

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Regula von Büren: Quality is Decisive

When is cultural mediation “good”? What criteria can be used to measure quality in the cultural sphere? These questions are very important to the foundation Stiftung Mercator Schweiz: funding should go where it will make a big impact, generate stimulating output and create good practice examples. For this to occur, the projects have to be of a high quality. Judging whether a project is “good” or not is no easy task. Stiftung Mercator Schweiz sees three criteria as key in this kind of judgement:

Strategic Fit

The foundation supports projects which augment the role of cultural mediation in society. The foundation wants to make it possible for children and young adults to interact with cultural institutions and artists in order to dispel anxieties about contact with the arts and their institutions. The young participants should be able to actively experience and explore different forms of art.

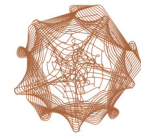
Superior Project Quality

The applicant must be skilled, the concept internally coherent, the budget appropriate and there must be a plan in place for meaningful evaluation. In addition, the project should meet a need.

Appropriate project objectives

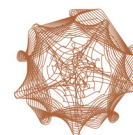
Quantitative goals, like a specific number of participants of activities carried out, etc. are not the only dimensions of interest, a project’s impacts on the target groups are also of primary concern. The children’s satisfaction is one important aim, but so is the satisfaction of the teachers and artists involved. Internal and external evaluations provide valuable indicators in this respect.

In addition to those criteria, the foundation relies on expert reports in its evaluation of cultural projects. There are also certain guidelines which the project manager can consult for assistance (e. g. Perrot, Wodiunig 2008). The exchange of experience and information with project partners is very important, as is exchange with other foundations which provide funding



and with people responsible for projects who are pursuing aims similar to the foundation's. This encourages learning from one another – and that is an important aspect in cultural mediation. Quality assessment, the question of what “good” cultural mediation is, is a process that must be continually improved and changed through the concerted efforts of many people.

Regula von Büren is a project manager at Stiftung Mercator Schweiz. She heads the Museum and Environment division and is also responsible for the cultural mediation area of activities in the Children and Young Adults area.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Reto Luder: MUS-E – Promotion of and Through Art and Culture in Schools

The → MUS-E® projects integrate a wide range of the arts (e.g., theatre, dance, music, the fine arts and film) into the daily routine of schools. The two-year projects, taking the form of biweekly lessons, are individually tailored to the needs and underlying conditions of a school class. The concept at the core of every project in the MUS-E® programmes is designed individually in consultation with the teachers and artists. The artists bring in their artistic skills, the teachers a pedagogic competence in their subject. The principal aim of all MUS-E® projects is the social, emotional and physical sensitization of children through the medium of art and culture within a framework of holistic education. The intent is that the arts will help schoolchildren to better understand themselves and their environment and discover and enhance their own abilities and strengths.

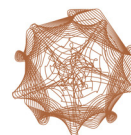
→ MUS-E <http://www.mus-e.ch>
[16.2.2013]

Thanks to the changing artistic disciplines at the core of the MUS-E® programme, all children have the opportunity to discover their own individual expression in the arts and create their own approach to culture. The programme uses art as the language that can be understood across borders and makes it possible for all children to cope creatively with the challenges of a globalized world. An open, imaginative and creative attitude towards all participants helps the children to tap into the value of the arts as a language and acquire the associated opportunities for expression.

MUS-E® works with a wide range of institutions and applies advanced research approaches to document the effects of artistic projects. The non-profit association MUS-E Schweiz/Fürstentum Liechtenstein supports the growth of MUS-E® in connection with the "International Yehudi Menuhin Foundation" in Brussels, the umbrella organization of all national MUS-E coordinating bodies.

Taken as a whole, the MUS-E® programme is opening doors to art, culture and creativity for several thousand children in Europe and Israel. Compared to other in-school art programmes, it achieves a very high level of sustainability of impact, due in no small part to the length of its individual projects.

Dr. Reto Luder is a teacher and special education professional. He studied special education and psychopathology and serves as a lecturer for special education in the Zurich University of Teacher Education. Reto Luder is a member of the board of MUS-E Schweiz/Liechtenstein.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Murielle Perritaz: When Quality is a Luxury

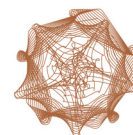
Dance mediation in Switzerland is a long way from having the framework and conditions necessary to ensure qualitatively excellent mediation. Very few institutions can boast a dance mediator or mediation programme. The training courses are not in place and dance mediators report having difficulty finding the support necessary to implement or develop their activities.

In a country in which the occupation of dancer went officially unrecognized until 2009, dance mediation is and will remain a marginal issue. Many projects aiming at improving conditions for the process of artistic creation are underway. Everyone is talking about the linkage of works and target groups, but it remains an objective which is difficult to achieve.

