

## **Rapport ICOM CECA 2023**

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SIG on Sensory Mediation

GIS mediación sensible



### **Introduction**

The Special Interest Group (SIG) on Sensory Mediation has eight members from four French-speaking territories: Belgium, Switzerland, Quebec and France. The representatives are all women who are in charge of public services and cultural action at museums and art centres. This SIG draws from the expertise of Lucie Aerts, Marion Boutellier, Vanessa Desclaux, Louise Giroux, Anne-Sophie Grassin, Sarah Mattera, Fanny Serain, Claire Thiboutot.

### Context in 2023

In 2022, Anne-Sophie Grassin published an article in the *La Lettre de l'OCIM* based on a qualitative questionnaire study administered the end of five of the eight sensory mediation projects that she had initiated at the Musée de Cluny. The study findings reveal that mediation provides visitors with four key benefits, as it:

- Transforms and enriches their relationship with the works of art
- Gives them a greater sense of autonomy
- Enhances their enjoyment of the works of art
- Lets them see the museum in a new way

Based on these conclusions, the SIG continued its research and refined its method to achieve its goal of defining the field of sensory mediation.

In 2023, the SIG on Sensory Mediation met once a month on a Friday, except in July and August, for a total of 20 hours of discussion. An agenda was created and minutes were taken for each meeting.

## 2023 meetings

While an initial definition of sensory mediation was established by the group in 2022 with a diagram based on a word cloud and presentations of sensory mediation projects, the 2023 sessions enriched resources that included a bibliography, diagrams, lists, and analyses of sensory mediation projects.

- January 2023: This year started with a talk by guest speaker David Howes, a sensory anthropologist and the co-director of the Centre for Sensory Studies. Howes was one of the first researchers to theorize about sensory museology. The *Sensory Studies Manifesto* shows that we are witnessing a veritable sensory revolution that is in opposition to approaching art and culture through texts and reading (textualization/discourse) and that stresses the primacy of the visual. However, museums around the world have become increasingly aware of how the senses can be used as a lens for mediation, which serves as a warning against "sensory marketing."
- February 2023: Each member of the SIG took up a term from David Howes' talk to contextualize it within the definition of sensory mediation. Each person provided an example of a project for each term. Concepts such as "atmosphere," "emotions," "textualism," and "decompartmentalization" were discussed in particular.
- March 2023: The group decided to produce a collective publication for the professional museum community that will be a primer on sensory mediation. For this publication, we are working on examples of projects and are defining the most essential keywords.
- April to May 2023: Two sessions were devoted to deciding on the format of the primer and the structure of the texts (each word must be supported by a theoretical point of view and be accompanied by a project as an example, a toolbox to help design a mediation project related to each word, and bibliographical references).
- May to June 2023: Discussions continued on which method to choose to create the primer on sensory mediation.
- September 2023: We made clarifications to further guide the work on our future collective publication, i.e. we will work on the ten words that best articulate the definition of sensory mediation.
- October to December 2023: The last three sessions of the year were an opportunity to discuss the first papers written on this topic.

## **Presentations on sensory mediation from the CECA ICOMSIG**

- Anne-Sophie Grassin, the head of the public services department at the Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne (MAC VAL) in Vitry-sur-Seine, gave a presentation on sensory mediation for CIPAC and ICOM France.
- Marion Boutellier, the head of the public services department at the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, coordinated an OCIM training course at the Musée Fabre on the role of emotions in cultural mediation.

## **Upcoming in 2024**

Articles will be drafted on the ten words related to sensory mediation. Each article will be under two pages.

First half of 2024: Drafting of the articles.

Second half: Search for a graphic designer and a publisher.

*Fanny Serain (Head of exhibitions, cultural department of the town of Meyrin, Switzerland) joined the group in June 2023.*

*Morgane Gouzien, (Coordinator of reception and mediation at the FRAC MECA (Bordeaux) left the group in September 2023; she did, however, take part in most of the year's sessions.*

*GRASSIN, A.-S. "Le tournant sensible de la médiation culturelle", La Lettre de l'OCIM, n°202-203, July-October 2022.*