), → [Ausstellen und Vermitteln](#), → [médiatrice et médiateur culturel](#), → [Kuverum](#), → [Musikvermittlung](#), → [Bilden – Künste – Gesellschaft](#), → [Vermittlung der Künste](#), → [Kulturelle Medienbildung](#):

Above are some of the many initial and advanced training programmes for cultural mediators who intend to work in non-school settings which have been set up at Swiss universities in the last decade. Their heterogeneous profiles cover mainly cultural mediation in the areas of exhibition and visual, musical and theatre arts. So far there is no curriculum devoted solely to mediation in the literary arts – but it is represented in the content of coursework such as the bilingual Bachelor programme in → [literary writing](#) of Bern's University of Applied Sciences. Courses of study in the area of both non-school and school dance mediation are offered by institutions in Switzerland's neighbouring countries (e. g. → [dance pedagogy at the Folkwang University of the Arts](#), in Essen, Germany; the → [private Anton Bruckner University](#) in Linz, Austria; → [dance dissemination](#) at the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz [University for Music and Dance] in Cologne. One of the best established training programmes in the area of → [community dance](#) is offered by the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in London. In France, Paris' → [Centre Nationale de la Danse Pantin](#) is one of the institutions offering continuing training programmes in dance education).

These newly created, specialized courses of study are one indication of the increasing differentiation within the cultural mediation field. Another is the enhanced visibility of occupational advocacy groups. In the exhibition world, and in theatre, musical and dance education → [associations](#) and other organizations are working to improve employment conditions, discussing quality criteria, organizing conferences, offering professional development courses, providing information services (such as notices about events, publications or job openings) and opportunities for networking.

Both the colourful bouquet of new training opportunities and the intensifying advocacy efforts within the occupational field are welcome in principle. It should not go unremarked, however, that institutionalization is also tied up with this process. Cultural mediation is changing from what was once a fairly ill defined, open field of experimentation into an increasingly disciplined sphere, with a varied, sometimes uneven distribution of resources, with respect to power, funding and prestige. Universities, cultural institutions and funding institutions are using cultural mediation and the knowledge it produces to enhance their own claims to legitimacy and their own images; associations are protecting first and foremost their own interests, which are not necessarily identical with those of cultural mediation. Thus institutions and other bodies are not under all circumstances automatically destined to promote new and interesting developments

→ [Teaching Artist](#) <http://www.hkb.bfh.ch/de/weiterbildung/kulturvermittlung/cas-teaching-artist/> [25.1.2013]

→ [Trans](#) http://head.hesge.ch/-TRANS-MEDIATION-ENSEIGNEMENT-#IMG/jpg/Sullivangravure1879_NB_web.jpg [25.1.2013]

→ [Ausstellen und Vermitteln](#) <http://www.zhdk.ch/?av-mae> [7.12.2014]

→ [médiatrice et médiateur culturel](#) <http://www.eesp.ch/ufc> [25.1.2013]

→ [Kuverum](#) <http://kuverum.ch> [25.1.2013]

→ [Musikvermittlung](#) <https://www.zhdk.ch/index.php?id=27814> [25.1.2013]

→ [Bilden – Künste – Gesellschaft](#) <http://weiterbildung.zhdk.ch/angebot/suche/3623> [25.1.2013]

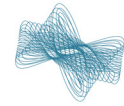
→ [Vermittlung der Künste](#) <http://www.fhnw.ch/ph/iwb/kader/vermittlung-der-kuenste> [25.1.2013]

→ [Kulturelle Medienbildung](#) <http://www.phbern.ch/weiterbildung/weiterbildungslehrgaenge/kunst-und-schule/cas-kulturelle-medienbildung.html> [25.1.2013]

→ [Literary writing](#) <http://www.hkb.bfh.ch/en/studies/bachelor/baliteratur/> [7.12.2014]

→ [Dance pedagogy at the Folkwang University of the Arts](#) <http://www.folkwang-uni.de/en/home/tanz/courses-of-study/dance-pedagogy-ma/> [7.12.2014]

→ [Anton Bruckner](#) <http://www.bruckneruni.at/Tanz/Institut> [1.5.2012]



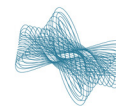
in this field of work. The latter quite often occur at the periphery of the field. Remaining attentive and receptive to people and developments outside of the mainstream during a phase of establishment and institutionalization is a challenge in every sphere – including that of cultural mediation.

