



History of Museum Education and Interpretation *Belgium*

Edited by Nicole Gesché-Koning

ICOM international
council
of museums
Belgium

M CECA ICOM
international committee
for education
and cultural action

History of Museum Education and Interpretation - Belgium

Published by Alexandre Chevalier -
ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles
& Sergio Servellón - ICOM Belgium Flanders

Edited by Nicole Gesché-Koning

Translations and revision of English texts:
Alison & Roger Heath, Danielle Schaub
& John Wojtowicz

Cover & Lay-out: Studio Olbinski – Liège
www.olbinski.be

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ISBN : 978-2-9602355-8-6

Printed in Belgium by AZ Print, Liège

Preface

Alexandre Chevalier

President ICOM Belgium and ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles

Sergio Servellón

Vice-President ICOM Belgium and President ICOM Belgium Flanders

The publication of this book coincides with the annual conference of ICOM's International Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) on the theme of "Co-creation inside and outside the museum walls", held in Leuven (Belgium) in 2021.

The two sections of the Belgian national committee of ICOM have wished to recognise and celebrate the role of Belgians in the development of museum education and interpretation by supporting not only the Leuven conference but also this publication.

As well as being one of the founding countries of ICOM after the Second World War, Belgium relied on the involvement of Belgian professionals in CECA, where they provided strategic support and reflection at both local and national levels, with a view to bridging the fields of education and of the museum.

The annual CECA conference in Leuven offers the opportunity to launch a new series of CECA publications proposed by the CECA president on the general history of museum education and interpretation. This volume concerning Belgium illustrates the cooperation that has always existed between the different communities in the country. In the spirit of openness to all audiences and inclusion pursued by museums, we wish to commend the museum educators of Belgium's three communities - Flemish, French and German.

The book chronologically examines the development of museums working with the public in the 20th and 21st centuries, starting with pioneers such as Jean

Capart, Léo Michel Thiery and Germaine Faider-Feytmans, as well as later key figures. The publication also looks back on the role played by the Commission for Education and Cultural Action, the bilingual working group created in 1970 following a UNESCO recommendation.

In 1979, after the linguistic split of the Belgian Association of Museums into two associations, owing to the reform of the Belgian state in 1970, the working group continued its activities within the French Association of Belgian Museums (*Association Francophone des Musées de Belgique* - AFMB) and the *Vlaamse Museumvereniging* (Flemish Museum Association - VMV).

Currently there no longer exists a Commission for Education and Cultural Action within the two sections of ICOM Belgium (now called ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles and ICOM Belgium Flanders), but two national CECA correspondents appointed for Belgium, one for the Flemish community and one for the French and German communities. The correspondents have both the responsibility to continue the reflection on museum education and interpretation in Belgium and to serve as a link between Belgian professionals involved in museum education and their colleagues around the world.

The book thereafter examines the place of education and interpretation in museums from the perspective of the other regional associations representing museums in Belgium: Brussels Museums (former Brussels Council of Museums) and Museums and Society in Wallonia (*Musées et Société en Wallonie*). Finally, some articles analyse the contribution of Belgian universities as forums underpinning and theoretically supporting museum education.

The publication would not have seen the light without Nicole Gesché-Koning's initiative, coordination and, above all, knowledge, and network. As former CECA national correspondent for Belgium, she has tirelessly promoted education and interpretation as a fundamental basis for museums. Because of her ability to build bridges, she has ensured an intergenerational link between the past and the present. The publication therefore also acknowledges, and bestows a tribute to her work. We would like to thank her warmly on behalf of ICOM Belgium.

Foreword

Marie-Clarté O'Neill
President ICOM-CECA

Museum Education in Belgium : An Impressive History

The work presented here, in its richness and diversity, calls for several important remarks on my part, as current President of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) of ICOM.

First, it represents an in-depth historical review of a museum function, education, long considered by museums as a sympathetic and indispensable function, without recognition by the professional environment as a scientific discipline in its own right, just as research into collections or their material care. The numerous worldwide social upheavals since the middle of the 20th century and the proof of the role that museums could play in accompanying them seem to gradually give museum education a more fundamental status. The professionals of the CECA have consistently demonstrated talent, inventiveness, energy, and resilience. However, the oldest among them, of which I am one, sometimes regret the repetition of comparable initiatives too often implemented without any real discernible progress in quality, probably owing to two diseases.

- The first concerns research: too little research is conducted on the educational activities of museums; institutions do not consider the results of existing ap-

plied research; and many museum education professionals lack skill in applied research.

- The second concerns the history of the discipline. Terribly fragmented, it offers no global vision of the achievements or mistakes of the past, thereby providing few means of avoiding 'reinventing the wheel' or thinking that the alleged novelty of an initiative displays its main quality.

This publication addresses the second gap in a masterly way. In this respect, I would like to make two other comments:

- Not surprisingly, the first National History of Museum Education emerges from Belgium, which has shown remarkable initiatives since the beginning, both with regards to the prophetic dimension of emerging needs, and with regards to the quality of the products proposed, overcoming the difficulties linked to bi-culturalism, and perhaps even enriching it.
- The initiative and its surprising scope would not have existed without the involvement and competence of Nicole Gesché-Koning. A guardian of the CECA in many capacities, including as Secretary and President for two mandates, she has above all functioned as the living memory of the Committee so that we regularly turn to her for all sorts of questions. This collection of essays therefore presents an unhopd-for opportunity for the CECA to commit the memory on paper, transforming it into history.

The initiative must not remain isolated but act as the first link in a chain with the stated aim at overcoming the poor historical visibility in the fields of museum education, mediation, and cultural action as well as its consequences, as mentioned above.

Thank you, Nicole, for such a superb achievement

And thank you in advance to all CECA members or mediation enthusiasts who would willingly pursue the initiative for their country or region, a worthy response to one among the primary vocations of museums: to work on the past to build the future.

Editorial

Nicole Gesché-Koning

Editor

75 years have already passed since the creation of ICOM and its first national and international committees, with a Belgian presence from the outset. The time range offers an opportunity to look at the archives of the various committees related to education and cultural action so as to identify their founding elements. Their knowledge, for today's leaders, proves essential to advance a profession so essential in the understanding of the unstable world we live in.

It allows to place into historical perspective the work of some pioneers in the field of museum education and to revisit the fundamentals of a profession that has continued to develop, so much to become one of the key functions of the museum, alongside conservation and research. Belgium, hosting this year the international members of CECA in Leuven, has the honour of inaugurating a new collection devoted to the History of Museum Education and Interpretation.

Since the publication in the 16th century of the oldest treatise on museology by the Belgian Samuel Quiccheberg (1529-1567) and the creation in 1922 by Jean Capart (1877-1947) of the first education department in a national museum, Belgium has played an important role in ICOM and CECA. Amongst others, some renowned museum curators joined them as founders and committed education officers, in times when communication did not enjoy the facilities of today's global dissemination. The *History of Museum Education and Interpretation in Belgium* therefore not only pays tribute to the pioneers of museum education and interpretation, but also shows their often visionary, convinced and, dare we say, modern specificity: people of good sense,

open to the world and to others, aware of their educational task with respect to their collections and the shapers of the heritage under their responsibility. If, today more than ever, the trend lies in the emphasis of the human aspect, who and what do they concern? Is it the museum director anxious about attendance figures and the resources he or she lacks or fighting for the public, or even the bequeathers of all the objects that make up the museum collections, or all those through whose hands these objects have passed, with all the questions they have asked themselves? Which visitors do we have in mind and how can we include them, make them participate in the activities of the museum? Should we consult and involve them in the management of the museum? What messages are most appropriate to convey? In short, how do we consider the role of museum education and interpretation today?

The terms inclusion, participation, community involvement, so dear to those who advocate the new definition of the museum, already represented the mission of many institutions even before the creation of ICOM. Belgium definitely fostered them before.

The international conference of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action of the International Council of Museums, scheduled to take place in Leuven in October 2021, provides an opportunity to examine the evolution of education and interpretation within Belgian museums and to discuss prospects, all communities and regions included.

This publication would have never seen the light without the support of ICOM Belgium, CECA international and all the authors, translators and revisors to whom go my warmest thanks.

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From Samuel Quiccheberg to Jean Capart

François Mairesse

Sorbonne nouvelle-Paris 3, CERLIS, CNRS, ICCA

Presenting Samuel Quiccheberg (1529-1567), the author of the first treatise on museums (written in Munich in 1565), the *Inscriptiones vel Tituli Theatri* as a pioneer of museum education and interpretation may seem audacious. His main concern was to propose a classification system of collections, for the use of all - nevertheless largely based on the princely collections of the time. The aim of this Belgian scholar - as he describes himself in his book -, is to gain knowledge of objects, *so that by looking at them and handling them frequently one can quickly, easily, and surely acquire a singular knowledge of things and an admirable wisdom* (according to the title of his book). Among the objects, he promotes the constitution of a “stock of images”, considering them as a useful substitute for the development of knowledge: “the mere sight of an image is sometimes better for one’s memory than reading a long text. Little by little,

thanks to these images, a great service will be rendered to letters”.¹ One may consider this treatise as a first pedagogical effort to understand collections. One should not forget that these principles of classification and presentation, as well as the explanation given by images, constitute the first milestone of a didactic approach based on the study of objects. In this sense, the author immediately integrates, through this first treatise, a reflection on learning and education based on collections.

However, it was mainly at the end of the 19th century, when the world of museums became more professional, that the reflections on museum education and learning really developed. I would like to briefly mention here the ideas of some Belgian personalities who worked in this field, either through some of their projects or the creation of education and interpretation departments in museums.

¹ Quoted from the French translation of the treaty. See N. Brout., “Le traité muséologique de Quiccheberg”, in F. MAIRESSE et al, *L’extraordinaire jardin de la mémoire*, Morlanwelz, Musée royal de Mariemont, 2004, t. musée, fol E iii v, p. 109.

FROM CHARLES BULS TO PAUL OTLET: TOWARDS A MUSEUM ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

The history of museums in Belgium follows that of its main neighbours in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. In terms of education, Belgium founded a national school museum in 1882, directed by M. Germain, while developing a network of school museums in its schools.² The American Seymour-Monroe, on a study trip, described this establishment as one of the most remarkably organised in Europe.³ On a more general level, Belgium was also committed to reforming its education in relation to its art industries, following the example of the South Kensington Museum, organised by Henry Cole. During his various missions, Marius Vachon⁴ evoked the Belgian situation, which he considered favourable, notably thanks to the establishment of a museum of decorative and industrial arts in the Parc du Cinquanteenaire, the future Museum of Art and History of Belgium. It was in this same place that the national school museum was set up and that, a few years later, the first education department in Belgium and the Mundane-

um were created (see below). These developments testify the strong desire to align the museum with the formal education system, but the concern for education affects, in a more global way, all audiences throughout life, starting with the working classes.

Indeed, we find the same emphasis as that developed by Henry Cole⁵, the desire to address everyone: “museums must be organised in a more aesthetic and methodical manner and constitute, not exhibitions, but true establishments of popular education [...]”.⁶ It is in this context that a particularly original project for a popular museum for the education of science and art was developed. Its author, Charles Buls (1837-1914), the future mayor of Brussels, sought to awaken the desire to learn, to provide everyone with the means to acquire new knowledge, but also to arouse respect for the scientific world: “The ploughman who walks through the museum’s galleries cannot fail to come away from them with a certain respect for the mass of knowledge possessed by scientists; but it will be less the objects themselves that will strike him than the order and science brought to their classification and grouping”.⁷ Co-founder and then president of the *Ligue de l’Enseignement*, which aimed to

² M.-E. GALTIER-BOISSIÈRE, “Une visite aux musées scolaires de Bruxelles et d’Amsterdam”, in *Revue pédagogique*, 1896, 28-1, pp. 219-223. On the history of these museums, see K. CATTEUW, *Als de muren konden spreken. Schoolwandplaten en de geschiedenis van het Belgisch lager onderwijs*, PhD thesis, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, 2005.

³ W. SEYMOUR MONROE, “Educational Museum and Libraries of Europe”, in *Educational Review*, April 1896, pp. 374-391.

⁴ M. VACHON, *Rapports sur les musées et les écoles d’art industriel et sur la situation des industries artistiques en Belgique et Hollande*, Paris, Ministère de l’Instruction publique et des Beaux-Arts, Maison Quentin, 1888.

⁵ T. BENNETT, *The Birth of the Museum*, London, Routledge, 1995.

⁶ WORK OF PUBLIC ART, *First International Congress*, Brussels, 1898: *Resolutions of the Congress*, I-IV, pp. 140-141.

⁷ C. BULS, “Un projet de musée populaire”, in *Revue de Belgique*, 6, t. XVII, 1874, p. 47.

improve education in Belgium, Buls organised a model school in 1875, based on an intuitive method and modern teaching materials, including art and natural history collections.⁸ He failed in realising his project for a people's museum, but a few years later, in 1887, he opened the Brussels municipal museum.

In liberal and socialist circles, popular education was seen as fundamentally linked to museums. In 1902, in an article entitled *Art for the People - Museum Catalogues*, Jules Destrée (1863-1936), then a socialist deputy, saw the museum as a means of education at the service of all, and cheap catalogues as an essential tool: "The museum is a common good. Its aim is to provide permanent education, to provoke the aesthetic development of the entire nation. [...] It is offered to all, and especially to those who love beauty and who are poor".⁹ Destrée became Minister of Sciences and Arts in 1919 and then, at its creation in 1926, the first President of the International Office of Museums, the forerunner of ICOM.¹⁰

If Destrée's activity appears to be relatively limited in educational terms, that of one of his contemporaries, Paul Otlet (1868-1944), was to prove decisive. The author of the *Traité de documentation*¹¹ was a visionary; also considered as one of the forerunners of the Internet,

he is above all known for his major influence on bibliography, having laid the foundations with Henri La Fontaine, as early as 1895, of the International Bibliography Office.¹² His first major project - the creation of a directory of all published works throughout the world, and their presence in the main libraries - immediately earned him recognition beyond national borders. Otlet wanted to make the knowledge of humanity available to all, to contribute to bringing people together. A tireless mediator, he constantly sought to facilitate access to knowledge. In the field of bibliography, he and La Fontaine developed the Universal Decimal Classification (UDC) and a system of standardised bibliographic records. In 1907, he founded an international library and launched a documentary encyclopaedia the same year, followed three years later by the first international museum. From 1920 onwards, all the institutions created were brought together in a World Palace (Palais mondial), opened on the Cinquantenaire site in Brussels and renamed a few years later Mundaneum. This place, dedicated to the meetings of the international associations, also housed the increasingly important collections assembled by the founders. It was in this context that the World Museum was opened, as both a place of research for academics and a library and educational collection. "It is a museum of ideas and not of things and does not

⁸ P. DEFOSSE, M. PASPESANT, "De l'école modèle de Bruxelles (1875-1879) à l'École moderne de Barcelone (1901-1906)", in *Cahiers Bruxellois - Brusselse Cahiers*, 2015/1, XLVII, pp. 56-73.

⁹ J. DESTREE, "L'Art pour le peuple - Les catalogues des musées", in *Le Peuple*, 273, 30 Sept. 1902, p.1.

¹⁰ E. FOUNDOUKIDIS, "Jules Destrée's international work in the arts", in *Mousseion*, 33-34, 1936, pp.7-16.

¹¹ P. OTLET, *Traité de documentation. Le livre sur le livre*, Brussels, éditions du Mundaneum, 1934.

¹² J. GILLEN (COORD.), *Paul Otlet, fondateur du Mundaneum (1868-1944)*, Belgium, Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2010.

limit itself to representing them solely by means of physical objects, sufficiently small in volume to be installed in the space of the buildings. [This is the function of models, samples, photographs, maps, graphics, diagrams. The latter tend to become a World in miniature, a Cosmoscope enabling us to see and understand man, Society, the Universe"].¹³ Towards the end of the 1920s, the museum occupied about sixty rooms, but due to a lack of resources or support (and probably also of visitors), it was forced to close its doors in 1934. It was this project that Otlet sought to propose to other cities from 1924 onwards, and, in 1928, to the city of Geneva in partnership with Le Corbusier (who presented his plan for a museum with unlimited growth). After having been scattered in several places, part of the collections linked to these different projects is still to be found in Mons.

JEAN CAPART AND THE FIRST EDUCATIONAL SERVICE ON THE CONTINENT

It was almost at the same period that Jean Capart (1877-1947) created in 1922 at the Royal Museums of the Cinquantenaire (later the Royal Museums of Art and History of Belgium) the first education department on the European continent. From the beginning of the century, under the direction of Eugène van Overloop, the museum had already been giving courses and offering a few guided tours to the public; on the other



hand, the organisation of an education department was part of a much more systematic desire to reach all visitors, especially schoolchildren. Jean Capart is best known for his work in Egyptology and the considerable development of the museum of which he became the Director in 1925, but he was also an outstanding museum educator and interpreter. A notorious Americanophile, it was in 1921 that he met the main leaders of the American museum education system, gathered in Paris for the XIth International Congress of Art History.¹⁴ A year later, he created the first education department and took over its management, before recruiting Jacques Lefrancq (1897-1949) as his successor. In 1924, Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert,

¹³ P. OTLET, *Le Centre international*, Office central des associations internationales - Publication n°64, Brussels, n.d., pp. 7-8.

¹⁴ F. MAIRESSE, "L'idée du musée dans la pensée de Jean Capart" in *Annales d'Histoire de l'art et d'Archéologie*, Université Libre de Bruxelles, XVII, 1995, pp. 113-121.

the Director of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, founded an Art Distribution Department. Capart, to whom we owe many articles on the role of museums, sought to develop the two facets of his institution: the scientific museum, with its libraries and research institutes, but also the educational museum. “The “scientific” must determine the “educational”, taking care to avoid confusion of functions. A scientist, prepared for his task by long specialised research, does not necessarily have the qualities of a pedagogue”.¹⁵ Capart’s educational policy was based on the museum’s catalogues and guides, the didactic aspects which he endeavoured to improve. With the *Boston University Prints*, a collection of 4,000 art reproductions for which he had the monopoly for distribution in Europe, he distributed hundreds of thousands of images to schools. For it was above all the school public that Capart sought to attract, hoping (somewhat naively) that children attracted by school visits would naturally lead their offspring to the museum a few years later. Jacques Lefrancq, PhD in art history, and a great pedagogue, was appointed head of the Education Department. He was also the founder of the *Ecole des Marronniers* where the teaching system was centred on intuition aiming to foster sensitivity as much as knowledge. For Lefrancq, the objectives of the education department for which he developed many activities were to complement formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education) to make the collections more accessible to



ordinary people by means of talks and lectures, but above all to develop education. “Education is primarily aimed at children. It aims to enrich not only the mind with notions, but also the soul with intuitions and reflexes that are often unconscious.”¹⁶ The aim is therefore to awaken a sense of beauty and a love of history, by organising drawing classes, storytelling sessions and educational film sessions. The service became so renowned that in 1932 the journal of the German Museum Association devoted a nine-page article to it.¹⁷

MUSEUM EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION AT NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL

Capart did not conceive education solely from a scientific perspective but integrated it into a vision more directly embedded within society. As the author of an important article on the social role of museums published in *Museion*¹⁸, he sought to convince people of their usefulness, to perpet-

¹⁵ J. CAPART, *Le temple des musées*, Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History, 1936 (2nd ed.), p. 114.

¹⁶ J. LEFRANCO, “Le rôle social des musées: un exemple belge”, in *Museion*, 3, Dec.1927, pp. 244-251.

¹⁷ K.H. JACOB-FRIESEN, “Die Königlichen Museen d’Art et d’Histoire des Cinquantenaires zu Brüssel und ihre didaktische Arbeit”, in *Museumskunde*, 4, 1932, pp.134-142.

¹⁸ J. CAPART, “Le rôle social des musées”, in *Museion*, 12, 1930, pp. 219-238.

uate their financing. This logic is not unique to national museums. The folklorist Albert Marinus, who was working on developing a network of local museums in Belgium, mentions three types of specific contribution of these smaller institutions: their accessibility (they are less impressive and the visit is shorter), the “contextual” orientation given to teaching (“in the future, teachers will have to draw more inspiration from the child’s environment for everything that concerns his instruction and education”) and the response they offer to the increase in leisure time and the development of tourism (“the country must be equipped to meet these new demands and among these elements stand the local museums”¹⁹). Among these establishments, the Maison d’Erasmus in Anderlecht, created by Daniel Van Damme in 1930 and directed for a long time after the war by Jean-Pierre Vanden Branden (the man with more than 10,000 guided tours²⁰), is a model of the relationship between the museum and its public. In Belgian Luxembourg, the Virton Museum (later the Gaumais Museum), founded by a schoolteacher, Edmond Fouss²¹, and centred on the exploration of the territory by its inhabitants, presented its first exhibitions on local trades, in French, but also in local dialect. The link forged between Fouss and the local population contributed considerably to the development of the museum and the creation of numerous local branches, a precursor of eco-museums.

While the Cinquantenaire site provides a particularly fertile base for the development of museum education, the movement to open the museum to the public was already widely shared by many players throughout the country on the eve of the Second World War. It would continue to spread over the following decades.

¹⁹ A. MARINUS, *L'utilité des petits musées*, Brussels, Van Campenhout (Bibliothèque d'études régionales), n.d. (1936 ?), pp. 1-5.

²⁰ J.P. VANDEN BRANDEN, “Ma philosophie de l'accueil”, in *Museum International*, 36, 4, 1984, pp. 234-235.

²¹ P.-J. FOULON, “Un créateur de la Gaume, Edmond P. Fouss”, in *Vie des musées*, 1979, pp. 73-76.

From the School Museum Michel Thiery to the World of Kina (*Wereld van Kina*)

Jo Luycx - Consultant, educational collaborator

GHENT. From the birth of the School Museum in 1924 to its change of name to the World of Kina (*De wereld van Kina*) in 2003, two prominent figures, Léo Michel Thiery and Roland Verstraelen, have each left their mark on the evolution of museum education in Flemish museums.

In the middle of the 19th century, Belgium saw the emergence of the *Musées-écoles normales*. These were collections of educational resources within schools for the training of teachers.

Considering the severe lack of teaching materials in education, this trend was extended to primary education. “School museums” were thus set up in various places to function as loan services for the use in the school classrooms.

