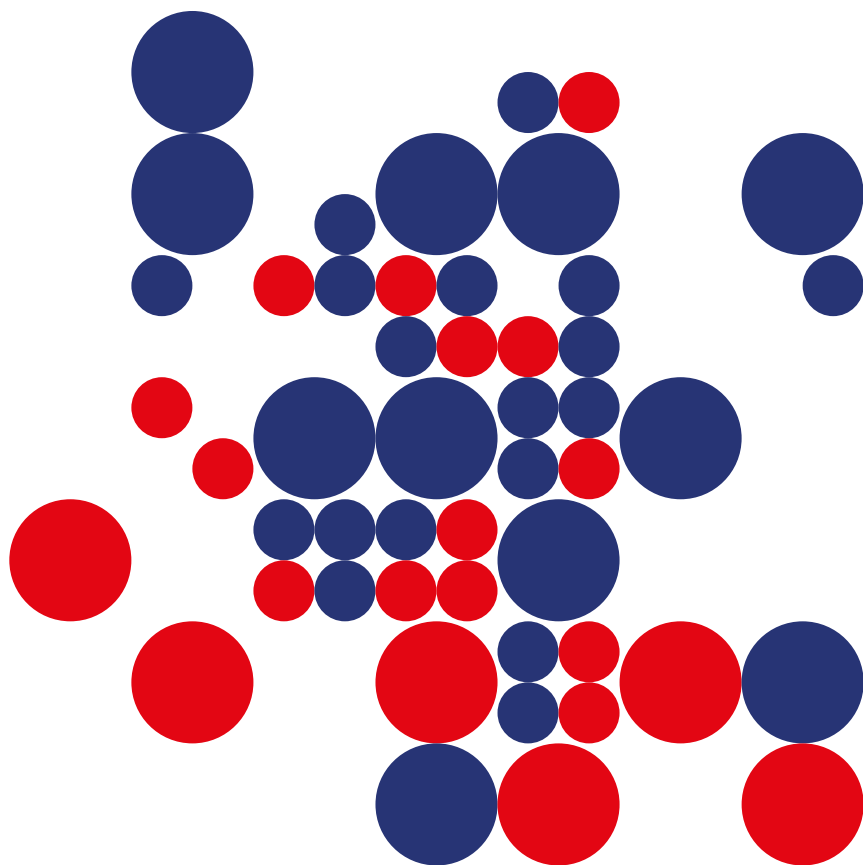




History of Museum Education and Interpretation *France*

Sylvie Savare

History of museum education and interpretation – France

Scientific editors: Nicole Gesché-Koning & Marie-Clarté O'Neill

Author: Sylvie Savare

Original French

Translation in English: DeepL revised by

Vicky Airey (Preface), Nicole Gesché (Chapter I),
Susan Rowe (Chapter II), Jenny Pistela (Chapter III),
Marina Gross-Hoy (Chapter IV)

Publication supported by ICOM-CECA, SAREC and ICOM France

Cover, layout design and layout: Studio Olbinski – Liège www.olbinski.be
with the financial assistance of ICOM Belgium Wallonia-Brussels

© 2025 CECA / ICOM France

ISBN : 978-2-492113-30-7

Preface

Danièle Giraudy

Honorary General Curator of French Museums & Heritage

Mediation, Museums, Change

This is an idea that would have greatly pleased Georges Henri Rivière, creator of the *Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires* in Paris and one of the founders of ICOM in 1946, introducing the word “delectation” into the definition of a museum: “to commission each country to conduct a study on the art and manner of helping the public to visit this institution.” Of course, Nicole Gesché-Koning and Marie-Clarté O'Neill are enthusiastically taking care of this publication on behalf of France, just as they look after our students at the University and the *École du Louvre*. One of them, a Master's student called Sylvie Savare, has just written a brilliant history on the subject, which will soon be published and disseminated online by CECA, the Committee for Education and Cultural Action of the International Council of Museums.

The panorama painted by Sylvie Savare is clear, didactic, illustrated, and sometimes surprising when it describes the practices associated with change in museums, leading us to think about their collections, our habits, and the metamorphoses in society which they reflect.

From the sometimes pompous lecturer of the past, standing in front of masterpieces and imparting his knowledge to admiring and silent visitors, to the inexhaustible castle guide describing “the shoes of the Black Prince from the 18th century and his sole 17th century chapel” imagined by French comedian Jacques

Dufilho, to the “tactile mediator” of today, whirling around the immersive exhibition between Chat GPT and Chatbot, there have been many stages. Sylvie Savare makes an analysis of three centuries, and of many places: the King’s Palace belongs now to its visitors, and the temple has become a forum for discussion. Animators and then mediators have intervened, dialoguing with their groups, demonstrating in science museums, doing creative work in art museum workshops, integrating musicians, dancers, psychotherapists, and other various carers for baby or pre-nursery visitors when the museum becomes part of a social or daycare centre, patching up needs forgotten elsewhere. Culture is the vital necessity that is the first to be cut when we find ourselves facing bankruptcy or a pandemic. (On second thoughts, we reopened hairdressers’ salons during Covid in France...)

The museum adapts to its evolving audiences, and its valuable intermediaries also adapt when students are followed by schoolchildren, then small children (for whom the guide lowers the works exhibited and their explanations to their height), and people with disabilities (in which case the mediator makes his comments in sign language and provides Braille labels). As a psychologist, he/she helps “first-time visitors” to choose which works of the collection to exhibit and even how to write labels: should one write *pyxis* or box? Louis XIV or Louis 14? Or will you be able to dream freely during a Zen and meditative visit, where the objects “speak for themselves”? Would you feel reassured, accompanied by a dog? Or would you rather stay where you are and have the museum come to you with a museum kit, on a museum bus or even on a boat? Perhaps you would prefer to bring your own treasures to the museum, and line them up alongside those others which are priceless?

Because what is also changing within the museum is the relationship and role that conservation contributes or allows to mediation and interpretation. Often, the latter still intervenes in rooms where displays have been completed, or pictures already hung or in exhibitions ready to open. This is thus far too late to be

integrated into the work of the museum team and is rarely involved from the very beginning of the design stage of the future installation. With his/her different training background - different salary and status - the specialist curator, often unaware of the needs of the public, does not have the time or will to meet museum visitors regularly, nor to think of them *in relation to* the collections for which his/her responsibility is to bring items to life. Two professions, two educational backgrounds, two career paths, one unquestioned hierarchy.

It is this teamwork, finally being organized here and there, with teaching and best practices in mediation taking shape, that Sylvie Savare studies in this publication, with the attentive detachment of a historian. Today, museums, which are becoming increasingly expensive, like to expand, move their offices, staff, and abundant stores outside the building to “air” their collections on display, and desperately seek the sponsorship they lack to become profitable and therefore attractive institutions. Mind the ethics! Museums have continued to cling to the word “delectation” in their seventh definition, placing it at the end of the sentence before disappearing, whilst its visitors zap through their collections on a tour shared with *TikTok*, *QR codes*, and audio guides. Yet the museographer presenting the work can make it eloquent if it becomes the subject of a triple input, with the collection specialist who articulates its elements, and the public, in a museological training programme me which may or may not integrate all disciplines.

And so, we have the *slow visit*, where the public’s gaze remains fixed on the fast food of the museum café-restaurant and the fast fashion of the T-shirts in its shop. This slow visit brings us full circle, recalling Bergotte’s Proustian stroll in front of the small yellow wall painted by Vermeer, long before the birth of the tour guide. Such a person would have been incredulous faced with the crowds waiting at the exhibition entrance having registered well in advance thanks to the Cloud in a kind of “regulated flow”. The museum might even open to several hundred million people only coming for a fast look, a single work, to photograph themselves in front of it, thus turning their backs to it.

Have a quick look at the fabulous adventures of mediation and interpretation, noting in passing the courageous inventions which are rarely expensive when produced regionally, often by individuals rather than institutions, sometimes disappearing with them before being reborn elsewhere, and each time described as innovative because there was no previous history to consult. Compare the budgets allocated to these activities and their locations, or their publications - small leaflets and free brochures - in contrast to the heavy catalogues, take a deep breath, and invent something of your own... Go for it. And enjoy!

Editorial

Nicole Gesché-Koning

Scientific coordinator

Marie-Clarté O' Neill

President, ICOM-CECA

For several years, CECA has been pursuing the ambitious project of publishing a series of books describing the history of museum education and interpretation country by country. After Belgium and Brazil, and before China, which is also in preparation but not yet submitted, the 2025 project is the publication of this book on France, based on a brilliant master's thesis at the *École du Louvre*. This new volume, which will be presented at the ICOM General Conference in Dubai, was written by Sylvie Savare, member of the CECA Board in charge in this context of CECA's strong presence on social media.

The principle behind the publication is to draw on two possible sources of information, depending on the case. Either the professional community, and in particular the ICOM network and more specifically CECA, are called upon and work on a national level, as was the case in Brazil, for example, or the work is based on academic research of excellence supervised by CECA experts, as is the case with the work on France, presented here at SAREC.

Three ways of treating the subject can be adopted according to each country: a presentation of a number of personalities who have marked the discipline (the approach adopted by Belgium, placing them in a chronological and historical perspective), an analysis of concepts or themes that are particularly important for the field in question (the approach adopted by Brazil); or a presentation of a continuous historical narrative placed in the social and political context of the country in question. The latter approach was chosen for France and, subsequently, for China.

Russia and Germany, which are possible future developments, will therefore have a choice of approach based on existing examples.

The financial participation of SAREC was essential to complete this publication project, as the CECA budget must systematically cover the cost of other traditional multi-year publications such as *ICOM Education* and the annual publication of the best projects from the Best Practice competition. Variable contributions from national committees are encouraged by financial recognition from ICOM. In addition to SAREC's contribution, we would like to thank ICOM and ICOM France France as well as all the persons who have accepted to give their time to check the AI translations..

Foreword

Tracing the history of visitor support in museums in France from the 18th century to the present day is an ambitious and immense task.¹

We have chosen to reflect on this history of visitor support by analysing the evolution of each of the elements that make up the three-way relationship on which it is based: museum/visitor/object. The prism of the relationship to the object has been favoured.

Indeed, in times when the physical existence of museum institutions seems to be questioned by some (museums closed during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns because they were deemed “non-essential,” the growing importance of the virtual world, constraints related to conservation, etc.), analyzing the place of the museum object within this three-way relationship seems fundamental.

The subject is vast and calls for input from many disciplines, which will only be briefly touched upon in this book: mainly, education, sociology, political and social sciences, and philosophy.

Many examples are taken from the practices of major Parisian museums. However, we are fully aware that provincial museums and various cultural venues have also often been a source of pioneering proposals which will be mentioned here.

Finally, interviews conducted between 2022 and 2024 with eleven museum professionals have provided useful input for our discussion.

All these interviews (in French) can be found on the ICOM CECA website, in the Publications section, Histories of museum mediation.

¹ This study is based on the research carried out by the author, Sylvie Savare, as part of her Master 2 thesis in museology at the École du Louvre: *De l'instruction à l'éducation muséale: une histoire de l'accompagnement des publics au musée, en France, du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours*, August 2024.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	1
---------------	---

Danièle Giraudy

EDITORIAL	5
-----------------	---

Nicole Gesché-Koning & Marie-Clarté O'Neill

FOREWORD	7
----------------	---

INTRODUCTION	15
--------------------	----

I. From the creation of museums to the Popular Front:
the gradual introduction of museum support tools
and systems for the instruction and education for all 17

A – Creation and evolution of museum
institutions: a political will 18

1. The invention of the museum:
the word and its embodiment
2. The revolutionary foundations
of French museums
3. The 19th century and the advent
of popular education: museums
in schools and schools in museums,
instruction and moral edification
4. The interwar period and the Popular Front:
a turning point
5. The evolution of museum supervision,
testimony to their primary mission:
the transmission of knowledge

B – Towards the organisation of museum
education and interpretation 29

1. From the elite to the beginnings
of democratisation: the emergence
of the concept of the public
2. The setting up of tools and mechanisms:
schools in museums

II. From the Second World War to the 1980s:
between sociocultural activities
and cultural action 41

A – Paradigm shift 43

1. Legal and international context:
definition and missions of museums
2. The 1960s: redefining the role
of museums, with socio-cultural
activities as a new mission
3. ICOM and the museum crisis

B – Broadening of the concept
of the public and emergence of dedicated
educational services 48

1. From the public to publics
and the concept of the non-public
2. Childhood: cementing the link
between schools and museums;
introducing arts and cultural education
3. Timid consideration of people
with disabilities: the beginnings
of social inclusion
4. The emergence of services dedicated
to supporting visitors and staff
with diverse training backgrounds

C – New innovative forms of support: iconic institutions and prominent figures	56
1. Attractive museums: a new ambition	
2. The <i>Musée des Arts et traditions populaires</i> : innovative tools for supporting audiences	
3. Eco museums: the foundations of a participatory approach	
4. Workshops and museums for young audiences: from the first workshops at the <i>Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs</i> to the <i>Musée en Herbe</i> , an unusual venue	
5. The <i>Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou</i> : an incubator of ideas to support all audiences	
6. Auditoriums and exhibitions: other innovative tools for support	
III. From the 1980s to the present day: the birth of mediation – From the segmentation of support services to universal accessibility	75
A – Mediation: emergence of the term and legal framework	77
1. Some definitions and concepts	
2. Pioneering museums and the legal obligation of mediation	
3. A favourable international context: ICOM and ICOM CECA	

B – Broadening the concept of audience: tailored mediation and the emergence of universal accessibility.....	84
1. School audiences: a constant focus of attention and the revival of arts and cultural education	
2. Individual visits to museums by children: a shift towards the concept of the family	
3. Babies: individuals with cultural rights and the strengthening of the parent-child bond	
4. Teenagers and young adults: a neglected audience because they are difficult to win over?	
5. Museums for all: social inclusion and universal accessibility	
IV. Mediators today: a profession under threat from new trends in visitor support	117
A – Professionalisation and organisation of mediation services	119
1. The introduction of specific training courses: mediator as a profession	
2. Informal training: growth in online resources and exchanges between professionals	
3. Slow recognition of the profession of mediator	
4. The organisation of mediation services	

B – Multifaceted mediation: the four paths of mediation, is the role of the mediator in jeopardy?	128
1. Object-centred mediation-education in the light of new technologies	
2. Socially-focused mediation and multidisciplinary: in search of innovative experiences	
3. Contemplative mediation focused on visitor well-being	
4. Consumer mediation focused on the visitor-customer	
C – All mediators: mediator, a profession in danger?	163
CONCLUSION	165
BIBLIOGRAPHY	169
LIST OF PEOPLE INTERVIEWED	175
CHRONOLOGY	177

Introduction

Running, dancing, meditating, creating, touching, tasting, smelling... all this is now possible in museums, which in just a few decades have become places of life, inviting visitors to share the richness of their collections in new ways, making them accessible to all, *in situ*, outside their walls, or virtually.

The term “accompaniment” has been used in the French version as it seemed erroneous and anachronistic to use the term “mediation” which only appeared in the 1980s and which definition remains vague. Nevertheless, the term “mediation” is the term mostly used nowadays in French. The Spanish prefer the word “education” and in English “interpretation” is often added to education. Both mediation, education and interpretation appear in this English version depending on the various translations of the French original publication.

This accompaniment, based on a variety of tools and devices, involves a three-way relationship between the museum, the visitor, and an object. The nature of this relationship has evolved significantly over the centuries, because or as a consequence of changes in the perception of these three components. This basis of this evolution flows on the changes in the objectives assigned to support and on the evolution of the concept of the public with the growing awareness of the diversity of audiences requiring specific support. The changes in the objectives assigned to museum support have been underpinned by a strong political will in France and by the evolution of the definition of the museum and its role in a highly influential international context. The evolution of these objectives allows us to define three major periods following a chronological path with, however, porous boundaries.

In France, from the creation of museums in the 18th century to the Second World War, the primary aim of museum support was to transmit knowledge as part of a

process of instruction and then popular education. The knowledgeable museum guides relied on written and oral tools at their disposal to deliver this knowledge about a specific object to an increasingly wide audience. This in a move already aimed at democratisation. Indeed, while adult amateur visitors were long favoured, in the 19th century, considerable efforts were made to promote school visits to museums and museums in schools to reach young people and the working classes and artisans. The museum object was at the heart of the educational project.

The second period extends from the Second World War to the 1980s. It saw the emergence of socio-cultural activities and cultural action. This was a period of recognition of the plurality of audiences and of taking the non-public into account, which was to constitute a fundamental evolution in the purpose of museum education. The aim of the museum educator was then to promote integration and social cohesion, placing the individual at the centre of their work, with the object now merely being a means to an end, a tool in the service of this objective. Young people took a prominent place in cultural policies with the introduction of arts and cultural education, cementing the strong link between schools and museums. People with disabilities began to be considered giving birth to the notion of social inclusion. During this period, a few prominent figures contributed greatly to the evolution of the concept of accompaniment and the development of new mechanisms.

Starting in the 1980s, the concept of museum education evolved. While school audiences continue nowadays to be the focus of particular attention, museum institutions have committed themselves to reaching new audiences and implementing universal accessibility measures and tools.