→ Dance dissemination <http://dance-germany.org/index.php?languageId=2&pos=06000&id=20899> [7.12.2014]

→ Community dance <http://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/study/dance/one-year-programmes/postgraduate-diploma-community-dance> [25.1.2013]

→ Centre Nationale de la Danse <http://www.cnd.fr/professionnels/education-artistique/formations> [25.1.2013]

→ Associations <http://www.kultur-vermittlung.ch> [25.1.2013]



7.4 Voluntary work in cultural mediation

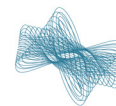
According to the → [Swiss Federal Statistical Office](#), approximately 33% of the Swiss population engaged in volunteer work in 2010. In the ranking of volunteer causes, cultural institutions came in second, accounting for almost 10% of all voluntary service (sports headed the list). Statistical Office data show that volunteers in cultural institutions tend to be more highly educated and correspondingly have higher incomes. In this respect they are less heterogeneous as a group than volunteers in other spheres, such as sports or the social sphere. This is a function of the fact that volunteers see public appreciation and the cultivation of networks, for instance, as beneficial. In the cultural arena, social and symbolic benefits of this kind can be used and generated only by those – few – individuals who have learned to perceive the arts in this way. By contrast, appreciation of sports as a social good is found at all levels of society to a greater degree.

A brochure published in 2008 by the German Museums Association entitled "Civic engagement in the museum" stresses that volunteers should not be a substitute for full-time staff. Instead, volunteer workers should "... support the museum's activities, round out the work of the full-time employees and bring new impulses into the museum" (→ [Deutscher Museumsbund 2008](#)). The latter is made less likely by the fact that institutions seldom have organizational structures in place which would systematically take up the experiences and ideas of voluntary workers and allow them to have an impact, in the sense of renewal or change. In 2010, the Swiss volunteer association → [BENEVOL](#) published a set of standards for working with volunteers which can serve as guidelines for cultural institutions and others.

→ [Federal Statistical Office](#) <http://www.freiwilligenmonitor.ch/static/files/service/downloads/SAKE-2010.pdf> [1.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070403.pdf

→ [Deutscher Museumsbund 2008](#) http://www.museumsbund.de/fileadmin/geschaefts/dokumente/Leitfaeden_und_anderes/BEIM_Broschuere_2008.pdf [1.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070401.pdf

→ [BENEVOL](#) http://www.benevol.ch/fileadmin/pdf/BENEVOL_Standards_Freiwilligenarbeit_2011.pdf [1.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070402.pdf



7.5 Cultural mediation as a research field

After remaining primarily a field of practice for over a century, cultural mediation has become a significant field of research and theoretical work in the last 15 years. The rapid proliferation of graduate programmes in the field testifies to this; other indications in the German-speaking regions are the establishment of research institutes in universities, such as the Institute for Art Education (IAE) at Zurich University of the Arts, and private cultural mediation institutions which conduct research, such as Vienna's → *Educult*. In recent years, platforms have been established for individuals and institutions active in research: the Art Education Research Network in Switzerland and the network → *Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* in Germany. In the French-speaking region, one can point to the Master's programme Recherche Histoire, esthétique et sociologie de médiation culturelle at the → *Médiation Culturelle* department of Université Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, which is conducting research in the field.

Thus far, the majority of the research into cultural mediation has been of an evaluative character. It is aimed primarily at demonstrating the effects of cultural mediation on participants (see, e. g., the research on transfer effects in the project → *Jedem Kind ein Instrument* [An instrument for every child]) (Rittelmeyer 2010). The motivation for funding and initiating cultural mediation is largely based on the desire for non-art-related transfer effects (such as increased willingness to perform or social cohesion), as the text in “6. Cultural mediation: Why (not)?” discusses. Research is commissioned in order to produce evidence of such transfer effects. This places researchers in a dilemma: on the one hand, if their work is to deserve the name of research, it must be unbiased. On the other hand, the future of the commissioning institution may depend on finding evidence for effects. The field of tensions is particularly evident in the debate about the validity of → *studies* conducted under these conditions.

However, there is also a growing amount of research which does not focus on effects but instead investigates that approach critically. For instance, there are studies which attempt to identify what various actors and organizations consider to be positive effects and then analyze what lies behind those views. There is also research exploring the effects of a funding policy aiming primarily at transfer effects (→ *Hoogen 2010*). Other studies analyse the key concepts of cultural mediation, such as “participation” (→ *Hope 2011*).

→ *Educult* <http://www.educult.at/forschung> [1.5.2012]

→ *Forschung Kulturelle Bildung* <http://www.forschung-kulturelle-bildung.de> [1.5.2012]

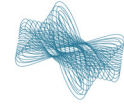
→ *Médiation Culturelle* http://www.univ-paris3.fr/MHSMEDC/0/fiche___formation [11.6.2012]

→ *Jedem Kind ein Instrument* <http://www.jeki-forschungsprogramm.de/forschungsprojekte/sigrun/sigrun-transfer> [1.5.2012]

→ *studies* see Texts in 6. Cultural Mediation: Why (not)?