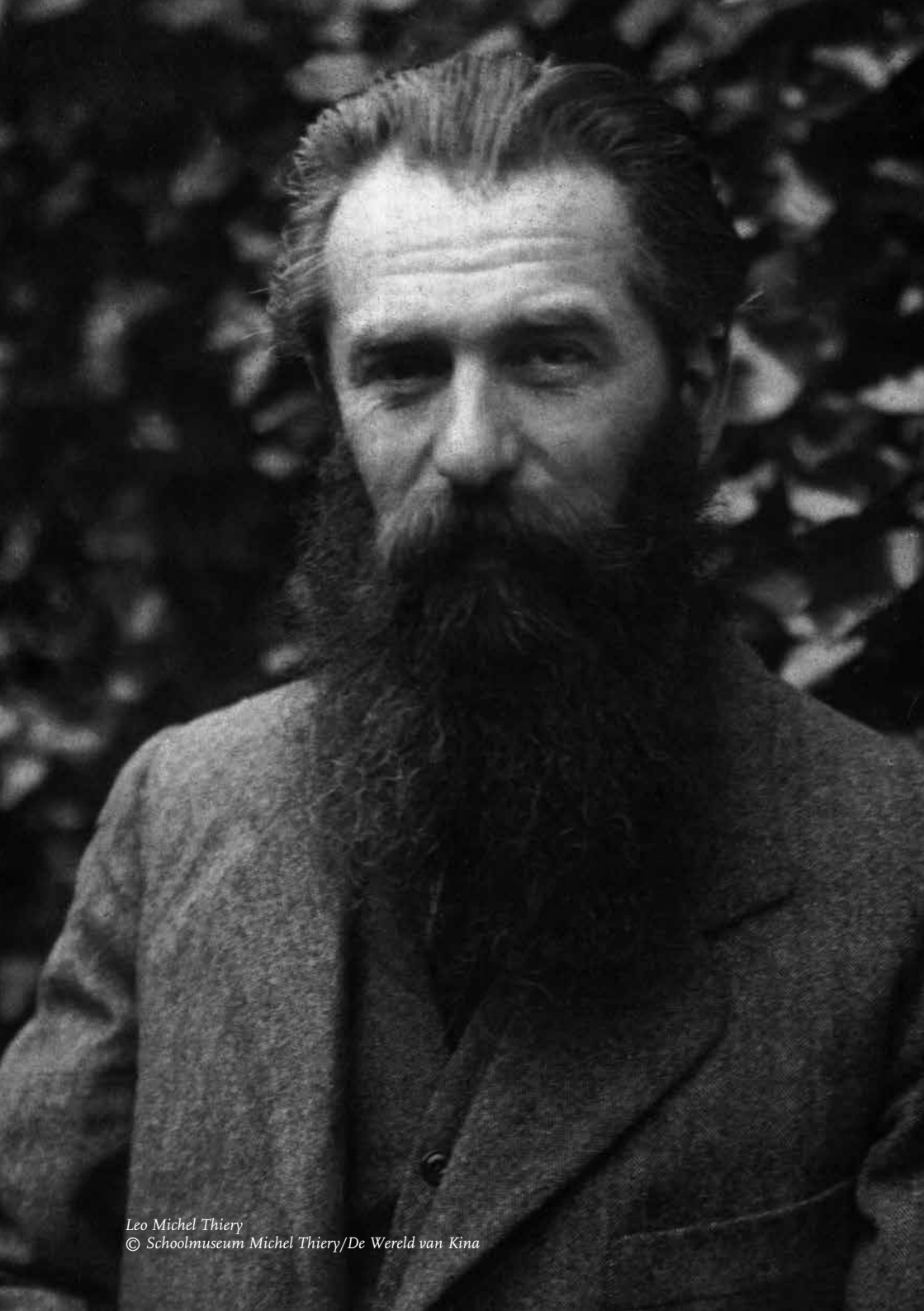
LEO MICHEL THIERY

(1877-1950) was a progressive teacher who turned his own classroom into an educational museum, setting up a small botanical garden in the school playground.

In 1909, the Ghent alderman Cambier asked him to design an educational collection for the municipal education system, calling it *School Museum*.

In 1923, Thiery was given the opportunity to develop this school museum and to become its curator. He then gave his museum a very different vision from the one conveyed by the school museums created in many Belgian and foreign cities. This was his former classroom which had been enlarged. Its adjoining botanical garden was the first of its kind in the former Netherlands.

“I didn’t go to see how school museums were designed elsewhere”, he



Leo Michel Thiery
© Schoolmuseum Michel Thiery/De Wereld van Kina

says. "In all modesty, I had my own idea that I wanted to put into practice".¹

He then gave shape to his ideas, already described in 1914 in his *Encyclopedisch onderwijs* (Encyclopaedic Education).² For him, *encyclopaedic* education should not be concerned with what a child is supposed to become one day, but with what he or she wants to be or is able of being, developing both soul and mind and thus shaping a being as we imagine it in our wildest dreams.

True to his own philosophy of encyclopaedic education, his museum covered all the natural sciences, not hesitating to mix mathematics, language,

and culture. This approach was highly innovative.

After his visit to the museum, the Swiss pedagogue Claparède (1873-1940) from the J.-J. Rousseau Institute said: "Mr Thiery, your museum is unique".³ Alfred Schoep (1881-1966), professor of mineralogy at the University of Ghent, meant that Thiery's geological collection, however small, was better presented than that of the university.

It was not just a school museum. Indeed, his museum was even open on Sundays for the public. Over the years, thanks to his perseverance, the number of adult visitors grew steadily.

¹ L. M. THIERY, *Uit de geschiedenis van het Schoolmuseum*, Ghent, Hoste, 1966.

² L.M. THIERY, *Encyclopedisch onderwijs*, Ghent, A. Hoste, 1914.

³ L. M. THIERY, *Uit de geschiedenis van het Schoolmuseum*, op. cit.



Botanical Garden in the Berouw, Spring 1934
© Schoolmuseum Michel Thiery/De Wereld van Kina



To attract visitors, he began to give lectures in the museum's auditorium, accompanied by slide and film projections, which were modern teaching aids for the time. As a result, a growing number of visitors discovered his museum, and some 150 to 200 people attended his fascinating Sunday morning lectures.

But it was mainly the carefully separated official and free schools that visited the museum. Such was the success that Robert Piette, coming also from the educational world, was appointed assistant curator.

The museum's collections were enriched by Thiery's connections with intellectual and academic circles as well as by his passion as a collector.

When he retired in 1943, he passed the torch on to Piette who then ran the museum during a period that was damaged by the war and saw the gradual deterioration of the buildings and collections. The number of visitors slowly decreased, and the rate of growth slowed down.

When Piette retired in 1960, he handed over to his assistant curator Roland Verstraelen (1925-1983) then faced

with a new challenge. The museum buildings at Berouw 55 needed extensive renovation. It was decided to relocate them to St Peter's Square. Verstraelen described his task as follows: "After 1945, education and didactics made great strides, but the development of museums and modern museology was even more important. The high showcases filled with lots of material, the way the objects are displayed, the encyclopaedic knowledge, the endless succession of series of engravings and photos are hopelessly outdated and oldfashioned. Modernising the museum is no longer an option, it has to be completely rethought and redesigned".⁴

Roland Verstraelen
© Schoolmuseum Michel Thiery/
De Wereld van Kina



⁴ R.C.L. VERSTRAELEN, *Het stedelijk Schoolmuseum Michel Thiery*, Ghent, 1972.

The task facing the 35-year-old teacher Verstraelen was ever so difficult as Thiery had set up high standards.

The School Museum reopened its doors on the other side of Ghent in 1970, after having gone through a selection through the collections, relocations, major renovations and didactic innovations. In the meantime, since 1961 Roland Verstraelen had already published the fortnightly journal *Hamster*, the first and only magazine of its kind in Flanders to popularise plants and animals for young people. He was the chief editor and publisher of the Friends of the M. Thiery School Museum ('Vriendenkring Schoolmuseum M.Thiery').

The *Michel Thiery School Museum* opened at Sint-Pietersplein 14, with

rooms on the earth, the universe, rocks and minerals, palaeontology, and a room on the sea containing mainly shells. Rooms on insects (1974) and on Belgian birds presented in realistic dioramas (1975) then followed.

The new museum no longer had a curator who drew and painted everything alone, but a team of decorators; no longer a curator who gave tours in the form of a 'one-man show', but an educational team.

The high number of visitors clearly showed that the renovated museum had achieved its goal: it reached not only the schools in Ghent, but also people from all over East Flanders and other regions.

Verstraelen was for many years a member of the Flemish Museum As-





Earth and Mineralogy
© Schoolmuseum Michel Thiery/De Wereld van Kina

sociation (*Vlaamse museumvereniging*), where he held various positions, including vice-president (1977-1979) and president (1980-1982). It was during this period that he wrote the following editorial for the magazine *Museumleven* (no. 6, 1979):

“...For many [curators] it is still difficult to accept that, in the museum-object-visitor relationship, it is no longer the object that prevails, but the visitor; that each object carries information, a message, which cannot be the sole privilege of a few insiders. In the meantime, it is obvious that the museum has become a means of information and education par excellence and that it must be integrated into everyone’s education and training: the museum must learn, educate, train!”

Verstraelen was full of new ideas. He made connections with the new medium of television. He succeeded in bringing the museum and nature education into people’s living rooms thanks to his magazine and to his radio and television programmes, like his *Schooltelevisie* (school television). In 1973, his controversial three-part series on sex education for young people on the B.R.T. (Belgian Radio and Television Company) channel are still engraved in a whole generation’s collective memory.

Thanks to the man in the bow tie, the museum won the German Prize for Culture in 1976 and the European Museum Prize in 1980. He had before his untimely death in 1983, planned to reinstall the museum and the original hortus in the Berouw district. Unfortunately, he did not see the reopening.

The museum as we know it today ailed at getting rid of its somewhat old-fashioned name of School Museum. The School Museum Michel Thiery was thus renamed becoming in 2003 the World of Kina (*De wereld van Kina*), with a Home and Garden section. Kina is a contraction of Kind (child) and Natuur (nature) and intends to continue this rich tradition.

Measuring the impact that these two important figures have had on the museum landscape is not easy.

In addition to guided tours and building on the former pedagogical foundations the current educational team offers a wide range of documents and activities: different worksheets, folders, treasure hunts, workshops, holiday activities, online games, guided tours in the rooms via the FARO (the Flemish support institute for cultural heritage) application *Erfgoedapp* (Heritage app), a room specially adapted for the visually impaired, virtual walks in the house and garden rooms and a 3D virtual space in the inner courtyard.

When temporary exhibitions are developed or permanent rooms are redesigned, the educational team is from the very beginning integrated into the design team.

Even the museum’s acquisition policy is largely determined by the expectations and educational projects within the museum.

Kina’s World continues to shape education in the museum world.

For more information on *De wereld van Kina* and its activities, see: <https://dewereldvankina.stad.gent>

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Germaine Faider-Feytmans and Her Educational Work at Mariemont

Daphné Parée

Doctor of History

If there are personalities who have played an influence on the world of Belgian museums, Germaine Faider-Feytmans (1903-1983) is undoubtedly one of them. A doctor in classical philology, she obtained her PhD in 1926 from the University of Ghent, where she had attended Paul Faider's (1886-1940) courses in Latin literature. He married her the same year and was always keen to involve her in his research. When he became curator of the Museum of Mariemont in 1934, it was therefore quite natural for her to support him.¹

The Museum of Mariemont has its origins in the bequest the wealthy industrialist Raoul Warocqué (1870-1917) made to the Belgian state in 1917. Like many private collectors, he was accus-

tomed to showing his works of art to close friends and distinguished guests. However, he went beyond that by organising guided tours of his castle for adult and school groups. He thus gave visitors an important place and his collections an educational purpose following the philanthropic tradition of the educational institutions he had founded in the region. It is therefore hardly surprising that one of the conditions of his bequest was to have the collections of the museum open to the public.

Anxious to bring private heritage into the public domain and to promote popular education, Jules Destrée (1863-1936), then Minister of Sciences and Arts, took all the necessary steps to ensure that the Belgian State would accept this legacy. This was done in 1920. Un-

¹ For a biography of Germaine Faider-Feytmans, the reader is referred to among others the entries by C. JACQUES in É. GUBIN, C. JACQUES, V. PIETTE and J. PUISSANT (eds.), *Dictionnaire des femmes belges*, 2006, Brussels, éd. Racine, pp. 244-245, and by G. DONNAY in the *Nouvelle Biographie nationale*, Brussels, Académie royale de Belgique, 2003, t. 7, pp.136-138. For what follows, we refer the reader to D. PARÉE, *Du rêve du collectionneur aux réalités du musée. L'histoire du musée de Mariemont* (1917-1960), Brussels, éd. de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2017, and in particular to pages 246-260.



Germaine Faider-Feytmans in her office
in Mariemont, circa 1943-1944
© Musée royal de Mariemont

der the direction of Raoul Warocqué's former personal secretary, the Museum of Mariemont then stumbled along on a scientific level for about fifteen years. It was open to the public following the wishes of the will, and crowds of people flocked to it even during the summer months. Visitors wandered through the rooms under the guidance of the guards, unfortunately without any educational aim behind the visits.

Although Paul Faider's main objective was to give the young museum scientific credibility, he also developed an educational approach as soon as he took up his post at Mariemont. Thanks to the reorganisation of the collections and their systematic labelling, he intended

to replace the guards' guided tours by unaccompanied visits. He therefore equipped the rooms with didactic tools such as panels and labels and edited an illustrated short guide (*Guide sommaire illustré*) which was published for the first time in 1935 and then regularly updated and enriched. Armed with this guide and a map of the museum handed out free of charge at the entrance, visitors could now move around the castle as they wanted, stopping wherever they wished and taking the time to contemplate the objects and learn more.

On his arrival at Mariemont in 1934 Paul Faider considered that "schools had very little to learn there". Judging their visits to be ineffective, he drew up recommendations to encourage teachers to prepare their visit and to estab-

lish links with what they were teaching at school. Inspired by the Royal Museums of Art and History, where Jean Capart (1877-1947) had set up an educational service as early as 1922, Paul Faider thought of setting up an educational service at Mariemont but did not obtain the appropriate funds from the State to appoint an assistant to its management.

When he died in 1940, Germaine Faider-Feytmans having always assisted her husband at Mariemont appeared as his natural successor. Inheriting his achievements and benefiting from a better post war economic situation, she continued his research and intended to develop the museum's educational dimension even further. She felt that the Museum of Mariemont had a social role to play and considered that "it not only enriched the knowledge of informed amateurs or the impressions of passing tourists, but also welcomed the hard-working and endearing people of the central coalfield area".²

Taking up Paul Faider's project, she then created in 1946 the education department of Mariemont. To achieve this she turned to the *Cercle des Amis de Mariemont* (Friends of Mariemont) founded in 1934 convincing them to employ an art graduate.³ This financial support remained crucial for many

years because it was not until the end of the 1950s that following the example of the subvention allocated since the end of the 1920s to the Royal Museums of Art and History and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, the Museum of Mariemont received a state subsidy for its educational service.

Germaine Faider-Feytmans was energetic in promoting the activities of the new department. She visited schools in the region, spoke about the collections in her numerous lectures, ran poster campaigns and advertisements in the press and on the radio, maintained contacts with tourist associations such as the Touring Club and the Flemish Tourist Association (*Vlaamse Toeristenbond*), and wrote many articles which, when not focusing on the museum's educational mission, never failed to emphasise its importance and to mention the activities offered to visitors.⁴ In addition to guided tours, the staff members of the education department also provided rich documentation containing information on the collections and practical information. They also published illustrated guides to specific collections accessible to all. The masterpieces of Mariemont were then integrated into the museum's plan together with the publication of more and more views of the park, the castle, and the art objects.

² G. FAIDER-FEYTMANS, "Le Musée de Mariemont. Centre d'étude du passé du Hainaut", in *La Vie wallonne*, 1947, p. 242.

³ F. MAIRESSE, *Mariemont, capitale du don. Des Warocqué aux Amis de Mariemont*, Morlanwelz, Musée royal de Mariemont, 2007, pp. 65-66.

⁴ Among many others: "Le Domaine de Mariemont", in *La Revue française de l'Élite européenne*, 1952, pp. 27-31; "Les musées et la vulgarisation", in *Alumni*, 4, XXI, March 1953, pp. 357-367; "Le château et le musée de Mariemont", in *Hainaut-Tourisme*, April 1959, pp. 18-20; "La profession de Conservateur de Musée", in *Bulletin de la Classe des Beaux-Arts*, Académie royale de Belgique, XLV, 1963 (II-12), p. 225-230. A bibliography of Germaine Faider-Feytmans can be found in P.-M. DUVAL, "Notice sur Germaine Faider-Feytmans", in *Annuaire de l'Académie royale de Belgique*, 1985, pp. 229-301.

Though mainly directed towards schools the museum was nevertheless concerned by all visitors. Germaine Faider-Feytmans was at the origin of a ministerial circular that was distributed in 1946 to the state's teacher training colleges and middle schools. This text reminded that school groups were allowed free admission, specified the terms of the visits, and emphasised that the guides adapt their presentation according to the visitors' age and education. It recommended limiting the size of groups to 25 people, focusing on only one section of the museum at a time. However, to meet the demand, a general tour of the collections would also be developed. The benefits of these measures in the field were rapidly seen and Germaine Faider-Feytmans was pleased with the good cooperation with teachers, some of whom becoming regular visitors.

Based on this observation, she decided in 1952 to adapt this circular to non-school groups and to draw up a set of rules designed to reduce the difficulties the education department encountered during busy months. Aiming to improve the conditions for the visits and to make them ever more enriching, this new regulation intended to fight against the negative consequences linked with the development of mass tourism which the reduction in daily working hours and the development of better travel facilities had favoured resulting in overcrowded rooms which Germaine Faider-Feytmans deeply deplored. During the summer months, groups of disproportionate size flocked in disorder and with no preparation to Mariemont rushing through the castle,

which was only one of the many stops in their day filled with an overloaded programme. She tried to make tour organisers aware of this by advising them in small articles in all sorts of magazines to visit only one section of the museum, to come in small groups, to take their time to admire the works of art in silence.⁵

Germaine Faider-Feytmans was a visionary and aware of her role as a facilitator; she constantly sought to better welcome the visitors and to reach new audiences. Although attendance at the Museum of Mariemont grew steadily until it exceeded 50,000 admissions in 1953, she tried to spread the number of visitors more evenly over the year, to attract groups from provinces other than Hainaut and Brabant and to bring new categories of visitors to the museum. She had for example planned to organise a series of lectures in winter and to open Mariemont twice a week until 8 p.m. to allow workers to be able to attend. Visits for the visually impaired were organised from 1956 onwards, anticipating what would be done at the Royal Museums of Art and History from 1970 onwards.⁶

In 1959 still trying to bring the workers' world closer to the museum, Germaine Faider-Feytmans also launched another original initiative. She invited directors of industrial companies in the area to offer their workers a guided tour of a section related to their professional activity focusing on specific technical aspects. Employees from the Dubois sawmill in Trazegnies visited the regional archaeology section and the ceramics decorators from the Boch Frères faïence factory in La Louvière



*School visit by Mary's Daughters
(Filles de Marie) in 1934
© Musée royal de Mariemont*

came to study and appreciate the Tournai porcelain answering the museum's invitation addressed to small groups from the coal mining industry and factories in the area.

Although the experiment was not as successful as she had expected, as it was difficult for employers to release their workers during working hours or for them to give up part of their salary, Germaine Faider-Feytmans considered the experience to be positive and intended to continue it.⁷ However, the fire that broke out in 1960 completely changed the life of the museum. Until her retirement in 1968, she en-

deavoured to keep the museum open mounting small exhibitions in a makeshift building erected in the park.

Driven by a high ideal of public service and the virtues of knowledge for all Germaine Faider-Feytmans was one of the pioneers in museum education. Despite limited resources she never ceased to multiply initiatives in this field and above all she always questioned herself: "Have I done everything necessary for everyone to understand?"⁸

⁵ For example, G. FAIDER-FEYTMANS, "Le rôle social du musée d'art", in *Rencontres. Cahiers de l'Institut provincial de l'Éducation et des Loisirs*, July-September 1952, pp. 50-52, or "Comment visiter un musée, in *Vie féminine*, February 1958, pp. 14-15.

⁶ F. MAIRESSE, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁷ T. FAIDER-THOMAS, "L'activité du service éducatif au Musée de Mariemont", in *Rencontres. Cahiers de l'Institut provincial de l'Éducation et des Loisirs*, January-March 1968, p. 109.

⁸ G. FAIDER-FEYTMANS, "The social role...", *op. cit.*, p. 52.



Museum Education and Interpretation in the Second Half of the 20th Century¹

Nicole Gesché-Koning
Cultural heritage educator

In the years following those of the personalities mentioned in the previous chapters, the importance of education and interpretations in museums emerged after the creation of ICOM and the Second World War. Throughout the twentieth century, many museums benefited from the existence of an education department, a prerequisite for official recognition within Belgium's two communities, Flemish² and French.³ Those years saw the set-up of new structures, organising the education departments internally, recruiting guides and animators and reflecting on the status of museum educators.⁴ It was an exciting

time of great possibilities, driven by people convinced of their role as mediators at the service of the public and society.

TWO CONFERENCES ON MUSEUM EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION WITHIN A UNITED BELGIUM

The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (MRBAB) organised, from 8 to 10 May 1968, together with the Belgian national committee of ICOM, an important colloquium on the theme *Le*

¹ I wish to thank Claudine Deltour-Lévie, Nathalie Nyst and Stéphanie Masuy for their critical review of this article and Danielle Schaub for her careful revision of the English text.

² The cultural heritage decree (*Cultureelerfgoeddecreet*) dated 27/02/2017 governs the recognition of museums in Flanders - <https://www.vlaanderen.be/cjm/nl/cultuur/cultureel-erfgoed/regelgeving/cultureelerfgoeddecreet> - accessed on 31/07/2021.

³ The *Décret relatif au secteur muséal en Communauté française* (Decree relating to the museum sector in the French Community) dated 25/04/2019 and its implementing decree dated 19/06/2019 governs the recognition of museums in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (see "Recognition procedure": <http://www.patrimoineculturel.cfwb.be> - accessed on 27/07/2021).

⁴ C. DELTOUR-LÉVIE & F. VAN NOTEN, "Musée et communication", in *La Vie des musées*, 3, 1988, pp. 18-22.



Musée et son public/Het Museum en zijn publiek (Museums and their public).⁵ More than fifty years later, the ensuing bilingual publication still deserves interest, as it discusses the role of modern art museums and contains many contributions on the definition of the museum, the notion of its public(s) and its various tasks: conservation and presentation, scientific research, teaching and temporary exhibitions.

Under the aegis of the Commission for Education and Cultural Action in Museums (see below), set up in 1971, and the Belgian national committee of ICOM, the colloquium *Museum en samenleving/Musée et vie sociale* (Museum and social life) took place on 8 and 9 December 1977, with the support of the Ministry of Culture and the *Commissariat Général au Tourisme*.⁶ Luis Monreal, the secretary of ICOM at the time, insisted that museums are in-

⁵ *Le Musée et son public / Het Museum en zijn publiek*, ICOM Belgian National Committee, 1968, 255 p.

⁶ *Commission éducation et action culturelle/Commissie educatie en publiekswerking* (ed.), *Musée et vie sociale / Museum en samenleving*, Brussels, 1977.

stitutions that are part of their society and not marginal ... that the museum must serve society ... that only cultural animation can help the museum to get out of the narrow framework which it traditionally is confined to and to emerge as more than a repository of culture, a scientific reservoir, a data bank ... If the authorities recognise that museums are a means of identifying new cultural needs, then you (the animators) will really have made museums instruments at the service of society.⁷ The colloquium most importantly established among its conclusions the need for creating in the broadest sense of the term educational structures in museums, for reflecting on the museum education staff's status and training as well as for better integrating education departments in the general management of museums.

Following these two symposia, numerous education departments emerged in Belgium, an aspect to which *Vie Musées* (1976) devoted its entire first issue and which I subsequently discussed in *ICOM Education*.⁸ Their history and development were broached on by several articles in the magazines *Vie des musées* and *La Vie des musées*, *Museumleven*, *Museumpeil* and *L'Invasion au musée*. In 1975 Kathleen Lipkens created the Children's Museum (sometimes disparaged for its lack of a real collection) based on the Boston model. Still holding relevance today,

it performed the innovative mission "to give all children the opportunity to learn more about themselves, about others and about the world around them in order to become confident and curious citizens open to others" (<https://www.museedesenfants.be>).

TRIBUTE TO SOME KEY FIGURES IN MUSEUM EDUCATION IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 20th CENTURY

Museum education nowadays while adapting its models to the new post-war society owes much to those working in the footsteps of J. Capart, M. Thiery or G. Faider-Feytmans.

SUZANNE DELEVOY-OTLET (1913-2017): a life dedicated to cultural mediation⁹

In 1945 Jean Capart most appropriately called upon "Madame Delevoiy", as the guides who took her as a model used to call her, to assist Jacques Lefrancq (1896-1949), in charge of museum education at the Royal Museums of Art and History (MRAH). S. Delevoiy's final dissertation at the Ecole Centrale de Service Social, submitted in 1935, focused on 'The educational role of museums' (*Le rôle éducatif es musées*).

⁷ L. MONREAL, "L'animation culturelle dans le cadre des musées", in *Musée et vie sociale*, op. cit. pp. 45-48.

⁸ N. GESCHÉ-KONING, "The avant-garde of European museum education in Belgium", in *ICOM Education* 27, 2017, pp. 71-86.