Today, four paths seem to be emerging in this new landscape of support. They tend towards a concept of “total mediation”, centred on the people as such as on their individuality, without neglecting the museum object, which is experiencing in other forms a keen renewed interest. These trends may become a threat to mediation professionals, who are always seeking legitimacy.

The history of visitor support in France has thus been part of a global history of visitor support since its inception, in which French museums have more often been followers than pioneers.



*From the creation
of museums
to the Popular Front:
the gradual introduction
of museum support tools
and systems
for the instruction
and education for all*

The creation of museums in France is a recent phenomenon resulting from a slow process of opening royal, princely, secular, and ecclesiastical collections to the public.

France was not a pioneer in this field; museums were first an Italian institution, which emerged in the 15th century and spread throughout Europe.

The French Revolution gave new impetus to this young institution, which had a social and, above all, educational dimension aimed at adults of all ages and, gradually, children.

A – CREATION AND EVOLUTION OF MUSEUM INSTITUTIONS: A POLITICAL WILL

1. The invention of the museum: the word and its embodiment

Although the word “museum” had been known in France since the 13th century, it was not used in its modern sense until 1559, in a few rare works. Until the 1760s, the word “cabinet” was preferred to refer to a public or private collection. Under English and Italian influence, the term “museum” gradually replaced it.

The creation in 1729 of the King’s Cabinet by the Comte de Buffon in the *Jardin Royal des Plantes*, created in 1635, was part of a widespread European phenomenon. In 1745, Louis Daubenton was appointed to the position of guard and demonstrator. He undertook the arduous task of methodically organizing the collections. Under his leadership, the King’s Cabinet, or Natural History Cabinet of the *Jardin des Plantes*, became the first museum in Paris and a very popular attraction.

Art museums, on the other hand, underwent a more chaotic evolution and emerged relatively late in France compared to the rest of Europe, both in Paris and in the provinces.

Indeed, from the successors of Francis I to Louis XIV, French monarchs showed little interest in collecting paintings, antiques, or curiosities. A sign of the renewed interest in collections was the evolution of the artist’s status at the beginning of Louis XIV’s reign, under the regency of Anne of Austria. On the initiative of Charles Le Brun, who brought together painters and sculptors, the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture was created in 1648, thus conferring nobility to the fine arts. Its ambition was to train artists, raise them above the status of crafts-

men subject to taxation, and thus promote painting and sculpture to the rank of liberal arts. Although the kings after Francis I were no great art lovers, Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642) and especially his successor Cardinal Mazarin (1602-1661) were great collectors. Upon Cardinal Mazarin’s death, part of his collection was bequeathed to King Louis XIV. Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619-1683), who became Intendant of Finances and Superintendent of Buildings (1664), set about expanding the royal collection by purchasing tapestries, paintings, and art objects on behalf of King Louis XIV, and therefore the state. This frenetic acquisition policy came to an end around 1695, a few years after Colbert’s death.

In 1720, the private collection of the House of Orléans was opened to the public. From 1750 to 1779, the *Palais du Luxembourg* (Luxembourg Palace), comprising ninety-nine paintings and twenty drawings, a tiny fraction of the royal collection, as well as Rubens’ gallery of Marie de Medicis, were opened to the public, without, strangely enough, being called a museum. On the other hand, the numerous antiques in the royal collection, which at the time were of little interest to the court and art lovers, were kept in a room in the Louvre that was not open to the public.

Under Louis XVI, his friend the Count of Angivillers (1730-1810), appointed Director General of Buildings, Arts, Gardens, and Manufactures of France, revived the idea² of establishing an art museum in the Louvre, in the *Grande Galerie*, with the *Palais du Luxembourg* to be left as a residence for the king’s younger brother, the Count of Provence. Work began, acquisitions progressed well, and commissions for sculptures and paintings depicting great historical events and famous figures poured in, but then the Revolution broke out.

In the provinces, art museums, mainly inheriting private collections, flourished in a few cities.³ In Besançon, for example, the current Museum of Fine Arts and Archaeology owes its origins to the bequest in 1694 by Jean-Baptiste Boisot, a scholar and abbot of Saint-Vincent, of his collections to the Benedictines of the city, on condition that they be made available to the public under the control of the city and the clergy.

At the dawn of the French Revolution, the first museums were therefore divided into two categories: natural history museums and fine arts museums.

² This is not a new idea, having already been put forward by Le Bernin (1598-1680) during his stay in Paris in 1665, and then by Etienne LA FONT DE SAINT-YENNE (1688-1771) in *Réflexions sur quelques causes de l’état présent de la peinture en France avec un examen des principaux ouvrages exposés au Louvre, ce mois d’août 1746* a work published in 1747 in which he called for a museum to be accessible to all.

³ Besançon 1694, Toulouse 1751, Nîmes 1778, Arles 1784, Dijon 1787.

2. The revolutionary foundations of French museums

During the French Revolution, events radically transformed the history of collections.

The first was the nationalization of Church property by a vote of the Constituent Assembly on November 2, 1789, followed by the nationalization of the emigrants' and Crown's property on August 11, 1792. After many vicissitudes, the *Muséum central des Arts* (Central Museum of Arts), now the Louvre, a museum with a universal vocation, opened its doors on August 10, 1793. During this period, four other museums were established in Paris, extending the categories of museums to national history, including archaeology, and the mechanical arts: the *Musée des Monuments français*, on the initiative of Alexandre Lenoir to preserve the nationalized property of the Church; the *Muséum national d'histoire naturelle* (Natural History Museum), successor to the *Jardin royal des Plantes*; the *Conservatoire national des arts et métiers* (National Arts and Crafts Conservatory); and finally the *Cabinet d'Anatomie de l'École de la Santé de Paris* (Anatomy Cabinet of the Paris School of Health).

To preserve the nationalized property of the Crown and the Church on their territory, provincial towns created their own museums, such as Nancy (1793), Toulouse (1793), Tours (1794), and Orléans (1797). The Chaptal decree of 14 Fructidor, Year IX (August 31, 1801) led to the creation or confirmation of fifteen provincial museums.⁴

It is estimated that during the ten years of the revolutionary period, the number of museums quadrupled to eighty, excluding Paris and Versailles.

After the Congress of Vienna (1815), France had to return the works of art looted by Napoleon's troops throughout Europe. To enrich the museums once again, in 1818, Louis XVIII approved the creation of a museum dedicated to living artists in the the *Palais du Luxembourg*, thereby stimulating French artistic production. This was the first museum of contemporary art.

3. The 19th century and the advent of popular education: museums in schools and schools in museums, instruction and moral edification

This frenzy of museum creation based on the French revolutionary model, with its encyclopaedic ambition, continued throughout the 19th century in France and throughout Europe. There were 600 museums in France in 1900. Museums

played an essential role in public education and moral edification. The ministerial circular of April 26, 1881, specified that “while it is at school that children and workers receive their education, it is above all in museums that they find examples. The reorganisation of museums is therefore a corollary to that of schools.”⁵

The creation of new museums stemmed from the concept of popular education, an education open to all, throughout life, a fundamental phenomenon for understanding the evolution of the functions assigned to museums and the place given to museum objects.

Popular education

Popular education, a specifically French concept, is defined as “a project to democratize education, carried out by associations with the aim of supplementing school education and training citizens”.⁶

It has its conceptual origins in the Age of Enlightenment, among the encyclopaedists around Denis Diderot, in a context of struggle against obscurantism and the influence of the Catholic Church. For these thinkers, education was the main tool for social and political emancipation. Nicolas de Condorcet (1743-1794) wanted to make education for all a tool for emancipation and equality so that democracy would persist and all citizens would be enlightened. He advocated the need for education in two stages: primary school and lifelong learning.

This idea of popular education and education for all flourished in the 19th century with the schooling of children from working-class backgrounds and adult education. In the 1820s, numerous training projects for workers were set up in around 100 French towns⁷ by liberal philanthropic elite associations. The aim was to provide workers with basic education (reading, writing, arithmetic) and scientific and technical knowledge to improve their skills against the fierce industrial competition from England. These training courses, set up by philanthropists, also aimed to consolidate moral values, which were seen as guarantees of social cohesion and stability.

⁵ POULOT Dominique, *Quelle place pour la « question du public » dans le domaine des musées ? in DONNAT Olivier (ed.), Le(s) public(s) de la culture*. Vol. 1 et 2. Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, Académique, 2003, p.103-121.

⁶ VERRIER Christian, *Éducation populaire*, in DELROY-MOMBERGER Christine (ed.), *Vocabulaire des histoires de vie et de la recherche biographique*. Toulouse, Érès, « Questions de société », 2019, p. 209-211 & POUJOL J., 1994. *Éducation populaire*, ETEVE C. & CHAMPY P. (dir.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de l'éducation et de la formation*, Paris, Nathan.

⁷ CHRISTEN Carole, *L'éducation populaire sous la Restauration et la monarchie de Juillet*, La Révolution française, 4 | 2013.

⁴ Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, Geneva, Nantes, Lille, Brussels, Strasbourg, Nancy, Dijon, Toulouse, Caen, Rouen, Rennes, Mainz.

The museum at school: school museums

The Primary Education Act of June 28, 1833, known as the Guizot Act, required every municipality with more than 500 inhabitants to establish a public school. This marked the beginning of the organisation of the public school system and freedom of education. This law already contained the first steps towards the establishment of a collection of objects in schools. It was strongly recommended to assemble collections of minerals, wood, plants, and animals as teaching aids. These were the first steps toward the creation of school museums. This idea of encouraging children to study from things rather than words originated in France in the 16th century with the writings of François Rabelais (1483-1553) and later of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778),⁸ who advocated the observation of nature. As for Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827),⁹ one of the founders of modern pedagogy, he emphasized the educational virtues of construction games.¹⁰ Throughout the 19th century, school museums were slowly established in primary schools.

During the Third Republic (1870-1940), the Jules Ferry laws (1881-1882), which made primary school¹¹ public, free, secular, and compulsory, took this desire to introduce collections of objects into schools a step further by introducing the *leçon de choses* (lessons of things). The decree on the organisation of teaching and the curriculum for primary schools of July 27, 1882, in Article 16, provided for a lesson in things for the teaching of physical and natural sciences. In the programmes annexed to the regulations on the organisation of teaching in public primary schools, it was stated: “In all teaching, the teacher shall begin by using tangible objects, showing them to the children and letting them touch them, placing them in the presence of concrete realities, then gradually training them to extract abstract ideas, to compare, to generalize, and to reason without the aid of material examples.” These museums were considered teaching aids. The collections were supposed to reflect the students’ environment and were made up of objects brought in by the students or the teacher or collected during school trips. Ideally, they included food products, industrial products, building materials, objects related to heating and lighting, geology, mineralogy, botany, zoology, agriculture, chemistry, and physics.¹² Thus, primary school children did not go to the museum; instead, the museum came to them, within the school.

On the other hand, high school teachers in the Paris region were encouraged to organize “educational visits” to museums for their students.¹³ During the 1930s, free admission for school groups and the provision of time off from teaching facilitated these visits to national museums.¹⁴

Educational museum (“Musée pédagogique”)

At the same time as school museums were being established, the idea of creating an educational museum took shape during the 19th century and came to fruition with the founding of such an institution by decree on May 13, 1879, on the museum’s main purpose was to participate in teacher training and the dissemination of educational methods by lending books and organizing exhibitions both in France and abroad, as well as at World’s Fairs. It thus contributed to the educational reform underway in the 1880s.

The school at the museum, for everyone

The origins of the school at the museum school date back to the 18th century.

In fact, from the 18th century onwards, on the initiative of the painter François Boucher (1703-1770), drawing schools began to spring up in museums.

These schools, intended to train future artists, welcomed young boys from early childhood. They were most often located near or within the museum itself in order to facilitate access to the works that served as models. In turn, these schools, by preserving and exhibiting the students’ works, served as museums.¹⁵

While the concept of popular education was largely behind Jules Ferry’s school laws, it also contributed greatly to the creation of museums dedicated primarily to adult vocational training.

For example, many museums focusing on trades were opened to promote craftsmanship and industry. They played a role in adult training and education.

⁸ French Institute of Education, entry : museum schools

⁹ *Ibid.*, entry: Pestalozzi

¹⁰ Appendix A: Interview with Véronique Andersen, 13 March 2024, Pestalozzi, along with the great German pedagogues, is said to be the inventor of ludology. Maria Montessori also demonstrated the importance of construction games.

¹¹ Primary schools is organised as follows: elementary course from 7 to 9 years old, intermediate course from 9 to 11 years old, higher course from 11 to 13 years old and a complementary course lasting one year, [article 3 decree of 27 July 1882](#).

¹² [French Institute of Education](#)

¹³ TROCHET Arnaud. *La médiation orale avant l’heure (1919-1944): visites accompagnées et conférences éducatives au Louvre et dans les musées nationaux: enjeux, modalités, acteurs*. Histoire, p. 12.

¹⁴ BORDEAUX Marie-Christine, *Du service éducatif au service culturel dans les musées: éducation et médiation*, Bulletin des bibliothèques de France (BBF), 2013, n°3, p. 18-22.

¹⁵ POULOT Dominique: *Quelle place pour la question du public dans le domaine du musée ?* dans *Les publics de la culture: politiques publiques et équipements culturels*, DONNAT & TOLILA, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2003.

Three notable institutions illustrated this trend: the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers*, the *Union Centrale des Beaux-Arts Appliqués à l'Industrie*, and the *Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro*.

- The *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers*

In the spirit of the Enlightenment and the principles of the French Revolution, which made the education of citizens a necessity, the idea of a museum-school for craftsmen was born. It was promoted by Abbé Grégoire (1750-1831) to the National Convention in 1794 and came to fruition that same year with the creation of the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers* (Cnam). The Cnam aimed to bring together all newly invented tools and machines. It opened its doors to the public in 1802. It was thus a symbol of social emancipation through work.

- The *Union centrale des Beaux-Arts appliqués à l'industrie* (Central Union of Fine Arts Applied to Industry)

In 1796, Toussaint-Bernard Émeric-David (1755-1839), art historian and politician, suggested the creation of a museum of industrial arts,¹⁶ linking the fine arts and industrial arts. In 1798, the first Exhibition of French Industrial Products was organized on the initiative of Nicolas François de Neufchâteau (1750-1828), Minister of the Interior under the Directory. The aim was “to offer a panorama of the products of the various branches of industry for the purpose of emulation”.¹⁷ One hundred and ten exhibitors, artists, and manufacturers presented their masterpieces or manufactured products, which were listed in a catalogue.

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, held in London in 1851 in the Crystal Palace, a glass and metal palace built for the occasion, marked a change in the evolution of the roles assigned to museums. Attracting more than six million visitors, it celebrated industry, applied science and technology, and its success heralded the dawn of mass culture. In its wake, the Museum of Manufactures was created at Marlborough House, known as the South Kensington Museum (1852), now the Victoria and Albert Museum. A true museum-school, its vocation was educational and didactic for English artists, decorators, and craftsmen.

In order to compete with the strong competition from the British Empire and the recent opening of the South Kensington Museum, the Central Union of Applied Arts for Industry was created in France in 1864, clearly stating its educational role for workers and craftsmen. In addition, the museum was intended to contribute to the dissemination of “good taste” among all social classes.

¹⁶ Industrial arts, later called applied arts, then decorative arts

¹⁷ DION-TENENBAUM Anne, *Un âge d'or des arts décoratifs, 1814-1848*, Paris RMN 1991, p 116.

- The *Trocadéro Museum of Ethnography*

Following the resounding success of the 1878 Special Exhibition of Scientific Missions, and on the initiative of the Ministry of Public Instruction, it was decided to create an ethnography museum in Paris in the Trocadéro Palace,¹⁸ which had been built for the Universal Exhibition of that same year.

This creation was once again driven by a desire to educate, transmit knowledge and scientific research, but also to disseminate the ideas promoted by the Third Republic to reinforce its colonial policy¹⁹.

During the 19th century, museums became an essential tool for the transmission of knowledge, a means of education through the popularization of scientific data, a tool for training everyone, at all ages, a real museum-school. Museums were also places of research, promoting the dissemination of political ideas and serving as tools for moral edification.

Thus, in the 19th century, an unbreakable link was forged between museums and schools, a link that continues to thrive today. However, the main efforts in terms of education and instruction within museum institutions were aimed at adult audiences. Children were not considered part of the museum audience. As Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille points out, in France, museum visits were to remain, for some, particularly museum staff, exclusively for adults and an informed audience²⁰, whereas in the United States, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, the first museum for children, was created in 1899, marking the beginning of a remarkable shift in attention to this new audience.

¹⁸ STÜSSI-GARCIA Susana, *Les « précieux adjuvants des études ethnographiques: La galerie américaine du musée du Trocadéro, entre érudition et pittoresque (1878-1900)*. POULOT, Dominique. *L'effet musée: Objets, pratiques et cultures*. Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2022. (p. 151-173).

¹⁹ LOYAU, Anne, *Le Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro et ses transformations, 1878-1935: configurations, espaces muséaux et réseaux dans: La France savante*, Paris : Éditions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2017.