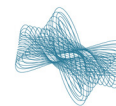
→ *Hoogen 2010* <http://irs.ub.rug.nl/ppn/327486783> [24.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070501.pdf

→ *Hope 2011* <http://www.sophiehope.org.uk> [1.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE0705.pdf



One important methodological approach is practice-led research, the purpose of which is to improve cultural mediation on the basis of theory and through analyses performed jointly with practitioners (for an example see the 2009–2011 project “Kunstvermittlung in Transformation” [Cultural Mediation in Transformation] conducted by a coalition of four Swiss universities of the arts and five museums (Settele 2012)).

Other scholarly disciplines with different specializations have also begun to engage in research on cultural mediation. Among them (often in combination) are approaches anchored in the history of education, didactics, the neurosciences, concept-theory and philosophy, art and sociology and other disciplines.



7.6 Funding of cultural mediation in Switzerland

In Switzerland, the Swiss Confederacy acts in a subsidiary role in the promotion of culture, supporting only projects of interest to the country as a whole, and supplementing the country's cantonal and municipal governments in doing so. In its support for cultural mediation, the → [Federal Office for Culture \(BAK\)](#) funds measures intended to promote language skills, literacy and reading and musical education, while the Swiss Arts Council → [Pro Helvetia](#) is responsible for funding arts mediation projects. In the course of its four-year Arts and Audiences Programme, Pro Helvetia developed a set of funding criteria, which it published in 2012 in the form of guidelines for grant applicants → [Leitfaden für Gesuchssteller_innen](#). Since cultural mediation projects generally take place at one location and interaction with the public takes place within a specific local context, proving that a project has national relevance can be difficult. For that reason, the focus is on promoting projects which, due to their high quality, can contribute to improving the practice of cultural mediation in the country.

One meets with a range of attitudes to cultural mediation at the cantonal and municipal level. Accordingly, funding activities at those levels are structured in a variety of ways. The greatest share of resources flow into partnerships between cultural institutions and schools (see → [Canton of Aargau](#), → [Canton of Bern](#), → [Canton of Zurich](#)). Increasingly, regional coordination offices are beginning to coordinate such cultural mediation projects, i.e. those for schools as well as discounts on cultural programmes.

While funding opportunities for school projects do exist in many Swiss cantons, there is no comparable support for cultural mediation activities outside of schools led by freelance mediators nor, in many places, is there for the non-school-related cultural mediation activities of institutions. Such projects often fall organizationally between the departments of culture and education, sometimes even in the area of social affairs. What is more, cantonal and municipal authorities tend to see cultural mediation as a standard part of the remit of institutions and thus covered by the agreements governing their activities. As a result, a municipal theatre is expected to finance any cultural mediation projects from its ordinary budget. The portion of the budget spent on cultural mediation is therefore a question of the institution's priorities. Resource allocation at privately financed institutions is also determined to a great extent by internal priorities. The cultural

→ [Federal Office for Culture \(BAK\)](#) see their Changing perspectives text in 1. What is cultural mediation?

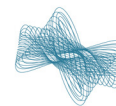
→ [Pro Helvetia](#) see their Changing perspectives text in "1. What is Cultural Mediation?"

→ [Leitfaden für Gesuchssteller_innen](#) http://www.prohelvetia.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/customers/prohelvetia/Foerderung/Vermittlungsfoerderung/2014/140708_Promotion_of_arts_outreach_at_Pro_Helvetia_def_EN.pdf [1.5.2012; see Resource Pool MFE070603.pdf

→ [Canton of Aargau](#) <http://www.kulturmachtschule.ch> [25.1.2013]

→ [Canton of Bern](#) http://www.erz.be.ch/erz/de/index/kultur/bildung_kultur.html [21.5.2012]

→ [Canton of Zurich](#) <http://www.schuleundkultur.ch> [21.5.2012]



mediation programme and the materials developed for it by the → [Daros Latin America Collection](#) in Rio de Janeiro – privately financed – provide an example of how this situation can be put to advantage. (see Valdes 2011).

In Switzerland, funding vehicles such as prizes and fellowships are rare or still up for debate. The City of Basel is an exception in this respect, having launched a free idea competition for → [cultural mediation projects](#) in 2012. At present, those → [fellowships and grants](#) which are awarded for cultural mediation in Switzerland are mostly destined for curators or critics, another indication of the open-ended use of the term.

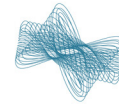
In many cases, the only funding opportunity available to individuals working with institutions or independently is to submit grant applications to the foundations which fund cultural mediation. A list of the foundations particularly active in cultural mediation is being compiled under → [Infothek](#) at www.kultur-vermittlung.ch.