⁹ S. DELEVOY-OTLET, "Le Service éducatif des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, création et évolution, de 1922 à 1979", in J. SCHOTSMANS (ed.), *Liber Memorialis 1835-1885*. Brussels, Royal Museums of Art and History, 1985, pp. 283-289; C. DELTOUR-LEVIE, "Les services éducatifs des Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire. Une expertise pour demain", in *Bulletin des Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire*, 72, 2001, pp. 265-283.

She then succeeded J. Lefrancq as head of the education department, which had not yet enjoyed official recognition. Indeed, only in 1965, under the direction of Pierre Gilbert (1904-1986), did the education department become a museum entity of its own¹⁰, marked by the hiring of six people (three for the French speaking department and three for the Flemish one). Suzanne Delevoy took over the management of the French-speaking department, Madeleine Divoire expanded the Slide library (*Diathèque*), founded in 1926 by Jean Capart, and Thérèse Destrée-Heymans joined the team to create the Dynamusée. Marleen Van Cauwelearts headed the *Educatieve Dienst* (Dutch-speaking education department), assisted by Mieke Van Raemdonck and Miriam Lambrecht. They later moved from education to conservation, becoming responsible for the Glass, Islamic and Far Eastern collections.

In addition to the management of school visits, S. Delevoy organised Sunday visits for individual visitors, sessions for young people entitled *Clio-jeunesse*, thematic art history lectures for adults (women in history, great discoveries, famous people, etc.) as well as the creation, in 1970, of the Museum for the visually impaired, with annual exhibitions which she

entrusted the organisation of to the museum guides. In 1979, with the International Year of the Child, the education department diversified the guides' work.¹¹ A Belgian tribute to S. Delevoy's long career as initiator of numerous projects and inspirer of numerous vocations appeared in *L'Invitation au musée* and internationally in *ICOM Education*¹².

ALAIN QUINTART (*1932) and the popularisation of science between science and nature

Museum education also contributed to a crucial development at the Museum of Natural Sciences of Belgium in 1934 with the creation of its education department. Alain Quintart, this "rare bird", the "scientific godfather of the marsupilami" (he gave it a learned name: *Marsupilami franquini* QUINTART, 1989), as described by a journalist from *Le Soir* in 2005, holds a PhD in Zoology from the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) and founded the forest house of Bon-Secours, from which he originates.¹³ Secretary of the ICOM Belgian committee from 1974 to 1977, an active member of CECA International and of the Commission for Education and Cultural Action of the French-speaking Association of Museums in Belgium, he is known for his

¹⁰ P. GILBERT, "Le musée et l'art d'enseigner/The Museum and the art of teaching", in *Museum*, XX, 4 (Musées de Belgique/Museums of Belgium), 1967, pp. 291-299.

¹¹ C. DELTOUR-LEVIE & N. KONING, "Le Service éducatif des Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, un travail d'équipe", in *La vie des musées*, I, 1986, pp. 49-53 & C. DELTOUR-LEVIE, "Les services éducatifs des Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire. Une expertise pour demain", in *Bulletin des Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire*, 72, 2001, pp. 265-283.

¹² L. COMHAIRE & N. GESCHÉ-KONING, "In memoriam Suzanne Delevoy-Otlet (25 December 1913 - 7 May 2017)" in *L'Invitation au musée*, n° 29, 2, 2018, pp. 58-59 & *ICOM Education*, 27, 2017, pp. 215-219.

¹³ A. QUINTART, S. JACQUEMART & T. ORELLANA, "Nouveaux musées. La maison de la forêt de Bon-Secours, un éco-musée?", in *La Vie des musées*, 1979, pp. 4-12.

work in popularising science and his commitment as president of the association *Les Naturalistes Belges*. At the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, A. Quintart was entrusted with the coordination of all museological activities, including educational activities, as well as the responsibility of the museography workshop¹⁴.

IGNACE VANDEVIVERE (1938 - 2004): multiculturalism and the art of dialogue¹⁵

Ignace Vandevivere spent his childhood in Africa and, upon returning to Belgium, in Flanders, in Brussels and finally in Louvain. After studying art history at the Université catholique de Louvain (UCL), he was appointed lecturer and then professor at the UCL. Founder and director of the Museum of Louvain-la-Neuve from 1979 to 2004, he based his entire “museum utopia on dialogue, a utopia marked by the public nature of the institution: public, therefore open to all, to ideas, to dialogue, a system open to society”. Its educational value lay in the dialogue between the object, the museum and the public, each learning from the other. Crucial to him, direct observation should lead to critical analysis, the study of sources but also technique, all essential skills for understanding a work of art. I re-

member a session when he observed a statue in the museum in 1979: what a forceful opening, what a fine method of analysis and what inspiring questions and lessons; the experience marked my entire career as a teacher and museum educator. Thank you, Ignace!

THÉRÈSE DESTRÉE-HEYMANS and the Dynamusée (°1938)

The role of raising public awareness and involving young people in the discovery of the museum owes much to Thérèse Destrée-Heymans and her vision of the purpose behind the discovery of a museum.

The whole approach of Dynamusée, the creative workshop she developed, deserved the praise of Guy Donnay, the chief curator of the Royal Museum of Mariemont at the time, for its pioneering role, capturing in the spaces dedicated to the past a new dynamic of action and reflection, with creative expression remaining the closest means of grasping the very reality of the art work.¹⁶

Let's pay tribute to Thérèse Destrée-Heymans by taking up the main ideas of the Dynamusée workshop.

“The aim was to enable young and old alike to exercise their freedom of vision

¹⁴ A. QUINTART, “Rénovation de l’Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique : d’une salle d’exposition à un Muséum”, in *Les Naturalistes belges*, 67, 2, 1986, pp. 33-64 & “Muséum de l’Institut royal des Sciences naturelles de Belgique. Méthodes de travail et résultats”, in *La Vie des Musées*, 1, 1986, pp. 19-22 - [https://doc.ocim.fr/LO/LOo19/LO19\(3\)-PDF](https://doc.ocim.fr/LO/LOo19/LO19(3)-PDF) - accessed on 22/07/2021.

¹⁵ F. MAIRESSE, “In Memoriam Ignace Vandevivere”, in *La Vie des Musées*, 18, 2004, pp. 94-96 & *Ignace Vandevivere : conversation with François Mairesse and Bernard Van Den Driessche*, Éditions Tandem, 2008, 78 p.

¹⁶ I would like to thank D. Delooz for sending me this document, which is stored in the archives of the education department. Nowadays the name Dynamusée has been taken over by the BAM, the Fine Arts Museum in Mons.

by teaching them to see further, using a variety of approaches to make the museum's collections attractive to individual visitors. Such education of the eye aimed to develop sensitivity to the world, imagination, creativity, critical thinking and to understand the fluidity and mobility of creative thought. Thus the witnesses of the past became the springboard for the future. Such education was not passive; the imagination supported by the museum therefore served as a support for current creativity.... The workshop aimed to teach how to see by means of a sensory and playful rather than cognitive approach, breaking away from passivity and indifference. The course of an animation workshop included: a mental conditioning by looking at the image, by engaging in gestural and verbal games, by narrating a tale; an observation time in the museum rooms; and finally *a creative expression* in the workshop. Dynamusée primarily aimed to teach how to see and become familiar with the museum, and its long-term objective consisted in shaping a museum visitor who could establish a dialogue with a museum object. The museum's collections always served as the starting point, the creative expression being its thread".¹⁷

A STATUS FOR GUIDES/EDUCATORS: BACK TO SQUARE ONE?

Although all gradually equipped with an education department, museums

failed to grant their educators with appropriate salary recognition. In 1983 the educators working at the Royal Museums of Art and History (MRAH) and the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (MRBAB) finally acquired an official status thanks to the hard work of Claudine Deltour-Levie, Thérèse Marlier and Brigitte de Patoul.¹⁸ No longer temporary workers, the guides at last enjoyed some security with their work being acknowledged: the museum paid not only for their guided tours, but also for their preparation, research, and publication work.

Unfortunately, today we are witnessing a return to square one: at the Royal Museums for Art and History (MRAH), as in many other institutions, the guides work again as freelance contractors and deserve payment only for the guided tours on a fee-for-service basis, decided by a museum manager rather than by the few people still in charge of the education department. The team spirit, the solidarity, the quality of the pedagogical creativity that prevailed for nearly a hundred years - the MRAH's education department will celebrate its hundredth anniversary in 2022 - have been replaced by consumerism and profitability. A regrettable regression so far from the wishes of its founder J. Capart!

Ever since then, guides have relied on the artist status set up by Smart¹⁹, a company created in 1998 to support self-employed workers in developing their activities by giving them the status of employee-entrepreneur; despite

¹⁷ DYNAMUSEE - *Expression and creativity workshop in connection with the museum collections*, typed document

¹⁸ C. DELTOUR-LEVIE & F. VAN NOTEN, "Musée et communication", in *La Vie des musées*, 3, 1988, pp. 18-22.

¹⁹ <https://smartbe.be/fr/a-propos/> - accessed on 31/07/2021.

much criticism, their input emits a ray of hope for guides, who must reconcile social protection with a real entrepreneurial dynamic.

THE COMMISSION FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURAL ACTION OF THE BELGIAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

Set up in December 1971 within the Association of Belgian Museums²⁰, this committee aims to “develop methods of action that will enable museums to fulfil their educational and cultural role in the service of humanity more effectively”.²¹

Responsible for the educational aspect of museums, the bilingual commission also split in 1979.²²

*The early years*²² saw interesting national meetings on the ‘Training of Museum Educators’ (*Formation des éducateurs de musée*, 1974), *Museum as an influence on the quality of life* (1975) and

‘Receptioning the Individual Visitor’, 1976 (*L’accueil du visiteur individuel*).

Active members of museums in Brussels and Wallonia of the Frenchspeaking Commission organised many activities²⁴ and publications²⁵ supported until 1995 by the Ministry of Culture of the Belgian French Community; these are listed in several issues of *La Vie des musées*. Many ideas developed by the members of this Commission gave rise to the creation of the Council of Brussels Museums (*Conseil bruxellois des musées/Brusselse Museumraad*), now Brussels Museums and Museums and Society in Wallonia (*Musées et Société en Wallonie - MSW*), which took over from it (see the following chapters).

Let’s pay tribute to the members who have supported this association for over twenty years: Marie-Cécile Bruwier, Fernand Collin, Claudine Deltour-Lévie, Brigitte de Patoul, Nadine Dubois, Catherine Fache, Nicole Gesché, Marie-Paule Leblanc-Magnée, Jean-Pierre Lensen, Thérèse Marli-

²⁰ This national association created in 1963 was split in 1979 following the State reform in two linguistic groups: the *Association francophone des Musées de Belgique* (AFMB), the French speaking association of museums and the *Vlaamse Museumvereniging* (VMV), the Flemish speaking one. Both forming nowadays ICOM Belgium have changed their names in ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles and ICOM Belgium Flanders.

²¹ Resolution n°1 of the ICOM General Assembly held in Grenoble during the Xth General Conference: https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICOMs-Resolutions_1971_Fr.pdf - accessed on 31/07/2021.

²² R. DE ROO chaired the Commission from 1971 to 1976, followed by Thérèse Destrée-Heymans from 1977 to 1979. For the activities of the Dutch-speaking part of the Commission from 1979 onwards, see the article by Isabel Lowyck in the next chapter..

²³ See R. DE ROO, “Vijf jaar Educatieve Commissie”, in *Museumleven*, 4, Bruges, 1977, pp. 67-68.

²⁴ C. DELTOUR-LEVIE, “Musée et Action culturelle” & “Rapport de la Commission Éducation et Action culturelle dans les musées 1987”, in *La Vie des musées*, 2, 1987, p. 25-28 & p. 29-30; see also by the same author, “Les Rapports de la commission” in *La Vie des musées*, 3, 1988, p. 23; 4, 1989, p. 21; 5-6, 1990-1991, p.22 7, 1992, p. 15 and F. COLLIN, “La Commission Éducation et Action culturelle”, in *La Vie des musées*, 7, 1992, p. 13-14.

²⁵ See *La Vie des musées*, 5-6, 1990-1991, p. 38.

er, Alain Quintart, Bernard Van den driessche, the real linchpins of the *Association francophone des Musées de Belgique*, supported in their actions by the directors of their respective museums - René De Roo, Eliane Dewilde (1938-2011), Guy Donnay, Ignace Vandevivere (1938 - 2004), some of whom will take over from them.

The Commission participated annually in the 'Festival for Children and Youth' (*Festival pour l'Enfance et la Jeunesse*), and in 1989, in collaboration with the Family League (*Ligue des Familles*) and Le Ligueur, launched the programme 'Museums and Families' (*Musées en famille*) under a common label (logo, propaganda, folder), which was repeated in 1990 and 1991. The Commission then supported the campaigns launched by the King Baudouin Foundation with the support of the National Lottery: 'Museums Revived by Young People' (*Les musées prennent un coup de jeunes*, 1992) and 'Young People Revived by Museums' (*Les jeunes prennent un coup de musée*, 1993).

In 1997, the Commission organised together with the commission of museum education of the Flemish association of museums (*Commissie Educatieve Werking van de Vlaamse Museumvereniging*), the symposium 'Richness and diversity of education departments in Belgian museums' (*Richesses et diversités des services éducatifs des musées de Belgique/Rijkdom en diversiteit van de educatieve diensten van de musea in België*). This symposium which took place at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences brought once again together the two commissions of the country.

Ever since then, both commissions have ceased their activities, several of its leaders having turned to the creation and development of the associations supported by ICOM Belgium and already mentioned above, namely the Brussels Council of Museums (1995), Museums and Society in Wallonia (1998), FARO and AmuseeVous whose philosophies and activities are developed in the following chapters.

WHAT FUTURE FOR EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS IN THE 21st CENTURY?

The following chapters will convince the reader that the educational role of museums developed throughout the last century has a bright future. Apparently boosted by the health crisis, numerous new initiatives have been launched, both individually and within ICOM Belgium Wallonia-Brussels and ICOM Belgium Flanders, as well as within Museums and Society in Wallonia and Brussels Museums.

TESTIMONIES OF SOME MEMBERS:

“ The Commission for Education and Cultural Action in Museums is the first museum network I encountered when in the 1990s I was a young manager of the Museum of Prehistory in Wallonia. It gave me the opportunity to open up to other museum themes, to meet other people involved in inspiring cultural actions and to start thinking about my own museum education practices.

When I had the pleasure of chairing it for a few years, the Commission taught me the importance of networking, sharing experiences and training to overcome the “spirit of competition” that still animated the sector at the time. Undoubtedly thanks to those years, did I find the motivation, the desire, and the energy to join Bernard Van den driessche with Bernadette Bonnier to found “Museums and Society in Wallonia.

(Fernand Collin)

“ Of my long career at the Royal Museums of Art and History, I spent the most striking years (which influenced all my actions as head of department thereafter) chairing the Education and Culture Department of this great museum. The opening up to the public initiated by Mrs Delevoy in the footsteps of Jean Capart was already well established and it was almost natural to develop it by taking the changes in society into account. The freedom of action that I had at the time turned me towards the outside world: contacts with schools, with cultural associations, but also with colleagues in other museums, first within the French-speaking Association of Museums and then within the Commission for Education and Cultural Action. Then we discovered a team which, beyond the types of collections or the size of the institution, began to propose common actions playing on the differences and on the specific aspects in each. This group of friends created a real synergy between the museums in Brussels and Wallonia. I enjoyed presiding over such slightly crazy dreams. A few years later, in 1995, still convinced of the contribution that real synergy between institutions can make, I took part in the founding team of the Council of Brussels Museums, meeting up again with Alain Quintart! All these years have influenced all my actions as head of department and director of the museum thereafter.

(Claudine Deltour-Lévie)

“ When, at the beginning of the 1980s, I agreed to join the French-speaking board of the Commission for Education and Cultural Action of Museums following the vacancy of the chair, I belonged to the very young Museum of Louvain-la-Neuve, which at that time, due to a lack of staff, did not have a structured education department. I agreed on the only condition that I would not take on the leadership alone. Together with Claudine Deltour (MRAH), Catherine Fache (MRBA) and Nadine Maquet (Musée de la vie wallonne), we formed a team rich in the diversity of experiences and visions able to set up the achievements and actions mentioned above and below over several years. Interdisciplinarity functioned as the driving force behind our dynamic, based on the concept often repeated by I. Vandevivere: “An education department is not one department among others in a museum, it is the whole museum at the service of education”. Educare: conduct outside of ... outside of oneself, outside of categories, outside of conventions. ”

(Bernard Van den driessche)

(R)evolution of Museum Education and Interpretation in Flemish Museums Review of the Years 1973 to 2003

Isabel Lowyck

Business Manager Guide-ID Belgium & France

Lecturer at the University of Antwerp

What a warm feeling I had re-searching the archives of the Association of Flemish Museums (*Vlaamse Museumvereniging* - VMV)¹ and meeting with several key people in the Commission for education and cultural action in museums². It is most gratifying to discover how relevant and avant-garde the work of museum educators was more than forty years ago. Obviously, museum educators at that time believed in the motto “unity is strength”; they were aware that one does not invent hot water alone, but that it is the result of a slow process. Projects that were innovative twenty years ago still have repercussions today. The field of heritage has certainly evolved rapidly and dynamically. The public has also become more central. We are on the right track, with many challenges for the future...

I was impressed by the relevance and vision of R. De Roo's article, the founder and first chairman of the commission for education and cultural action³: “The museum educator has an important mission to fulfil in the contemporary museum world and he will conquer that place”.⁴

Education staff in museums have clearly fought for their place. Indeed, at the time - as in some cases still today - there were notorious tensions between scientific and educational staff. To quote R. De Roo: “Some well-meaning colleagues sometimes feel that education activities are intended to popularize museums in ways that dangerously compromise their scientific character. The educator, on the other hand, wants to make the scientific side of the museum accessible to ‘all’ visitors, whom he wishes to involve in this

¹ The archives of the Flemish association of museums are kept with the Royal Archives (*Rijksarchieven*) in Beveren.

² See also preceding paper.

³ R. DE ROO, ‘Vijf jaar Educatieve Commissie’, in *Museumleven*, 4, Bruges, 1977, p. 67-68.

⁴ R. DE ROO, ‘VijfjaarEducatieve Commissie’, in *Museumleven*, 4, Bruges, 1977, pp. 67.

way within the limits of his means and in an enjoyable way. This is certainly not an easy task, but one worthy of total dedication".⁵

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF MUSEUMS

From the 1970s onwards, museums gradually became aware of their educational role. This was the beginning of new times in their history and these years may be regarded as having played a turning point. As the public gained more importance, the aim was not only to introduce the public to the objects in the museum, but also to make the collections accessible to a wider range of visitors. In the 1970s, few museums had such a well-developed education department as the large institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp, the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels and a few others, where education was one of their many tasks and was integrated into their mission.

Fifteen years later, in the mid-1980s, the same issues as at the beginning were still being discussed: the staff's status, the different types of guided tours, workshops for young people, etc. The Flemish Commission for education and cultural action also looked at cooperation between Belgium and the Netherlands. In 1995, a five-day seminar was organized on the presentation of museums. At that time, there was no professional training or-

ganized internally. The topics covered were audience research, presentation, evaluation, exhibition design and techniques, etc. The seminar led to the publication of a printed syllabus.

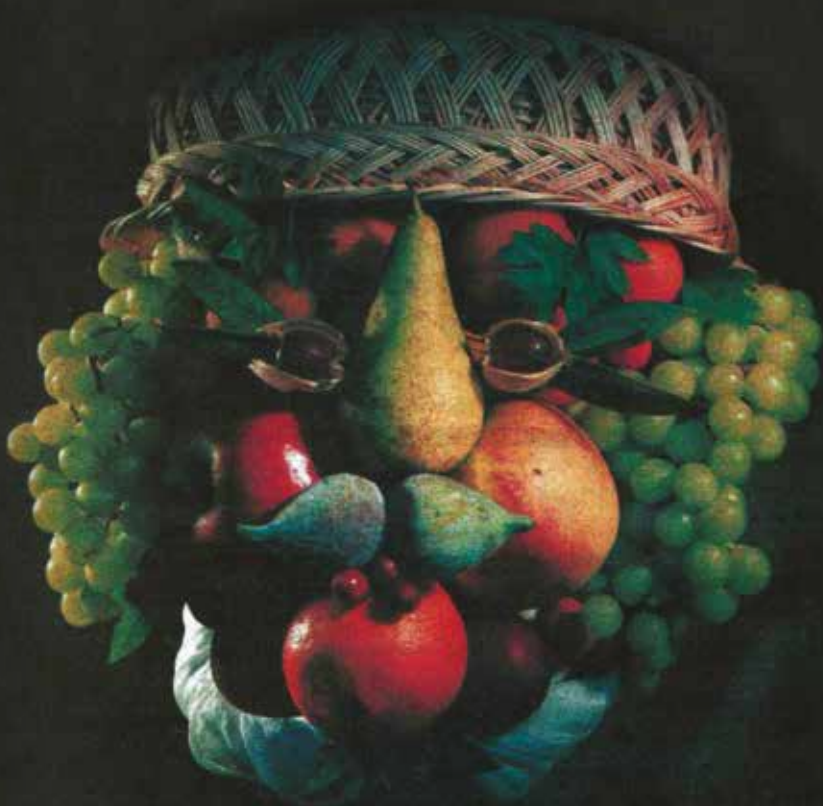
Museum education departments were developed mainly between 1980 and 1990. The challenge that the Education Commission set itself was still valid: "How can we transform the temples of art into institutions where everyone feels at home, where the public takes ownership of the collections and becomes a regular visitor?"⁶ Referring to an article on 15 years' work within the commission, for Mieke Van Raemdonck and Bernadette De Loose, "the Commission for education and cultural action in Flemish Museums should try to better define the purpose of museum education, and thus the education staff's tasks; their role within the museum structures would thus become clearer. In addition, the commission should try to make the public's voice better considered in the general policy of museums".⁷

Bernadette De Loose, former head of Education at the Design Museum in Ghent was involved in the early years as secretary of the education commission: "Our dreams in the late eighties - when global public activities were absolutely not a priority - became a reality in 1996, with the long-awaited Museum Decree. In the meantime, we continued with great enthusiasm and imagination. Involving the public was a learning process for me. I would like to forward the following

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Mieke VAN RAEMDONCK en Bernadette DE LOOSE, 'Inleiding: de educatieve commissie', in: *Vlaamse Museumvereniging*, 1986, p. 11.



cultuur is gezond
laat je verwonderen!



A visit at the Royal Art and History Museums
© I. Lowyck

message: “Research, learn, test, compare, experience, set priorities. Know that methods and content evolve. Beware of fashionable trends. Always continue to strive for quality instead of quantity!”

THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION FOR EDUCATION AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN MUSEUMS

In the 1990s, the work of the Commission was extended to new topics such as teaching and curricula, training of guides, new media, etc. These topics are still relevant today. In addition, regular work visits were organized to Wallonia and the Netherlands. Each study day was accompanied by a ‘market of ideas’ session, open to all participants who wished to share an idea or their experience, even discuss with the group or make an announcement.

Peter Van der Plaetsen education officer at the Archeocenter Velzeke testifies: “For me, being a member of the Flemish Museum Association (VMV) was the first step towards broadening my horizons. The contact with other museum workers gave me a breath of fresh air. I remember, for example, that we were one of the first to plan an interactive exhibition at PAM-Velzeke. Our experiences were widely shared with other colleagues in the sector. I also had the opportunity to participate at international level by

hosting, for example, the partners of the CECA project All roads lead to Rome and by attending the final event in Rome. I consider the 1980s and 1990s to have been a turning time for museums. Staff members had to step down from their ivory towers and think more in terms of the public. Whereas at that time the object was put on a pedestal, in the nineties and beyond, it is the story that surrounds them that becomes paramount”.