²⁰ GAZEAU Marie-Thérèse, *L'action éducative et culturelle des musées nationaux et des musées de province en rapport avec le public scolaire*, thesis at the École du Louvre under the direction of Jean Châtelain, 1972, cited in TROCHET Arnaud *op. cit.* thesis reprinted and published in 1974 under the title: *L'enfant et le musée*, Paris Éditions ouvrières, collection Enfance heureuse, 1974.

4. The interwar period and the Popular Front: a turning point

Internationally, the creation of the International Office of Museums in Paris in 1926 was part of a reflection on the educational and social role of museums.²¹ The reports of numerous expert conferences held between 1927 and 1938 emphasized the essential role of museums in the transmission of knowledge for all.²²

The relationship between schools and museums, initiated by the Ferry laws establishing the second cycle of secondary education, which promoted learning based on observation of objects, continued, particularly in the physical and natural sciences. The instruction of September 30, 1920s, concerning upper elementary schools advocated experience as a means of learning: the teacher must “strive to multiply experiences and carry them out with everyday objects”,²³ which the teacher had taken care to collect. Walks with pupils were also intended to encourage observation and experimentation. In addition to the permanence of school museums, this type of teaching, based on objects and observation, paved the way for a deeper relationship between museums and schools and even foreshadowed the advent of museum workshops in the second half of the 20th century. In the 1920s, despite the reluctance of many curators and the educated public, some museums began to organize “special departments for young people.”²⁴

The arrival of the Popular Front in May 1936 was a turning point for the world of culture, introducing paid holidays and the 40-hour week, thus allowing more free time for leisure, particularly cultural activities, and laying the foundations for a cultural policy. Thus, as early as June 1936, a left-wing newspaper campaigned for the creation of a Ministry of Culture.²⁵ Under the impetus of the Popular Front, popular education was revived.

Jean Zay (1904-1944), who was Minister of National Education between 1936 and 1939, implemented a cultural policy that integrated popular culture and mass culture. Cultural activities were then promoted by the government and cultural associations such as the Popular Association of Friends of Museums, the Association for the Development of Public Culture, *Jeune Science*, the communist association *Maison de la Culture*, and the Youth Hostels, the forerunners of the *Maisons de la Jeunesse et de la Culture* (Youth and Culture Centres). The aim was also to open museums more widely to science and technology and to popular arts and traditions. He was thus responsible for the decisive impetus behind the creation of the *Musée de l'Homme*, inaugurated in 1938, in a desire to combat

racism and the rise of nationalism at the time. The name itself highlighted the beginnings of a paradigm shift in which man began to take centre stage in the collections.²⁶ Jean Zay's influence was also decisive in the creation of the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions, founded by Georges Henri Rivière in 1937. This museum had a scientific vocation, and its founder's ambition was to bring together curators and researchers on field missions to collect artifacts from everyday life. In the same year, the *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris* (The Paris Museum of Modern Art) was inaugurated as part of the International Exhibition of Arts and Techniques. Jean Zay also introduced “guided leisure activities” such as organized visits and art workshops into schools.

The popularization of museums was reflected in visitor numbers: in 1935, the Louvre welcomed 280,000 visitors, rising to 507,000 in 1937, including 84,000 for “visites aux lumières” (lighted tours).²⁷

The Popular Front thus laid the foundations for the cultural action carried out after the Second World War.

The administrative organisation of museum institutions had to adapt to these profound changes.

5. The evolution of museum supervision, testimony to their primary mission: the transmission of knowledge

This desire to educate all citizens, regardless of age or social class, throughout their lives, is also reflected in the change in the supervision of museums.

In 1802, the position of Director General of the Central Museum of the Arts was created, with immediate responsibility for the Louvre Museum, the Museum of French Monuments, the Special Museum of the French School in Versailles, the galleries of the government palaces, the mint, the chalcography workshops, the fine stone engraving and mosaic workshops, and finally the acquisition and transport of works of art. The supervisory ministry was then the Ministry of the Interior.²⁸

From the second half of the 19th century, a close link was established between education and museums.

²¹ TROCHET Arnaud *op. cit.*, p.99.

²² *Archives de l'Unesco* & TROCHET Arnaud *op. cit.*

²³ COHEN Cora, *Quand l'enfant devient visiteur: une nouvelle approche du partenariat École/Musée*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016, p.47 & ff..

²⁴ *Ibid.* p.49.

²⁵ ORY Pascal, *La culture pour tous ? L'Histoire* n°197, March 1996, p. 84.

²⁶ “In creating this title, I wanted to indicate that everything concerning man as a human being, in its many aspects, should and could find its place in the collections”. Paul Rivet: *site du musée de l'Homme* (*Musée de l'Homme* website).

²⁷ Night visits, three times a week, launched for the first time at the Louvre in 1936 and made possible by electric lighting. PEYRIN Aurélie, *Être médiateur au musée. Sociologie d'un métier en trompe-l'œil*, Paris, La Documentation française, 2010, p. 23.

²⁸ Decree of 19 November 1802 creating the General Directorate of Art Museums.

In 1870, the administration of fine arts was attached²⁹ to the Ministry of Public Instruction, created in 1828³⁰. This ministry then took the name Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts. In line with revolutionary ideals, the state intended to take charge of education for all classes of society, as evidenced by the Guizot (1833), Falloux (1850), Duruy (1867) and, above all, the Ferry laws (1881, 1882), which advocated quality education for all with teachers specially trained for this purpose. By creating new schools, reorganizing several large institutions, and establishing universities, it established a strong and centralized structure.

The fact that the administration of fine arts was attached to the Ministry of Education is significant: since education is understood as the transmission of knowledge and learning, museums, under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction, were therefore required to follow the same approach, that of teaching knowledge, as part of an educational mission that reinforced that of schools.

In 1932, Édouard Herriot's government decided to rename the Ministry of Public Instruction the Ministry of National Education³¹. This change in terminology is also significant. The word "education" comes from the Latin *educatio*, and the verb *ducere*, which means to lead or guide. The terms "cultural life," "cultural action," and "cultural policy" appeared. This marked the beginning of a change that was carried forward a few years later by the Popular Front.

After this brief overview of the creation and evolution of museums, whose purpose at the time was instruction, in the sense of popular education and moral edification, from their origins to World War II, it is worth mentioning the people involved in museum visits, visitors and guides, as well as the first tools put in place to encourage these encounters.

B - TOWARDS THE ORGANISATION OF MUSEUM EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. From the elite to the beginning of democratisation: the emergence of the concept of the public

Access to curiosity cabinets and princely collections was initially reserved for a small elite, a cosmopolitan microcosm of renowned artists, amateurs, and dealers.

These cabinets and galleries were sometimes open to the public, but they were mainly used by scholars and academics, who found valuable study materials there.

It was at the end of the 18th century that the concept of "public"³² as we understand it today, emerged as a corollary to the idea of a museum accessible to all. This with the aim of making every individual a cultured and enlightened citizen, a grand idea of the Age of Enlightenment that was revived during the French Revolution. One of the functions of the museum was in fact to "redistribute the knowledge and cultural values of the elite," which is seen today as an educational function³³ but which could in fact be considered as a form of propaganda.

The King's Cabinet in the Royal Botanical Garden thus welcomed a public of connoisseurs, professional naturalists, and curious amateurs. The article "*cabinet d'histoire naturelle*" (natural history cabinet) in the *Encyclopédie*, published in 1752³⁴, referring to visitors, emphasized that: "They come from all paths of life and all nations (...). Twelve to fifteen hundred people are received there every week; access is easy; everyone can enter at will, enjoy themselves or learn." This article highlights the museum's dual purpose: education and entertainment.

In the second half of the 18th century, interest in natural history spread to all strata of society, including the lower clergy; the new natural history museums attracted a fairly large audience coming to learn about natural resources and the diversity of species, among other things. while having fun, marvelling at and being amazed by this diversity, which was then considered the work of the supreme creator. They could also watch experiments and demonstrations.

²⁹ Prior to this, the Fine Arts Administration was attached to the Ministry of the Interior from 1792 to 1852, then split between the Ministry of State and the new *Maison de l'Empereur*, which became the *Maison de l'Empereur et des Beaux-Arts* (Site France Archives, entry: [Administration des Beaux-Arts](#)).

³⁰ [Site du ministère de l'Éducation nationale, de la Jeunesse et des Sports](#) (Site of the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports)

³¹ Under the Vichy government, the term "*instruction publique*" was used again.

³² One of the first occurrences in 1718 in *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et la peinture*, op. cit. by Abbot Dubos, quoted in POMIAN Krystof, t. I, p.480.

³³ BORDEAUX Marie-Christine, *Du service éducatif au service culturel dans les musées: éducation et médiation*, Bulletin des bibliothèques de France (BBF), 2013, n° 3, p. 18-22. She raises this anachronistic aspect of the "educational" qualification of the function of museums before the second half of the 20th century.

³⁴ Quoted in POMIAN Krystof, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale, I Du trésor au musée*, Paris, Gallimard, 2020, p.453. The *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, the first French encyclopaedia published in Paris between 1751 and 1772 under the direction of Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, was ultimately the first popularised work. See article: « *Cabinet d'Histoire naturelle* » vol. III, p. 490.

As for the art collections, the princely collections that were gradually opened to the public aroused the interest of courtiers, those close to the sovereigns, then the rest of the nobility and, from the end of the 17th century, even the bourgeoisie. Art museums were aimed at a select, educated audience, guarantors of good taste and capable of discerning the beauty of works of art, which were perceived as manifestations of human genius; they were admired for pleasure and delight.

The opening of the National Museum of Art, a museum with a universal vocation, in 1793 marked a desire to broaden the audience to all sections of society, to educate, to form the minds of free men and to move people. This democratisation, conceived as an opening to a larger and less educated audience, was then closely linked to the concept of education advocated by Condorcet.³⁵ It was achieved in small steps.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the art museums, temples of beauty, remained essentially intended for educated people and artists who came to learn by copying masterpieces. The museum was a centre of learning, but the situation changed.

Indeed, travel accounts by foreigners confirmed the growing democratisation of access to museums during the 19th century. In 1825, a Russian traveller echoed this social diversity: "Today, Sunday, we found the rooms full of people from all classes of society, for the Louvre is open to all. I saw peasants and poor day labourers in rags standing in front of a painting by Correggio".³⁶ However, at that time, the Louvre was only open on weekdays to copyist artists and foreigners. The rest of the public, the general public, was only admitted three days a month until 1806, then two days a week, and finally only on Sundays and public holidays from 1824 onwards. In 1855, new regulations for the Louvre stipulated that the museum was now open to the general public all week, except on Mondays.³⁷ Sunday remained the busiest day, or was assumed to be so, as there are no precise figures on visitor numbers before the introduction of admission fees in 1922.

It is more difficult to establish visitor numbers and the proportion of children and teenagers. Indeed, visitor accounts, press articles, and engravings of the interior of the Louvre do not mention the presence of young visitors, despite an initial desire expressed in a report by Jacques-Louis David in January 1794: "it must (the Museum, the Louvre Museum) become an important school. Teachers will bring

their young pupils there; fathers will bring their sons".³⁸ This desire was not fulfilled, since in 1818 there was a note at the entrance to the museum indicating that a catalogue was available and stating: "Leave your canes and do not bring children." The primary function of the museum was to educate and train artists, and the museum was supposed to promote the moral edification of adult citizens.

Democratisation accelerated in the first half of the 20th century. Indeed, the educational role of museums for young people was the subject of reflection within the International Organisation of Museums, which, in 1927, proclaimed that "museums must not only be open to young people, but also be frequented by them in a methodical manner and under competent guidance".³⁹ It also called for the introduction, as in the United States, of a "Museum Hour" in schools, "included as far as possible in the curriculum" and "devoted to serial and graded visits, supplemented by discussions among children and written exercises." To this end, it recommended the creation of genuine educational services within museums.

In 1931, school visits were introduced at the Louvre, but they remained occasional.⁴⁰

To facilitate access for working-class people, who had long working hours, the first evening opening took place at the Louvre Museum in March 1936, at Henri Verne's instigation. As part of the museum's refurbishment, he had electric lighting installed in the Greek and Egyptian sculpture rooms. This initiative was a great success, attracting 100,000 visitors between March and December 1936.⁴¹ In 1937, "popular Tuesdays" were introduced with reduced admission for unionized workers.⁴²

With the creation of museums, fuelled by the spirit of the Enlightenment and driven by revolutionary ideals of civic education, the museum's audience shifted from courtiers and scholars who frequented curiosity cabinets and princely collections to an essentially adult audience from all paths of life, in a spirit of democratisation.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

³⁹ *Résolutions*, Mousseion, n°3, 1927, p. 263. Quoted by LAOT Emmanuel, *Une histoire des services éducatifs en France. Facettes de l'histoire de l'Éducation artistique et culturelle*.

⁴⁰ *Histoire du Louvre*, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

⁴¹ *Histoire du Louvre*, *op. cit.* p. 251. Interrupted during the Second World War, the "nocturnes" did not resume until 1989.

⁴² Quoted in POMIAN Krystof, vol. II, p. 90.

³⁵ *Rapport sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique* Condorcet 1792 quoted in Sociétés contemporaines n°81, 2011, p. 27.

³⁶ Quoted in POMIAN Krystof, vol. II., p. 24.

³⁷ Under the scientific direction of BRESCH-BAUTIER Geneviève, *Histoire du Louvre*, Paris, Louvre Éditions, Fayard vol. III, p. 247.

2. The setting up of tools and mechanisms: schools in museums

The encounter between the collection object and the visitor was established very early on through discourse (oral commentary), writing (labels, texts, catalogues, and books), and the experiences and demonstrations offered in curiosity cabinets and the first natural history museums.

This encounter focused solely on the object and the transmission of knowledge about it. The measures put in place varied according to the type of museum, to best suit the target audience.

Natural history museums and ethnographic museums

At the *Jardin Royal des Plantes*, courses in botany, chemistry, and anatomy were taught by professors attached to the *Académie des Sciences*, founded in 1666. Daubenton undertook a vast project to methodically classify the King's Cabinet, considered the first natural history museum in France, to make it accessible to both connoisseurs and curious amateurs. Thus, in 1752, the article "*Cabinet d'histoire naturelle*" (Natural History Cabinet) in the *Encyclopédie*, already mentioned above, provides interesting insight into the presentation of the collections, with one of the first accompanying elements being the label: "all these collections are arranged in a methodical order and distributed in the most favourable way for the study of natural history. Each item bears its name, and everything is placed under glass with labels, or arranged in the most suitable manner (...) questions relating to natural history are answered with pleasure".⁴³ This article highlights that in the mid-18th century, oral and written accompanying tools were already in place: labels and people to answer questions.⁴⁴

In addition, books intended for amateurs completed this initial arsenal of accompanying tools.

In the second half of the 18th century, natural history enthusiasts could, as they had a century earlier, attend free public lectures on natural history given by naturalists employed by the public authorities and watch experiments and demonstrations.

Natural history museums, ethnographic museums, and newly created history museums saw the first immersive experiences in the second half of the 19th century, thanks to technical progress (particularly photography and taxidermy) and colonial expansion, which sparked a keen interest in non-Western artifacts.

The first step was the invention of the diorama in 1822 by Louis Daguerre and Charles Marie Bouton.⁴⁵ This was a large painted backdrop animated by a play of light, a refinement of the already highly successful panorama principle. This device evolved and was enhanced for educational purposes, to showcase an exhibit in its natural setting, contextualizing it to improve understanding while appealing to the public. This device, which still exists in some institutions, consists of a display case with a painted backdrop. The scene is animated with dried plants, reconstructions of dwellings, stuffed animals, mannequins, archaeological objects, and more.

In the 1880s and 1890s, for educational purposes, the National Museum of Natural History in Paris⁴⁶ presented naturalistic dioramas⁴⁷ for the first time at the opening of the Zoology Gallery for the 1889 World Fair. However, these first dioramas were rather basic: they showed felines hunting or having captured prey in a very simple setting. They contrasted sharply with the dioramas developed at the same time in European and US museums, which sought to represent in display cases and with many details the biotopes of stuffed animals.

Natural history museums and science museums were undoubtedly the first⁴⁸ to forge links with schools, mainly primary schools, due to the very nature of the objects on display, in line with the Ferry laws on practical education.

This focus on young audiences was the creation in 1935 of a "junior" section for under-15s within the Society of Friends of the National Museum of Natural History, which organized visits to the museum led by "teachers, laboratory deputy directors and assistants".⁴⁹ In 1936 for example, a visit plan was drawn up for teachers bringing school groups to certain museums in Paris.

⁴⁵ BAPST Germain, *Essai sur l'histoire des panoramas et de dioramas*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Founded in 1783.

⁴⁷ CUISIN Jacques, *De la nature à la culture: Quelques exemples de dioramas naturalistes au Muséum d'histoire naturelle de Paris*, Culture & Musées 32 | 2018.

⁴⁸ Few texts exist on the subject, as COHEN Cora points out, *op. cit.* p. 50.

⁴⁹ COHEN Cora, *op. cit.* p. 51 & website [site de la Société des Amis](#).