→ [Daros Latin America Collection](#) <http://www.goethe.de/wis/bib/prj/hmb/the/156/de8622841.htm> [1.5.2012]

→ [Cultural mediation projects of the City of Basel](#) http://www.educationprojekte.ch/fileadmin/daten/wettbewerb/kult%26co_Ausschreibung_Flyer.pdf [21.5.2012]; see Resource Pool MFE070602.pdf

→ [Fellowships and grants](#) http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/kultur/de/index/foerderung/bildende_kunst/stipendien.html [21.5.2012]; http://aus_schreibung.kurator.ch [21.5.2012]

→ [Infothek](#) <http://www.kultur-vermittlung.ch/de/infothek/foerderung.html> [24.8.2012]

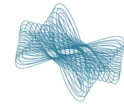


CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Margrit Bürer: All About Cultural Mediation

The attention being enjoyed by cultural mediation is a positive development since it is contributing to cultural mediation. New occupational fields have been established, various training programmes are available, professional associations have formed, and research findings and funding opportunities will make it possible to improve the working conditions of cultural mediators and perhaps even allow the effective employment of volunteer work – the achievements to date are numerous and substantial. Those who are interested in culture can choose from a plethora of cultural mediation offerings. Every domain has its own cultural mediation experts; practitioners have consolidated their role within the cultural sphere and the ratio of those mediating to those consuming is acceptable. Along with the satisfaction we feel with all that has been achieved, we should allow space for doubts about whether things are heading in the right direction, if we haven't already.

Surveys reveal that the absolute numbers of people interested in culture are not increasing with the growth of the spectrum of cultural offerings; instead, the same people are availing themselves of more offerings. Those findings, if correct, suggest that the investment in cultural mediation is resulting primarily in the development of skills among the “specialized audience”. In itself, this is not a bad thing, but neither does it provide a rationale appropriate to the cultural-policy ambitions implicitly tied to the cultural mediation. The continually increasing numbers of cultural events, artist and institutions suggest that engaging actively in cultural activity is more attractive than consuming it. Both this and the basic ideas behind cultural mediation suggest that one should continue exploring cultural mediation approaches which allow the boundaries between “those producing” and “those consuming” and between teachers and learners to dissolve and which open up opportunities for interaction and exchange. Thus along with calling for professional and differentiated cultural mediation, I am advocating respect and use of ordinary and effective cultural mediation, first and foremost, of the kind that is stimulated by a cultural work or production, lets that be known in its immediate environment and makes it accessible to other people.

Margrit Bürer holds an advanced degree in social pedagogy, certification to supervise in-service training in social pedagogy and an Executive MBA HSG. She has served as Cultural Officer for the Canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden since 2006. She worked as a freelance filmmaker, 1982–1994 and was employed in various capacities at the Swiss Art Council Pro Helvetia 1995–2006.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Franziska Dürr: Cultural Mediation – a Balancing Act

In the last 20 years, many cultural institutions have come to appreciate the importance of cultural mediation. An exhibition, a museum or a cultural event: visitors, especially for their first visit, need an invitation or a guide to draw them in. Thus we are seeing more and more museums and other cultural institutions announcing art mediation programmes and reaching out through them to both new audiences and their traditional audiences.

Who does the cultural mediation work though? Who can build the bridges? Is a history degree or teacher training what is needed to do cultural mediation in a historical museum? Should a person get an advanced professional qualification in cultural mediation or perhaps even do a course in marketing?

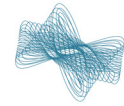
Cultural mediation work involves coming up with an offering, putting it into practice and then reviewing and analyzing it. The challenges begin to arise far in advance of the actual event: how are visitors going to find out about the offering, how can it be structured in a way that will ensure that visitors play an active role in the substantive area, not just passively consume, that their encounter with culture becomes an individualized experience?

In addition to specialist knowledge and pedagogical skills, cultural mediators need to be able to innovate, to devise new approaches. They need stamina, tenacity and aptitude since their aim is to inject new elements into existing structures.

Cultural mediation also entails actively pushing for structural conditions which allow the mediation to keep evolving over time. If it is going to develop into something which will endure, cultural mediation requires space, budgetary resources and attention.

Both a sound grasp of the subject and skills appropriate to the type of cultural mediation are prerequisites. Cultural mediators have to be interested both in people and in culture. Thanks to their own artistic and cultural practice, they share a common bond with culture and thus in-depth expertise about the cultural domain they are working in. They also need pedagogic expertise and aptitude, founded on education or their own experiences. It is because they can tap into both of these areas that cultural mediators are predestined to be the hosts, to invite new audiences, to build bridges and open the doors to culture. Personal initiative and a solid base of professional and life experiences are also key for a successful career.