Hugo Vanden Dries, former head of the education department at the Museum of Natural Sciences in Brussels and chair of the education commission in the late 1990s and early 2000s, holds fond memories of this time. “I believe that taking time to visit other museums, learn about new practices, ... is always enriching. I still remember the working visit to the Zaans Museum of Zaandam⁸. They told me about Kolb’s learning theory and how it can be used for museum visits and museum education. I have also applied this know-how myself in our museum. We have always encouraged these working visits in both Wallonia and Flanders. The late 1990s and early 2000s were pioneering years for educational services, there was a belief and energy that we also shared with members of the education committee. When I started at the museum in the 1980s to 1985 the museum counted about thirty guided visits a year. In the early 2000s, on busy days, we counted nearly 30 groups a day!

⁸ This working visit was part of the course on Kolb’s learning styles conducted by the Dutch Museum Association (2003-2005) in cooperation with the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam, the Museum of Communication in The Hague, the Zaans Museum in Zaandam, and Zcala in The Hague. See: Els HOOGSTRAAT & Annemarie VELS HEIJN, *Kolb’s learning theory in the museum: dreamer, thinker, decision maker, doer*, Amsterdam, Museumvereniging, 2006.

I have also seen the Museum Association evolve from an amateur group working in the field, meeting after hours, to a professional organization. It was also at that time (early 2000s) that the education commission became a professional group of colleagues and changed its name in *Publiekswerking* or dealing with the public. In the first year the group worked in collaboration with CultuurNet Vlaanderen (the current publiq), and from 2004 with Cultural Biography Flanders (*Cultureel Biografie Vlaanderen*).⁹ I still remember the meeting day 55+, which took place in our museum in 2003. We were inspired by adult learning and the profile of a contemporary 55+. There were also workshops offered around accessibility, communication and the offerings for seniors”.

A final project in which the Flemish Museum Association was involved at the level of the education and interpretation department was the one concerning the work of guides, carried out in collaboration with the Department of Fine Arts and Museums of the Ministry of the Flemish Community and the King Baudouin Foundation. A workshop was organized at the MUHKA (Museum of Contemporary Art in Antwerp)¹⁰ on 4 December 2000 by the committee for museum visitors (*collegagroep publiekswerking*) of the Flemish Museum Association. The MUHKA has always played a pi-

oneering role in the field of welcoming the public. It is therefore no mere coincidence that this museum has taken the initiative for this activity. Getting answers to all the questions museum educators ask themselves about the relationship between museums, collections, and the public (the “museum makers”, “educators” and guides), museum educators became more and more inclined to rethink their objectives and working methods. There is a growing awareness that the above-mentioned relationships presuppose an interaction in which everyone has a role. The publication *Volgt de gids? Nieuwe perspectieven voor educatie en gidsing in musea* (Does the guide follow? New perspectives for education and guided tours in art museums) which resulted from the workshop brings together various critical reflections on the challenges facing museum educators. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill the leading figure of museum education and interpretation also contributed an article entitled “Museum as Teacher”.¹¹

My research in the archives brought me to go through the various reports of the activities of the VMV’s public services group until 2007. In 2010, the Flemish Museum Association was replaced by ICOM Belgium Flanders, taking over working visits, study days, training courses, etc.¹² We should also mention FARO, the Flemish interface

⁹ *Culturele Biografie Vlaanderen* has been taken over by FARO the Flemish structure supporting cultural heritage.

¹⁰ The MUHKA played a leading role from the 1990s onwards with Geertrui Pas and Greet Stappaerts (see N. Gesché-Koning’s last article) and from the 2000s onwards with Peggy SAEY & Marijke VAN EECKHAUT, to whom we owe the interesting publication *Publieksbegeleiding in de praktijk*, CultuurNet Vlaanderen, Brussels, 2003.

¹¹ Patrick DE RYNCK, IVO ADRIAENSSENS et al., *Volgt de gids? Nieuwe perspectieven voor educatie en gidsing in musea*, Brussels, King Baudouin Foundation, 2001, p. 7.





for the support of the cultural heritage sector, which also proposes working groups according to the needs of the field and national and international trends, such as digital participation, volunteering, ...¹³

TOWARDS NEW AUDIENCES

In addition to its role in the education Commission, the Flemish Museum Association (*Vlaamse Museumvereniging*, VMV) has also focused on raising awareness among small and large museums in search of new audiences. Various museum projects were therefore developed. At the beginning of this century, the government approved various calls for subventions to raise museum public awareness, museums still too often considered as dusty places. The year 2000 was the first year in which the VMV coordinated the “Museum Campaign” under the motto “Culture is healthy, enjoy museums”. The aim was to attract more people to museums and to make museum visits becoming a more important part of people’s leisure time. To illustrate the campaign, more than 50,000 apples were distributed in railway and underground stations. The newspaper *De Standaard* devoted a whole section to the campaign, which was given a large budget and attracted more than 86,000 visitors. 160 museums

opened their doors: it was a great success. A year later, the ICOM Museum Day was transformed by combining the Heritage Weekend¹⁴ into a Museum Day and an Archive Day. At the time, this was in line with the policy of Flemish Minister of Culture Bert Anciaux. In Ghent and Antwerp, the first steps towards a more integrated vision of cultural heritage were taken through heritage conventions (*erfgoedconvenanten*). The communication agency Duval-Guillaume was appointed to develop a new campaign. Its slogan was: “Cultural heritage, the DNA of our society” showing the image of a new-born baby being considered having no past. But on the contrary, a baby is from his/her birth marked by its social origin, i.e., the DNA of our society. Today, the Tangible and Intangible Heritage Day in Flanders is coordinated by FARO.

From 2000 to 2002, every Thursday evening, several museums in Flanders and Brussels opened their doors later than usual for the Thursday Museum Evenings. This was an excellent opportunity for small museums to welcome new visitors. It was also a unique opportunity to visit the museum outside the usual opening hours and at democratic prices (2 or 1 euro). Children were not forgotten. During the summer, night tours of the coast were organized in cooperation with

¹³ ICOM Belgium Flanders is the official representative of Flemish museums in Belgium and abroad. It stimulates national and international collaborations to enrich the Flemish Museum expertise. It facilitates interactions and exchanges between various actors in the Flemish Museum sector by creating platforms such as working visits, study days, Museum Policy Talks: <https://www.icom-belgium-flanders.be/>

¹³ For more information see www.faro.be and following article by S. Masuy et H. Van Genechten.

¹⁴ Editor’s note: In Flanders, a Heritage Day (*Open Monumentendag*) is organised on the second Sunday of September as part of the European Heritage Days. The Day of Tangible and Intangible Heritage (*Erfgoeddag*) is held in April.

ONTVLAM BAAR



**museumgids
voor/door
jongeren
2002/03**

the organization Westtoer. The participating museums received a specially prepared information pack and were invited to attend regional information sessions.

In 2004, the first *Krokuskriebels* (spring thrill or crocus festival) was organized, an initiative of the Family League (*Gezinsbond*) and the VMV: during a whole week the museums focused their activities on children and families. Thanks to the collaboration with the Family League, fees were kept affordable. Tom Schamp designed the logo and 47 museums participated in the event. Children had become a target group in the leisure sector.

Previously, in 2001, Youth Museum Days (*Jongeren Museum Dagen*) were organized for the first time. 12 muse-

*Museum guide Ontvlambaar
(Inflammable) – JongerenMuseumDagen
(Young Museum Days)*

ums were remixed by 14–16-year-olds and a tailor-made Museum Day/Week organized for this target group. One can already speak here of co-creation. Each museum, which also benefited from coaching sessions, was assigned a group of young people with whom to set up its program and communicate. Again, the sharing of each other's experiences and expertise was here essential. Museums were encouraged to include a target group that they were not familiar with (at least a group they were not used to host during the youth's leisure time). A range of activities was organized, from workshops and horror tours to parties and guided tours. The motto was *for and by the*



AmuseeVous evening, Ghent
©Annelies Tyberghein

youth. The following year, the number of museums doubled. The slogan was “Become a curator of the future”. A weekend was organized in Sint-Katelijne-Waver with all the young people involved. Workshops were scheduled and the young people could sit around

a campfire with the philosopher Ludo Abicht to discuss art and life.

For the young participant Annelies Tyberghein, “the Museum Days for Young People (*Jongeren Museum Dagen*) were the beginning of everything. I got to know the backstage of museums and I could realize projects in an innovative way. We were allowed to select objects from the SMAK (Contemporary Art Museum in Ghent) and then hang them in the Huis van Alijn allowing the works of both institutions to dialogue. This was a unique experience. When you get to know the ins and outs of a museum, your world expands. I’m still impressed by what was totally innovative even 20 years ago”.

The last edition of the Museum Days for Young People was entitled “In-

flammable". A guide to 86 museums in Flanders and Brussels was designed by 12 young people. Based on their visit and their vision of the museums, its aim guide was to awaken the young people's interest for museums. At the same time, 400 other young people were asked how in their mind one could make a museum more attractive.

AmuseeVous

When in 2004 the Flemish Museum Association (VMV) stopped hiring employees, I decided to put all the ideas I had gathered in the meetings of the commission in a new non-profit organization AmuseeVous¹⁵, a meeting place for young people and museums. Our first project was the "bracelets" project in collaboration with the Rock Werchter festival and its organizer Herman Schueremans. What a marvelous opportunity! We created a museum on the festival ground and on presentation of their bracelet gave all festival-goers free admission throughout the summer to the museums of the region. We were supported by famous sponsors like musicians Luc De Vos, Thé Lau, Mauro, An Pierlé, ... At the third and last edition, we even exhibited real works of art by Ted van Lieshout and Kendell Geers. The youngsters' amazed looks when they visited the stand are unforgettable memories!

The AmuseeVous organization devoted to young people began then to organize nightly museum events and parties. I was always amazed by their creativity. For AmuseeVous, it was also essential to involve the museum staff in the event. I oversaw the general coordination ensuring exchange and trust. Giving the youth confidence was crucial! In order not to depend financially on the budget of the museums we always tried to finance these activities ourselves. Exchanges and cooperation with Flemish and Dutch youth led to debates in Amsterdam (for example with the cultural association *De Brakke Grond*) and to Olga Van Oost's *Mind the Gap* research published in 2009¹⁶.

One should also mention the "1 euro" museum entrance fee for young people initiated by Minister of Culture Bert Anciaux. If the financial aspect is one barrier to overcome to reach young people, it is certainly not the only one. Our goal at the time was really to reach young people in the most vulnerable target groups. This is still our challenge nowadays¹⁷.

All the above-mentioned examples prove that museum education in Flanders, as in Brussels and Wallonia, has a bright future¹⁸.

¹⁵ <https://www.amuseevous.be> - accessed on 31/07/2021.

¹⁶ Olga VAN OOST, *Mind the gap, The sequel, een onderzoek naar het vrijetijdsaanbod voor jongeren in Vlaamse en Nederlandse musea*, AmuseeVous, 2009.

¹⁷ H. VAN GENECHTEN & O. VAN OOST, «Museum Wanted! Jongeren zijn vragende partij», in: *faro / tijdschrift voor cultureel erfgoed*, jg. 14, nr. 1 (2021), pp. 28-33.

¹⁸ See following article by S. MASUY AND H. VAN GENECHTEN. «Museum Education and Interpretation in the 21st C.»

Museum Education and Interpretation in Belgium in the 21st Century Trends and Challenges

Stéphanie Masuy - Head of Education (*Ixelles Museum*)
and French-speaking ICOM CECA National Correspondent

Hildegarde Van Genechten - Advisor Education
(*FARO, the Flemish interface for cultural heritage*)

PREAMBLE

Writing an article with four hands, two French-speaking and two Dutch-speaking, is a relatively unusual situation in a country where museums are generally viewed through a community or regional prism despite their highly varied status and diverse audience profile. The exercise is however rather stimulating and meaningful in a field like museum education and interpretation, where the aim is to create connections. It has allowed us to highlight common and significant trends and developments that have appeared over the last twenty years. By comparing our respective experiences and knowledge acquired in the field, we have tried to identify these developments and trends that carry the seeds of the evolution of museum education and interpretation.¹

One can see that the evolution of mu-

seum education and interpretation in Belgium is ultimately very porous in comparison with other international developments in the field and follows the many trends of museums in the Western world. While Flanders is often inspired by Anglo-Saxon or Dutch examples, Wallonia is oriented more towards exchanges with France and Quebec, with Brussels museums seeming to be sailing between these two different trends.

The linguistic and, above all, political complexity of the country does not facilitate exchanges between the museums of the different communities; yet the initiatives of national meetings supported by the different museum associations in the country and ICOM are highly appreciated by all museum educators. These meetings even tend to flourish.

¹ This article follows our communication "Evolution of educational practices in Brussels, Flemish and Walloon museums" at the conference *Dynamiser la médiation culturelle: méthodologies et moyens* co-organised by ICOM Belgique/Wallonie-Bruxelles, ICOM CECA Belgium & the House of European History on March 18, 2019, at the House of European History (Brussels).

WHEN AUDIENCES BECOME AN ISSUE - MEDIATION AND MARKETING

In the early 2000s, large-scale surveys and studies regarding museum audiences² were conducted in the three regions of the country. They led to the development of new strategies. In 2002 the *European Group on Museum Statistics* (EGMUS) was created.³ Marketing and economic principles invested the sector: in 2003, the Brussels museums launched the Brussels Card; in 2005, the museums of the city of Bruges organised *Market'eum*, a congress bringing together over 130 professionals around museum marketing.⁴

In this context, audiences are seen as target groups – niche audiences for the most specific of these. Reaching a large and diversified audience becomes a real challenge and mediation projects can in this respect prove to be significant funding levers, but also a way of enhancing one's image vis-à-vis sponsors, patrons, and public authorities, who are increasingly sensitive to this audience issue. The same occurs with the different prizes celebrating good mediation practices.

The 'Museum Prize', followed by the 'Public's Prize' and the 'Children's Prize' introduced in Belgium in 2006 by the law firm Linklaters-De Bandt and the Flemish magazine *Openbaar Kunstbezit*, as well as the prize awarded by the Akcess group of corporate patrons of Prométhéa⁶ have played a decisive role in the development of Belgian education departments. In 2018, the *museumPASS*musées also made its appearance on a national scale. Involving more than 200 museum institutions, this marketing product encourages the Belgian public to regain the museums.⁷

Numerous discount formulas have also been developed, often in collaboration with the social sector, to ensure access to culture for those for whom the price of an entrance ticket normally presents an obstacle in visiting museums. These include the so-called Article 27 tickets, Cultuurwaardebonnen, the former *Paspartoe*, the *UiTPAS*, "*For 50 cents, you get art*", the first free Sunday in museums recognised by the Walloon-Brussels Federation, etc. The democratisation of rates is clearly an essential measure, but it is certainly not enough.

² L. RANSHUYSEN, *Publieksonderzoek in de Vlaamse musea*, Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, 2001. Conseil bruxellois des Musées, *Enquête sur les publics des musées bruxellois* 2001, 2002; D. BAUGARD, *Les publics de la culture : synthèses de l'enquête réalisée auprès des visiteurs des musées fédéraux*, 2003; IPSOS-enquête, 2004 : www.belspo.be/belspo/pubobs/docum/2004_02_fr.stm; J.-P. MASQUELIER, *Les musées et leurs visiteurs en Communauté française*, Ministère de la Communauté française, 2009.

³ www.egmus.eu, accessed on 30.07.2021.

⁴ Congress organised in collaboration with CultureleBiografieVlaanderen (now FARO) and CultuurNetVlaanderen (now publiq).

⁵ [https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/MuseumPrijs_\(België\)](https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/MuseumPrijs_(België)), accessed on 30/07/2021. This prize, awarded by a jury of professionals from the art and museum sector, has given a Walloon museum, a Flemish museum and a Brussels museum each an endowment of 10,000 euros.

⁶ www.promethea.be/nl/akcess, accessed on 30.07.2021.

⁷ www.museumpassmusees.be, accessed on 09.08.2021.

PROFESSIONALISATION AND MUSEUM COLLEGIALITY

The recognition of museums is conditioned politically by the professionalisation of museum education departments coupled with an ambitious public policy, which is to be found in the various decrees within the two communities of the country. These include, for example, in Flanders, the “Museum Decree” (*Museumdecreet-1996*) and the current “Cultural Heritage Decree” (*Cultureelerfgoeddecreet-2017*);⁸ and in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, the latest Decree relating to the museum sector in the French-speaking Community of 25/04/2019 and its implementing decree of 19/06/2019.⁹

Cultural mediation is also slowly finding its place in university curricula. Continuing education also plays an essential role in the museum educators’ professionalisation. Study days and training courses are organised like those offered by FARO, the Flemish interface for cultural heritage, *Museums and Society in Wallonia*, ICOM Belgium and BeMuseum.

At the end of the last century, the creation of new museum networks like Brussels Museums (the former Brussels Council of Museums), *Musées et Société en Wallonie*, together with

the association of Flemish museums (*Vlaamse Museumvereniging*) emphasised the need to professionalise this sector and to reach new audiences. The *Museumavonden* (Flemish Museum evenings) were launched in 2000, followed in 2001 by the Brussels Museum Nocturnes.¹⁰

These events also serve as meeting places for the persons in charge of the education, marketing, and communication departments of museums. Large, medium-sized, and small structures are thus given the opportunity to meet, thereby increasing the number of exchanges of expertise and best practices.

Collective events such as the *Krokus-kriebels*¹¹, *Erfgoeddag*, the *Tom & Charlotte* family trails, *Museum Night Fever*, a network such as *Marmaille&Co* in Wallonia, as well as the *Vlieg* treasure hunt,¹² are all activities that experiment with museum education and interpretation. The related networks and training days that are often linked to these activities also contribute to the professionalisation of the sector.

DIVERSIFYING AUDIENCES

In this context, museums are developing an increasingly refined offer for different types of public. Among these, **school groups** remain a priority audi-

⁸ The first Heritage Decree (*Erfgoeddecreet*) dates from 2004, the Cultural Heritage Decree (*Cultureelerfgoeddecreet*) from 2008 and was updated in 2012 and 2017.

⁹ Decree of 25 April 2019: www.etaamb.be/fr/decret-du-25-avril-2019_n2019013214.html, accessed 08/08/2021.

¹⁰ See I. Lowyck’s article, and the articles by P. Van der Gheynst and C. Lalot et al.

¹¹ *Krokuskriebels* is an initiative of the *Gezinsbond*, the Dutch-speaking Family league, in collaboration with FARO and museums in Flanders and Brussels. The 10th edition took place in 2021.

¹² *Schatten van Vlieg*, an initiative of publiq: www.uitinvlaanderen.be/schattenvanvlieg, accessed 10/08/2021.



Krokuskriebels activity for families and toddlers © KMSKA – Sanne Van De Werf, 2018

ence in democratising the museum. A recent survey conducted in Flanders¹³ reveals that 40% of the activities within heritage organisations are geared towards education; the associations representing French-speaking museums are active partners in the Cultural and Artistic Education Pathway, *Parcours d'éducation culturelle et artistique* (PECA) initiated in 2020 by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation¹⁴.

In addition to essential education programmes and participatory projects for schools, the last two decades have also seen the development of a great quan-

tity of activities aimed at **children** and **families**: treasure hunts, audio-guided tours, family days, nights at the museum, holiday courses, buggy tours, etc.

There are also exhibitions with “real” works of art, such as at the BPS 22 in Charleroi, or at Mudia, the interactive didactic art museum opened in 2018 in Redu. Whereas in the past, many young parents felt excluded from museums – and especially art museums – they are now welcomed by activities offering a much more sensitive approach to works of art through their children’s eyes. A Manifesto was even

¹³ L. VERMEERSCH, N. HAVERMANS, *Cultuureducatie in de vrije tijd. Een tweede veldtekening*. Onderzoek in opdracht van Departement Cultuur, Jeugd en Media door HIVA/KULeuven, 2021, pp.69-70.

¹⁴ *Le Parcours d'Éducation culturelle et artistique (PECA) pour les musées de Bruxelles* (PECA): www.brussel museums.be/fr/professionnels/le-parcours-deduction-culturelle-et-artistique-peca-pour-les-musees-de-bruxelles, accessed 08/08/2021; MSW, Webinar: Musées et enseignement : en quoi consiste le PECA ? (Museums and Education: What is the PECA?), 10/06/2021.



dedicated to them in 2013.¹⁵ The museum is thus gradually enhancing the image of being places for children's good memories; it is also winning over today's parents and, we hope, those of tomorrow.

Attracting **young people**, from teenagers to young millennials, is still a challenge. Many museums have realised that they need to consult these audiences, get them involved, and take constant interest in their world and experiences. Playful and immersive processes (escape rooms, etc.), participatory projects, digital tours and festive events that are becoming popular

are just some of the activities that have proven their worth. Young people are given carte blanche, as in *Museum Night Fever*, or they invest museums as in *AmuseeVous*¹⁶ or at the MAS in Antwerp.¹⁷

To further strengthen their societal and inclusive missions, museums are also positioning themselves as places of learning for the **most vulnerable or disadvantaged people**, as well as places for personal renewal and development.

At the *Musée de la Vie wallonne* (Liège), teenagers are invited to discuss with educators from the museum and the

¹⁵ I. CHAVEPEYER, C. FALLON, *Musées d'art. Amis des tout-petits. Manifeste*, Fraje, Bruxelles, 2013. Dutch translation: faro.be/publicaties/kunstmusea-ook-voor-de-allerkleinsten.

¹⁶ See I. Lowyck's preceding article.

¹⁷ *Publiq, 10 jaar MAS in Jonge Handen*: www.publiq.be/nl/inzichten-en-praktijk/10-jaar-mas-in-jonge-handen, accessed on 09/08/2021. Many other interesting examples can be found in the publication *Weg met jongeren*, Toerisme Vlaanderen, 2021: www.toerismevlaanderen.be/jongeren#erfgoedmusea, accessed on 09/08/2021.





family planning organisation *Infor-Femmes*¹⁸ how to “live together” and the related societal challenges. In addition, nowadays the pioneering Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (Brussels) with their Tailored Museum (*Musée sur Mesure*) programme, offer “Arts and Care in Dialogue” guided tours and, in 2019, hosted the inspiring international symposium *Through Art We Care* bringing together the caring sector and the world of culture.¹⁹

Museums thus become a place for dialogue, meditation and even a space for therapy.

CO-CREATION WITH THE PUBLIC AND MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

To renew the discourse on heritage and collections and, above all, to be open to different points of view and interpretations, museums are increasingly rethinking their participation and co-creation processes, a theme that has been chosen for the ICOM CECA 2021 Conference. Audiences are invited to share their frames of reference, their knowledge, and their experiences, allowing them to identify with and recognise themselves in the museum and its programmes.

In 2013, the participatory project Audience at Work (*Public À l'Œuvre/ Publiek AanZet*) was organised for the first time at the M Museum (Leuven) in collaboration with the non-profit organization Mooss (now Bamm!) and the cooperative Cera.²⁰ Engaged in a process lasting several months, citizen-commissioners were invited to choose their subject of an exhibition, select the objects to be exhibited, write the accompanying texts, and plan the scenography. In a collaborative mode, they explored the backstage of the museum and shared their points of view on the collections.²¹

Thanks to inclusive practices, making the sector accessible **to audiences that have so far been ignored** has also become its major concern, to remain in tune with contemporary society's ongoing debates. Due to their specific collections and themes (colonialism, migrations, etc.), museums such as the MAS and the Red Star Line in Antwerp, and the Africa Museum in Tervuren develop multi-perspective discourses, thus recognising the value of diverse interpretations and meanings. In the same spirit, other museums are entrusting visits to new people to approach the works from a more personal and sometimes also militant angle, when not integrating gender, cultural identity, religion, etc., and in doing so,

¹⁸ *Make your voice heard* animation: www.provincedeliege.be/fr/evenement/17/11636, accessed on 09/08/2021.

¹⁹ W. BOUCHEZ, J. RODEYNS & al, *Through Art We Care*, 2019.

²⁰ Bamm, *Publiek aan zet*: www.publiekaanzet.be, consulted on 09/08/2021. The project, joined in the meantime by the non-profit organisation *Arts & Publics*, has since spread to the Fine Arts Museum (*Musée des Beaux-Arts*) in Charleroi (*Reg'Arts décalés* exhibition in collaboration with the Photo Museum (*Musée de la Photo*), 2016-2017), the *Musée de Folklore et des Imaginaires de Tournai* (*Faux Contact* exhibition, 2018-2019), and the BELvue (Brussels), among others.