⁴³ Quoted in POMIAN Krystof, vol. I, p. 453.

⁴⁴ The origin of posted mediation.

Fine arts museums

Regarding art collections that were transformed into fine arts museums, oral and written commentary was widely used, in a long tradition of *ekphrasis* dating back to Greek Antiquity and revived since the Renaissance.

As early as 1666, Colbert requested that at the *Académie royale de Peintures et de Sculptures* (Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture), ⁵⁰ “every month... the explanation of the best paintings in the King’s Cabinet [be given] by the professor on duty, in the presence of the assembly”.⁵¹

One of the first catalogues was the first volume of engravings of Louis XIV’s paintings, statues, and busts with commentary by André Félibien (1619-1695), published in 1677.⁵² From then on, publications and descriptions, even pictorial ones, of the collections multiplied.

In 1793, the year the *Musée national des Arts* (National Museum of Arts) was inaugurated, the *Catalogue des objets contenus dans la galerie du Muséum français* (Catalogue of Objects in the French Museum Gallery) was published. This was the first catalogue of the Louvre Museum, listing 537 paintings and 124 miscellaneous objects.

The hanging chosen for the *Grande Galerie* (Great Gallery) was chronological and didactic. The curators wrote relatively succinct *Notices* on the permanent collections or for exhibitions which were available for purchase. Denon encouraged the production of publications illustrated with engravings, such as Petit-Radel’s four-volume *Monuments Antiques du musée Napoléon*, published between 1804 and 1806.

As for the label,⁵³ it appeared rather late. Until the 20th century, paintings were displayed in museums, as in private homes, covering the entire height of the walls, so that it was not necessary to place a label next to the works.

However, from the second half of the 19th century onwards, “small signs were placed in or attached to the frames, mentioning the name of the artist, often the title of the work, and sometimes even a caption”.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Founded in 1648.

⁵¹ LICHTENSTEIN J. *La Couleur éloquente*, Paris, Flammarion, coll. «Idées et recherche» 1989, quoted in CAILLET Elisabeth with the collaboration of LEHALLE Evelyne, *À l’approche de la médiation culturelle*, Lyon, PUL, 1995.

⁵² Unfinished publication. POMIAN Krystof, t.I., p.479.

⁵³ This is a label bearing various items of information about the work and its author; the most commonly accepted indications today are: the artist’s name, places of birth and death, the title of the work, the date it was produced, the technique, the inventory number and sometimes some interpretation and provenance.

⁵⁴ COMAR Philippe, *De la tyrannie du cartel*, Tusson, Envois - L’Échoppe, 2023, p.24.



Humorous drawing by Cappiello, *Le Canard Sauvage*, no. 5, 1903 (Source: Gallica)
“I can’t see anything on the canvas – Look at the frame: there’s something to read!!!”

In 1933, museum directors and curators from around the world, gathered at the symposium *Muséographie – architecture et aménagement des musées d'art* (Museography – Architecture and Layout of Art Museums), recommended “indicating the name of the artist on the frame (or next to it), and only in certain cases, the subject of the work”.⁵⁵

Most often, these labels, when they existed, mentioned an inventory number that allowed the work to be found in the catalogue. The label, as we know it today, came into being in the second half of the 20th century. in the form of a rectangular cardboard placed at the bottom left of the painting. The Louvre adopted this practice in the 1950s.

During the second half of the 19th century, oral museum commentary experienced a remarkable boom. Under the Second Empire (1851-1870), independent guide-interpreters began to work at the Louvre⁵⁶, which was already receiving many foreign visitors.

Under the Third Republic, the *Traité de l'Administration des Beaux-Arts* (Treaty on the Administration of Fine Arts) of 1885⁵⁷ specified that guidance within the museum should be provided as follows: “on the one hand, the objects on display should bear basic information about each item; on the other hand, the general public, i.e. visitors, should be able to obtain, at a very reasonable price, a brochure bringing together and coordinating this information, with the limited explanations necessary for understanding the work outside the context of the work itself; finally, the elite public, i.e. artists, scholars and connoisseurs, can find in a comprehensive catalogue, which is a real scholarly work, the elements of comparison and study that museums are intended to provide”. These guidelines emphasized the importance of considering two types of visitors: the lay public and the informed public and highlighted the importance of written materials.

To support the educational function of the museum, the *École du Louvre* was created in 1882 to train people in the proper functioning of museums and to mainly ensure this function. From its inception, the school opened its doors to auditors, scholars, curious minds, and knowledgeable amateurs.⁵⁸

In 1910, the *Association des Guides et Interprètes du Louvre et des musées nationaux* (Association of Guides and Interpreters of the Louvre and National Museums) was created.

In 1919, Jean d'Estournelles de Constant (1859-1949), the new director of the *École du Louvre* and director of the national museums (1919-1926), a firm believer in museum education for the benefit of the greatest number, undertook several bold projects.

In the year he took office, he created a *Société d'Amis d'enseignement par les musées* (Society of Friends of Museum Education), which became the *Office national d'enseignement par les musées* (National Office for Museum Education) and then the *Office d'enseignement par les musées*, whose main activity was the organisation of conferences.⁵⁹

In May 1920, inspired by the model of the Metropolitan Museum in New York and the National Gallery in London, as well as the empirical practice of the *ciceroni*,⁶⁰ he established a programme of paid lecture-walks, the first institutional form of guided tours in national museums⁶¹ combined with educational lectures (general art history courses). The decree of April 2, 1920, stipulated that the *École du Louvre* would oversee registering participants for these tours and that the lectures would be given by former students of the school and freelance *attachés* from national museums. The title of “freelance national museum *attaché*” was awarded to “graduates of the *École du Louvre* who had successfully completed a thesis. They undertook to make themselves available to the national museums for ten years in the event of employment and often worked as volunteers.”⁶² The curators were responsible for developing the programme for these lectures.⁶³

A new project further expanded museum education for the general public. In 1921, Jean d'Estournelles de Constant, faced with the complexity of organizing walking tours of the museum's galleries, coupled with general art history classes, launched free art history classes for the general public at the Louvre, but outside the framework of the *École du Louvre*, thanks to the patronage of Rachel Boyer⁶⁴ who paid the teachers.

⁵⁵ *Muséographie - architecture et aménagements des musées d'art, international study conference*, Madrid, *Éditeurs Société des nations*. Office international des musées, *Institut international de la coopération intellectuelle*, 1934, League of vol. II, p. 353 - 356.

⁵⁶ TROCHET Arnaud, *op. cit.*

⁵⁷ POULOT Dominique, « 5. Quelle place pour la « question du public » dans le domaine des musées ? », in: DONNAT Olivier (ed.), *Le(s) public(s) de la culture*. Vol. 1 et 2. Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, « Académique », 2003, p. 103-121.

⁵⁸ DUREY Philippe, *École du Louvre, Jalons pour une histoire 1882-1998*, École du Louvre, Paris, 2021, p. 126.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 229.

⁶⁰ Quoted by TROCHET Arnaud, *op.cit.* as “a salaried companion who, for a small fee, will show you everything that is essential or take you straight to the showcases you are looking for”, p.44.

⁶¹ PEYRIN Aurélie, *Être médiateur au musée. Sociologie d'un métier en trompe-l'œil*, Paris, La Documentation française, 2010, p.22.

⁶² PEYRIN Aurélie, *Démocratiser les musées: une profession intellectuelle au féminin*. Travail, genre et sociétés, 2008, 19, p. 65-85.

⁶³ DUREY Philippe, *op. cit*, p. 233.

⁶⁴ DUREY Philippe, *op. cit*, p. 236.

Jean d'Estournelles de Constant's intention was to target art workers and the general public, with the *École du Louvre* catering scholars. The lecturers included artists such as Antoine Bourdelle, art critics, the president of the *Salon d'Automne*, eminent specialists, and museum curators. These courses were so successful that two more series had to be offered, with a total of 1,000 registrations, and many were turned away due to lack of space. In 1933-1934, these courses were incorporated into the *École du Louvre*.

The first guided tour service for national museums was created by the decree of March 9, 1928, to provide "controlled explanations" "at a unique and relatively low price."⁶⁵ The lecturers and guides at the national museums, who were mainly graduates of the *École du Louvre* and recruited through an oral exam, led these tours. They were mainly women trained in art history.

Thus, at the dawn of the Second World War, the three main players in oral guidance at the Louvre were independent guide-interpreters, whose scientific rigor was sometimes considered insufficient, lecturers from national museums for lecture tours (1928), and finally, official staff dedicated to guided tours (1928).⁶⁶

In other museums, there are mentions of a few tours offered at the *Musée de Cluny*, the *Musée du Luxembourg*, Versailles, and the *Musée de l'Orangerie*, but on a much smaller scale.

At the end of the 1920s, national museums therefore offered "scientific education (and) popular education in the broadest sense of the word."⁶⁷

The *Front Populaire* (Popular Front) accelerated the introduction of guided tours for educational purposes and improved access to museums for a wider audience.

For Henri Verne, director of the national museums (1925-1940), the mission of the lecturers was to "teach visitors to see the works as if someone were reading the work for them in their minds."⁶⁸ The guided tours were a great success. At the Louvre Museum in 1936, 52,700 visitors took part in these tours led by around 50 female guides⁶⁹ rising to 61,400 in 1937.

⁶⁵ DUREY Philippe, *op.cit.* Note from the Director of National Museums at the Ministry of Public Education, p.130.

⁶⁶ TROCHET Arnaud, p.19. "Lecture tours" and "guided tours" were introduced by the decree of 9 March 1928. The former took place mainly on days when the museum was closed, the latter on opening days only, and were offered in several languages.

⁶⁷ Report of the experts' meetings : *Compte-rendu de la réunion d'experts*, Paris, 28 et 29 October 1927, *Museion*, vol.1, n° 3.

⁶⁸ Quoted in PEYRIN Aurélie (2018), *op. cit.*, p. 24.

⁶⁹ Recruited at the *École du Louvre* and after a recruitment exam, in PEYRIN Aurélie, *ibid.*

Museums of technology and industrial arts (Musées des techniques et des arts industriels)

The aim of the museums of technology and industrial arts was to accompany an audience composed mainly of craftsmen and workers as a few curious visitors.

Since its creation in 1794, the *Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers* (Cnam) has offered demonstrations and explanations of the tools and machines on display. In addition, as a place of learning and knowledge transfer, the Cnam offered three academic courses from 1819 onwards, in line with its motto *Omnes docet ubique*⁷⁰ mechanics applied to the arts, chemistry applied to the arts, and industrial economics⁷¹. These courses were very successful.

The *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs*, for its part, developed educational activities with decorative arts schools and workshops from 1898 onwards.

Until the dawn of the Second World War, closely linked to the notion of instruction and popular education, the interaction between objects and visitors took place according to a top-down model, from the knowledgeable to the unknowledgeable, adopting an essentially cognitive approach. The main focus was on teaching, educating, and instructing. The object remained at the heart of the encounter.

At the end of this first part, it therefore appears that the accompanying tools, both oral and written, still in use today, were put in place very early on, some even before the museum was created.

Discourse (visits, experiences, and demonstrations) and writing (labels, catalogues, notices) were the fruit of the work of experts, specialists, knowledge holders, curators, and scholars. Discourse centred around the object was thus conveyed from the knowledgeable to the novice with the aim of contributing to their education and moral development, in order to make them free individuals in the spirit of the Enlightenment and in accordance with the revolutionary ideals whose repercussions were felt throughout the 19th century. In accordance with these principles, driven by the political will of leaders and institutions, the public expanded in a vast democratisation movement that began during the French Revolution and was amplified, particularly during the Third Republic, with compulsory education and the emergence of the concept of popular education.

Under the Popular Front, cultural democratisation and popular education experienced a decisive new impetus, which was interrupted by the Second World War.

⁷⁰ *Omnes docet ubique*: teaching everyone, everywhere. Today, Cnam continues its educational mission and hosts an engineering school, institutes, laboratories and the Musée des Arts et Métiers, which houses the largest industrial and technological collection in the world.

⁷¹ *Site du Cnam* (Site of the Cnam).



*From
the Second
World War
to the 1980s:
between sociocultural
activities
and cultural action*

The Second World War left Europe in ruins. Thanks, in particular to the Marshall Plan, France experienced a period of great prosperity, the *Trente Glorieuses*, between 1945 and 1975. This period brought profound economic changes with the advent of the consumer society, following the example of the United States. Major societal upheavals also marked this period. The events of May 1968 (university student demonstrations against university conditions followed by widespread strikes involving workers all over the country) shook French society with the cultural world playing a major role. This was followed by a growing awareness of the individual, their place in the community, and the need to strengthen social cohesion. A new perspective on childhood emerged with the implementation of new learning methods⁷² developed by the Freinet couple, Célestin (1896-1966) and Élise (1898-1983), and by Maria Montessori (1870-1952). These methods, known as active pedagogy, made children the actors in their own learning. Play, manipulation, observation, and freedom of action were at the heart of these new techniques, which profoundly changed the relationship to knowledge acquisition, and continue to do so today.

The museum world was not immune to these profound changes and now placed visitors and the public at the heart of its concerns. The aim of cultural policies was to reach new audiences and no longer simply to collect, preserve, and display works of art.

During this period, museums continued to draw inspiration from foreign museums, particularly Anglo-Saxon ones, in a relationship of cooperation but also competition, as Anne Krebs⁷³ points out.

A – PARADIGM SHIFT

1. Legal and international context: definition and missions of the museum

The Louvre closed its doors on August 25, 1939, and reopened to the public under German occupation in 1940, offering guided tours once again in February 1941. However, this was only a partial and purely symbolic reopening. The Vichy regime, also inspired by institutions founded by the totalitarian regimes of the interwar period, encouraged the creation of regional museums of art and popular traditions based on the model of the *Museon Arlaten*, a museum of *Provençal* culture opened by Frédéric Mistral in Arles in 1899⁷⁴.

After the Liberation, fundamental texts were adopted on the reorganisation of museums, performing arts, and cinema, emphasizing democratisation and decentralisation.

The ordinance of July 13, 1945, provided the first legal definition of a museum: “a permanent collection of works of artistic, historical, or archaeological interest open to the public.” The 1946 Constitution guaranteed everyone “equal access to culture,”⁷⁵ affirming the pre-eminence of the social function of museums and accelerating decentralisation. The *Direction générale des musées français* (Directorate General of French Museums)⁷⁶ became the *Direction des musées de France* (Directorate of Museums of France), with Georges Salles (1889-1966) as director.

At the same time, on the international stage, the creation in 1946 of ICOM, the International Council of Museums,⁷⁷ played a major role in disseminating ideas and establishing professional and ethical standards. During seven conferences held between 1948 and 1965, under the direction of George Henri Rivière, following topics of concern at the time were addressed to the museum world: education through museums, exhibitions, the circulation of cultural property, and the conservation and restoration of cultural property. In 1947, ICOM proposed an initial definition of a museum, placing the collection at the very heart of it⁷⁸

⁷⁴ POULOT Dominique, *Une histoire des musées de France XVIII^e - XX^e siècle*, Paris, La Découverte / Poche (2005), 2008, p.148.

⁷⁵ Paragraph 13 of the preamble to the Constitution of 27 October 1946, repealed on 4 October 1958, except for the preamble, which is still in force as part of the constitutional bloc.

⁷⁶ Created in 1802.

⁷⁷ Replaced the International Museums Office, a body of the League of Nations, created in 1926 on the proposal of French art historian Henri Focillon.

⁷⁸ ICOM, statutes, 1947, article 3: “the word ‘museum’ includes all collections open to the public of artistic, technical, scientific, historical or archaeological objects, including zoos and botanical gardens, but excluding libraries, unless they maintain permanent exhibition”.

⁷² These learning methods are a continuation of the work of great educationalists such as Pestalozzi, who placed great emphasis on games in his teaching methods.

⁷³ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

and assigning an essential role to museum education. In its second issue, *ICOM News* already proposed a wide range of educational activities that could be offered in a museum: “classes and courses for adults, lectures and demonstrations, guided and commented tours, practical work for adults, copying of objects or documents by the public in the galleries, discussion groups, study clubs for adults, film and slide shows, musical programmes, theatrical performances, work with children (whether in children’s museums or in sections dedicated to children in museums in general), school services, and external activities such as the loan of objects and the organisation of traveling educational exhibitions.”⁷⁹

This major concern for museum education led to the creation, in 1948, of two committees within ICOM dedicated to education: Committee No. 6, devoted to children’s museums and activities for children in museums, and Committee No. 7, dedicated to educational work in museums, which focused primarily on relations between museums and schools.⁸⁰ These two committees merged in 1953 to form the Committee for Education, which was dissolved in 1962. Under the impetus of Hugues de Varine, who organized an international symposium on the educational and cultural role of museums in Paris in 1964, the current International Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA) was created a year later. This symposium made it possible to define the educational and cultural missions of museums and the human and technical resources needed to achieve them.

Under the Fourth Republic (1946-1958), youth and popular education movements were revived.

The Fifth Republic marked a turning point in the cultural world. From then on, it was enshrined in the French Constitution of October 4, 1958, which stated that it was the responsibility of the State to do everything possible to ensure that everyone could participate in cultural life.