Franziska Dürr is the Director of Art Mediation of the gallery Aargauer Kunsthaus and the “Kuverum” training course in cultural mediation.



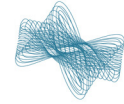
CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Gianna A. Mina: Museo Vincenzo Vela and Cultural Mediation

Every exhibit, whether permanent or temporary, is in itself an act of cultural mediation. By compiling and presenting objects or artworks and presenting content in a specific arrangement, curators convey a vision, a common thread, an interpretation which is intended to engage the audience as far as possible, to engender an enriching and stimulating dialogue. When this act of displaying and conveying content takes place in what was once an artist’s studio, a dwelling and a private museum, it takes on an additional relevance and an evident rationale.

Supported by the Confederacy, Museo Vincenzo Vela is one of the few museums in Swiss territory where all of the above applies. It is one of the most original of Europe’s 19th century Künstlerhäuser [dwelling cum studio cum gallery of an artist or artists]. It was designed by the Swiss sculptor Vincenzo Vela (1820–1891), who was active, primarily during the Italian Risorgimento, as a sculptor and defender of the ideals of that unification movement.

Following the museum’s reopening after major renovations and restructuring work (1997–2001), its director, aware of the premises stated above, made cultural mediation one of her primary concerns. In 2001 she established a cultural mediation service, which serves as a motor for the whole region. The service expands its offerings for various audience groups from one season to the next, in an open dialogue. We have built up a relationship based on mutual trust with the teachers of several schools, by organizing discussion series and laying out our intentions clearly: museum mediation which is not a continuation of school instruction but rather is intended to be understood as a complementary learning process involving all of the senses.

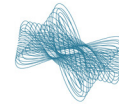
Our positive experiences with schools encouraged us to expand the museum’s public engagement process to encompass other interested visitor groups. Thanks to the contributions of experts in other fields and of our visitors themselves, who act as the museum’s “ambassadors”, we developed activities over the years for blind people, people with disabilities (including severely disabled people) and, starting five years ago, for asylum seekers. The fact that we have a very distinctive and unusual permanent exhibition enabled us to develop projects which involve not only the artistic experience, but also and just as seriously, a historical perspective and an engage-



ment with psychology and other humanistic disciplines. Music has become an important element of our cultural mediation concept as well. Regular musical events inspire an interested audience to come in for a new museum experience and provide an occasion for contemplating the intersections between different forms of artistic expression and their differences. And theatre, like sculpture a “plastic” form of expression – the one in motion, the other static – also has a firm presence in our programme.

In my opinion, appropriate cultural mediation, which makes all of this possible, is based on certain key principles: a generous, sensitive reception of the audience, a serious engagement with the themes proposed, an ear attentive to the needs and desires of the audience and the ability to interpret the permanent exhibitions anew over and over again, to approach them with curiosity and imagination along a path which is anchored in the past but directed towards the future.

Gianna A. Mina has served as the Director of Museo Vincenzo Vela in Ligornetto since 1992. She led the Swiss Commission for UNESCO from 2007 to 2011 and is a board member of the Verband der Kunsthistorikerinnen und Kunsthistoriker in der Schweiz [Association of Art Historians in Switzerland]. Since 2012 she has served as President of the VMS [Verband Museen der Schweiz].

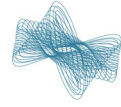


CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Anne Catherine Sutermeister: Cultural Mediation as an Indicator of the Quality of Cultural Policy?

By establishing itself as an independent cultural and artistic practice, cultural mediation became part of the system for promoting culture, while at the same time questioning what lies behind it and creating turbulence within it. The priority attached to it in the different cultural spheres is therefore a valuable reference point for assessing the reactive ability of policy and its capacity to position itself coherently vis-à-vis a new mandate.

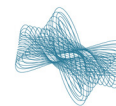
Cultural mediation enjoys a long tradition in Europe, though it was institutionalized in Switzerland rather late in the day. Whereas in France it was and still is bound up in a political vision (democratization of the audience), in this country it often figures in more pragmatic or even utilitarian considerations. Once funding instruments contingent on offerings were developed to support institutions and artists, the focus shifted to programmes aimed at a wider public. In today's apprehensive political climate, the question arises as to whom the subsidized cultural programme should target. At times, cultural mediation has been misused as an answer to every question.

The advent of cultural mediation as a support instrument raises cogent questions and speaks to the way culture is structured and how policy-makers view their own role. Most institutions, artists and associations have developed some form of cultural mediation, and provide a plethora of offerings. However, audiences do not always make use of them. This failure is due to inadequate coordination of promotional activities, redundancies and the heterogeneity of target groups. Despite extremely professional efforts on the part of a great many individuals and institutions, the view of cultural mediation as a service to the public – rather than as a series of short-term one-off offerings – is only slowly gaining ground. How can one put in place cultural mediation which, in accordance with its genuine mandate, is target-group oriented and not developed with a dependency on the artistic sector? How are the various visions of artists and cultural organizations to be reconciled with an approach that takes urban geographic and socio-cultural factors into account?