²¹ See also the Museum Hof van Busleyden in Mechelen, the STAM in Ghent, the Stadsmuseum (City Museum) in Lierre, other pioneers in co-creation.

opening themselves up to new audiences²².

In Brussels, while Brussels Museums with its *Open Museum* programme²³ launched in 2020 is trying to make museums structurally more inclusive and participative, Bozar is explicitly committed to inclusive management by adding an *inclusion advisor* to its team.

NEW MEDIATION PRACTICES

These developments are also making an impact on mediation practices. Dialogue and interaction have meanwhile become key concepts. While classic media (texts, audio guides, guided tours, etc.) are still very present and appreciated by the public, one should mention other new approaches to mediation such as philosophical workshops, *Slow Art*, *mindfulness*, or the constructivist strategy of visual thinking (*Visual Thinking Strategies* – VTS). These approaches consider the visitor as a relaxed actor in search of personal discovery.²⁴ Several Antwerp museums have developed expertise in this field (Museum of Photogra-

phy, Middelheimmuseum, etc.); they also participate in international events such as the *Slow Art Day*.²⁵ They have integrated these new methods of mediation into their relationship with new audiences. For example, the M Museum in Leuven hosted the 51st International Conference on Visual Literacy in 2019.²⁶

With this evolution of mediation practices, public services are increasingly working together with specialists in artistic and cultural interpretation, but also with those in the social and health care sectors. Through their creativity, agility and administrative versatility, all these actors contribute greatly to the renewal of museum education and interpretation practices.

DIGITAL SHARING

Digital practices have invaded the field of mediation. Costly and requiring significant follow-up, they often remain limited to simple developments (applications offering digital tours, use of tablets, etc.); thanks to the pooling of resources, museum associations and FARO provide now valuable support

²² See the colloquium *Des Musées (plus) accessibles* organised at the Museum of Natural sciences, Brussels, 24-25/11/2011 and the Proceedings published under B. Allard's direction in *La Vie des Musées*, 24, 2012.

²³ Examples include individual coaching sessions per institution, the development of a diversity charter, and the organisation of the virtual conference Re-imagining museums as safe spaces of 9 March 2021.

²⁴ K. D'HAMERS, *Hoe gebruikt u slow art in uw erfgoedpraktijk?*, FARO. Vlaams steunpunt voor cultureel erfgoed vzw: <https://www.faro.be/kennis/publieksbegeleiding/hoe-gebruikt-u-slow-art-uw-erfgoedpraktijk>, accessed 08.08.2021; an example of an introduction to VTS open to the public: Wiels, *Visual Thinking Strategies: intro evening*, 16.10.2019. In collaboration with Matchbox and PhiloCité: www.wiels.org/fr/events/visual-thinking-strategies-soirée-dintro, accessed 08.08.2021.

²⁵ *Slow Art Day*: www.slowartday.com, accessed on 08.08.2021.

²⁶ 51st Annual IVLA Conference (mleuven.be): www.mleuven.be/nl/IVLA, accessed on 08.08.2021.



MuseumLab – Experimental installation with added reality at the BAM – Project Atlas
© City of Mons, 2019

for new developments.²⁷

Resources are sometimes brought together at a very local level, as in Mons, where the museum centre (*pôle muséal*), through its Museum-Lab, is developing a long-term strategic vision supported by regular experimentation in partnership with private companies in the region.²⁸

The health crisis, with its confinements and restrictions, in a very short time has led to a profusion of digital initiatives: online exhibitions, but also blogs, vlogs, videos, etc. Consequently, museum educators are also becoming communicators and are regularly asked to provide social networks with entertaining and educational content. They are experimenting with online conferences and webinars, virtual meetings with the public and interactive online guided tours.

Initially seen as a stopgap measure to keep guides active and in dialogue with the public, they are now proving to be valuable new accessibility tools.

CLOSED MUSEUMS: A NEW SPACE FOR EXPERIMENTATION?

These accessibility tools have been particularly important for maintain-

ing ongoing museum education and keeping in touch with the public during those periods when the museums were closed, whether due to the health crisis or to renovation.

A simple closure for health reasons has led to the development of new tools to maintain links with visitors. On the other hand, museums closed for renovation may take this opportunity to rethink their relationship with the public. In 2017, the Museum L (Louvain-la-Neuve) reopened its doors with mediation devices now integrated into the heart of the museum display. In 2020, the Museum of Fine Arts in Antwerp hired a pool of volunteers (*De Schoonste Honderd*) to test the devices that will be operational at the reopening. 5,000 people applied for 100 vacant positions(!).²⁹

As part of the *Museum at Home* project, the Museum of Ixelles – in collaboration with the educators of the non-profit organisation *Patrimoine à Roulettes* (Heritage on Wheels), which co-created the project – lends its works to its neighbours, thus creating a loyal network of museum ambassadors within its neighbourhood.³⁰ This project is the first Belgian initiative to be awarded the Best Practice 2021 ICOM CECA Prize.

²⁷ With the support of ICOM and the international committee ICOM CECA, ICOM Belgium, ICOM CECA Belgium, Brussels Museums, *Musées et Société en Wallonie*, in collaboration with FARO, are currently working on an experimental project that should be completed during the summer of 2022 in the form of prototypes of interactive virtual guided tours and video tutorials intended for museums wishing to try this type of mediation.

²⁸ MuseumLab: www.polemuseal.mons.be/fr/museum-lab, accessed 08/08/2021.

²⁹ *De Schoonste Honderd*: www.kmska.be/nl/de-schoonste-honderd, accessed 08.08.2021.

³⁰ *Museum in Progress*: www.museedixelles.irisnet.be/museum-in-progress/museum-in-progress, accessed 08.08.2021.

CULTURAL MEDIATOR, A PROFESSION MORE THAN EVER IN NEED OF RECOGNITION

The museum educators' precarious status is nothing new, but it has been particularly highlighted in the recent context of the health crisis (Covid-19).

Museums now rely almost exclusively on freelance guides whose diverse status does not facilitate the defence of the profession or the sustainable development of the needed skills. Within museum institutions, the people in charge of the education departments often wear several hats, combining the functions of secretary, communicator, animator, event organizer and project manager. Under these conditions, it is hardly surprising that their passion and enthusiasm for the job leads sometimes to exhaustion.

The profession is in desperate need of greater recognition to assert its interests. As demands differ according to personal and institutional situations and the fact that this sector is also highly competitive, the task is not easy.

In 2020, independent guides joined in an attempt to unite their voices and defend their interests to politicians (e.g. the regulation of fees, development of a clear status, solidarity initiatives) by creating the non-profit organization *Guides et médiateurs culturels de Belgique* (guides and museum educators of Belgium); another initiative worth mentioning on the mediators' part employed in cultural institutions in Brussels is in the performing arts and contemporary art sector: the associa-

tion of professional cultural mediators *Association des Médiateurices Culturelles Professionnelles* (AMCP) was created in 2021 to ensure direct representation of the profession of mediator within the Brussels PECA consortium, bringing together some twelve cultural operators, including Brussels Museums³¹.

QUESTION TIME

At the beginning of the 2000s, museums and museum mediation were still strongly focused on expanding and increasing their audience. Linked to the societal challenges that have emerged, gradually the emphasis is shifting to more social impact and how to make the museum activities more relevant to the needs of society.

Looking back at twenty years of museum mediation in Belgium ineluctably opens a field of questions about the future:

Inclusion being a priority for all mediation services nowadays, how can we disregard categorisation and communitarian visions and transform the museum into a genuine space for encounters with others and facilitate living together harmoniously?

In this feverish society, which is questioning itself more than ever, how can museum mediation be even more reactive and integrate current societal issues more rapidly?

How can we imagine new partnerships with companies, centres of expertise, within the territories, with our neighbours, and further co-construct

³¹ *Parcours d'éducation culturelle et artistique au sein des écoles de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*. op. cit., note 14.



Musée comme chez soi (*Museum at Home*): the neighbours
of the Museum of Ixelles temporarily closed for works
© Musée d'Ixelles – Photo: C. Roche, 2019

the museum as a full-fledged actor in the community?

How can we also enhance and professionalise the museum educators' precarious and poorly recognised profession, which has been so severely shaken during the Covid-19 crisis?

Finally, how can we work more closely together, beyond linguistic and institutional barriers, to share our experiments?

We hope to have shown through the various examples discussed that complexity does not hinder ingenuity or the desire to share. The need to evolve towards a more open museum, concerned with a broader representation of the public, in continuous adjustment to a society that is in constant change, promises a brilliant and challenging future for museum education and interpretation in Belgium.

Brussels Museums 25 Years Aimed at Rendering Brussels Museums More Accessible

Pieter Van der Gheynst - *Director of Brussels Museums*

25 years ago, at a round table on museums held in Brussels on the Assises du tourisme (Tourism conference), some fifteen Brussels museums expressed the wish to gather into an association that would serve as a meeting point and enable a common promotion of Brussels museums. In September 1995, the Council of Brussels Museums came to light (since 2020, it has been renamed Brussels Museums). This non-profit association aims at serving the Brussels museums and their visitors, intending to defend the latter.

For the past 25 years, the basic mission of Brussels Museums has been to **improve access** to Brussels museums and their rich and diverse collections. To do this, we tackle the various barriers that can hinder a visit to the museum: the entrance fee (all our public activities have very democratic entrance fees), the opening hours (for example by facilitating evening openings), so-

cio-cultural factors (thanks to strong partnerships, we manage to reach more fragile groups) and, finally, information (on what the museums offer and how this offer is communicated). The last two pillars (socio-cultural and information) play a key role in our cultural mediation with the public.

Let us analyze **some key concepts of cultural mediation, the common thread in our (public) activities.**

1. LEAVING ROOM FOR EXPERIENCE STARTING FROM PRACTICE

Brussels Museums has never hesitated to experiment new formulas. Let us recall the very first edition of the *Museum Night Fever* programme 13 years ago; only 7 museums participated, and we had many questions and doubts: “Will an event that works in Berlin also work in Brussels?” This first edition was a great success and the event continued to grow, becoming THE festive event for museums in Brussels with, today, more than 30 museums involved and reaching some 17,000 visitors.

Through new methods and concepts applied to a concrete event, we also want to inspire museums to deepen and go beyond their own practices. Night-time events and special activities for young people have become a real added value in the calendars of many museums. The BELvue Museum has for example developed its own youth group, the *BELvue Gang*. Similarly, in 2002, when the council of Brussels Museums launched the games ‘Explore the museums with Tom and Charlotte’, this type of activity was not that widespread in museums as it is nowadays.

2. THINKING ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH PAIRS

There’s no better way to get a message across to a target group than to let it speak and manage the process. This

principle remains the basis of *Museum Night Fever*, designed for and by young people. This ensures that the message is authentic and that the world, the expectations, and interests of the audience are understood. During the *Museum Night Fever*, we let young people conduct the guided tours in the museums themselves. Instead of a traditional one-and-a-half-hour tour, the audience was given short, refreshing and often very personal information about unexpected objects or topics.

3. ACTIVELY INVOLVING THE TARGET GROUP AND LISTENING TO IT

Avoid thinking too much on your own when thinking about your activities and concepts related to the audience. Instead, start with the ideas and creativity of the target group. Listen carefully, ask questions, and dare to enter in dialogue. This is why the entire *Museum Night Fever* programme is systematically in the hands of a number of young partners: young artists’ collectives, youth associations, (higher) education institutions, academies, etc.

Together with the museums’ education departments, the youth’s ideas about the collections started taking shape. This led to interesting collaborations, such as those between more than 150 fashion design students from the Francisco Ferrer Higher Education School and BOZAR; 70 young designers from the Kool Kids Klub collective and the BELvue Museum; visual artists, musicians, poets and social workers, who all came together



at MEDEX (Musée Éphémère de l'Exil - the ephemeral exile museum) in association with experience.brussels; amateur acrobats from the 'parkour' association and Autoworld, etc.

4. ROOM FOR FUN AND ORIGINALITY

Communication messages does not mean that it must be boring, difficult or time consuming. The 'fun' factor is too often forgotten or considered less important, when on the contrary, an enjoyable experience ensures that the viewer will be all the more 1) captivated and 2) attentive. At *Museum Night Fever*, the story behind the collections is transformed and nuanced by performing arts, offering a new perspective on what museums usually try to

convey through sometimes lengthy texts. During our 2016 campaign on the 100 *Masterpieces* chosen from 100 key objects in the permanent collections of the Brussels museums, we developed a campaign via our website inspired by a dating site: just like the popular application Tinder, visitors could *surf/swipe* between the profiles of the different masterpieces. In case of a match or encounter, the profile / masterpiece revealed more information about itself; various specific activities were also proposed around the object in the museum concerned.

In 2008, during *MuseumTalks*, we let young visitors briefly share their opinions on certain objects in the collections. A new, visually innovative, and even mischievous website was created, containing '*avant la lettre*' more than

100 podcasts with their corresponding iconographic material.

In the *Tom and Charlotte's* play trails for families, the pleasure of play and discovery was encouraged by short questions and fun activities in the museum.

5. VENTURING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

The 'traditional' museum audience is still predominantly white, educated, middle-class and elderly. Unfortunately, we are only addressing a small part of the population. Cultural mediation must aim at reaching out to a much wider audience; working towards a greater diversity of audiences is imperative if we are to escape monoculture.

Broadening the audience for the activities of the Brussels Museums and seeking new horizons are among our priorities. How can we reach more young people? How can we convince people who rarely or never visit museums to come? How can we also reach the neighborhood inhabitants to visit the museum?

There is no single entry point to this essential diversity. We have always strongly believed in co-creation, active listening, genuine involvement of target groups and experimentation based on trial and error (see above).

Reaching out to groups of different cultural backgrounds - especially within the hyper-diverse society of Brussels - has always been our ambition. Together with the Commission





of the Flemish Community and the non-profit organisation Foyer, we have carried out a particularly inspiring reflection on the theme of diversity: together with some ten Brussels museums, we have visited foreign museums (such as the Municipal Museum in The Hague or the Museum of the History of Immigration in Paris) and discussed with their staff.

Another key moment for Brussels Museum was the launch, at the end of 2019, of *Open Museum*, a new structural pillar of our work to further support, raise awareness and empower our members: how can we help Brussels museums to become more 'inclusive' at structural, staff, cultural mediation, and programming levels? We also think of reaching underrepresented groups: how can we make them feel more com-

fortable in the museum? How can we make them 'recognize' themselves in the museum's narratives? *Open Museum* wants to address themes such as decolonization, racism, and gender that until recently were not part of the museum concerns.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

The crisis of covid-19 has confronted us with a particularly difficult reality that forces us to continually rethink our 'safe values'. Covid-19 and its related lockdowns have given birth to a spectacular number of new digital tools: augmented reality, 3D virtual tours, online workshops, digitization of collections, podcasts, museum radio programmes...

We are suddenly and rapidly invaded by all these new tools, and we lack the hindsight to measure the potential (and the risks) of all these novelties. Together with representatives of MSW (Museums and Society in Wallonia) and ICOM Belgium, we are going to start a vast investigation into online guided tours: how to ensure the necessary interactivity? How to reach the different groups online? How does an online visit differ from an *in-situ* visit?

With many (new) challenges, but certainly as many new opportunities the coming years seem to be rather exciting for cultural museum educators. In these complex, changing and often polarized times, cultural mediation is more than ever the key to the museums of the future!

Museums and Society in Wallonia From a Federation to an Exchange and Innovation Platform

Alice Terwagne - Training Officer

Diane Degreef - New Technology Consultant

Aurielle Marlier - Communications Officer

Romain Jacquet - ICT trainer

Clément Lalot - Director

Founded in 1998 to respond to the specificities of Walloon museums within a complex institutional country, the non-profit organisation Museums and Society in Wallonia (MSW) is definitely modern in its approach counting more than 180 member museums of various sizes and backgrounds. In constant evolution, it has become an exchange and innovation platform, either through the organisation of events, meetings, or training courses, or through the setting up of specific museum education and interpretation (mediation) programmes, thematic days, workshops, etc.

For MSW the notion of 'society', which some people do not seem to understand, misspell, or modify, plays an integral part in the association's identity. From the outset, MSW has sought to reflect and understand societal issues as thoroughly as possible and to thus

become a facilitator for Walloon museums, building bridges between the cultural milieu and its environment. Today, museums need more than ever a network on which to rely at certain key moments.

Our aim in this article is to highlight several mediation projects we are daily dealing with: *Marmaille&Co*, as a label promoting mediation with families; *Youth and Heritage Week*, museum education through games; *training courses* for museum educators and mediators; and *Behind the Museum*, an important digital mediation tool.



MARMAILLE&CO

About ten years ago, the network of fine arts museums (Art&Mus) launched the Marmaille&Co network. The principle was simple: each museum offered a specific programme for families in the two main languages of the country. At the outset, the project brought together some fifteen institutions. The network soon grew to more than 60

museums. They all agree to adhere to a predefined charter, to offer throughout the year specific mediation under the title Marmaille&Co and to interact dynamically, meeting several times a year, mainly to define the outlines of the annual action plan. In addition to the implementation of permanent mediation tools, each year following the school holiday calendar five or six ac-



tions are proposed by Marmaille& Co. Since the network's inception, several new Marmaille&Co projects have been launched: the family weekend, 'Selfie'O musée', Nights at the museum, 'En balade au musée', 'RaConte-moi un musée', etc. The Carnival holiday coinciding with the launching of the 'Viens t'a (musées)' action (Come and enjoy 'museums') is a moment of great

excitement due to the richness and diversity of activities offered: countless treasure hunts, escape games, rallies, creative workshops, game books, show tours and other forms of mediation through games have been set up. Several museums have also developed education kits as part of one of their actions launched during the year.

Parallel to its annual plan, Marmaille&Co has in recent years worked on revitalizing itself. Several campaigns like the 'Little Visitor's Passport' have been launched to encourage the public to become regular visitors. The passport consists in a paper document to be stamped in the museums visited to raise each apprentice explorer's curiosity. This year, ambassador families are also joining the project to test various activities, promote the museums and enrich the actions conducted under the label Marmailles&Co. By doing so, we hope to create a community around the project and to develop its qualitative aspect.

A Marmaille&Co education bag will eventually be launched at the end of this year. In cooperation with the network of Belgian toy libraries the network has been working on the design of an amusement bag for more than two years. Neutral and adaptable by each museum, this bag will offer visitors a dynamic and pleasant journey thanks to three different game mechanisms. The aim is to apply the principle of gamification to the museum space and not the other way round, as was often the case previously. The bag will be launched at the end of 2021 during an event focused on the promotion of our members' different mediation tools.

YOUTH AND HERITAGE WEEK

If the Marmaille&Co branded actions are very popular among the young public, they are not the only initiatives launched by MSW to strengthen the ties between children and museums. Since 2019, MSW has also been creating education material for the Youth and Heritage Week. This annual event, coordinated by the Heritage Days Secretariat, aims to raise awareness among young people about the preservation of built heritage helping them to discover the richness of the Walloon heritage.

The action is structured in two parts, each targeting a specific public. The first part is aimed at schools, allowing them to discover the regional heritage in in-

stitutions spread throughout Wallonia, while the second, aimed at families, proposes a specific day dedicated to them. Thus, each 1st of May all heritage sites included in the programme are free of charge.

These different mediation tools designed by MSW aim, once again, at transmitting education content in an attractive and recreational way. As every child is naturally attracted by games, using them is an ideal way to transmit knowledge to the youngest. All these media bear therefore an inseparable playful and educational dimension. To involve children in the acquisition of knowledge and to help them appropriate different contents, several ingredients are necessary: commitment (children are actors), experience (they are involved in their discovery) and, in the

*Timeline on a sword, from feudal clod
to neo-Gothic castle,
as part of the Youth
and Heritage Week (2019)
© MSW*



case of team games, a mixture of competition and collaboration.

Each year, these different education tools are based on a predefined theme, such as the treasure hunt, for example. The challenge is therefore multiple. First, it is a question of reinventing this theme by adapting it in various forms to several different age groups (3-5 years, 6-12 years, 9-13 years). Depending on the target audience, particular attention is paid to the volume of information offered, the vocabulary used, and the graphics chosen. Then, it is important to design game mechanisms that can be transposed from one site to another and used independently by parents or teachers. The team is therefore careful to create simple tools with clear rules that can be understood by all. Finally, these mediation tools must convey an educational content specifically related to each heritage site. The games are therefore designed in such a way that each participating institution can integrate its own personalized content.

TRAINING COURSES

Among our other objectives let us mention that of professionalizing the cultural sector. MSW therefore also organizes training sessions several times a year to help its members acquire the needed expertise to carry out their mission.

The main objective of the training courses is obviously to accompany the actors of the field in a process of professionalization, by helping them to offer a quality service to the museum

visitors. MSW is present at different levels proposing its own training courses, thus responding to a real and precise need that no other organization satisfies, and courses similar to other existing ones but which are only open to the museum institutions. The aim is therefore to provide members with content entirely adapted to the sector and to encourage the exchange of good practices and experiences. This formula makes it easier to move from theory to practice and thus adds real value to the session.

The topics covered in the training courses are based on six main themes: digital technology, conservation, legislative, administrative and management issues, communication, transition, as well as mediation and welcoming the public.

The aim of the section on mediation is to help museums improve their reception of the ever-increasing number of targeted visitors, such as toddlers, visitors with special needs, individual tourists, Dutch-speaking visitors, schoolchildren, etc. The association also encourages its members to use new mediation techniques such as gamification and content based on playing, topics which have already been discussed above.

Many training sessions have been offered in recent years, such as 'Scripting an educational escape game', 'Welcoming your visitors in Dutch', 'Personalizing the welcome of your visitors', 'How to bring a work of art to life for all types of public' and 'Museums and CEC (Centres of expression and creativity): What mediation?



BEHIND THE MUSEUM

MSW has recently added another offer to its members and their visitors with a unique new digital mediation tool: Behind the Museum (www.behindthemuseum.be).

Created in 2019, this immersive web platform offers visitors unprecedented and totally free access to the backstage areas of several Walloon museums and to many of the little-known heritage collections that are hidden in them. Anyone can browse the site as they wish and discover its multifaceted content, as Behind the Museum is structured around several interlocking mediation paths.

The first type of mediation, the most technological of all, is the immersive 3D virtual tours, thanks to which the

visitor can move freely (it is therefore an active experience) in the digitized spaces. The use of this technology allows several things. First, it is a way of enhancing in a comprehensive manner the value of areas that are usually not open to the public like storerooms, offices, restoration workshops, etc. and/or that are no longer accessible (past temporary exhibitions, closed or modified spaces/museums). The various paths are highlighted by information bubbles and their content presented in the form of texts, videos, and photos. The visitor takes thus part in a visual experience that is enriching from all points of view. 3D digitization also makes it possible to mediate with certain audiences with specific needs, such as people with other capabilities and elderly people, who cannot reach some



Photograph of a mask (Musée du Masque) by Epicentro as part of the project Behind the Museum. © MSW

places like buildings lacking elevators, museums and sites with stairs, ladders, etc.). Digitization makes it possible to digitally safeguard spaces, which represents an essential form of mediation for the public, museum professionals, students and researchers of future generations who will then have access to past exhibitions as well as to different forms of museography used at the time of digitization.

The video clips and interviews with museum staff are the second part of the project and allow the content provided during a physical visit to be extended to anticipate and/or complement the visit (without competing with it). Various subjects are addressed: the work within the institution, the museum jobs, the staff's passion and enthusiasm, current issues, etc. Non-digitized spaces are also highlighted and explained.

Photographs of the collections, taken using a specific artistic process, eventually make it possible to magnify and share with the greatest number of people little-known pieces of our heritage or objects from the daily life of our ancestors. Photos and video clips are available on each museum's webpage as well as in the virtual tour.