The creation of a Ministry of Cultural Affairs in 1959, under the impetus of André Malraux, marked the renewal of French cultural policy, which was then based on two pillars: the democratisation of culture and the structuring of cultural administration. Cultural action thus became separate from popular education, even though both ultimately retained the same objectives “to build the nation, create citizenship, extend the culture of the elite to as many people as possible, reconcile high culture and popular culture, and open the aesthetic experience to all. But while cultural action advocates democratisation, i.e., the

broadening of the audience for legitimate culture, popular education aims to be democratic, mediating between art and life, high culture and working-class or rural culture, and advocates education for the people. Its action is intended to be sociocultural.”⁸¹

The founding decree of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of July 24, 1959, stated that its purpose was “to make the major works of humanity, and first of all those of France, accessible to as many French people as possible, to ensure the widest possible audience for our cultural heritage, and to encourage the creation of works of art and the mind that enrich it.”

The crisis of May 1968 helped to reveal a new sensitivity in society to social inequalities and the worsening of poverty. The museum had to adapt to this change.⁸² The notion of cultural development emerged, and culture was now expected to serve the development of society in all its aspects, both economic and social, by offering a variety of activities.⁸³

During the following years, the museum gradually transformed itself from a place of learning and knowledge into a place of encounter and leisure, because of a period of major crisis that shook the museum world. Museums faced fierce criticism, and visitor numbers remained very disappointing.

2. The 1960s: redefining the role of museums, with socio-cultural activities as a new mission

Faced with the social unrest of the late 1960s, the crisis in museums was bound to erupt. Museums were then perceived as places created for and reserved for the elites and the bourgeoisie, they had to reinvent themselves to meet the new expectations of the population. The famous analysis by Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, based on surveys conducted between 1964 and 1965 in European art museums, highlighted this illusion of a museum accessible to all.⁸⁴ During the 1960s, to support reconstruction and urbanization and to create social ties in newly redeveloped areas, the concept of sociocultural activities emerged and shook up the museum world.

Sociocultural activities should be understood as “any action in or on a group—or a community, or an environment—aimed at developing communication and

⁷⁹ *ICOM News*, Vol. 1, No. 2, December 1948, p.5 & Nicole GESCHÉ-KONING, *La place de l'éducation au sein de l'ICOM avant la création du comité CECA (1946-1965)* in *ICOM Education* 30, p.11. One can only be surprised by the exhaustiveness of this list, which is still so relevant.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.10 and 15.

⁸¹ CHMC I (2015). MOULINIER Pierre, *Action culturelle et éducation populaire. Politiques de la culture.*

⁸² Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

⁸³ CHMC I *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ BOURDIEU Pierre and DARBEL Jean, *L'amour de l'art, les musées d'art européens et leur public*, Sens commun, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1969.

structuring social life, using semi-directive methods.”⁸⁵ The social function of socio-cultural activities was the cultural development of everyone. It sought to distinguish itself from popular education: “The popular educator was in a dual relationship similar to that existing between teachers and students.”⁸⁶ The animator, on the other hand, had a privileged relationship with the group or community. Cultural or sociocultural animation⁸⁷ rejected the school model. This orientation continued in the following decades. For example, Jacques Rigaud, director of Jacques Duhamel’s cabinet (Minister of Cultural Affairs from 1971 to 1973), argued for “mediation activities” that were not merely ‘pedagogical’ but capable of “stimulating the emergence or development of a certain way of life without imposing its meaning or rhythm.” According to Jacques Rigaud, “cultural institutions must be places of animation.” He believed that democratisation (as desired by André Malraux) was a failure and an anachronistic idea, because “it tends to model cultural development on the example of public education as organized and generalized by Jules Ferry and his posterity.” Finally, in his view, “cultural development cannot be the extrapolation, for the benefit of the many, of the practices of the elite, nor the simple renewal of this elite through social advancement and the progress of maintaining affluence; it can only be conceived as the blossoming of a general aspiration for dignity of life, which is currently unrecognized, distorted, or disguised by social habits, inhibitions, and prejudices.”⁸⁸ Jacques Duhamel thus pursued a very active policy in favour of integrating culture into everyday life. His objectives included developing children’s sensitivity to works of art, considering adults’ capacity for learning, and using new audiovisual techniques. In 1971, he created the (*Fonds d’intervention culturelle* (Cultural Intervention Fund) (FIC)⁸⁹ to support original initiatives. He thus forged a new concept, that of cultural development.

This crisis in museum institutions was not unique to France. From then on, the role of museums became part of a broader approach that went beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and the conservation of artifacts. Museums had to serve the public and be useful to them. The interest in audiences, whether knowledgeable or not, a concept introduced in 1937 by Georges Henri Rivi  re, thus found its full expression, and people began to take an interest in the non-public.

3. ICOM and the museum crisis

In North America in the late 1960s, Canadian museologist Duncan F. Cameron theorized this paradigm shift following a study conducted in museums in 1967, which now considered the museum as a communication system.⁹⁰ He particularly emphasized the need to involve visitors in the museum experience. In 1971, in his article *The Museum, a Temple or the Forum*,⁹¹ he asserted that museums were in the midst of an identity crisis.

In France, Pierre Gaudibert also launched the debate: “The museum, temple or forum, is the blueprint for all the directions that have been taken in relation to museums and cultural action.”⁹²

Also in 1971, the 10th General Assembly of ICOM confirmed this crisis in the museum world and the need to affirm the social role of museums as a means of remedying it. Resolution No. 1 states that “every museum must accept as its duty to strive to serve the social environment in which it operates to the best of its ability” and “urges all museums (...) to re-examine at all times and in all respects the needs of the public they serve (...which) will enable museums to fulfil more effectively their educational and cultural role in the service of humanity.”

The *Santiago Declaration of Chile* in 1972 was a milestone in the evolution of the definition of a museum. The result of a UNESCO meeting initiated by Hugues de Varine (director of ICOM between 1966 and 1974)⁹³, this declaration advocated the advent of a comprehensive museum, open to the world, playing a social role, with genuine access to collections, and aiming to develop awareness of issues related to ecology, social development, urbanization, and lifelong education.

In 1974, ICOM thus succeeded in formulating a new definition of the museum, reflecting this paradigm shift: “A museum is a permanent, non-profit institution, serving society and its development, open to the public, which researches, acquires, preserves, communicates and, in particular, exhibits material evidence of man and his environment for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment.”

⁸⁵ IMHOF Jean-Paul in the report of the «equipment-animation» commission of the Haut Comit   de la Jeunesse (High Committee on Youth), 1966), *Site Minist  re de la Culture et Communication* (Culture and communication website), article by MOULINIER, Pierre *Histoire des politiques de «d  mocratisation culturelle*, 2011 revised in July 2012.

⁸⁶ Poujol Genevi  ve, *Profession: animateur*, Privat 1989, cited in the article on the Ministry of Culture and Communication website, article *Histoire des politiques de d  mocratisation culturelle* 2011 revised in July 2012.

⁸⁷ Cleavage that existed in the 1970s, but faded in the 1990s, *Ibid*, p. 11.

⁸⁸ Poujol Genevi  ve, *Ibid*. Quote in extenso, p.8.

⁸⁹ Abolished in 1985.

⁹⁰ DUNCAN Cameron, *A viewpoint: The Museum as a communications system and Implications for Museum Education*, Curator, the Museum Journal, Vol 11, issue 1 March 1968, p. 33-40.

⁹¹ DUNCAN Cameron. *Ibid.*, p.11-24.

⁹² GAUDIBERT Pierre, *Du culturel au sacr  *, Paris, Casterman, 1981.

⁹³ He succeeded George Henri Rivi  re, director from 1948 to 1966.

B – BROADENING THE CONCEPT OF THE PUBLIC AND EMERGENCE OF DEDICATED EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

1. From the public to publics and the concept of the non-public

Studies conducted by sociologists have helped to evolve the concept of the public. Indeed, museum visitors do not constitute a homogeneous entity. Pierre Bourdieu demonstrated the great social inequality in access to works of art, emphasizing that the family, even before school, was the real vector of taste for works of art, thus thwarting the attempts at cultural democratisation. He advocated to have interpretation and appropriation tools established in museums. This study had a major impact and, in the years that followed, highlighted the concept of the non-public, i.e., people who never visit museums, and the need to develop appropriate support tools. Anne Krebs⁹⁴ emphasizes the usefulness of such devices for first-time visitors, who often simply do not dare to enter the museum.

The *Villeurbanne Declaration* (May-June 1968), promoted by the directors of cultural and drama centres, invented the notion of the non-public, which would guide future cultural action. The idea behind the politicized cultural action policy was to promote a culture for all, by all and for all, rejecting the so-called Fine Arts policy,⁹⁵ which was regarded as serving a culture that was legitimate for an elite audience.

Museums were to attempt to overcome such disparities by introducing new support measures. To better understand audiences, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs launched the first survey on the cultural practices of the French people in 1973. Since then, these surveys being the main existing tool for monitoring the French behaviour regarding culture and the media have multiplied.⁹⁶ The sixth edition took place in 2018.

Although museum and exhibition attendance increased significantly between 1960 and 1978 in France, rising from 5.1 million to 10.4 million visitors to national museums, these figures nevertheless masked major disparities. Significant gaps remained between social categories despite the increase in cultural offerings. In 1981, only 17.3% of farmers had visited a museum at least once in the twelve months prior to the survey, compared with 61% of senior executives and

professionals. The impact of educational attainment was also clear: 14% of those with no qualifications had visited a museum, compared with 55.6% of those with a high school diploma or higher.⁹⁷

2. Childhood: cementing the link between schools and museums; introducing arts and cultural education

Children's relationship with museums can be established in two ways: either during a school visit or during an individual visit with an adult. It can take place in a museum dedicated to children⁹⁸ or in a traditional museum intended for all audiences. Expectations differ depending on the nature of the visit: in the context of a school trip, the main objective is to acquire knowledge,⁹⁹ with the teacher trying to use the museum visit as an illustration or support for their teaching. During an individual visit, the recreational aspect prevails.¹⁰⁰

Until the second half of the 20th century, school trips to museums were rare, mainly due to the reluctance of curators and the educated adult public, who wanted to enjoy the quietness of the galleries to contemplate the works. The nature of the objects could also be a barrier to welcoming children into museums: it was considered inappropriate to show young audiences and young women naked bodies, as was often the case in fine art museums.

After World War II, the relationship between schools and museums became a central concern, and museums began to forge strong links with the teaching profession.

Advances in educational research in the early 20th century, highlighting the specific learning process of children, and the spread of active teaching principles, which made students active participants in their own learning, gradually influenced the relationship between schools and museums. Museum staff also drew inspiration from initiatives in other countries, particularly the United States, Belgium, and Scandinavia.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs. She points out that the more culturally and intellectually literate visitors are, the more they prefer to visit the museum on their own.

⁹⁵ According to Dominique TADDEI, *Secrétariat national à l'action culturelle du Parti socialiste* (national secretariat for cultural action of the socialist party); quoted in the article *Histoires des politiques de "démocratisation culturelle"* (Ministry of Culture website) *Site du Ministère de la Culture*, 2011 revised in 2012.

⁹⁶ *Site du Ministère de la Culture* (Ministry of Culture website), Survey dates: 1973, 1981, 1988, 1997, 2008 and 2018.

⁹⁷ Service des études et recherches du ministère de la culture, *Pratiques culturelles des Français*, Paris, Dalloz, 1983, 1990.

⁹⁸ Dr. VAN DER STIGCHEL (Netherlands) proposed the term "educational museum" to designate museums specially created for children, during the plenary session devoted to the educational role of museums at the first biennial conference of ICOM (Paris, 28 June - 3 July 1948), *op. cit.* *ICOM Education* 30, p.11. However, this term can lead to confusion because, in France, it refers to institutions serving teachers.

⁹⁹ Other objectives can be cited: desacralization of the place, feeling of belonging to a culture, knowing how to be in the museum, learning how to become a future visitor, helping creativity during workshops, etc.

¹⁰⁰ *Museum*, vol XXXI, n° 3, 1979, *Le Musée et l'enfant*, introduction by Ger van Wengen p. 148.

Museum, vol. XXXI

¹⁰¹ Appendix A: Interview with Véronique.

The consideration of young audiences was late in France compared to its development in the United States in the 19th century and in Sweden and Belgium in the 1920s.¹⁰²

This development took place in an international context favourable to the development of links between schools and museums; these links were considered essential by the International Organisation of Museums, in 1927 and by ICOM, with the creation in 1948, as mentioned above, of committees No. 6 and No. 7 dedicated to museums for children and activities for children in museums and museum/school relations. In parallel with the considerable work carried out by ICOM, in 1952, under the patronage of UNESCO, a study course was held at the Brooklyn Children's Museum, laying the foundations for cooperation between the two institutions and launching the idea of training for museum education.¹⁰³

In France, strengthened by these various influences and always with a desire for democratisation, the link between children and museums grew after the war, thanks to a few pioneering figures.

The decree of March 2, 1931, established two-hour school visits for high school students accompanied by their teachers and led by a guide or lecturer. The aim of these visits was "to illustrate their history lessons and educate their taste."¹⁰⁴

From 1948 onwards, the *École du Louvre*, under the impetus of Germaine Cart (1902-1989), offered training for "lecturers whose task was to address young people".¹⁰⁵

Booklets for teachers were also produced on a more systematic basis. Geneviève Dreyfus-Sée (1904-1997), author of numerous works on active teaching methods, wrote a guide in 1952 on "the use of museums in active schools." In it, she provided information on how to prepare visits to different types of museums: "historical and archaeological museums, ethnographic museums, natural history museums, science museums, and art museums."¹⁰⁶ Teachers remained at that time the main point of contact for museums.

The Fifth Plan (1966-1970) emphasized for the first time that cultural development was a component of social development.¹⁰⁷ The priority was therefore to reduce inequalities in access to culture, with schools being seen as the ideal place for cultural democratisation.

In March 1968, the Amiens conference, organized by the *Association d'étude pour l'expansion de la recherche scientifique* (Association for the Study of the Expansion of Scientific Research, entitled "For a new school: teacher training and research in education," brought together more than 600 educators, intellectuals, and activists. It proposed a vast programme of educational reforms with a view to adapting to a rapidly changing world and considering the general personality of the child.¹⁰⁸

Following this conference and in line with the objectives of the Fifth Plan, in 1969, the third of teaching time was extended to secondary schools,¹⁰⁹ meaning that one third of the teaching time was devoted to early learning and physical education. This measure encouraged school visits to museums.

The creation of the *Fonds d'intervention culturelle* (FIC) or Cultural Intervention Fund in 1971 had a major impact on the cultural development by formalizing the collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture, the state, and local authorities.¹¹⁰ In the 1970s, 25% of the actions financed by the FIC concerned cultural activities in schools. For example, the FIC supported in 1978 the programme *me Les jeunes Français à la découverte des musées* (Young French People Discover Museums).

The state's massive intervention continued in 1973 with the introduction of the 10% educational programme : "10% of school hours are devoted to educational activities chosen by teachers and students, with the curriculum for other subjects being reduced accordingly."¹¹¹

Efforts to promote the place of arts education and creativity in schools were reinforced by Law No. 75-620 of July 11, 1975, on education, known as the Haby Law. This law truly launched the introduction of arts and cultural education in schools.

In 1977, the creation of the *Mission d'action culturelle en milieu scolaire* (Cultural Action in Schools) within the Ministry of Education strengthened the link between schools and museums.

In 1979, the *Mission d'action culturelle en milieu scolaire* launched the *Pactes* programme (educational and cultural activity projects), "built around a theme, limited in time, and open to outside contributions."

In 1981, they were replaced by the *Projets d'action éducative* (PAE, educational action projects).

¹⁰² GAZEAU Marie-Thérèse (1974).

¹⁰³ COHEN CORA, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted by LAOT Emmanuel, AN 20150044/153, circa 1931: *Note sur les visites guidées collectives et privées*. Quoted by TROCHET Arnaud, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

¹⁰⁵ ICOM Education 30, *op. cit.* p. 12.

¹⁰⁶ COHEN CORA, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁷ French planning by the Commissariat au Plan sets the major qualitative or quantitative, economic and social objectives to be achieved.

¹⁰⁸ ROBERT André Désiré, *Autour de mai 1968, la pédagogie en question. Le colloque d'Amiens*, Les Sciences de l'éducation - Pour l'Ère nouvelle, 2008/3 (Vol. 41), pp. 27-45.

¹⁰⁹ This term refers to collège and lycée students, i.e. children aged 11 to 17.

¹¹⁰ This term covers the words communes (boroughs), departments, regions, overseas collectivities and collectivities with special status.

¹¹¹ [Ministry of Culture website](#)

The link between museums and children, which was strongly encouraged by the State¹¹² in the school/museum relationship, also took the form of art workshops for young people and the creation of spaces dedicated to youth.