As a new form of established cultural and artistic intervention, cultural mediation can be seen as a challenge to rethink the inner workings of the cultural system: How can cultural mediation competence centres be coordinated with the institutions existing in the individual cultural domains? How can the array of artistic strengths and qualities be harnessed together to put them in the service of the population? With its specific features, cultural mediation is triggering an interesting dynamic in the cultural system. How the public sector responds to these questions will reveal a great deal about its reactive capacity.

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FOR READING AT LEISURE Working in a Field of Tensions 7: Research on Cultural Mediation – Between Demonstrating Effects and Scientific Impartiality

“Cultural heritage institutions are increasingly seen as instruments for government policies on social inclusion, cohesion and access [...] and required to present evidence of their performance. [...] Funding levels across the sector are contingent on being able to present such evidence.” (Brown 2007)

In Text 6.RL, we pointed out that research in the field of cultural mediation is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The last 15 years have seen increasing efforts towards research-based analyses of current practices and a differentiated historiography. Traditionally scepticism vis-à-vis theory has prevailed in the education professions (Patry 2005), but recently more and more individuals working in the cultural mediation field have become interested in new stimuli, conceptual analyses and augmentation for the formation and substantiation of their practices. For example, in 2012 an Austrian virtual “salon” focusing on cultural mediation theory was established, → [Salon Kulturvermittlung](http://salon-kulturvermittlung.at).

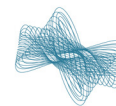
Text 7.5 mentioned the tension that exists in cultural mediation between legitimization efforts and the aspiration of unbiased research in cultural mediation. Below, the research field will be described from this viewpoint in greater detail.

“Visitor orientation” has emerged as a key concept in the debate about the future sustainability of publicly funded cultural institutions. At the turn of the 21st century, David Anderson (then Director of Learning and Visitor Services at London’s Victoria and Albert Museum, now General Director of National Museum Wales) spoke of a museum’s switch from being “object focused” to “user focused” (→ [Anderson 2000](http://www.cultivate-int.org/issue2/networked)). Current position statements put forth by the management of cultural institutions in the German speaking region are aligned with Anderson’s statement, for instance, in the search for a position “between education on culture and cultural marketing” (Mandel 2005) and in the interest in arts and cultural mediation (Kittlausz, Pauleit 2006).

The notion of visitor orientation is coupled with the concept of cultural institutions as societal learning venues, in which the situation outside of schools and universities is taken as an ideal model for self-motivated “lifelong learning” (John, Dauschek 2008), with the associated transfer effects on the individual’s willingness to perform and social behaviour. Accordingly, a considerable share of the research activities in the field of cultural mediation is framed along those lines. As the quotation introducing this section suggests, the greater the emphasis on transfer and educational effects in rationales for the public funding of cultural institutions, the more imperative

→ [Salon Kulturvermittlung](http://salon-kulturvermittlung.at) <http://salon-kulturvermittlung.at>
[10.10.2012]

→ [Anderson 2000](http://www.cultivate-int.org/issue2/networked) <http://www.cultivate-int.org/issue2/networked> [10.10.2012];
see Resource Pool MFV0701.pdf



becomes the pressure to demonstrate those effects. Another part of the research being done concentrates on the evidence and the promotion of the → reproductive function of cultural mediation. In this area one finds primarily assessments of cultural mediation projects' educational effects on participants or tests of displays, performance venues and infrastructures with a view to the ways they can be used by visitors and the aims of optimizing utility and expanding audiences (for examples in the museum sphere see the offerings of the working group for empirical education research → Arbeitsgruppe für empirische Bildungsforschung).

Evaluations and surveys are the most commonly found and also the oldest form of research examining cultural mediation. As early as in the 1940s, there were studies conducted in the United Kingdom and in the USA which examined the educational mission of museums and their status quo in the area of cultural mediation; they were funded both by governmental agencies and associations (Low 1942) and as individual initiatives by people who wished to rethink the role of museums (Wittlin 1949).

The methodology of audience research includes both investigative methods¹ drawn from cognitive psychology, such as “thinking aloud” (Dufresne-Tassé, Lefebvre 1994), in which the visitor is motivated to participate as a subject in an experimental set-up, and quantitative and qualitative investigative methods drawn from social and market research, i.e. focus groups, observation of visitor behaviour and surveys designed to record their demographic data and attitudes. One recent example drawing on neuroscience, cultural sociology and artistic processes to examine a question of marketing strategy is the study → eMotion (Tschacher et al. 2012), conducted out of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Northwest Switzerland in a partnership with the art museum Kunstmuseum St. Gallen.