Launched in December 2020, the platform counting since July no less than nineteen institutions is evolving, welcoming a new museum every month. In order to allow the visitor to better understand the diversity and complexity of the museums spread over the Walloon territory, Behind The Museum brings together institutions around various themes (fine arts, archaeology, industrial heritage, natural sciences, intangi-

ble heritage, etc.), type of discourse (scientific, engaged, neutral), legal forms (public, private museums, etc.), sizes (small, medium or large structures) and geographical situations (city, local, decentralised museums, etc.).

Circulating information, establishing links between museums and society, and facilitating access to cultural content for specific audiences is, in short, one of the essential challenges of MSW's mission. Today and for the future creating more and more tools the association intends to make mediation one of its greatest strengths and thus to put all its expertise and know-how at the service of its members.

The Irène Heidebroek-Eliane Van Duyse Fund A Former Guide and Teacher Encourages Young People to Visit Museums¹

Laura Goyens

King Baudouin Foundation

The Irène Heidebroek-Eliane van Duysel Fund, launched by Irène Heidebroek, a former committed teacher and museum guide, aims at stimulating secondary school students' interest in art and history by encouraging them to visit a museum or a place of artistic or historical interest in Belgium.

To achieve this the Fund organises an annual call for projects to reward one or more creative and original activities that encourage young people aged 12 to 18 to visit museums or cultural institutions.

The call is launched every year in September. The total budget is €10,000. Applications are evaluated by an independent jury of experts who report to the Fund's Management Committee, which makes the final decision. In its assessment, the jury considers several selection criteria, including:

- the creative process in co-creation with young people;
- the long-term vision of the project and the guarantees of continuity;
- the establishment of a partnership involving the world of education, museums and possible technical partners;
- the quality of the implementation of the project (accuracy and reliability of the financial plan, realistic timetable, evaluation and monitoring of the project, etc.)
- ...

The other selection criteria and all additional information can be consulted on the King Baudouin Foundation website via www.kbs-frb.be (type 'Heidebroek' in the search field).

Since the creation of the Fund, 18 winners have received financial support for their projects. *La Fonderie*, the Brussels Museum of Industry and Work,

¹ The Irène Heidebroek - Eliane van Duyse Fund is managed by the King Baudouin Foundation: www.kbs-frb.be



received funding in 2019 to develop, *with* and for young people, a mobile application to promote our industrial and technical heritage. During four internships, young people were invited to develop under the guidance of animators from *La Fonderie* together with a digital developer a prototype of the application. This prototype was then tested by other young people and developed into a working application. The application itself will be available to the public in the Fall 2021.

ists will create a special and unique tour through museum. This tour will then be printed on a map, and video letters and audiovisual capsules created. Once the project is completed, other classes will be invited to visit the museum and take part in the guided tour. The aim of the project is to encourage young people to think, experiment and share, and to stimulate other young visitors to reflect on their visit to the museum and the history it presents.

One of the current projects supported by the Fund is the Collections project of the non-profit organisation MUS-E Belgium, in collaboration with the Africa Museum in Tervuren. During the school year 2021-2022, pupils from two classes of Dutch and French-speaking schools with their teachers and two art-

University Museums and Collections as Mediation Places and Tools

Nathalie Nyst

Coordinator of the ULB Museums Network

Located at the heart of their campuses, university museums and collections are not only places of mediation at the crossroads between university and society, where researchers, heritage and the public meet, dialogue and collaborate, but also between university and museums as such. Indeed, while preserving, studying and exhibiting collections and knowledge that all bear witness to the three university functions (research, teaching and dissemination of knowledge), they are above all directly integrated into territories dedicated to scientific knowledge and are thus separated from society by a double 'symbolic' barrier: the general public must pass through two doors to gain access to them: first, that of the University, and second, that of the Museum.

Paradoxically, this anchorage in the cru-

cible of research, in THE place where knowledge is produced par excellence, is what makes them special: university museums and collections have access to the knowledge generated now and bear witness to it, when they do not contribute to it directly. It is therefore imperative that this constantly evolving scientific knowledge be explained, disseminated, and debated within their walls, whatever the disciplines.¹

Moreover, these museums and collections use tangible tools (objects, archives, equipment, laboratories, etc.) to explain how today's science differs from yesterday's, how it is created and transmitted over time: "*The tangible evidence of the evolution of knowledge is intrinsic to the way in which objects in university museums and collections are assembled, organised and used*".²

¹ D. FERRIOT & M. C. LOURENÇO, 'De l'utilité des musées et collections des universités', in *La lettre de l'OCIM* 93, 2004, pp. 4-16; M. C. LOURENÇO, *Entre deux mondes. La spécificité et le rôle contemporain des collections et musées des universités en Europe*, doctoral thesis, CNAM, École doctorale technologique et professionnelle, Paris, 2 vols. (<http://webpages.fc.ul.pt/~mclourenco/chapters/MCL2005.pdf> - accessed 02/07/2021).

² D. FERRIOT & M. C. LOURENÇO, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

INSOUPÇONNABLES BEAUTÉS DE LA RECHERCHE

LE DESSIN DANS LES COLLECTIONS DE L'ULB



EXPOSITIONS
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Du 13 | 01 | 2012
au 10 | 03 | 2012

Vernissage
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Les Musées de l'ULB exposent leurs trésors dessinés,
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Informations

nmyst@ulb.ac.be
marie.depraetere@ulb.ac.be
www.ulb.ac.be/musees

ULB Culture

Département des services
à la communauté universitaire
02 650 37 65
culture@ulb.ac.be
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INVICTA



Avec le soutien de Willy Decourtois, Bourgeois, et des membres du
Collège des Bourgeois et des membres de la Commission de l'Environnement.

These museums and university collections were created to be places of research and learning, and thus above all places of mediation. The international conference jointly organized by CECA and UMAC in Alexandria in 2014, *Squaring the circle? Research, museum, public: A common commitment towards effective communication*³, perfectly illustrates the intrinsic links between these two international committees of ICOM.

What about Belgian university museums? How do they fulfil their role as mediators of scientific knowledge and questions? For which types of public?

Within ten universities⁴, Belgium has almost 300 university collections and museums of varying size and type, of which about 105 are in Flanders, 145 in Wallonia and 40 in the Brussels-Capital Region.⁵

These museum entities can be divided into several categories: 1) places for the promotion and popularisation of science, some of which, such as the ULB Centre for Scientific Culture in Charleroi or the ULB Chemistry Experimentarium, only preserve rare collection objects, while others, such as the ULiège House of Science or the ULB Physics Experimentarium, mix old collections and contemporary devices; 2) museums and collections more specifically related to one or more disciplines,

such as the Aquarium-Museum of the ULiège or the collection of botanical models and the herbarium of the Plantin Moretus University Library of the UNamur; 3) museums which bring together specimens, works and other items from several disciplines, such as the Museum L of the University of Louvain, the Gents Universiteitsmuseum (GUM) in Ghent and the MUMONS of the University of Mons.

Whatever category they belong to, these museums and collections share a second characteristic that of being places of mediation primarily intended for the captive audiences of the campuses, i.e., students, professors, and researchers.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH MEDIATION

First, the *students*, for whom museum collections and infrastructures are tools of inspiration for developing creative practices or collaborative and interdisciplinary learning. Museums and university collections contribute to the students' information, training, and development. Their involvement may vary: visits to museums and collections, internships and projects (designing tools or events), studies, theses and dissertations related to the collections, restoration of objects, jobs.⁶ Examples

³ 13th ICOM-UMAC & 45th annual ICOM-CECA Conference, Alexandria, Library of Alexandria, 9-14/10/2014 (see bibliography).

⁴ In Flanders: KU Leuven, UAntwerpen, UGent; in Wallonia: UC Leuven, ULiège, UMons, UNamur; in Brussels: ULB, Université Saint-Louis (UC Leuven), VUB.

⁵ Interuniversitair Platform voor Academisch Erfgoed, *Overzicht van collecties academisch erfgoed in Vlaanderen*, 2019, 487 p.; *Cartographie des musées et collections universitaires en Belgique francophone*, Plateforme du patrimoine académique francophone de Belgique, work in progress.

⁶ For more information: N. Nyst, 'Les musées et collections universitaires comme lieux de formation estudiantine. Le cas du Réseau des Musées de l'ULB', in *Les musées universitaires et leurs publics* - The university museums and their publics, Proceedings of the colloquium organised by l'Embarcadère du Savoir & the University of Liège, Liège, 5-7/11/2019, in press.

include the ‘Stic Jam’ project at the Museum L of the University of Louvain, where students during technology workshops create an innovative and education digital medium⁶; the organisation of the international Universeum conference (European Academic Heritage Network) in Brussels and Leuven in 2022, a macro-project conceived by students of the Master in Cultural Management of the ULB⁸ and the Museum Student Team (MuST) of the GUM (Ghent University Museum) involving behind-the-scenes students from different courses.

University museums are thus tools and places of mediation where via the collections students are trained in a non-exclusive manner both theoretically and practically in research, scientific, popularisation and professional practice.⁹

For *professors*, the collections also serve as teaching resources used within their courses, seminars and other projects, offering their students the opportunity to put theoretical knowledge into practice. For example, academics supervise the biology students of the Université libre de Bruxelles in their use of the collections from the Museum of Zoology and Anthropology preparing activities for secondary schools: one such instance is the workshop “Didactic exploitation of a drosophila farm”, which took place during the 2018 edi-

tion of the *Printemps des sciences*¹⁰.

Researchers use the specimens and other artefacts not only as research objects, but also as media for mediating their research. At the Université libre de Bruxelles, teams from the Department of Organismal Biology and the Interfaculty School of Bioengineering are using the infrastructures of the Jean Massart Botanical Garden. Nicolas Vereecken, from the Laboratory of Agroecology, is working on the “ToxiFlore” project, financed by the Brussels-Capital Region, to evaluate the impact of pesticides used by commercial nurseries on pollen contamination through an experimental set-up of three greenhouses launched in 2019.¹¹

OUTREACH MEDIATION

Outside the academic community, the main target is of course the public at large, for whom the purpose of the mediation is to make science more accessible, showing science in the making, or involving citizens in the scientific process and discussing the topics of research and its results.

The main mission of the future new museum within the Belgian university museums, the MUMONS, which will open its doors in October 2021, is to contribute to socio-cultural inclusion in the economically disadvantaged

⁷ A. QUERINJEAN, ‘Comment le Musée L, Musée universitaire de Louvain, ouvert depuis fin 2017, joue-t-il sa partition pour un nouveau concerto : students users friendly ?’, lecture given at the international colloquium *Les musées universitaires et leurs publics*, University of Liege, 5/11/2019.

⁸ www.universeum-network.eu

⁹ For more information: N. NYST, ‘Les musées et collections universitaires comme lieux de formation estudiantine’, *op. cit.*, in press.

¹⁰ Museum of Zoology and Anthropology, Rapport d’activités 2018, ULB, n.p., p. 7.

¹¹ Jardin botanique Jean Massart, Rapport d’activités 2020, ULB, n.p., p. 12.

area of Mons. The museum of the University of Mons affirms its phil-anthropic dimension, concerned with “giving everyone the keys to understand the world, by stimulating curiosity and reflection, open-mindedness and decompartmentalization”¹², postulating that scientific knowledge plays a strategic role in the exercise of citizenship. MUMONS therefore announces that it will go beyond mere scientific communication to encourage, through exchanges with the public on current issues, everyone’s appropriation of scientific knowledge.

At the Ghent University, the same is true for the latest Belgian university museum, the GUM, which declares itself to be a *Forum for Science, Doubt and Art and a museum for all those who dare to think*. To awaken a critical eye, the GUM’s activities confront the public – called “participants” – with themes combining science, culture and society. “The participants conduct their own research by means of questions, dialogues and a wide range of working methods”.¹³

Finally, an increasingly common trend among university museums and collections is to position their heritage and activities at the crossroads between sciences and arts. Whatever the discipline of the collections, be it biology, physics, architecture, anatomy or mineralogy, whatever their nature – scientific instruments, specimens, drawings or samples-, arts and sciences

coexist within the university’s heritage and they engage in a dialogue with the public discovering it. Created in 1979, wasn’t the forerunner of the Museum L of the University of Louvain already called Dialogue Museum?

The GUM regularly demonstrates this, as illustrated by the restoration of a papier-mâché model of a horse by Louis Auzoux (1797-1880) or the fresco created in 2020 by the muralist ROA on the façade of the museum, consisting of the skeletons of an elephant, a rhinoceros, a grizzly and an okapi.¹⁴ As to the Network of Museums of the ULB, it has for more than fifteen years been working to forge links between the arts and sciences, particularly through its exhibitions ULBulles. *The ULB Museums welcome the comic strip* (2009) and *Unsuspected beauties of research. Drawing in the ULB collections* (2012)¹⁵ just two examples among many others activities.

IN CONCLUSION

The local, regional, national, and global context in which university museums and collections are situated, for example, in the growing questioning of the role and place of science in society, leads to changes within these institutions in order to remain credible and attractive for non-academic audiences. They can no longer be satisfied with being ‘scholarly museums’, but must reinterpret themselves to become ‘com-

¹² <https://mumons.be/a-propos/missions/> (accessed on 28/07/2021).

¹³ <https://www.gum.gent/fr> (accessed on 28/07/2021).

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Note that the street artist is thus faithful to the rule he has set himself: to be in touch with the local fauna (O. GRANOUX, ‘Street art: le mystérieux Roa rapatrié ses monstres fantastiques à Paris’, *Télérama*, 14/01/2021; <https://www.telerama.fr/>, accessed on 28/07/2021).

¹⁵ Organised in the Espace Allende (Solbosch campus), respectively from 23/10 to 7/11/2009 and from 13/01 to 12/03/2012 (see bibliography).

municative museums'¹⁶ using new languages, mostly digital, and new methods, such as the inclusion of amateur practices and co-creation (participatory research platforms, living labs, etc). By doing so they will manage to anchor science more firmly in everyday life, stimulating curiosity and encouraging the public's imagination, reflection and participation. For the producers, users and managers of the university heritage what better challenge than 'to publicly reaffirm and assume the will to be a cultural and social actor'¹⁷

This is because in the museums and collections of Belgian universities, as elsewhere, the need for a dialogue between science and society, between scientific heritage and societal issues, is no longer an issue: the time has come for "*citizen sciences, participatory sciences, responsible research and innovation*", which place the visitor "*at the heart of the processes and practices that accompany the construction of scientific knowledge in order to better understand its progress and evolution over time*", particularly with regard to the technical, economic and political contexts in which it is deployed.¹⁸

¹⁶ G. GIACOBINI, 'Attirer le grand public aux musées universitaires. L'expérience turinoise', lecture given at the international colloquium *Les musées universitaires et leurs publics*, University of Liège, 6/11/2019.

¹⁷ H. DREYSSÉ, 'Comment la question des publics pourrait-elle devenir centrale pour les musées universitaires ? Quelques aperçus sous diverses latitudes', lecture given at the international colloquium *Les musées universitaires et leurs publics*, University of Liège, 6/11/2019.

¹⁸ S. SOUBIRAN, 'Patrimoine des universités et médiation culturelle des sciences', in *La Lettre de l'Ocim*, 164, 2016, pp. 36-37.





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M. MOULIOU, S. SOUBIRAN, S. TALAS & R. WITTJE (eds.), *Turning inside out European heritage: collections, audiences, stakeholders* (= *Proceedings of the 16th Annual Meeting of the Universeum European Academic Heritage Network*, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, 11-13/06/2015), Athens, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens Press, 2018.

N. NYST, 'Musées et collections universitaires : interfaces entre chercheurs et grand public', in N. NYST, C. DUPONT & M.-E. RICKER (eds.), *Médiation muséale et patrimoniale. Enjeux et perspectives. Actes du colloque organisé à Beez (Namur) les 9 et 10 février 2012* (= *Documents du Patrimoine culturel*, 5), Bruxelles, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, 2014, pp. 136-145.

S. SOUBIRAN, 'Patrimoine des universités et médiation culturelle des sciences,' in *La Lettre de l'Ocim*, 164, 2016, pp. 33-37.

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The Mediation Laboratory of the Prehistomuseum: From the Kinesthetic to the Systemic and Philosophical Approach

Fernand Collin - *Director*

Marie Wéra - *Head of the Mediation Laboratory*

As the museum grew, from the Museum of Prehistory in Wallonia to the Prehistomuseum and the Prehistosite in Ramioul, it has never ceased to develop its practice of heritage mediation. A continuous process that still drives the education laboratory of our institution today. Writing this article has given us the opportunity to review the publications or working documents that exist in the deep layers of our 'education stratigraphy'. We thought it would be useful to extract some of them and make them available to the reader of this summary on our website [www.prehisto.museum/journal].

As early as 1989, the museum began to actively popularise prehistory. At that time the term mediation was not yet being used. Today the Prehistomuseum is an atypical museum

institution¹, unique in Europe, which conserves, studies and dynamically promotes the main collection of Belgian prehistoric archaeology, consisting of over 500,000 objects. **With a team composed mainly of archaeologists (20 out of 30 employees), the Prehistomuseum is "100% mediator"; it creates original and unprecedented links between the prehistoric heritage and the Homo sapiens of today, in an exceptional natural site of 30 hectares.** The Prehistomuseum is a MuseoPark that aims to contribute to the cultural development of as many people as possible. Since its reformulation and extension in 2016 on the basis of the Ramioul Prehistosite (inaugurated in 1994), it welcomes between 50,000 and 65,000 visitors per year. Our institution was founded by the non-profit organisation *Les Chercheurs de la Wallonie* (Wallonia researchers), a

¹ S. CHAUMIER [with F. COLLIN], "Fernand Collin, directeur du Préhistomuseum de Ramioul à Liège", Rapport de la Mission Musées du XXI^e siècle, vol. 5 - Contributions, Ministère de la Culture, Paris, 2017, pp. 11-14. See also: S. CHAUMIER & F. COLLIN, "De la pédagogie du geste et de la pop-archéologie !" in *La Lettre de l'OCIM*, 170, 2017, pp. 32-34.

learned society of amateur archaeologists who discovered the Ramioul cave in 1907 in the district of Flémalle. Today, it is recognised as a Category A museum by the Ministry of Culture and as an exceptional tourist attraction by the *Commissariat Général au Tourisme*. The Prehistomuseum is also supported by the Walloon Heritage Agency, with which it collaborates on preventive archaeological missions. In addition to its conservation and study mission and its expertise in preventive conservation, it regularly develops research in experimental archaeology and mediation with its two laboratories dedicated to these issues. The Prehistomuseum is active in the Network of Walloon museums, i.e., the *Musées et Société en Wallonie* (MSW), and in the International Network of Palaeolithic Museums and Sites (Ice Age Europe).

WHAT DOES THE PREHISTOMUSEUM OFFER ITS VISITORS TODAY AND WHY?

Today, in Belgium, in Flémalle near the city of Liège, the Prehistomuseum exists to “tell the extraordinary adventure of Homo sapiens to inspire our future”. Prehistory is fascinating, despite the few traces it has left us. It reveals our common origins but also the variety of cultural expressions of human societies since the dawn of time. To experience the extraordinary adventure of Homo sapiens through the activities of the Prehistomuseum is to follow in the footsteps of our own adventure and discover who we are.

Knowing where we come from will help us better understand our present, and why not also inspire our future?

In the museum and in its 30-hectare park, all individual visitors are invited to enjoy nine fun (“Have fun at...”) and educational (“To learn that...”) experiences, and they also have the opportunity to meet archaeologist-mediators every day who answer their questions and offer them the chance to try out prehistoric technologies (lighting a fire, firing a propellant, knapping flint, making pottery). Groups (schools, associations, companies, etc.) can choose from around thirty different options led by an archaeologist-mediator on the same tour. The experience is based on the common points between the Homo sapiens of prehistoric times and today: *Sapiens and his Ancestors, All Sapiens, Nomadic Sapiens, Hunting Sapiens, Farming Sapiens, Creative Sapiens, Builder Sapiens, Sapiens and Nature, Sapiens under the Magnifying Glass*.

WHAT IS THE DNA OF THE MEDIATING PREHISTOMUSEUM IN ALL ITS MUSEUM FUNCTIONS?

In 30 years, mediation has gradually become the active principle of the museum in all its dimensions. Today, it is the backbone of the institution’s cultural, scientific, social and tourist project. The museum-mediator is constantly inspired by the needs of its public, its collections and sciences. It is mediation that feeds the museum’s transversal attitude. Transversality al-

lows for decompartmentalisation and the agility that is essential to the museum, and does so in a relaxed manner. In this perspective, more than, and beyond the norms, the museum has a compass which directs and keeps us on course. It aligns all our actions, both in the strategic and the operational plan. The *raison d'être* explains why the mediation of the Prehistomuseum exists and, by extension, the Prehistomuseum itself. The mediation laboratory, through its action research, gathers the concepts with which the museum has grown up and integrates them into its didactic approach. Together with the education department and its mediators, it puts them into practice, evaluates them and transforms them.

The *raison d'être* of the Prehistomuseum is to allow everyone to experience humanity through an encounter with prehistory, archaeology, and nature.

The Prehistomuseum exists **for**, **by** and **with** its users. It is an archaeological museum that positions itself as a museum of society, ethics, and citizenship. It puts its collections into perspective by aligning itself with the questions of our society. It makes its scientific and societal approach and its management of doubt explicit. By affirming that humanity is universal but that it expresses itself differently in time and space, the Prehistomuseum is a museum of the **human being**, which seeks to understand and to make people understand the complexity of human behaviour. To do this, it identifies facts in prehistory and archaeology that are meaningful to us today and that can stimulate a

philosophical reflection on the destiny of our humanity. The Museum seeks to reach out to as many people as possible by making the heritage it is in care of and responsible for accessible intellectually, socially, and physically. It seeks to improve and develop its knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills to enrich the experience of its users. **The Museum team describes its approach as Pop Archaeology, i.e., “trying to make a museum for those who don’t like museums as well as for those who do”.**

The *raison d'être* of the Prehistomuseum is made up of 4 inseparable and complementary components that form the basis of the institution’s cultural and scientific project.

I. TO ENABLE EVERYONE TO DISCOVER OUR HERITAGE AND ITS RESOURCES.

The Prehistomuseum holds important collections of prehistory and other periods of our history, an archaeological site, documentary resources and a vast natural heritage. These resources are used to enable visitors to learn, to learn to learn, to learn to act and to react. Visitors are invited to question the notion of heritage through the diversity of its expressions and the relativity of its importance, depending on the viewpoint. The Museum postulates that ‘heritage does not exist’ but that it is our need (desire) to acquire, conserve, study and share it that generates heritage. The Museum seeks to understand and promote understanding of the phenomenon of heritage and its importance in the development and



understanding of our society. Heritage(s) participate(s) in the construction of heritage identities linked to the specificities of territories and of an era. But beyond time and space, the Museum is careful to highlight the universals common to all humanity rather than to exacerbate particularisms. In this way, it hopes to make a significant contribution to popular education, where the diversity of cultural expressions it provides for viewing and understanding develops a critical mindset that nuances our preconceptions and certainties. The words progress, evolution and civilisation are thus usefully questioned in the face of the debates on 'living together' that enliven our society.

2. TO ENABLE EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND THE ECOSYSTEM OF HUMANITY.

The Museum seeks to understand human behaviour in all its dimensions: social, cultural, economic, and environmental. The archaeological facts chosen as subjects of research, to be exhibited or animated, are approached in a systemic way in order to explain the complex and simultaneous interaction of the constituent elements of the ecosystem within which human societies are in constant mutation. Providing an explanation of transdisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity contributes to the development of a scientific culture where the understanding of the scientific process should allow the acceptance of 'doubt', the foundation of all research. The 'ecosystemic' approach calls together all of the Mu-

seum's heritage resources and the diversity of preconceptions of its different users. The Museum shows what it does not know and why it is doing research. It cooperates with its users to enrich their common reflections through the experience of the heritage.

3. TO ALLOW EVERYONE TO DISCONNECT, TO RE- CHARGE ONE'S BATTERIES, AND TO REBUILD ONESELF AS INDIVIDUALS AND/OR GROUPS OF INDIVIDUALS.