This new interest in children was evident in other areas. For example, François Truffaut's films *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1959) and *L'Enfant sauvage* (1969), Marguerite Duras' interviews with the young François in 1965 on the television programme *DimDamDom*¹¹³, and the work of Françoise Dolto, popularized by the daily radio programme *Quand l'enfant paraît* (When Children Appear) from 1976 to 1978, all contributed greatly to shaping this new view of childhood.

However, this historical overview of initiatives to support young visitors to museums calls for two comments.

The first is that, through the introduction of arts and cultural education, the state has given priority to the fine arts and, by extension, to fine arts museums.

The second is that concrete initiatives aimed at young people visiting museums on their own remained rare in the 1970s, with the exception of initiatives carried out by a few institutions such as the *Centre d'Arts Plastiques Contemporains* (CAPC)¹¹⁴ in Bordeaux, workshops set up at the *Union centrale des Arts décoratifs*, the *Musée des Monuments français*, and the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Marseille, and the opening of the *Atelier des enfants* at the *Centre Georges Pompidou* (in 1973, as a precursor) and the creation of the *Musée en Herbe* (1975).

3. Timid recognition of people with disabilities: the beginnings of social inclusion

This founding period of awareness of the difficulties of social integration and the need for effective cultural democratisation for all was logically also a time when "handicapped" people began to be considered.¹¹⁵

However, during this period, government action in favour of people with disabilities seemed very limited compared to the intense action taken on behalf of young audiences. As Bertrand Verine points out, it was not easy to pursue a cultural policy when few figures were available on disability.¹¹⁶

¹¹² Ministry of Culture website

¹¹³ *L'Atelier des enfants: Une traversée pédagogique de l'histoire du Centre Pompidou*. An evening organised by Romain Lacroix with Camille Jochyms and Lilou Parente, on 7 February 2024 with screening of Fabienne Servan-Schreiber's documentary, *L'Atelier* (1980, 52 min).

¹¹⁴ This centre became a museum in 1984.

¹¹⁵ This term of "handicapped" was the term used at that time. Today one prefers the term "people with disabilities".

¹¹⁶ Appendix K: Interview with Bertrand Verine.

Internationally, the inclusion of people with disabilities was also slow.

In ICOM publications, the first article relating to children with disabilities appeared in 1953.¹¹⁷ It was not until 1981, which was proclaimed International Year of Disabled Persons,¹¹⁸ that *Museum*, the ICOM journal, dedicated an issue to disability¹¹⁹. The introduction to this issue listed the different types of disability: "mobility impairments," "communication impairments," "mental and behavioural impairments," "elderly people," "visually impaired people," and "socially disabled people." The attention to be paid to "socially disabled" people was explained as follows: "programmes designed to facilitate museum access for those whose condition in the community constitutes a social disability would better reach all social groups and make the museum a more welcoming space that encourages all types of visitors to feel at home in the museum." This foreshadowed the concept of social inclusion that would flourish a decade later. In addition, the article presented very concrete examples of measures and practical solutions for each type of disability and emphasized the urgent need for specific staff training.

In France, Law No. 75-534 of June 30, 1975, presented by Simone Veil, then Minister of Health, remains the reference text on this subject, as it marked the beginning of public policy on disability for adults and children. This law defined three fundamental rights: the right to work, the right to a minimum income through benefits, and the right to educational¹²⁰ and social integration. This integration was to be achieved mainly through access for people with disabilities to institutions open to the entire population, which meant that the buildings themselves had to be accessible to people with disabilities and that visits to these places had to be adapted accordingly.

Although this law was the legislative starting point for the obligation to facilitate access to culture, both physical and intellectual, for people with disabilities, some cultural institutions began very early on, well before the law was enacted, to provide appropriate support for certain disabilities, mainly visual, and initially for children, as Bertrand Verine points out.

Danièle Giraudy¹²¹ was a pioneer with the exhibition *Les Mains regardent* (Hands Look) at the Children's Workshop of the *Centre Georges Pompidou*. In 1967, the launch of the *Muséobus* for children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Marseille¹²² was the first concrete step toward social inclusion and outreach.

¹¹⁷ THOMPSON Samuel, *The Museum and the handicapped*, *Museum VI*, 4, 1953, p. 257-265.

¹¹⁸ The International Day of People with disabilities is celebrated every year since 3 December 1992.

¹¹⁹ GEE Maureen, *Museums and disabled people, Introduction*, *Museum vol XXXIII*, n°3, 1981.

¹²⁰ Bertrand Verine recalls that nothing was done in schools about touch for the visually impaired.

¹²¹ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy.

¹²² This project was funded by the FIC and was inspired by the mobile libraries.

4. The emergence of services dedicated to supporting visitors and staff with diverse training backgrounds

As early as 1927, the International Organisation of Museums advocated the creation of services dedicated to education within museums.

The decree of March 9, 1928, established guided tours alongside lecture tours. Guided tour services were created in certain national museums, notably the Louvre, in July 1930. These were a forerunner to the creation of dedicated services within museums.

After the war, Decree No. 49-534 of April 13, 1949, established the first educational service for national museums,¹²³ a centralized service for all museums, located at the Louvre, under the direction of Germaine Cart. It enabled teachers to organize museum visits.¹²⁴ The guide-lecturers, a profession that remained predominantly occupied by women, were then trained at the *École du Louvre* or the *Institut d'Art et d'Archéologie*.

The mission of the educational service broadened that of the guided tour service by establishing closer ties with teachers in the city of Paris and the Ministry of National Education. This department also designed traveling exhibitions and communicated about various events.

Decree No. 52-18 of January 3, 1952, set the conditions for guided tours: frequency, distribution of revenue, but the fee for general guided tours remained less well paid than guided tours for schoolchildren, which were considered a priority.

From 1950 onwards, the term “lecturer” or “conference officer” was systematically used in fine arts museums to refer to professional guides, with the entry requirement now being a higher degree in art history.¹²⁵

In the 1960s, the advent of socio-cultural activities brought about changes in the nature of the support staff. The recruitment of cultural facilitators, benefiting from subsidies, grew, particularly in provincial museums, alongside teachers provided by the National Education System for a few hours a week.

This change was significant: these new facilitators had no specific scientific knowledge; the focus of the encounter between the visitor and the museum was now on the individual, integrated into a community, rather than on the museum object as a vehicle for scientific knowledge.

In 1966, the *Association technique pour l'action culturelle* (ATAC) (Technical Association for Cultural Action) was created to support the training of cultural activity leaders.

In 1968, the *Service éducatif des musées nationaux* (National Museums' Educational Service) was renamed the *Bureau de l'action Culturelle* (Cultural Action Office) reflecting this change in the museum's mission.

In 1969, the Office organized 20,000 conferences, a third of which were for schoolchildren¹²⁶.

At the end of the 1970s, it changed its name again to become the *Bureau de l'action culturelle et éducative* (Office for Cultural and Educational Action), once again reinforcing the educational dimension of the museum. Within museums, the dedicated department could take the name of educational department, cultural department or teaching department, for example, as at the *Musée en Herbe*.¹²⁷

The presence of teachers in educational services¹²⁸ made it possible to extend the major contributions of educational sciences to the museum field. However, alongside the facilitators and teachers, there were still the lecturers and the curators¹²⁹.

When it opened in 1977, the *Centre Pompidou* further broadened its recruitment base by calling on students, artists, and art critics to lead tours.

¹²⁶ PEYRIN Aurélie (2010) *op. cit.*, p. 26.

¹²⁷ Appendix D: Interview with Corinne Héreau.

¹²⁸ As Marie-Christine BORDEAUX points out in the above-mentioned article, it is interesting to note the change in the name of these services, from educational services when they were created to cultural services, reflecting the change in the functions assigned to them.

¹²⁹ PEYRIN Aurélie (2010) citing the report by Marie-Françoise POIRET for the *Inspection générale des musées classés et contrôlés* in 1975, *op. cit.* p. 25.

¹²³ A forerunner in Europe: Jean CAPART (1877-1947), a Belgian Egyptologist, art historian and chief curator of Belgian museums, initiated the first museum education service in 1922.

¹²⁴ COHEN CORA, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

¹²⁵ PEYRIN Aurélie (2010), *op. cit.* p. 25.

C - NEW INNOVATIVE FORMS OF SUPPORT: ICONIC INSTITUTIONS AND PROMINENT FIGURES

1. Attractive museums: a new ambition

During the 1970s, new art and history museums were established, and major projects were launched. This period was described as a “renaissance of museums”; and within twenty years, some 120 museums were created or renovated in France.¹³⁰ At the same time, museum professionals began to reflect on “the restitution of knowledge” and “the role of knowledge in museums,” thus bringing about a real shift as Marie-Clarté O’Neill points out.¹³¹

The birth of the *Musée d’Orsay* project in 1977 marked a renewed interest from the state in the development of museum institutions.¹³²

The programme law on museums of July 11, 1978, allocated 1.407 billion francs to the equipment and architecture of national classified and controlled museums.

The idea of a Picasso Museum was adopted in 1975. The Louvre, the Saint-Germain-en-Laye Museum, the Guimet Museum and Museum of African and Oceanic Arts started at that time to undergo renovation work.

Museum attendance increased considerably: 20% of the population had visited a museum during a year in the late 1960s, rising to 30% in 1988. However, the provinces remained behind, with major exhibitions still only taking place in Paris.

Following the example of the *Muséobus* in Marseille, new museum buses and even museum trains were launched in 1971. These were museums, or rather traveling exhibitions, “housed in specially equipped trains or buses (...) primarily intended for villages and towns that did not have their own museums.”¹³³

In the 1970s, beyond strengthening social ties, one of the objectives of these accompanying tools was to provide visitors with keys to understanding and interpretation by appealing to their perceptual qualities. The aim was to make visitors more active¹³⁴ in acquiring knowledge, a concept contrary to the simple guided tour, comparable to the “pointing finger” method described by Georges Henri Rivière,¹³⁵ where visitors passively received information. This new ambi-

tion, which engaged visitors, contributed to community integration by creating social ties between individuals. Social and perceptual development took precedence over cognitive development.

Those in charge of guiding visitors drew inspiration from examples provided by foreign museums¹³⁶ and new educational methods,¹³⁷ like the teaching techniques developed by Élise (1898-1983) and Célestin (1896-1966) Freinet, in which the learner is taken into consideration in a process of knowledge acquisition. The use of games, for example, and hands-on activities in workshops¹³⁸ was one way of achieving this. Developments in psychology and sociology contributed to this evolution in support mechanisms.

Visitor support in museums during the period from the end of the Second World War to the early 1980s was profoundly and lastingly influenced by a few remarkable individuals with exceptional intuition, even demonstrating “flashes of genius,” as noted by Marie-Clarté O’Neill and Danièle Giraudy, who describe them as “inventors-awakeners.” The reopening of the *Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires*, the opening of the *Écomusée du Creusot*, the *Musée en Herbe*, and the *Centre Georges Pompidou*, four innovative venues that served as models or at least as inspiration for many museum institutions, were achievements brought about by such personalities. These four institutions can be considered emblematic of a new relationship between visitors and the museum field. Cécilia de Varine nevertheless emphasizes the innovative capacity of provincial museums, whose new support initiatives sometimes preceded those of Parisian institutions.¹³⁹

Visitors, in all their diversity, including young people and people with disabilities, were placed at the centre of the relationship, to the detriment of the object, which then became merely a medium for learning about oneself and others, in a desire for integration, social cohesion, and inclusion.

The evolution of support systems and tools towards simplifying content and visitor participation were the main areas of development in visitor support.

¹³⁰ Histoire du Louvre, *op. cit.*, vol.III, p. 251.

¹³¹ Appendix F: Interview with Marie-Clarté O’Neill.

¹³² 64% of the total budget of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. *Les musées*, État et Culture, Paris, La Documentation française, 1991, p. 47.

¹³³ *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, p. 634.

¹³⁴ CAILLET Élisabeth in collaboration with LEHALLE Evelynne, *À l’approche de médiation culturelle*, Lyon, PUL, 1995, p. 115.

¹³⁵ Appendix I: Interview with Cécilia de Varine, and Appendix J: Interview with Hugues de Varine

¹³⁶ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs and Appendix F: Interview with Marie-Clarté.

¹³⁷ CHAUMIER Serge, MAIRESSE François, *La médiation culturelle*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2nd edition, 2017, p.105.

¹³⁸ Appendix J: Interview with Hugues de Varine, Workshops were already being run in *Maisons des jeunes et de la culture* by social workers.

¹³⁹ Appendix I: Interview with Cécilia de Varine.

2. The *Musée des Arts et traditions populaires*: innovative tools for supporting audiences

The Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions founded in 1937 by Georges Henri Rivière, moved to a new building in the *Bois de Boulogne* in 1972. This was an opportunity for its founder to completely rethink the museography established at the *Palais du Trocadéro*, which was already very innovative for the time.¹⁴⁰ With the introduction of “operational chains,” the presentation of objects replaced the guide’s commentary or written explanations. The objects spoke for themselves.¹⁴¹ Visitors simply had to look to understand the creative process on display, as was the case, for example, with the bread-making chain. Another major innovation was the introduction, for the first time in France, of audiovisual technology in a museum setting. Audiovisual and musical recordings were placed throughout the exhibition. This was an effort to recontextualize objects through a multidisciplinary approach that promoted decompartmentalization, but it was also an effort to popularize the museum for a wider audience.¹⁴² Georges Henri Rivière worked with musicologists, ethnologists, art historians, and others. This comprehensive approach was highly innovative and remains relevant today. It provided visitors with keys to understanding the artifacts on display. An initial audiovisual medium was introduced: an audio guide for visitors to the galleries, using devices rented at the museum entrance.¹⁴³ Slideshows, audio commentary integrated into the display cases, and videos depicting dances, for example, complemented the audio guide system. With an educational and didactic aim and to reach a wide audience, the language was simplified, with simpler texts and graphics punctuating the visit.

These audiovisual devices were quickly adopted, particularly in Parisian museums such as the *Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie* (opened in 1986), the *Musée d’Orsay* (1986), and the *Grand Louvre* (pyramid inaugurated in 1989).

3. Ecomuseums: the foundations of the participatory approach

Ecomuseums remain the great museological innovation of the late 1960s. A practical offshoot of New Museology, they experienced their greatest development between 1972 and 1985.¹⁴⁴

The term “ecomuseum” was coined in 1971 by Hugues de Varine.¹⁴⁵ An ecomuseum is a “cultural institution that, on a permanent basis and with the participation of the population, carries out the functions of research, conservation, presentation, and promotion of a set of natural and cultural assets representative of an environment and the ways of life that have succeeded one another”.¹⁴⁶ Ecomuseums were the preferred instruments of community development, a real tool for emancipation in an often dispute context.

Driven by the regional development policy launched in 1963 and, above all, by the ideology prevailing in the late 1960s, which advocated a return to the land, the promotion of the local area, and the desire for self-management, the first ecomuseum, the Niou Ecomuseum, opened its doors in 1967 on the island of Ouessant, in the Armorique Regional Nature Park. In 1968, the *Grande Lande* Ecomuseum was founded in Marquèze, in the *Landes de Gascogne* Regional Nature Park.¹⁴⁷

With the opening in 1971 of the ecomuseum, a name chosen “for convenience”¹⁴⁸ by the urban community of *Le Creusot-Montceau-Les-Mines*, concern for the social and industrial environment grew. It was a “museum without a collection (which) dealt with the heritage of a territory,” which for Hugues de Varine was “above all living heritage.” The approach was to promote what Hugues de Varine called inculturation, perceived as the invention “of new forms close to and inspired by the living local culture, so that people can empower their own practices.” Two objectives guided the creation of this ecomuseum: the moral reappropriation of the workers’ tools, restoring pride and giving cultural meaning to the urban community of *Le Creusot*, with heritage used as a means of mediation within the urban community.

¹⁴⁰ As soon as the museum opened at the *Palais du Trocadéro*, the scenography, borrowed in part from northern European countries, was innovative for France: black box effect, directional lighting, invisible nylon thread ties, disappearance of mannequins, etc.

¹⁴¹ In the same vein, Jean-Pierre LAURENT, director of the Musée dauphinois in Grenoble in the 1970s, emphasised that “the role of objects is comparable to that of words in language; they only have meaning as a means of conveying, in a coherent discourse, such and such an idea, such and such an emotion”, quoted in the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, p. 148.

¹⁴² CAILLET Elisabeth (1995), p. 114.

¹⁴³ DESVALLÉES André, *La muséologie selon George Henri Rivière*, Paris, Dunod, 1989, quoted in CAILLET Elisabeth (1995), p. 115.

¹⁴⁴ *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, p.367.

¹⁴⁵ For this section, see the interview with Hugues de Varine, Appendix J, on the choice of the term linked to a simple combination of circumstances.

¹⁴⁶ *Article 1 of the Charte des écomusées* (Ecomuseum Charter), instruction dated 4 March 1981 from the *Ministère de la Culture et de la Communication* (Ministry of Culture and Communication).

¹⁴⁷ *Les Musées*, État et Culture, La Documentation Française, 1991, p. 42.

¹⁴⁸ Appendix J: Interview with Hugues de Varine.