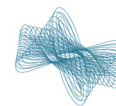
Basically, two distinct perspectives can be distinguished in audience research: one, the older historically, see visitors as forming a more or less homogenous group whose needs and behaviours can be described, and whose learning gains can be measured. The other, prevalent since the 1990s, sees visitors as a heterogeneous group whose members actively interpret content and take in cultural institutions in a performative fashion. From this perspective, research is understood as an activity which interprets and construes meaning rather than one which describes it objectively (Harrasser et al. 2012, p. 15). The lattermost approaches have also been used to obtain evidence of effects. Against this backdrop, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill at the School of Museum Studies of the University of Leicester, working on a commission from what was then the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries, developed the instrument known as the → Generic Learning Outcomes (Hooper Greenhill 2007). Her objective was to provide a tool which state-supported museums, libraries and archives could use to obtain the required evidence of effects. The tool is designed to enable the institutions

→ reproductive function of cultural mediation see Text 5.2

→ Arbeitsgruppe für empirische Bildungsforschung <http://www.arbeitsgruppe-heidelberg.de/> [7.12.2014]

→ eMotion <http://www.mapping-museum-experience.com> [10.10.2012]

→ Generic Learning Outcomes <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning> [10.10.2012]



themselves to conduct surveys which depict various dimensions of informal learning classified within six categories, including, for instance, “learning and understanding” and “values and dispositions”.² Two years after the study was published, about half of all English museums were using the Generic Learning Outcomes. They have since spread within the German speaking region as well (e.g. in the children’s museum → *Frida und Fred* in Graz, Austria, through a partnership with the → *University of Graz*). The Generic Learning Outcomes approach does consider audiences as active and heterogeneous, but one has to point out that although it provides potential opportunities for self-reflexivity on the part of institutions and cultural mediators (or users), the instrument is difficult to reconcile it with the aspiration of impartiality and being receptive to unanticipated outcomes, key criteria for scientific work. This is true above all when the continuing existence of the institutions under study is implicitly or explicitly tied up with a favourable assessment of its educational effects (Loomis 2002). In such cases, research is sometimes difficult to distinguish from services rendered, since the positions and intentions of the commissioning body are seldom made the subject of analysis or criticism. Moreover, the level of self-reflexivity involved is also frequently minimal – e.g. with respect to the → *normative positions* introduced by the analysis categories used. Thus they have not kept pace with the “reflexive turn” (Bachmann-Medik 2006), i.e. they do not involve critical self-analysis with respect to the scientific aspiration to produce an accurate depiction of the truth, or with respect to the authority and power of the researchers and their effects on knowledge production, despite the fact that self-reflexivity of this kind has been an established element in the scientific approach for several decades. Hence, rather than tending to contribute to an understanding of cultural mediation within the field as an independent and critical practice, they may be in danger of subordinating it to institutional and political objectives (Mastai 2007).

However, growing numbers of research projects on cultural mediation are based on the reflexive turn. Many retain the established constellation of researchers and subjects but attempt to provide a critical analysis of culture, its institutions and mediation practices rather than evidence of effects. One such is the project “Science with all Senses – Gender and Science in the Making”, which used ethno-methodological means to investigate knowledge acquisition of children in Vienna museums based on categories of class, ethnicity and gender (Harrasser et al. 2012).

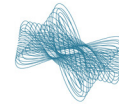
Other projects present themselves as attempting to use → *action research* to intensify the ties between research and development of cultural mediation by involving cultural mediation practitioners as researchers. There are also approaches which liberate visitors from their role as subjects and draw on their work and thoughts to design research. For instance, the Swiss project investigating aesthetic communication in children’s theatre “Ästhetische

→ *Frida und Fred* http://www.fridaundfred.at/cms/5780/Evaluierung_und_Forschung [7.10.2012]

→ *University of Graz* http://www.uni-graz.at/weiwww_tagung_outcome_vortrag-schrittesser.pdf [7.10.2012]; see Resource Pool MFV0702.pdf