Because Prehistory evokes, in the collective imagination, destitution, survival, simplicity, lost paradise or primitiveness, and because the museum's infrastructure offers contrasting spaces (in the middle of nature, in the dark, barefoot, in the heart of the storage rooms), the Prehistomuseum is a place conducive to discovery, pleasure, well-being and meditation. The 'spirit of the place' provides favourable and varied conditions for exploring our existential questions: 'Where do we come from? Who are we? Where are we going?' The perspective offered to the public is facilitated by the didactics of sensory and emotional approaches that stimulate reflection. For example, the experience of 'primitive humanity' through the reproduction of simple gestures invites the observation of the immanence of complex thought; immersion in nature summons human culture by questioning the innate and the acquired. The Museum naturally invites the question of happiness: 'All things considered, are we happier than our ancestors?' This is why the

Prehistomuseum also defines itself as a 'museum of human beings' and as 'the Prehistory Museum Park experiencing humanity'.

4. TO ENABLE EVERYONE TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE AND PROFESSIONAL AND/OR PROFESSIONALIZING SERVICES.

The Prehistomuseum seeks to develop its knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills in order to best fulfil its *raison d'être* in the service of its audiences. This requires the constant improvement of the organisation, and the further development of specific and appropriate methodologies to better execute its meaningful museum functions. Positioning oneself as a museum enterprise implies management technologies adapted to the project and its challenges. The economic approach via the prism of the economy of functionality and cooperation, and the improvement of the organisation through quality management and collective intelligence, are entrepreneurial experiments. If these are successful, they could perhaps inspire other cultural and tourist enterprises. The Prehistomuseum is perhaps also a museum management laboratory. The Laboratory of Experimental Archaeology, the Centre for Conservation, Study and Documentation and the Mediation Laboratory are developing services and working and training methods that can be shared with colleagues from other institutions or students in the fields of prehistory, museolo-

gy, mediation, tourism and heritage, and economics. The Prehistomuseum seeks, undertakes, and experiments with modesty and ambition, its main objective being to be useful to its users and to the heritage.

THE DIFFERENT PHASES OF MEDIATION AT THE PREHISTOMUSEUM SINCE 1989?

1989–1993: the time of the Chinese proverb 'I hear and I forget; I see and I understand; I do and I remember'.

The Museum of Prehistory in Wallonia (inaugurated in 1987) seeks to make the visitor an active participant in his or her discoveries by creating activities for schools inspired by research in experimental archaeology. As a pioneer in this field, the museum has chosen to use prehistoric gestures (lighting a fire, flint knapping, etc.) to demystify prehistory and to facilitate the appropriation of the heritage by everyone, insisting on the differentiation between animation and research in order to contribute to scientific culture.²

1994–2000: the era of the 'Message Archaeology'. Creation of an infrastructure adapted to the mediation of school audiences as well as individual visitors to the Prehistosite of Ramioul. First theorisation on the mediation of Prehistory with the pedagogy of the gesture and the Message Archaeology. After the question 'how to animate', the questions of 'why animate and for whom?' were asked. The Prehistosite then developed a model of the visitor's

² F. COLLIN, 'Recherche, vulgarisation et pédagogie de la Préhistoire, réflexions à partir d'exemples d'animations au Musée de la Préhistoire en Wallonie', in *Bulletin de la Société royale belge d'Études géologiques et archéologiques "Les Chercheurs de la Wallonie"* 32, 1992, pp. 53–71.

journey in the mediation process (for and through heritage) based on the theory of environments of the new geography. The systemic mediation between games (fact/economy/culture/environment) that serves as the first method of animation in Prehistory common to the various archaeologist-animators of the museum. At the same time, the awareness that heritage is a permanent contemporary creation and a relative truth led to the concept of 'message archaeology', in which archaeology and the museum are considered to be mirrors of society with all their deformity. It is from this period that the maxim 'it is better to ask good questions than to invent bad answers'³ was created.

2001-2007: the time when the Prehistosite conceived the notion of 'mediator museum' in all its museum functions. Management of an increasingly important education department (between 10,000 and 15,000 school children and 4,000 to 5,000 individual visitors per year) and writing of the first **Code of Ethics for Mediation** designed to set out the profession of mediator-museum.⁴ The code of ethics follows the journalists' model, considering the analogy with this professions, being also an interface between facts and society. Mediation is entering a phase of **professionalisation** that gives it a central place, stimulating all

the other functions of the museum. The Prehistosite then takes on its own museum and declaring itself as a mediator- museum.

Geluk ... Welke criteria maken dat we een waardeoordeel kunnen vellen over het leven van de prehistorische mens of over dat van onszelf?

2008-2012: the era of 'active museum principles'.⁶ Official creation of the Mediation Laboratory to research, create, experiment with, and evaluate activities to feed the museum process as a whole. The Prehistosite becomes too small to accommodate 35,000 visitors per year. Preparation of the 4th phase of expansion. This is the time when the museum becomes a real museum enterprise which financial balance depends on 50% of its own income. It continued its reflection on the usefulness of the museum for society by defining the museum attitude by writing, as for a prescription, 'the active principles of the museum'. Since then, the challenges of the Prehistomuseum have been to be mediator, agora, scientific, living, sustainable, citizen, a tourist enterprise and a fair museum. The awareness that the mediator-museum acts in a 'museum ecosystem' dates from this period. The museum became aware of the need to draw inspiration from its biotope.

³ F. COLLIN, "Patrimoine archéologique et société : relations difficiles ? Le rôle du médiateur", in *Bulletin de la Société royale belge d'Études géologiques et archéologiques "Les Chercheurs de la Wallonie"* 40, 2000, pp. 7-15.

⁴ F. COLLIN, 2001-2002. "Médiation du patrimoine archéologique", in *Bulletin de la Société royale belge d'Études géologiques et archéologiques "Les Chercheurs de la Wallonie"* 41, 2001-2002, pp. 7-12.

⁶ F. COLLIN & M. WÉRA, "Le Musée-Médiateur du Préhistosite de Ramioul au Préhistomuseum: reformulation d'un projet muséal à Flémalle (Liège, Belgique)", in *Actes du 9^e Congrès de l'Association des Cercles Francophones d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de Belgique - 56^e Congrès de la Fédération des Cercles d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de Belgique* (Liège, 23-26 August 2012), Congrès de Liège, II, 2, 2017, pp. 163-173.

WHY DEFINE YOURSELF AS A MEDIATOR MUSEUM?

“ Because mediation is not just one of the Museum’s missions. Mediation is the active principle of the four fundamental missions of the Museum and of its functioning. The acquisition, conservation, and study policy and the communication and management projects of the institution are driven by the energy generated by the meeting, in the Museum, of the public, the heritage and science. By nature, the Museum creates links between its three pillars. The Museum is therefore a mediator throughout its entire operating chain, carrying out its missions through, for and with its audiences. The public is its *raison d’être*. The main characteristic of the Mediator-Museum is to desacralize Heritage and Science in the eyes of the public, by explaining the societal processes underlying mediation. Given that heritage and science are constantly changing concepts, the Mediator-Museum assumes the subjective and relative character of its mediation. The Mediator-Museum must make its heritage and research process explicitly in such a way that everyone can understand the ‘point of view’ that determines all its choices and actions. The ‘making-of’ is one of the deontological bases of the Mediator-Museum.

We can therefore consider that the Mediator-Museum fundamentally questions its missions, especially if they are sclerotic (acquiring for the sake of acquiring, conserving for the sake of conserving, studying for the sake of studying, communicating for the sake of communicating). Therefore, it must justify its projects by simultaneously answering the four questions: what, why, for whom, and how? Nevertheless, the Mediator-Museum is not an anarchist since it carries out its missions respecting the norms and deontological rules in use. It is thanks to this ‘positive schizophrenia’ that the Mediator-Museum offers the public dynamic projects that concern all visitors. Like an artist, the museum creates unexpected tensions at the heart of our fundamental contradictions. In reality, the museum summons the museum of each person into the agora of our existential questions. Indeed, like a museum, every man, woman, and child collect memories, sort them, store them, preserve them and transmit them, whether in an immaterial or material way. In this museum agora, everyone can reflect on their own collection policy, the preventive conservation of the most important things they want to preserve, and ask themselves how to pass on their values to their children... The museum is no longer limited in time and space!

The Prehistomuseum mainly preserves human nature, man’s own nature, the variety of his behaviour and the traces of his choices and actions during prehistory. The Museum is therefore no longer just a material collection, nor just a building. It becomes a collective process of recognition of heritage and a process that is engaged, moving, trendy or out of step in the world of knowledge.

(2007)

”

2013–2016: the era of ‘Pop Archaeology’ and the ‘5M theory’. Construction of the Prehistomuseum, a reformulation of the Prehistosite (the museum grows from 3 to 30 ha). Creation of 9 permanent indoor and outdoor exhibitions. This is the time when the museum realigns its mediation under the concept of ‘Pop-Archaeology’ inspired by the Pop-Philosophy. The ambition is to “make a museum for those who do not like museums and for those who do”. In its own way, the museum opens a debate on popular culture for itself, which will stimulate its creativity in the choice of permanent mediation devices (the exhibition experiences) and in the development of its mediation programmes. The systemic and popular approach involved stimulates the need to anchor mediation in the understanding of human behaviour. This is why the museum is developing a pedagogy of human behaviour called ‘the 5M’ (Matter, Model, Manner, *Mots* (Words), Metaphysics) which is the cornerstone of the Prehistomuseum and of all the exhibitions experiences offered to visitors. Updating the code of ethics. Organisation of training courses for teachers.

2017–2020: the era of the ‘museum enterprise’. Writing the current *raison d’être* of the museum through the adoption of an economic model derived from the circular economy, ‘the Economy of Functionality and Cooper-

ation’. This is the time of success management (attendance fluctuates between 55 and 65,000 visitors per year, including 30,000 alone for the school public). After calling itself a ‘prehistoric adventure park’, the museum defined itself as a ‘MuseoPark’. 2020 is the year of the Covid-19 health crisis and brings a risk of bankruptcy which leads to repositioning and restructuring the museum. The museum now integrates the management of health measures into its daily management. The paradigms of the services offered are redefined to return to the essentials and to the heart of the museum’s activities. Capacity levels were reduced, and the ‘choreography’ of the activities was reinvented. This reformulation is beneficial to many aspects of the museum’s life, and more specifically to the mediators’ professional life as they are given more latitude for initiative and creativity than before, opening up a ‘new era of possibilities’.⁷

2021 will be the era of the ‘transitional museum’. Following the success of the ‘Super Sapiens operation’⁸ launched in the middle of Covid-19 to make people think about our ability to react to adversity thanks to our human talents, the Prehistomuseum is writing its mantra: “Telling the extraordinary adventure of Homo sapiens to inspire our future!” This is accompanied by a new ‘storytelling’ which provides a more readable thread

⁷ PREHISTOMUSEUM ASBL, 2018. “Dossier de demande de renouvellement en Musée de catégorie A (juin 2018), II. Le projet culturel et scientifique” (Recognition submission in Museum of A category), 44 p. See in particular pp. 22-35 and pp. 42-43 [Archives Préhistomuseum cote PR-667].

⁸ M. WERA, “Lettre à nos visiteurs. Pourquoi un grand jeu ? Par un Homo sapiens de la Préhistoire et ses amis du musée” (Letter to our visitors. Why a big game? By a Prehistoric Homo sapiens and his Museum Friends), 2020. <https://www.prehisto.museum/journal/Lettre-à-nos-visiteurs>.

that emphasises the playful and educational aspect of the experiences offered and lived by individual visitors. Naturally, the Prehistomuseum is also looking to embark on the path of sustainable development mediation. With its partners, it is studying the opportunity to diversify its value propositions on its site but also on the additional 30 ha that the neighbouring quarry is proposing to reallocate to allow its development. The Prehistomuseum is currently working on the mediation of the Anthropocene (to be continued).

WHY IS THE PREHISTOMUSEUM SEEKING TO BECOME A TRANSITIONAL MUSEUM?⁹

When our children are walking in the streets to save our planet, what is the museum doing in the meantime? Interested in this question, the Prehistomuseum is gradually implementing a series of actions to become a concrete part of the transition. From a museum of 'duty' (duty to acquire, conserve, study and disseminate its collections), the museum would become a museum of transition: a museum that, with its collections and knowledge, tries to act to manage complexity, to connect knowledge and to connect people to participate in the search for a future for our planet and thus for our humanity. In line with its *raison d'être*, "the Prehistomuseum exists to enable everyone to experience our humanity through the encounter with Prehistory, Archaeology and Nature", the

museum team is convinced that the Prehistomuseum can and must also become a useful actor in sustainable development.

TO MANAGE COMPLEXITY

Is our Western society not progressively suffocated by a single (simplistic) way of thinking that results from the inexorable tensions caused by our certainties and our doubts, by our beliefs and our scientific truths? Prehistory is an extraordinary experimental scientific discipline with complex thinking we share every day with our visitors. Our education department develops daily activities that ensure that the systemic nature of archaeological facts and the complexity of human behaviour are expressed, seen and understood. Our mediation laboratory works on a universal approach to humanity by highlighting the diversity of its cultural expressions in time and space. It has developed the '5M theory', a pedagogy on the complexity of human behaviour which supports all the museum activities and exhibitions. Visitors are informed about this 'museum bias' in a permanent exhibition room called 'The Making of the Museum'.

Currently, the Prehistomuseum proposes a universal approach to human behaviour by postulating that, at any given moment, within a given Environment, somewhere in the World, our actions are determined by our **Metaphysics**, our **Words (Mots)**, our **Models**, our **Manners**, our **Materials** and that we are one and the same hu-

⁹ Prehistomuseum Team, "The reason for the Prehistomuseum", in *Ice Age Europe Magazine*, 2017, 2, pp. 36-37.

manity with Multiple expressions.

All human production carries with it the complexity of human behaviour. At a given moment (for example 40,000 years ago), within a given environment (for example at Huccorgne, in the province of Liège), in order to produce a biface, the craftsman was consciously or unconsciously conditioned by material constraints (the material, the model, the manner) and immaterial constraints (the metaphysics and words/*mots*).

- The Material: the available and chosen materials suitable for the project production.
- The Model: the reference recognised as such which is reproduced by the company.
- The Manner: the memory and sequence of gestures and experiences that allow the reproduction of the Models.
- Metaphysics: the sacred, myths, religions, taboos... authorising or not certain productions.
- Words (*Mots*): the way they organise memory, its transmission and express our intentions and actions.

TO LINK INDIVIDUALS

Doesn't our Western society suffer from loneliness and individualisms artificially aggregated by social networks where unique thoughts circulate freely? In contrast, the museum is a real space where the visitor can experience authentic objects from the past. It is therefore an ideal space for

rebuilding social ties. This is a project that our Centre for Conservation, Studies and Documentation (CCED) is undertaking by using its collections to gradually create a heritage community (in 2005, the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society already encouraged this type of initiative). At the SEAC, every week, curious citizens, amateur archaeologists (from the association *Les Chercheurs de la Wallonie*, at the origin of the museum), students (in archaeology, conservation, museology, etc.), professionals (from the Prehistoric Museum of the Walloon Region) and the general public come to the museum. Professionals (from the Prehistomuseum, the Walloon Heritage Agency, other museums) have come together to take an active part in the service chain for the reception of a collection coming from the preventive archaeological excavations of the Bierset site located under the runway of Liège airport, close to the museum. This project, a source of personal and professional fulfilment, gives rise to unlikely human encounters, which gradually weave a real community. We are currently witnessing a unification of the various 'social cells' hosted by the museum. We can see that these stimulating connections and compartmentalizations are leading to the emergence of a new 'heritage business culture'.

TO TRY TO UNDERTAKE THE MUSEUM IN A DIFFERENT WAY

Our Western society is questioning its dominant economic model and is

gradually exploring alternative models that it hopes will be more sustainable for the future of the planet and humanity. On its own scale, in its own particular ecosystem, the Prehistomuseum is also experimenting with a new economic model at the service of humans and nature that relies on intangible (potentially infinite) resources rather than on limited material resources. Today, the challenge of the Economy of Functionality and Cooperation undertaken by the museum is to create, deliver and capture value. With this entrepreneurial technology the museum integrates social and environmental issues into its daily management and research and development. At the heart of its actions and projects it places both the expectations and the potential of all its stakeholders (in particular its users). In this spirit, the Prehistomuseum is also looking for new ways of organising itself by favouring mechanisms of cooperation and collective intelligence to make the museum 'agile' so that it can adapt to our ever-changing society. The Prehistomuseum would like to gradually become a 'liberated company'. If the children who walk the streets to save the planet ever come to the Prehistomuseum, the team's wish is that they will find a museum that is relevant to their concerns and a museum that is coherent.

SOME PHILOSOPHY

Our Western society is becoming aware of the imminence and importance of the changes needed to save the planet. Paradoxically, the earliest



periods of human history can be the most inspiring for our contemporary debates. Disappearances, appearances, changes, universals, inventions, diffusions, particularities, migrations, etc. are phenomena experienced by humanity yesterday as well as today. Because it is foreign to us and remote in time, prehistory is conducive to the discovery and analysis of all these



phenomena without any polemics. It generates more serene debates of ideas that are useful for our existential questioning. Putting prehistory into perspective gives rise to philosophical reflection. In the concluding room of the permanent exhibition *Tous Sapiens* (All Sapiens), a small human head from the Early Neolithic period leads to a philosophical question:

Doesn't prehistory offer us points of view on humanity that nuance our preconceived notions of 'others' in time and space? It calls upon our citizenship and allows us to ask ourselves the question of Happiness.

Citizenship: Doesn't prehistory allow us to become aware that we are all part of the universal process of humanity and that we are its actors?

Points of view: Why look at our differences rather than our commonalities to understand 'others' in time and space?

Nuances: What meaning do we now give to the words evolution, progress, civilisation, when prehistory shows us that we are one and the same humanity with multiple expressions?

Happiness: What are the criteria that allow us to make a value judgment on the life of prehistoric man, if not of our own?

International Influence of Belgian Museum Education and Interpretation

Nicole Gesché-Koning

Cultural heritage educator

The first ICOM meetings included two Belgian museum curators, Henri Lavachery (Royal Museums of Art and History) and Léo Van Puyvelde (Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium). The two international ICOM committees linked to dealing with the world of education - *Museums for Children and Children's Activities in Museums* (no. 6) and *Educational Work in Museums* (no. 7) created in 1948 - as well as the one that followed theming one in 1953 - the *Committee for Education* - hardly had any Belgian members. Indeed, it was not until Only with the ICOM General Conference in Copenhagen (1974) did that ICOM opened up its membership to all museum professionals, including museum educators!

Since then, CECA International has included some Belgian museum educators in its institutional positions (secretariate, management, board members). Following a UNESCO recommendation, the 1971 creation of the Commis-

sion for Education and Cultural Action in Museums within Belgian museums was intended to promote educational work worldwide. Before its division into two distinct groups owing to the 1979 split of the country, the commission had organised the colloquium *Musée et vie sociale/Museum en samenwerking*. In addition to Luis Monreal, Secretary General of ICOM, the following people participated in the event: Danièle Giraudy from the Centre national d'art et de culture G. Pompidou, Heike Kraft from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Frankfurt, Simon Wilson from the Tate Gallery in London, Lars-Henrik Ilsen from the Zoological Museum of Copenhagen University and Ger van Wengen from the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden.¹

¹ *Musée et vie sociale / Museum en samenleving*, Bruxelles/Brussel, 1977.

ENGLISH AND GERMAN MEDIATORS TRAINED IN BELGIUM

Belgium had already welcomed some future CECA members, whose stay in the country influenced them.

Molly Harrison (1909-2002), curator from 1941 to 1969 at the Geffrye Museum in London², whose portrait by Elliott & Fry is exhibited in the National Portrait Gallery³ and who co-signed one of ICOM's first publications on education⁴, allegedly studied in a Belgian convent.⁵ The income from Molly's café⁶, named in honour of this pioneering and inspirational figure in the worlds of conservation and education, praised for her sense of ethics and inclusion, goes in full to the education department. Could other museum cafeterias adopt the idea, if not in full, at least partially?

Renée Marcoué (1906-1986), CECA secretary from 1965 to 1974, studied art history at the *Institut Royal Supérieur d'Histoire de l'Art et d'Archéologie* in Brussels, founded in 1903 and housed

at the *Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* (MRAH), known now as the Musée Art et Histoire.⁷ Only thereafter did she submit her PhD at the University of London, after which she joined the education department of the Victoria & Albert Museum. As editor of the CECA journal *Annales des Musées/ Museums Annual* from 1969 to 1974, she worked tirelessly to promote and defend museum education at international level. Her wish was to enliven education so that it would become one of the main engines of personal development in museums.⁸

*Cornelia Bruninghaus-Knubel (Nele)*⁹, CECA president from 1983 to 1989, seems to have had ties with Belgium from birth. Born in 1943, she was entrusted to a Belgian au pair when her mother resumed her theatrical career. Twenty years later, she came to Brussels and, on the recommendation of a musician friend of her parents, found accommodation in the rue des Petits Carmes belonging to Marcel Broodthaers, who had left that year to pursue literary studies in Paris. Claude

² <https://www.museumofthehome.org.uk> - accessed on 15/07/2021.

³ <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw106571/Mrs-Molly-Harrison> - accessed on 15/07/2021.

⁴ G. CART, M. HARRISON & Ch. RUSSELL, *Museums and Youth. Three Papers*, ICOM, 1952, 141 pp. See also: M. HARRISON, *Changing Museums. Their use and misuse*, London, Longman, Green & Co, 1967 and *Learning out of school: a teachers' guide to the educational use of museums*, London, Ward Lock Educational, 1954, revised edition 1970.

⁵ G. ADAMS, "Molly Harrison. Pioneering the accessible approach in museums", in *The Guardian*, 23 Aug 2002 - <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2002/aug/23/guardianobituaries>. obituaries1 - accessed on 15/07/2021.

⁶ <https://www.museumofthehome.org.uk/visit-us/mollys-cafe/> - accessed on 15/07/2021.

⁷ <https://art-histoire.be> and

⁸ R. MARCOUSÉ, *The listening eye: teaching in an art museum*, London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1961. See also: R. MARCOUSÉ, "Museums and education", in *Museum*, vol. 21, 1, 1968, pp. 4-8. and R. MARCOUSÉ, (ed.), *Museums, Imagination and Education*, Museums and Monuments Series, XV, UNESCO, 1973.

⁹ Her parents had chosen this nickname in reference to the heroine of the novel *Tijl Uilenspiegel*.

Vermeylen, the secretary of the Palais des Beaux-arts at the time, lived in the same building and introduced her to Belgian cultural life. She also strolled through the city in the company of a former Jewish hidden child, introduced to her by the psychiatrist Jean Vermeylen. The months spent in the capital were formative both artistically and humanely, as she still recalls with enthusiasm the strong impression left on her. She believes her stay in Belgium played an important role in her future career as a museum educator at the Museum Folkwang in Essen, at the Kunstmuseum in Düsseldorf before she founded the Children's Museum at the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg. Under her chairmanship, the CECA managed to consolidate the momentum acquired by the committee since the 1970s and to defend the profession of museum educators, the visitors' 'advocates'¹⁰.

BELGIAN PRESENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

In the first years of ICOM, museum educators did not have access to the council, as it admitted only curators and institution directors as members. This explains why only *Constant Pirlot* of the General Directorate of Arts and Letters is listed among the CECA Belgian members in *Museums Annual* the CECA journal launched by R. Marcousé. No. 4 (1972) mentions the survey on museums and young people carried out by J.