The great innovation, apart from the absence of collections, was to rely solely on the participation of the inhabitants in writing the labels (with the help of Georges Henri Rivière) and other written materials. The objects were brought in by the residents, who also acted as guides through the various industrial buildings on the site, sharing their stories and experiences. These workers received no training on how to conduct the tours. They were volunteers, and the content of the tours remained open, but with an undeniable practical scientific input. Workshops were also offered.

Ecomuseums multiplied in France and were grouped together, much to the regret of Hugues de Varine, under the name of “society museums,” “museums that share the same objective: to study the evolution of humanity in its social and historical components, and to convey and provide reference points for understanding the diversity of cultures and societies.”¹⁴⁹

4. Workshops and museums for young audiences: from the first workshops at the *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* to the *Musée en Herbe*, an unusual venue

The *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* and the *Musée des Monuments Français*

The first creative workshop for children took place in 1953 at the *Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs* (now the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* (Decorative Arts Museum), Paris with the creation of the *Atelier des moins de 13 ans* (Workshop for Children Under 13) on the initiative of François Mathey, director of the museum, Yolande Amic, museum curator, and Pierre Belvès, illustrator.¹⁵⁰ This workshop was a great success and was extended to teenagers in 1955.



¹⁴⁹ BARROSO Éliane and VAILLANT Emilia, *Musées et Sociétés*, Ministère de la Culture, Direction des musées de France, 1993 and Hugues de Varine's clearer position on the subject: a consequence of the standardisation imposed by the 2002 museum law.

¹⁵⁰ [MAD website](#)

The workshop was only opened to the adult public in 1977. In 1979, it welcomed a new audience with the *Atelier des Tout-Petits* (Workshop for Toddlers) for children under six. In 1987, a summer workshop was offered for students, future architects or interior designers, designers, and graphic designers, in collaboration with the *École Camondo* and the *École Spéciale d'Architecture*.

At the end of the 1970s, Marie-Clarté O'Neill, drawing on her experience at the Junior Museum of the Metropolitan Museum (New York) and Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille proposed the first introductory workshop on architecture at the *Musée des Monuments Français* (French Monuments Museum).

Provincial museums in action

After a study trip to the United States, which took her to children's museums, museums, private collections, and artists' studios, Danièle Giraudy (1940 -) created the first children's museum for very young children (children in the first and second years of nursery school, children aged three to four), within the *Musée des Beaux-Arts de Longchamp*.¹⁵¹ The museum was run by artist-educators. She said that she was inspired by Michael Spock, director of the Children's Museum in Boston, and especially by the museum in Houston, created by the Ménil-Schlumberger family, who had loaned works for an exhibition for children, at their height, entitled *For Children*, which allowed this unusual audience to appreciate and play in and with the works".¹⁵² She also paid attention to the garden for children in Brooklyn and "its Braille labels on its scented plants. I later took up this idea of a perfume garden open to the blind at the Picasso Museum in Antibes."

Noticing that children from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Marseille did not visit the museum, Danièle Giraudy launched the *muséobus*¹⁵³ in 1967 to reach out to this audience by distributing educational kits, with the aim of encouraging them to come and discover the children's museum.

Building on this successful experience, Danièle Giraudy joined the team at the *Centre Pompidou*, where she created the Children's Workshop.

Still in the provinces, the *Centre d'arts plastiques contemporains* (CAPC) in Bordeaux, founded in 1973, was very active in supporting young audiences. In 1981, it launched "boîtes/expositions": a device like the educational material but adapted to museum scenography conventions with hanging and texts like labels. The

CAPC also had the idea of refurbishing a school bus to turn it into a traveling exhibition space for children, the Artbus, which was in service from 1975 to 1980. Workshops were organized in schools, art centres, and even outdoors. The programme was divided into three parts: a theoretical introduction to the exhibition for middle school students, followed by a presentation of the artist's creative process, often accompanied by the artist's materials on display in the exhibition, and finally a hands-on workshop related to the artist's practice.

The CAPC also offered a sensory approach with "colour boxes," such as the Green Box, encouraging visitors to discover colour through the five senses.

The Musée en Herbe

Apart from these first workshops and spaces dedicated to children, the great innovation of this period, "a utopia become reality"¹⁵⁵ was the creation, in 1975, of the *Musée en Herbe* in Paris, in the *Jardin d'Acclimatation*,¹⁵⁶ on the edge of the *Bois de Boulogne*, by Sylvie Girardet, Claire Merleau-Ponty and Anne Tardy, graduates in art history whose professor of museology was Georges Henri Rivière. Noting that museums were reserved for an intellectual elite, where children were not welcome, they wanted to share their wonder at art with as many people as possible, give children a taste for art, demystify museum visits, and familiarize children with the museum space to make them want to come back. The Museum wanted to be a springboard for these budding visitors to visit traditional museums. At the time, the museum mainly welcomed schoolchildren (80%).

Until it moved in 2008, the *Musée en Herbe* presented its exhibitions in the form of easily transportable "colour boxes": foldable panels with a reproduction of a work on one side and a game for children related to that work on the other.¹⁵⁸

After moving to the Paris centre, the *Musée en Herbe* adopted displays and scenography designed for its new spaces.

¹⁵⁴ Brosse Carine, above-mentioned article.

¹⁵⁵ Sylvie Girardet, director and co-founder of the *Musée en Herbe*, L'art pour tous, Art Team Media interview on *Youtube* 15 December 2023.

¹⁵⁶ Leisure and amusement park for children.

¹⁵⁷ Appendix D: Interview with Corinne Héreau: after moving to the heart of Paris, it was the other way round, as there was less space for workshops. The museum now mainly welcomes individual visitors. It receives around 100,000 visitors a year, with the aim of maintaining a certain number to ensure a comfortable visit. The museum welcomes six or seven school classes a day.

¹⁵⁸ Veyres Camille, *Médiation culturelle au Musée en Herbe: renouveler les relations entre public et musée, un moyen de favoriser la démocratisation culturelle ?* Sciences de l'Homme et Société, 2017, p.16.

¹⁵¹ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy and *Interview with Danièle Giraudy conducted on 31 May 2023 by Brigitte Gilardet*, art historian, research associate at the CHSP.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy: this museum-bus also parked near markets, hospital courtyards and deprived neighbourhoods, and was used as a "hook" to successfully attract visitors to the museum

Véronique Andersen points out that this museum was a pioneer in combining a visit with a creative workshop in one single activity.

The museum also introduced animated tours for school groups and, from 2008, for individual visitors: a general presentation lasting 15 to 20 minutes followed by free exploration with teachers and/or accompanying parents. From 2008, the mediators also commented on one work per room according to a defined tour script. In recent years, the speaking time has been reduced so that children “can continue to discover things for themselves while having fun,”¹⁵⁹ explains Corinne Héreau. The museum now favours free mediation (stationary mediation): mediators, who also act as security guards, welcome visitors, guide them, direct them, and offer room information sheets.

The Musée en Herbe, Paris (2023)
(Source: photographs by Sylvie Savare, November 2023)



The approach chosen to engage children and their companions, whether on individual visits or school trips, was, and remains today, humour and play, while maintaining high-quality informational content: “discovering while having fun”¹⁶⁰. Corinne Héreau emphasizes that “the transmission of knowledge and learning” remains the goal. The books written by Sylvie Girardet and Claire Merleau-Ponty¹⁶¹ serve as references for the mediators, although Corinne Héreau admits that they now need to be adapted for younger children.

Véronique Andersen recalls the extreme freedom given to mediators, the boldness and the rich collaborative work that prevailed, in the same spirit as what she had experienced in Scandinavian countries. Sylvie Girardet, now the museum’s artistic director, explains the content creation process: surprisingly the content is first written for an adult audience and then gradually pared down to its essentials¹⁶². Observation, imagination, and identification games throughout the exhibition allow children to discover the objects on display, pique their curiosity, and develop their powers of observation. For independent visits, activity booklets with accessories are available, and a small gift is provided at the end of the visit. To extend the visit, in 1979 the *Musée en Herbe* began producing small books and exhibition books aimed at young visitors and closely linked to the museum’s exhibition, further familiarizing children with the museum space.¹⁶³

From the outset, the *Musée en Herbe* has aimed to be intergenerational and still strives to raise awareness of art among as many people as possible, with a wide audience ranging from 3 to 103 years old! Since the Keith Haring exhibition, the museum has been offering tours for adults and events such as *Art’péros* (Art drinks) on Thursday evenings and Art-teas on Monday afternoons. It now provides a booklet that meets the criteria of the FALC (*Facile à lire et à comprendre*) or Easy to Read and Understand method.¹⁶⁴

In line with its long-standing commitment to making culture accessible to all, the *Musée en Herbe* launched in the 1990s a series of initiatives both inside and outside the museum, including tours and workshops for socially disadvantaged groups. These initiatives are carried out in collaboration with associations such as *Réussir Paris* (Succeeding Paris), which fights illiteracy, *La Halte Humanitaire* (The Humanitarian Halt) and the Red Cross.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Notably: GIRARDET Sylvie and MERLEAU-PONTY Claire, *Une exposition de A à Z-Concevoir et réaliser une exposition*, 1994, Paris, Édition OCIM, 1994.

¹⁶² Interview by Sylvie Girardet with Art Team Media on Youtube: astonishing, as one might imagine that the texts would be designed directly for children.

¹⁶³ See BROSSE Carine, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁴ This method aims to simplify documents and making them more accessible.

¹⁵⁹ Appendix D: Interview with Corinne Héreau.

Using educational kits designed and produced by the mediators, the museum went out to the schools for activities carried out within the school curriculum (presentation and facilitation of the workshop by the mediator) and to run extra-curricular workshops funded by the City of Paris.

Today, the museum is extending its activities to very young children, starting at age two, with projects in nursery schools.

The atypical *Musée en Herbe* continues to be a model today.

5. The Centre national d'Art et de culture Georges Pompidou (National Centre for Art and Culture): an incubator of ideas to support all audiences)

The opening in 1977 of the *Centre National d'Art et de Culture Georges Pompidou* (Centre Pompidou) was decisive in the evolution of visitor support to museums, notably by introducing, and this is where its originality lies, multidisciplinary in a single space, implementing the idea of a museum as a centre for exchange and encounter: educational spaces, restaurants, an entrance forum, a genuine place for exchanges, meetings and exhibitions in the early years, and further on a documentation centre. From its inception, it also housed the *Centre de Création Industrielle* (Industrial Creation Centre), the *Bibliothèque Publique d'Information* (BPI, Public Information Library) and the *Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique* (IRCAM, Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics/Music). In addition, the Centre Pompidou benefited from its remarkable architecture, although heavily criticized at first, and a new museography that gave pride to large modular platforms.

This project was part of a desire for cultural democracy and sought to inaugurate a new cultural practice.

In the first *Bulletin*, published in January 1977, Claude Mollard, secretary general of the Centre Pompidou, described Beaubourg as “an experiment in cultural integration” that could serve as an example for cultural centres in the provinces. Pontus Hulten (1924-2006, director from 1977 to 1981), in the same *Bulletin*, went further, declaring that “the museum of the future will therefore be considered a base, enabling direct contact between artists, the public, and society. It will be the ultimate place for communication, encounters, and dissemination; it will be an instrument for reflection and a centre for parascientific research on current and future socio-cultural practices.”

Travelling exhibitions, which were genuine tools for decentralisation and aimed at all audiences, were also set up. They were intended for cultural and educational organisations and were accompanied by documentation (bibliographies, catalogs, and other publications).¹⁶⁵ Conversely, the *Centre Pompidou* hosted exhibitions from provincial museums.¹⁶⁶

A first co-creation event was launched on the inauguration of the *Centre Pompidou* with a national competition followed by a photography exhibition¹⁶⁷. Visitors thus became artists, co-creators of an exhibition.

The *Centre Pompidou* offered different activities for correspondents, people in charge of forming groups, who were true ambassadors for the *Centre Pompidou*, and for all other audiences, either individually or in groups.

A variety of 1.5-hour tours were offered to correspondents: Discovery of the Centre tours, animated museum tours, “user guide” tours, meetings with artists, and animated tours of the exhibitions.¹⁶⁸

When the *Centre Pompidou* opened, during the Marcel Duchamp exhibition,¹⁶⁹ independent visitors could sign up for group tours (twenty people), which were paid, five days a week, led by a student, an artist, or an art critic. These tours were intended to be “an opportunity for exchange and discussion.”¹⁷⁰ For individual visitors, free activities were offered twice a day, every day. These were lively discussion meetings, again led by a student, art critic or artist. They were intended to “answer questions from the public and encourage everyone to express their views.”¹⁷¹ Other support measures were available to visitors: written documents for free consultation, “visual and video editing, films about artists or movements in the screening room, in the educational spaces, and thematic presentations bringing together works and visual documents, in order to renew and enrich perception.”¹⁷² However, “activities for school groups and continuing education groups were provided by researchers, specialists, and artists”.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁵ *Bulletin* 2, April May 1977, p. V.

¹⁶⁶ *Bulletin* 3, June September 1977, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ *Bulletin* 1, January 1977, p. 31.

¹⁶⁸ *Bulletin* 2, p. III.

¹⁶⁹ From 1 February to 2 May 1977.

¹⁷⁰ *Bulletin* 2, p. 52.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Bulletin* 2, p. 53.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

During the same inaugural year, paid educational activities were set up for groups three to five times a year, lasting an hour and a half, “around a chosen theme (from a programme of three programmes to choose from), during which a facilitator (a researcher or artist) (proposed) a discussion to the group based on their personal approach to the work of art.”¹⁷⁴ Another new feature was the paid activity (except for permanent passes) called *Un Tableau/ un conservateur/ une semaine* (One Painting/One Curator/One Week): every day at 4 pm, a member of the scientific team commented a painting from the permanent collections.¹⁷⁵ However, at that time the *Centre Pompidou* offered no workshops for adults.

Another innovation, in line with the museum’s policy of openness, was the free access to three storage rooms,¹⁷⁶ with works on sliding panels chosen by visitors, again in a spirit of co-creation.

The *Centre Pompidou* also offered original events on current exhibitions in other museums, such as the Louvre.¹⁷⁷ The *Centre Pompidou* also organized training courses for correspondents and teachers, with a particular focus on pedagogy.

From the very beginning the *Centre Pompidou* made innovation in visitor services a priority, developing numerous forms of support aimed at self-fulfillment, contact, exchange, discussion, visitor autonomy, and the creation of social ties.

The Promotion/Public Service, which was not really a service dedicated to “mediation” was very concerned about relations with the public. Intended as a liaison between the Centre Pompidou and visitors¹⁷⁸, it was eager for suggestions¹⁷⁹ and regularly consulted its members via questionnaires inserted in the *Bulletin*,¹⁸⁰ which allowed to adjust the programme mes.

In 1989, the Animation-Education Unit department dedicated to programme ming emphasized the use of Socratic maieutic in animated tours instead of the “old-fashioned” guided tours. This department also produced documents providing “essential reference points.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁴ *Bulletin* 4 October-November 1977, p.34.

¹⁷⁵ *Bulletin* 5 December 1977 - January 1978, p.47. In the same spirit, in the early 1980s, Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille and Marie-Clarté O’Neill created a lunchtime programme me at the Louvre called *Une heure/Une œuvre* (One hour/one work). This formula spread to many other museums. Appendix F: Interview with Marie-Clarté O’Neill.

¹⁷⁶ *Bulletin* 5, December 1977 - January 1978, p.15.

¹⁷⁷ *Bulletin* 5, p. IV.

¹⁷⁸ *Bulletin* 7, April - May 1978, p.5.

¹⁷⁹ *Bulletin* 10, December 1978 - January 1979, p. III.

¹⁸⁰ Report on the survey conducted in April-May 1979, *Bulletin* 15, December 1979-January 1980, p. 4 and 5.

¹⁸¹ CNAC (replacing the Bulletin in 1980) n°50, 15 March, 15 May 1989, p.32 and 33.

Pontus Hulten summed up the first year as follows: “The activities organized around the permanent collections, rather than guided tours, are an attempt to raise awareness of the visual arts: they teach visitors how to look at art and provide them with the information they need to then explore the museum’s works on their own.”¹⁸² In its first year, the *Centre Pompidou* welcomed six million visitors, a considerable success; 30,000 visitors benefited from the activities.¹⁸³

This cultural integration also extended to audiences that were still largely overlooked by museums: children and children with disabilities. The *Centre Pompidou* distinguished itself by opening, in 1975, a preliminary version of the Children’s Workshop,¹⁸⁴ which revolutionized the relationship between museums and children. It paved the way for new forms of support, both in terms of design, with an approach that emphasized the five senses, the beginnings of sensory mediation for all, and a new focus on disability and co-construction, and in implementation, with the creation of educational kits, the launch of the museum train, and a variety of workshops. The workshop was open to schoolchildren (for a series of four sessions, if possible, including one at the school) and to children visiting individually. The workshop was not officially associated with a visit to the museum and lasted an hour and a half. Danièle Giraudy emphasizes the importance of introducing young children to art before clichés relayed by adults, parents, or teachers influence their views and feelings. We must “teach them to look”.¹⁸⁵

This space, designed for children aged four to twelve, was “a space specially designed and equipped for them (the children).”¹⁸⁶ It was a giant play area created by artists based on children’s requests with a workshop space.