→ *normative positions* see Text 3.RL

→ *action research* see Glossary



Kommunikation im Kindertheater” used creative writing, drawing and other free design media to learn about the individual perceptions of children during a theatre visit both through observation and through the children’s own articulations (Baumgart 2012). In one nation-wide, model programme with an integrated research track in England entitled → [enquire](#) (2004–2011), artists, school pupils, students, scholars, teachers and gallery mediators worked together under the motto “learning in galleries”. During the programme, young people developed experimental interpretive tools for working with audiences. The projects were designed to draw on the work of school children while, at the same time, studying their learning behaviour and the dynamics of the partnerships between museums and schools. They also examined the authority of museums to interpret their traditional education practices. One project which takes a close look at that lattermost aspect is → [Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Culture](#) (Dewdney et al. 2012), conducted by the Tate Britain from 2007 to 2010 in partnership with London South Bank University and the University of the Arts London. In that project, a research group composed of scholars, museum staff and students with a migrant family background, in the broadest sense of that term³, examined how → [Britishness](#) is constructed within the museum’s curatorial practices and collection. Its results fundamentally challenge the museum’s → [cultural diversity policy](#) and open up prospects for changing the educational and curatorial work in exhibition institutions. The investigators behind Tate Encounters were familiar with the approaches of → [critical museology](#) and attempted to rethink institutional practice on that basis. The project attempted to make the hierarchies between researchers and their subjects and between teachers and learners transparent and conduct the “audience research” described above as “research in partnership with audiences”. In that context, the treatment and consideration of the inevitable hierarchies between professional researchers and participants from other fields was an integral component of the work. For instance, the young adults involved underwent methodological training as “co-researchers”. Similar projects have taken place in the German-speaking region in recent years too. For instance, the research project on the cultural mediation at documenta 12 was committed to this aim (Wieczorek et al. 2009; Mörsch et al. 2009). Education was declared as one of three leitmotifs of the d12 by the curators of that international contemporary art exhibit. The result was a cultural mediation concept which put the dialogue about art and the debates about education before the authorized transmission of knowledge. Cultural mediation was seen as a “critical friend” (Mörsch 2008) in its relationship to the exhibit. Twenty of the freelance cultural mediators conducted a team research project which used cultural mediation methods – as research, as performance and as intervention – in an attempt to conduct analyses designed to foster change in the practice of cultural mediation and its relationships with its surroundings, to engage in “radical

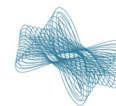
→ [enquire](http://www.engage.org/enquire) <http://www.engage.org/enquire> [7.12.2014]

→ [Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Culture](http://process.tateencounters.org) <http://process.tateencounters.org> [10.10.2012]

→ [Britishness](#) see Glossary

→ [diversity policy](#) see Glossary

→ [critical museology](#) see Text 5.RL



research” (→ *Malo 2004*, → *Graham 2010*). This example makes it clear, if it was not already, that one aim of research approaches like this in cultural mediation is to → *empower* the people taking part. This is also evident in the 2009–2011 “Kunstvermittlung in Transformation” [Art Mediation in Transformation] project, a collaborate project based on action research involving four Swiss universities of the arts and five museums, which aimed at working with practitioners to improve art mediation practices in museums on the basis of research and increase the engagement of universities with the field. At the end of the project, many of who had been involved indicated that the status of the cultural mediation in their institutions had improved. One of the museum professionals described finding that referring to the research context made it easier for her to motivate her team to experiment with practices and think about theoretical issues.⁴

Practical research does not offer an escape from the tension between the desire to document the effects sought and the aspiration of scientific impartiality. However, it can foster the development of the reflexive abilities in the field of practice, produce applicable outcomes and thus contribute to the field’s development while neither putting itself at the service of institution and cultural policy imperatives nor simulating indifference to those imperatives. Accordingly, it has the potential to continue the productive use of the existing fields of tension at the research level as well.

1 See for example the publications and projects of the Psychological Aesthetics and Cognitive Ergonomics research focus at the University of Vienna or the International Association of Empirical Aesthetics → <http://science-of-aesthetics.org> [14.10.2012]

2 For a detailed list and critique of these categories → see Text 3.RL.

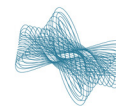
3 Participation in the research project was subject to two conditions: The students had to come from a family which immigrated to England (it did not matter where) and had to be the first person from their family to attend a university.

4 At another museum, a three-year position of “curator for education” was established → see Text 5.RL.

→ *Malo 2004* <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/malo/en> [10.10.2012]; see Resource Pool MFV0703.pdf

→ *Graham 2010* <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201004/2010214291.html> [10.10.2012]; see Resource Pool MFV0704.pdf

→ *empowering* see Glossary entry on self-empowerment



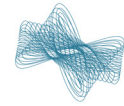
Literature and Links

The text is based in part on the following previously published paper:

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- University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Northwest Switzerland, Studio eMotion: <http://www.mapping-museum-experience.com> [10.10.2012]
- Graz children's museum Frida und Fred: http://www.fridaundfred.at/cms/5780/Evaluierung_und_Forschung [10.10.2012]
- Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, United Kingdom, Generic Learning Outcomes: <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning> [10.10.2012]
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