Boël, D. Nicolas and S. Gevers, with the help of the Friends of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and published in the journal *Clés pour les Arts* (June 1972). The survey concerned the museum in general (location, influence on museum work, services for young people, finances, relations between the educational service and other departments), the museum staff (selection, qualifications, and training courses), the public (how to contact young people and establish their social origin and age, how to work with schools - children and teachers), the activities within the museum (facilities on the premises, guided tours, workshops, loan services). No. 5 of the *Museums Annual* (1973) mentions a second Belgian member, *Thérèse Destrée-Heymans*, who presented the *Dynamusée*, opened in 1971, at the CECA conference in Budapest. The Belgian members of the committee then also included *René De Roo*, curator of the MRAH. As soon as other museum staff became members of ICOM, the list of Belgian CECA members grew. All of them were members of the *Association des Musées de Belgique* (the Belgian Association of Museums) and, above all, of the *Commission Éducation et Action culturelle dans les Musées*, namely the Belgian CECA¹¹.

Over the years, several Belgian museum educators participated in the annual conferences of the committee, but also in other international conferences on museum education and interpretation: R. De Herdt, L. De Jong, C. Del-

¹⁰ C. BRÜNINGHAUS-KNÜBEL, "Museum educator: the audience's advocate", in *Museum International*. Volume 45, 4, 1993, pp. 13-17 - <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0033.1993.tb01131.x> - accessed 17/07/2021. See also EAD, "Education through the museum as part of the museum function", in ICOM, *Running a Museum. A Practical Handbook*, 2006, pp. 119-132.

¹¹ See above: N. GESCHÉ-KONING, "La médiation muséale au cours de la deuxième moitié du XX^e siècle" and I. Lowyck's article.



*CECA European regional conference participants
at the Belgian Comic Centre Brussels, 1993*



tour-Lévie¹², T. Destrée-Heymans¹³, C. Fache¹⁴, Y. Hanosset, M. Laureys, S. Masuy, G. Pas¹⁵, J.-L. Petit, P. Saey, G. Stappaerts¹⁶, M. Vandevyvere, A. Van Dyck¹⁷, A. van Waeg¹⁸, S. Vermeiren, R. Verstraelen.

Bernard Van den driessche from the Museum of Louvain-la-Neuve, a regular member of the Commission for Education and Cultural Action in Museums, also co-founded the ICOM Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC), set up in 2000 and held its first meeting in 2001 during the ICOM General Conference in Barcelona. In 2004, he invited the chair of the committee, Cornelia Weber, to speak at the colloquium *Museums and University Collections of Arts and Civilisations held in the Museum of Louvain-la-Neuve*.¹⁹ Since its creation, this committee, like that of CECA, has had another Belgian member concerned with museum edu-

cation on its board, Nathalie Nyst.

This review of the Belgian presence on the international scene would be incomplete without mentioning Christine Boël, creator of the *Midis du cinéma* (Film middays) at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and president of the ICOM Foundation. The participants in the CECA European regional meeting in 1993 will remember her warm welcome.

BELGIAN MEMBERS OF THE CECA BOARD

Thanks to Thérèse Destrée-Heymans, CECA secretary of the CECA from 1978 to 1983, Belgium became better known within ICOM. From 1973 to 1988 she actively participated in the CECA annual conferences. Her enthusiasm led her to propose her candidacy to the CECA

¹² C. DELTOUR-LÉVIE, "Développement du service éducatif: réflexions et interrogations", in ICOM Hellenic National Committee (ed.), *CECA Annual Conference 1988: Establishing, Maintaining and Developing Museum Educational Services*, Athens, 1991, p. 146-149.

¹³ T. DESTREE-HEYMANS, "Disabled visitors in museums", in D. Cicha (ed.), *Music in the museum*, 1976, pp. 115-116.

¹⁴ C. FACHE, "Educational games", in T. HØYER HANSEN et al (eds), *Museums and Education*, Danish ICOM-CECA, 1982, pp. 57-61. See also the participation in 1986 of C. Deltour and C. Fache at the European colloquium in Ravello (Italy) on raising awareness of the heritage among teenagers: C. FACHE, "Les activités de la Commission Éducation et Action culturelle dans les musées de la Communauté française de Belgique", in *Pact News*, 18, March 1987, pp. 79-81.

¹⁵ G. PAS, "Kunstpluk, art as play", in ICOM CECA (ed.), *Museums and Communities*, Oslo, 1996, p. 59.

¹⁶ G. STAPPAERT, "Catching up with 'het Kiel'", in H. KRAEUTLER (ed.), *Heritage Learning Matters. Museums and Universal Heritage*, ICOM-CECA, 2007, Schlebrügge, 2008, pp. 345-346.

¹⁷ A. VAN DYCK, "Museum of Photography, Antwerp", in INC-ICOM & ASPAC (eds.), *Museums for integration in a multicultural society*, Calcutta, ICOM-Asia-Pacific Organisation, [1984], p. 92.

¹⁸ A. VAN WAEG, "Museums as a Platform for Intercultural Dialogue. What can Museums do for Community Art? What can Community Art do for Museums?", in G. JUNYING & M. FANG WANG (eds.), *Public Education and Museums. Museums for Social Harmony*, Jinan University Press & ICOM, 2011, pp. 173-179.

¹⁹ "Promoting university museums and collections: Concepts for and experiences on local, national, and international strategies".

international board, not without first ensuring that she would receive logistical assistance from the French Ministry of Culture. Elected secretary of the committee in 1977 during the General Conference of ICOM in Moscow and Leningrad, Thérèse hired me, with a contract of 9 hours/week, to become the secretary of the secretary! In that capacity I first organised the annual conferences in Rotterdam (1978) and Sesimbra, Portugal (1979). Thérèse and myself took over from Gudrun Vahlquist Hard the editorial work of the *ICOM Education* journal, n° 9 and 10. Belgian artist *Philippe de Gobert* provided the cover of n°10 as well as collaborating with Thérèse Destrée and myself to realise the didactic room of the museum on wooden altarpieces: a real teamwork between curators, museum educators, restorers and artists²⁰. Curiously, some twenty years later, I was involved with the same altarpieces in another context, namely the programme on public awareness of cultural heritage (see below).

OVER THIRTY YEARS OF BELGIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE CECA BOARD

Launched on the international scene, I quickly managed to work within the CECA Committee and to fulfill different positions thanks to my knowledge of various languages. In 1987, during the CECA conference in Paris, I dared step in as the interpreter of the prestigious guide, the director Pierre Quoniam, who conducted a visit of the Grand

Louvre. Thus began my involvement as translator in CECA conferences.

ICOM EDUCATION EDITORIAL BOARD²¹

At the request of Cornelia Bruninghaus Knubel, from 1987 to 2007, I undertook the editorial work of the CECA journal *ICOM Education*, begun with Thérèse Destrée and then continued by Udo Liebelt. I then proposed to various Belgian mediators to publish their work in the journal: Miriam Dom (n°17), *Bénédicte du Bois d'Enghien* (n°18) and *Véronique van Cutsem*, A. *Querinjean* and S. *Trivière* (n°19). The 20th issue, published thanks to the financial aid from ICOM on the occasion of its 60th anniversary, listed all the publications focusing on education within ICOM issued by the various education committees. Belgian representatives, *Christine Holef* and *Greet Stappaerts* contributed in n°21 on 'Museums and adolescents'.

CECA SECRETARY (1992-1995) AND PRESIDENT (1995-1998)

From 1992 to 1995, I was appointed secretary of the committee. It gave me the opportunity to organise in Brussels, Louvain-la-Neuve and Ghent, with the help of Eta Helming, the second European CECA regional conference (after that run in London and Liverpool in 1991). Many Belgian museum educators shared their often pioneering activities with international colleagues and published their contributions in the

²⁰ *ICOM Education*, 9, 1979-1981, pp. 12-17 - <http://ceca.mini.icom.museum/fr/publications/icom-education/>

²¹ All issues of *ICOM Education* can be consulted online: <http://ceca.mini.icom.museum/fr/publications/icom-education/>



CECA European regional conference participants at the reception organised by Christine Boël, Brussels, 1993



conference proceedings²².

During my presidency from 1995 to 1998 (with Dorothee Dennert from the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn as secretary), Belgium was represented by Marie-Cécile Bruwier from the Museum of Mariemont and myself at the 2nd seminar on education organised in Cairo (April 1996). The same year, CECA accepted the challenge launched one year earlier by the ICOM-CC Conservation Committee and published the second ICOM *Study Series* devoted to the CECA Committee²³. It encouraged the multiplication of contacts with other international committees such as the ICOM-CC Conservation Committee, that for the training of personnel ICTOP, and that for documentation CIDOC. At the request of ICOM, I represented CECA at the meeting *Museums, Civilization and Development* held in Amman, Jordan from April 26 to 30, 1994²⁴.

CECA AND HERITAGE CONSERVATION

The role of education in heritage conservation has brought the two most important ICOM committees to work together. Gaël de Guichen from ICOM-CC was invited by CECA and CECA by ICOM-CC: Five minutes for eternity proposes to see each education activity dedicate five minutes showing that heritage conservation concerns us all.

TRAINING OF GUIDES - LET US PROTECT OUR HERITAGE TOGETHER (1996 TO 1998)

The programme was coordinated by Catheline Périer-D'Ieteren, professor at the *Université libre de Bruxelles* (the Free University of Brussels) and member and former chairperson of the ICOM-CC committee. The Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, the Royal Museums of Art and History and the Royal Institute of Cultural Heritage took part in it, and had, among other partners, CECA. As CECA representative it has been a real pleasure to write the 'youth' version to raise awareness on the value of heritage in collaboration with Gaël de Guichen, from ICCROM (International Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property)²⁵.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

The project originally planned as part of a larger ICOM program involving several international committees was submitted to the European Commission, but was not retained. CECA reintroduced a limited programme to raise awareness on heritage preservation among young Europeans to the European Commission. This time it was selected as part of the Raphael programme (DGX), and it won the 1997 Heritage Days audiovisual prize.

The project invited people to travel and explore the various paths having

²² N. GESCHÉ-KONING (ed.), *European Museum Communication*, Brussels, ICOM-CECA, June 1993.

²³ https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/2_ICOM-CECA.pdf - accessed on 16/07/2021.

²⁴ N. GESCHÉ-KONING, "The Educational Mission of the Museum", in ICOM (ed.), *Museums, Civilization and Development/Musées, civilisation et développement*, Amman, ICOM, 1994, pp. 385-389.

²⁵ C. PÉRIER-D'ETEREN (ed.), *Public et sauvegarde du patrimoine*, Brussels, ULB, 1999 & A. Blondé (ed.), *Les jeunes et la sauvegarde du patrimoine*, Rome, 2001. - https://www.iccrom.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/2000_blonde_jeunes_sauvegarde_75872_light.pdf - accessed on 31/07/2021.



*Belgian participants at the final event of the programme All Roads Lead to Rome
here at the Hadrian's villa in Tivoli
© Peter Van der Plaetsen*

forged our cultural identity. The subsidies granted by the Commission were managed by the Royal Museums of Art and History (MRAH) and the Belgian coordination of the project was entrusted to Claudine Deltour-Levie, Françoise Putman and An Wielockx. The MRAH hosted the colloquium on *“Les publications éducatives muséales. An innovative approach to the Roman world (22-25/1/1997)”*, enabling the partners of the project²⁶ to discover the wealth of Belgian education departments.

The final event took place in Rome and, on the Belgian side, owed much to the participation of the Provinciaal Archeologisch Museum Zuid-Oost Vlaanderen - Site Velzeke under the direction of Peter Van der Plaetsen and the Sint Pieters Instituut of Ghent. From 28 May to 1 June 1998, no less than 400 young Europeans aged 15 to 18 from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom, visited the Roman forum, Hadrian's villa and the site of Ostia. Emerging from the request voiced by the CECA members of each participating country, the participants presented their artistic creations, the result of their reflections on the preservation of Rome and its presence in their respective countries²⁷.

BELGIAN NATIONAL COORDINATION WITHIN THE CECA INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

At the European regional level, where I initially represented Belgium, I participated in the 2011 national coordinators' meeting in Rome and Salerno (Italy). Today, for the sake of efficiency, two CECA Belgian members oversee the link between the international CECA and the museum educators of the two linguistic communities in the country: Stéphanie Masuy and Sofie Vermeiren, to whom we owe the organisation of the CECA 2021 conference in Leuven on the theme of *Co-creation within and outside the museum*. Dialogue, cooperation, inclusion, participation of the public, but also harmonious co-creation between the different departments of the museum, such are the new visions of the museum and its mission. Museum education is no longer solely confined to the museum's education and cultural departments: now the entire institution must embrace the notion of being a “mediator museum”²⁸.

²⁶ Museo nacional de arte romano de Merida, English Heritage, Museo nazionale di Castel Sant'Angelo, Rome, Swedish Association of Museum Educators, Musée des Antiquités de Rouen, Museums-Pädagogisches Zentrum, Munich, Danish Skoletjenesten, The New Haifa Museum, Israel, Tullie House, United Kingdom, and Landesmuseum für Kärnten, Klagenfurt, Austria

²⁷ N. GESCHÉ-KONING, “All Roads Lead to Rome - A European Project of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)”, in *Archäologische Museen und Stätten der Römischen Antike - Auf dem Wege vom Schatzhaus zum Erlebnispark und virtuellen Informationszentrum?* Köln 2001, pp. 197-203, and “Impact du programme européen *Tous les chemins mènent à Rome* après dix ans”, in *Congrès de Namur, Actes*, Namur 28-31.VIII.2008, Presses universitaires de Namur, 2011, pp. 1283-1293.

²⁸ See *supra*, p. xx

AUTHORS

Fernand Collin is a prehistorian and director of the Prehistomuseum, a reflective practitioner who has moved from excavation to research in experimental archaeology and then to the development of new museum approaches to Prehistory and the mediation of archaeology. In 1989, he created the first animations of the Museum of Prehistory in Wallonia (Flémalle, Belgium). On this basis, in 1994, he conceived the Prehistosite of Ramioul, which he completely reformulated with his team to propose, as of 2016, a new concept of museum and museum approach: the Prehistomuseum and Pop-Archeology. He is also a lecturer at the Chair of Museology at the ULG, a scientific collaborator at the Chair of Prehistory at the ULG, co-founder of the association Museums and Society in Wallonia (MSW) and president of the excavation section of the Royal Commission for Monuments, Sites and Excavations.

Diane Degreef is an advisor in new technologies within the MSW non-profit organization (Museums and Society in Wallonia). She is also responsible for the project «Semaine Jeunesse et Patrimoine» (Youth and Heritage Week) since 2019, a project of mediation through games and heritage awareness aimed at young people and coordinated by the Heritage Days Secretariat.

Nicole Gesché-Koning is an art historian and anthropologist. She has divided her career between teaching at the Royal Art Academy in Brussels and museum education, mainly at the Royal Museums of Art and History in Brussels. She has also taught courses in conservation ethics at the Art Academy in Kinshasa and at the Senghor Francophone University in Alexandria. Within CECA, she acted as secretary (1992-1995), president (1995-1998), editor of the journal ICOM Education (1987-2007), interpreter at various conferences and Belgian national correspondent (2008-2017).

Laura Goyens is an independent expert in the Heritage and Culture Department of the King Baudouin Foundation, where she is, among others, responsible for managing the files of the Irène Heidebroek-Eliane van Duyse Fund, intended to reward projects aimed at bringing young people into museums.

Romain Jacquet is a heritage-oriented project manager and ICT trainer at MSW. Graduate in History (Ulg) and Applied Cultural Management, with a specialization in Cultural Heritage (ULB), he joined the MSW team in 2017. Since 2019, he is responsible for the Behind the Museum project, a web platform of virtual museum visits accessible free of charge, thus actively collaborating in the preservation and transmission of heritage to as many people as possible.

Clément Lalot has been director of the MSW - Musées et Société en Wallonie- non-profit organization since 2017. A graduate in Art History (UCL) and Management Sciences (Louvain School of Management), Clément Lalot joined the museum sector in 2013 as a scientific attaché at the Musée du Petit Format. He now puts his experience and know-how at the service of the promotion and representation of museums and museum authorities in Wallonia and oversees

the complementary work carried out by the members of the team, particularly in the context of cultural mediation missions.

Isabel Lowyck Imagination and wonder inspire me on both a personal and professional level. After studying art history, I specialised in cultural management at the University of Leuven (KU Leuven), at the University of Antwerp (UFSIA) and at the Vlerick Business School. Over the past twenty years, I have been active in various cultural contexts (internship at the V&A in London; employee at the Royal Museums of Art and History, Brussels; project coordinator at the Association of Flemish Museums; founder and coordinator of AmuseeVous; head of the public relations department at the M Museum in Leuven; Business manager Belgium Guide ID Belgium & France and lecturer at the University of Antwerp.

Jo Luyckx is a consultant and educational collaborator for the guide service, room design/renovation or temporary exhibitions of the city of Ghent. He is also responsible for the museum library and the follow-up of the digitisation project of the audiovisual material as well as the management of the collections and loans.

François Mairesse is a museologist, professor of cultural economics and holder of the UNESCO Chair on the study of museum diversity and its evolution, Museum Prospect, at the Université Sorbonne nouvelle - Paris 3 (CERLIS, CNRS, labex ICCA). He also teaches museology at the École du Louvre. He previously directed the Royal Museum of Mariemont in Belgium (from 2002 to 2010) and chaired the ICOM International Committee of Museology (ICOFOM). He has published numerous articles and books in the field of museology, cultural economics, and cultural mediation.

Aurielle Marlier is a communications officer at MSW. She has a degree in Romance languages and literature, general orientation (UNamur), and a master's degree in book sciences and professions (UCL). She started her career in the publishing sector, as an editorial manager and press officer. She joined the MSW team a few months ago, not only as a communications officer, but also as Marmaille&Co project manager. She is now in charge of federating the member museums around this label and coordinating, throughout the year, transversal actions to ensure the promotion of the museums to the young public and to families.

Stéphanie Masuy has run the Public Service of the Museum of Ixelles (Brussels) since 2011. Previously, she worked during nine years for the Council of Brussels Museums (now Brussels Museums), the federation of Brussels museums. She was deputy director and coordinator of events such as «Les Nocturnes des Musées Bruxellois,» the children's games «Tom & Charlotte» and the first four editions of «Museum Night Fever,» the night of the Brussels museums. Stéphanie supports collaborative developments in the cultural sector and is a board member of Brussels Museums and of the General Assembly of Lasso, the Brussels platform for cultural participation. Since 2019 she has also been the ICOM CECA national correspondent for French-speaking Belgium.

Nathalie Nyst is a lecturer in the Master in Cultural Management at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social Sciences of the Free University of Brussels (ULB) and coordinator of the ULB Museum Network since 2003. She is also attached to the Directorate of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, mainly in charge of public museum policies. Treasurer of the UMAC (International Committee for Museums and University Collections of ICOM), she is also a long-standing member of Universeum (European Academic Heritage Network).

Daphné Parée holds a doctorate in history from the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and wrote her thesis on the history of the Museum of Mariemont. As an independent researcher, she is interested in the history of museums and the actions of public authorities in the field. After having been responsible for the Higher Schools of Arts within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation for thirteen years, she joined the administrative team of the Royal Academy of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts of Belgium in 2017. She is currently in charge of the library, archives, and art collections.

Alice Terwagne has overseen projects and training at MSW since 2017. With a degree in Tourism Science and Management (ULB), she has a double function: she is responsible for the promotion of museums to tourist organisations and manages, coordinates and sets up numerous training courses for museum professionals with the aim of professionalising the cultural sector.

Since 2019, **Pieter Van der Gheynst** has been the director of Brussels Museums non-profit organisation, the association of over 120 Brussels museums. Previously, he was project manager for the Brussels Card and Museum Night Fever. He is also a board member of museumPASSmusées, the national card for Belgian museums, and was previously a board member of AmuseeVous/MOOSS (now BAMM!), which aims to bring young people and museums together. He is particularly interested in the opening and accessibility of museums to the widest and most diverse public possible.

Hildegarde Van Genechten has been working in the field of cultural heritage since 2003, first as a consultant in the field of audience research at Culturele BiografieVlaanderen (Cultural Biography in Flanders). Since 2008 she has been

an advisor on participation and education at FARO, the Flemish interface for cultural heritage. FARO stands for practical support and development in the field of museums, but also focuses on heritage in the broadest sense (archives, heritage libraries, heritage centres...). It has set up various projects, networks, groups of colleagues and training courses on the themes of heritage education, mediation, and participation, always for and with the actors in the field. Her main interest is how to involve (new) audiences and how to anchor museums and other heritage organisations in society.

Marie Wéra is an art historian and archaeologist, one of the first mediators hired in 1994 at the Ramioul Prehistosite. From the daily animation, she quickly participated in the reflection on the meaning of mediation and translated the different concepts that emerged during the history of the institution into tangible and inspiring realities for the museum's educational service. Since 2007, she has overseen the mediation laboratory and has provided training both inside and outside the Prehistomuseum. She conducts action research that feeds the institution's challenges.

ADDENDUM

The place of museum education at the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium (RMFAB)

Thérèse Marlier & Brigitte de Patoul, former heads of the French-speaking Educational Service of the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium - to be read after p. 14.

As early as the 1910s, the future Chief Curator Hippolyte Fierens-Gevaert already insisted on the educational role of museums. In 1921, on his initiative, walking lectures were organized «with the aim of a broader artistic dissemination not only devoted to teaching».

And in 1924, he presented the project of creating a group specifically linked to the MRBAB for the «dissemination of art» “L’Œuvre de Diffusion Artistique” which started the following year. Its activities mainly focused on conferences and guided tours were addressed to all audiences, both schools and otherwise including, intellectual societies, workers’ associations or craftsmen.

In 1970, in the wake of the immense success of the guided tours of the exhibition «Bruegel, the painter and his world» (20.8 to 19.11.1969) and in replacement of the “Diffusion Artistique”, the Chief Curator Philippe Roberts-Jones created the Educational Services (French and Dutch speaking), integrated into the organic framework of the MRBAB.

While continuing the work of the “Diffusion Artistique” Department with guided tours and lectures, the Educational Service quickly expanded its scope of action, especially for children and young people. A tailor-made educational program for primary and secondary school audiences was offered to schools. New formulas aimed to encourage children and young people to develop their aesthetic sensibility: visits based on dialogue, soon to be enriched by museum kits, «animations», and new activities combining the discovery of works of art with creative workshops. At the same time, the visits aimed at the adult public included a wider

and diversified offer: workshop-visits, musical walks, literary walks, storytelling visits for families involving parents and children, etc...

The logo «Regarder Comprendre Aimer» (To Look, Understand, Like) created in 1990 expresses the philosophy of this work of sensitization to art.

Finally, since 1994, thanks to the support of the Chief Curator Éliane De Wilde and a large team of collaborators involved in the Educational Service, the latter has opened up to new audiences by developing specific programs: Deaf guides are trained to welcome the deaf and hearing-impaired public in sign language; the «Equinox» program is aimed at the visually impaired and blind public; the «Comet» program receives groups of psychologically fragile or mentally impaired people; the «Sesame» program is devoted to an underprivileged public by collaborating with refugee reception centers, literacy classes, CPAS (public social welfare centre), etc.

The presence of many trainees in the Service, exhibitions showing the approach and the results of creative workshops, participation in European projects, collaboration with many cultural, social, or medical associations, have allowed a deepening of the work of mediation and the spreading of practices and experiences.

Today, the arrival of new technologies constitutes an innovative contribution to mediation. While the various programs continue, the educational service, which has become the «Cultural Mediation Service», offers virtual tours on the MR-BAB's website (<https://fine-arts-museum.be/en/education>), video capsules on a work or an exhibition, educational files to prepare for a visit to the museum or to explore a theme in greater depth...

Translation Deep-L. Revision: Marina Gross-Hoy



This book is part of the desire of the Committee for Education and Cultural Action of the International Council of Museums ICOM CECA to draw the history of museum education and interpretation throughout the world. ICOM Belgium has not hesitated to embark on the adventure by publishing this first volume devoted to Belgium, a pioneer country in this field. From the oldest museum didactic material to the school museums, the birth of education departments developed during the 20th century and the reflections that have led to their development over the last twenty years, the reader is invited to discover the richness of a profession at the origin of the idea of the “mediator-museum”, at the service of its visitors and society.

“ An education department is not just another service in a museum, it is the whole museum at the service of education .

(Ignace Vandevivere)

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