For that reason, platforms for dance mediation professionals have been set up. Thanks to these platforms, it is becoming possible to bring institutions, mediators and partners together to a single space to coordinate existing dance mediation activities, identify resources and skills, promote the dissemination of existing projects and encourage the creation of new ones and improve their quality.

No one can dispute that this instrument is achieving results: it is facilitating exchange and the presentation and modification of dance mediation projects in a variety of contexts. However, it has not resolved one of the central problems in dance mediation: dance is an ephemeral art form. While works in museums can be displayed for weeks or months at a time, performing art is a thing of the past after a few days. In a system where the amortization of investments is a decisive factor, the development of complete, coherent and high-quality mediation projects focusing on the work of an artist is a luxury which dance can afford far too rarely.

Murielle Perritaz is the Managing Director of the network Reso – Réseau Danse Suisse – and works as manager of a dance troupe in various fields of dance. She is also a member of staff at Pro Helvetia and a programme designer at the theatre Zürcher Theaterhaus Gessnerallee.



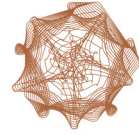
CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Gallus Staubli: Cultural Mediation Makes People Happy

At the mediamus conference held in Lenzburg in September 2012 on the “Significance and Scopes of Action of Mediation in Museums”, Gottfried Fliedl (founder and director of Museumsakademie of the Universalmuseum Joanneum in Graz, Austria) referred to Article 1 of the General Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which contributed to the development of the French Constitution of 1793: “The aim of the society is the common welfare [bonheur commun]”. If we assume that the socio-political aim of cultural mediation is democratization, fostered through the education of responsible citizens who can draw on a wide spectrum of means of expression, think and act innovatively and take part in shaping the life of their society, then (good) cultural mediation ultimately serves to increase gross social happiness. Jigme Singye Wangchuck, former King of Bhutan, coined that term in 1979, telling a journalist, “Gross national happiness is more important than gross national product”. Safeguarding culture, and particularly the reinforcement of cultural values, should result in an empathetic, free and happy society in which culture can continue to flourish, along with socially just economic development, the protection of nature and good governance.

In certain cultural institutions, which are not so much democratic as time-honoured, venerable, highly hierarchical and influenced by an “every man for himself” mentality, putting a deconstructive or even transformative approach to cultural mediation into practice is an art, one which encourages the democratization process. Only when the entire institution takes on cultural mediation as its own (and not the other way around!) has the basis for good and happiness-inducing cultural mediation been created. When this is not achieved, the only thing to do is “Step out of the museum, (the theatre, the concert chambers...) and enter into risky, innovative, organizationally, substantively and strategically new projects, objectives and partnerships [...]” (Fliedl 2012).

UNESCO's 2011 “Education for All” global monitoring report identifies the following four factors as decisive for education:

1. The teaching staff.
2. The amount of time actually spent on instruction.
3. The key significance of the first years of school.
4. Facilities and equipment.

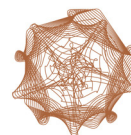


Transposing that to quality in happiness-inducing cultural mediation, we need:

1. Competent and confident mediators.
2. Good working conditions, and particularly scope for action and the vital position within the organizational structure.
3. Focus on a wide variety of target groups (cultural mediation for all).
4. Resources (personnel, budgetary, space, time).

Given all of that, cultural mediators will be able to make their users happy.

Gallus Staubli is a teacher, Head of Education and Knowledge Transfer at the Museum of Communication in Bern, a co-president of mediamus and a member of the board of the umbrella association for cultural mediation organization, Kulturvermittlung Schweiz.



CHANGING PERSPECTIVES Cultural Mediation Working Group, Pro Helvetia: Good Cultural Mediation: A Synthesis of Artistic and Educational Quality

High quality in a cultural mediation project reveals itself in a successful process in which both artistic and cultural mediational factors smoothly intertwine, resulting in the formation of something new and complete. Even if the end product may not be up to everyone's artistic standards, the path that led to it can be an important one and the project a success, depending on what it was intended to achieve.

Pro Helvetia assesses the professional quality of cultural mediation on the basis of the concept submitted and the demonstrated experience of the mediators involved. One element in the text setting out the concept is a section detailing how scope will be provided for participants' decisions, experience and knowledge to flow into the project. Qualitative evaluation focuses on whether the target groups, the target effects and the cultural mediation methodology have been selected thoughtfully and are in harmony with one another.

The standards which Pro Helvetia applies to purely artistic content associated with a compelling approach to cultural mediation differ from those it applies to an art project. For instance, it might deem a music education project to be cogent and compelling because of its synthesis of artistic and educational dimensions, even if the Arts Council might not support the performance of the actual work it revolves for its own sake.

One indicator of quality in a successful cultural mediation project lies in the compelling intertwining of artistic and educational quality. Promotion of cultural mediation must take both aspects into consideration.

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