The activities were led by young artists, specialists in various fields, and renowned artists such as Don Cherry, Boris Tissot, Lucien Clergue, and Max-Henri de Larminat.

¹⁸² *Bulletin* 5, December 1977 - January 1978, p.15.

¹⁸³ Rapport d’activité (Activity report) 1977, Centre Pompidou.

¹⁸⁴ *L’Atelier des enfants: Une traversée pédagogique de l’histoire du Centre Pompidou*, An evening organised by Romain Lacroix with Camille Jochyms and Lilou Parente, 7 February 2024 with screening of Fabienne Servan-Schreiber’s documentary, *L’Atelier* (1980, 52 min)

¹⁸⁵ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy.

¹⁸⁶ GIRAUDY Danièle, *L’Atelier des enfants du Centre d’art et de culture Georges Pompidou*, Paris, in op. cit. *Le musée et l’enfant*, *Museum* vol. XXXI, n°3, 1979.

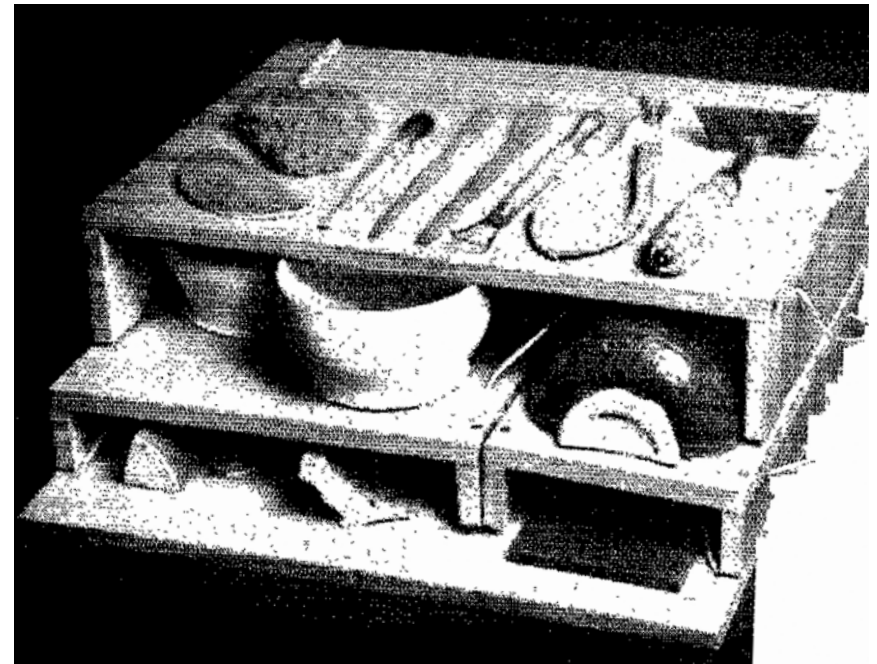


Between 1976 and 1979, the workshop welcomed 80,000 visitors for a series of six sessions. School visits to the museum were encouraged by the third-party educational time (*tiers-temps pédagogique*)¹⁸⁷ and the instructions given by the Ministry of Education. Danièle Giraudy explained: “The aim of this workshop is to teach children to look, listen and feel, to educate their senses, which are mainly developed through reasoning and memory at school, to bring them into contact with young artists, painters, sculptors and musicians, and to establish a dialogue that will awaken their interest in contemporary creation and familiarize them with artists and their work. ... Six workshops allowing children to discover drawing, colour, volume, audio-visual, physical play, and music took place at the same time, with 300 children per day wandering barefoot through the spaces. Thirty facilitators, visual artists, puppeteers, dancers, and actors await the children every day in the different spaces set aside for schoolchildren during the week, divided into small groups for a cycle of six introductory sessions. The eye and the hand, taste, hearing, and smell are combined to help children flourish by teaching them to love and invent. In the same spirit, sessions are devoted to children with disabilities who, along with other children, learn to look, move, dance, mime, and

¹⁸⁷ Experiments in third-party educational time began as early as 1964, encouraging school outings. They were formalised by the decree of 7 August 1969. There were two main aims to the educational third period: to bridge the cultural gap between pupils and to develop all children's aptitudes to the maximum, in particular by balancing their intellectual, artistic and physical faculties.

listen together, with puppets, costumes, masks, make-up, sounds and smells¹⁸⁹. Children with disabilities were also given special attention in small groups of ten to twelve children, compared to twenty-five for school groups and fifteen to twenty for groups of individual visitors.

Outside the museum, this new teaching method was disseminated in schools, where the Centre's facilitators organized art activities. Teachers could also borrow educational kits containing works of art to put together their own exhibitions in the classroom for eight to ten days.¹⁹⁰



Educational kit
(Source: Le musée et l'enfant, *Museum* vol. XXXI, no. 3, 1979, p. 178)

¹⁸⁸ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy. However, she points out that the children were all mixed together during the workshops.

¹⁸⁹ GIRAUDY Danièle, *op. cit.*

¹⁹⁰ Danièle Giraudy confided that she had been inspired by what she had observed in Sweden: a mobile briefcase service, the Rikstutstälningar, *Ibid.*

To complement this offering, a programme was planned for regional cultural institutions in the form of traveling exhibitions, kits, workshops, and educational meetings. In three years, the exhibitions *Vive la couleur*, *Du point à la ligne*, and *Les mains regardent*¹⁹¹ were presented in a network of fifty cities that served as branches of the Atelier. “For the International Year of the Child, the Children’s Workshop launched an international exchange programme (exhibitions, staff) with children’s museums in Europe, America, Israel, and Japan.”¹⁹²

Another innovation was the creation of the children’s museum train, spearheaded by Hugues de Varine, for the 1978 folk-art exhibition *Fer-blanc et fil de fer* (Tin and Wire). Initially set up on the forecourt of the Centre, the museum train welcomed nearly 30,000 visitors between October 25 and December 5, 1978. It then travelled to other cities in France and even to Belgium, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

Finally, the Children’s Workshop offered training courses for schoolteachers (introduction to workshop pedagogy and working methods), cultural leaders, and art students.

It should be noted that although teaching and disseminating the main principles of this innovative children’s workshop model were also part of their mission, Danièle Giraudy and her team always refused to “write a manual for children’s workshops or models for activities, so that everyone could invent their own way of doing things.”¹⁹³

The *Centre Pompidou* was therefore a melting pot of innovation in terms of supporting audiences, adults, young people, and people with disabilities. This innovation lay more in the content and technique than in its form. Indeed, it was still a classic format of offering guided tours, but the spirit was radically different: the ambition was to ensure that visitors could flourish by giving them the keys to understanding the works, which then became a simple vehicle, a tool for exchange, and a basis for discussion.

¹⁹¹ “*Les mains regardent* was our third travelling educational exhibition. After *Vive la couleur* (1975) and *Du point à la ligne* (1976), in 1977 we offered an introduction to volume and touch. In 1978, it was made available to museums, cultural centres and specialised institutions throughout France, and left our borders in 1979. Sensory education and education for the disabled were the two objectives of this exhibition, which invited visitors to touch a sculpture to get to know its skin better. Children love to touch and discover the world first with their hands. So it makes sense to imagine a museum that can be touched, and the 21 sculptors were playing along, because artists and children like to meet each other”. *Ibid.* GIRAUDY Danièle: This exhibition travelled the world for ten years and won the International Museum Prize in 1975.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ Interview with Danièle Giraudy by Brigitte Gilardet 2023.

The *Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires*, the ecomuseums, the *Centre Pompidou*, and the *Musée en Herbe* were incubators of ideas during the 1970s. Their influence was considerable in terms of visitor support. Far from the “museum visit” devoted to the worship of objects, the museum became a place of exchange and encounter for self-fulfillment within a community, with the collection object becoming a simple vehicle for communication, a pretext for exchange and the consolidation of social ties.

6. Auditoriums and exhibitions: other innovative tools for visitor support

During the same period, auditoriums and multipurpose rooms appeared in museum spaces, designed to encourage exchanges and transform museums into forums and centres of life.

When it opened in 1977, the *Centre Pompidou* had a large multipurpose room, known as the “experimental” room, which could accommodate 600 people for theatrical performances, dance events, film screenings, readings, and lectures.

Other museums followed suit: the Matisse Museum in Nice, and, in Paris, the Guimet Museum, the Museum of Decorative Arts, the Museum of French Monuments, and the *Musée d’Orsay*. The Louvre Museum acquired an auditorium as part of the huge *Grand Louvre* project (1981-1998).

The auditorium can thus be seen as an accompanying facility, a place where visitors can encounter the museum environment. It also attracts an audience that does not necessarily come to the museum to visit the collections, but rather to relax or enjoy a concert or a show. Here, the museum finds its full expression as a museum-forum, a place of life and encounter, beyond the simple encounter with artifacts, even if the final goal remains to attract visitors to the collections.

These new spaces can often be privatized, becoming a significant source of additional income for the museum.

Finally, this period saw the beginning of a wave of exhibitions, which are also a means of promoting and enriching the encounter between visitors and the museum. Here again, the *Centre Pompidou* was at the forefront of this trend. In the year it was founded, it offered around fifteen exhibitions, two or three simultaneously over a period of six to ten weeks.¹⁹⁴ In the 1980s and 1990s, Jean Davallon analyzed this exhibition phenomenon, considering the exhibition as a medium, understood as “the establishment of a mediation between two worlds: that of the visitor and that of science”.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ *Bulletin* 1, January 1977, p.20.

¹⁹⁵ DAVALLON Jean, *L’Exposition à l’œuvre, Stratégies de communication et médiation symbolique*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 1999, p.84.

Exhibitions since the late 1970s, particularly at the *Centre Pompidou*, have become increasingly elaborate, complex, and meaningful, with a narrative shaped by the curator to engage the visitor. They can therefore be considered as genuine mediation devices.

This second period, from the Second World War to the 1980s, was marked by the inclusion of new audiences, especially young people and, tentatively, people with disabilities. It was also a time of radical paradigm shift, reflecting this new attention to everyone: from then on, visitor support in museums was focused not on the object, but on the individual and their integration into the community. The museum object became a pretext for exchange and personal fulfillment. This was the great era of cultural animation, which replaced the top-down discourse of simple knowledge transfer that had prevailed until then.

While traditional forms of support, both oral and written, persisted, the objective, content, and technique differed to reflect this fundamental change. The prevailing idea was that of active visitor participation through Socratic maieutic¹⁹⁶ and workshops, in order to give them the keys to understanding, leading them towards autonomy and promoting their development. In the most successful participatory approaches, visitors even became co-constructors of the narrative.

The museum, which until then had been able to impress or even repel potential visitors, was transformed into a living space, moving from a temple to a forum in a desire to integrate all individuals, in all their diversity, into the community. This new vision deeply rooted prevails still nowadays.

On a technical level, the highlight of this period was the introduction of audiovisual tools, which made it possible to contextualize objects and broaden their understanding. This was also the time when the first steps were taken towards multisensory experiences to be developed in the workshops offered by museums.



*From the 1980s
to the present day:
the birth
of mediation*

—

*From the segmentation
of support services
to universal
accessibility*

¹⁹⁶ In addition to scientific knowledge, this presupposes a knowledge of communication techniques, rhetoric and pedagogy, in order to listen to the visitor and construct a discourse together.

The museum wave and a new political impetus

From the 1980s onwards, there was a wave of new museums created in France, a real “museum fever” and sense of optimism¹⁹⁷.

Jack Lang, Minister of Culture under President François Mitterrand, elected in 1981, made the creation of a network of French museums of international quality a priority. Between 1982 and 1983, three laws known as the Defferre laws¹⁹⁸, or devolution laws, which allowed the spreading up of state services¹⁹⁹, made this ambitious development possible.

Between 1981 and 1991, 108 museums were created or extensively renovated. In 1991, 186 museums were under construction²⁰⁰. The major construction projects in Paris included the *Grand Louvre*, with the inauguration of the pyramid in 1989, and the launch in 1986 of the *Musée d'Orsay* and the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie* in La Villette. To accompany this major transformation, in 1992 the *Direction des Musées de France* recommended the development of a scientific and cultural project (PSC) to prevent the construction of new museums without a clearly defined mission and clear approach to public engagement²⁰¹. Mandatory for the granting of investment aid²⁰² and for the application for the *Musée de France* label, this tool²⁰³ gradually spread to become an indispensable strategic document, setting objectives and integrating action plans covering all of the museum's missions to develop public engagement strategies.

The arrival of Jack Lang also marked a change in the concept of a visitor centred approach services in museums, with a return to an emphasis on the object and, by the same token, an emphasis on the aim of museum learning and engagement to transmit knowledge. “The desire to help and support people to find their place in life and their environment (...) is being replaced by a logic of access to content. Instead of confrontation, which was aimed at and originated from peo-

ple, mediation now prefers to highlight the works and knowledge that need to be addressed to audiences.”²⁰⁴ This marked a break with the concept of community development that placed the individual and their development within society at the centre of concerns.

In the 1990s, a new concept emerged, that of cultural diversity, which was already in its infancy in the demands for recognition of regional cultures that led to devolution laws. In 1999, the Minister of Culture and Communication, Catherine Trautmann (1997-2000), sought to accelerate cultural democratisation by promoting arts and cultural education that reconciled popular education and cultural action. That same year, a *Charte d'objectifs Culture-Éducation populaire* (Charter of Objectives for Culture and Popular Education) was signed, enabling cultural action to benefit from popular education networks and thus reach a wider audience.

A – MEDIATION: EMERGENCE OF THE TERM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

During the 1980s, the concept of mediation or in English education and interpretation in museums gradually emerged.

The first use of the terms “mediator” and “mediation” was by Marie-Clarté O'Neill, then in charge of training lecturers at the French Museums Directorate in the 1980s/1985: “The term mediation fits into a system that corresponded to my vision of education at the time and, in any case, to everything that was oral mediation, which was the obligation of visitor participation, in the sense of significant interaction with visitors.” The terms mediators and mediation were used at the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie* in 1986²⁰⁵. Its use can be linked to its etymology²⁰⁶ and the role of the guide, who was required to build a bridge or link between visitors and sometimes complex scientific concepts. The guide had to act as an intermediary in a constructive dynamic with visitors.

¹⁹⁷ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs. She deplores the use of this term, arguing that it obliterates everything that has gone before.

¹⁹⁸ Named after Gaston Defferre, Minister of the Interior and Decentralisation, the Act of 2 March 1982 on the rights and freedoms of municipalities, departments and regions, the Act of 7 January 1983 on the division of powers between municipalities, departments, regions and the State and the Act of 22 July 1983 supplementing it.

¹⁹⁹ State planning process consisting in setting up administrative authorities representing the State in local administrative districts.

²⁰⁰ *Les Musées*, État et Culture, Paris, La Documentation française, 1991, p.52.

²⁰¹ JOLY Marie-Hélène, *Le Projet Scientifique et Culturel a-t-il de l'avenir ?* La Lettre de l'OCIM, 124 | 2009.

²⁰² Decree no. 2002-852 of 2 May 2002 (article 10).

²⁰³ Decree no. 2002-628 of 25 April 2002 (article 6).

²⁰⁴ CHAUMIER Serge, MAIRESSE François, *La médiation culturelle*, 2nd edition, Paris, Armand Colin, (2013) 2017, p.120.

²⁰⁵ BORDEAUX Marie-Christine and CAILLET Élisabeth, *La médiation culturelle: pratiques et enjeux théoriques*, Culture & Musées, Hors-série, 2013, p.139-163.

²⁰⁶ 15th century, from Latin *mediatio*: mediation, intermediation; etymology: the root “med” meaning milieu (middle or between)

At the same time, museology became a field of research, a discipline, a science for some, a “set of attempts at theorization or critical reflection related to the museum field²⁰⁷”. Mediation, considered a key concept in museology, did not escape this strong desire for theorization and gradually became institutionalized.

However, Marie-Clarté O’Neill notes that even today, despite numerous publications, fundamental and applied scientific research on museum education remains largely insufficient, leading, in particular, to a lack of recognition of the profession in the museum world, which is a scientific and demanding field, with, in particular, the disciplines of art history and conservation-restoration, which have acquired the status of scientific disciplines²⁰⁸.

1. Some definitions and concepts

In the 1980s and 1990s, the word “mediation” gradually replaced the term “animation.” Élisabeth Caillet, a philosopher by training, was credited with popularising this term to describe the accompaniment of visitors in museum institutions. In her book written in collaboration with Evelyne Lehalle, *À l’approche du musée, la médiation culturelle* (Approaching the Museum: Cultural Mediation), published in 1995²⁰⁹, she emphasized that “the concept of mediation is based on this essential distinction: I inform you, says the mediator; I teach you, says the teacher. We must set aside the constraints of teaching and work to bring out pleasure and desire.” The mediator is a conduit, an intercessor. They must provide “work around the collections to offer visitors the possibility of optimized interpretation and appreciation²¹⁰.”

However, as Marie-Christine Bordeaux points out, “no truly shared definition has emerged from the theoretical work carried out since the 1990s²¹¹.” As Anne Krebs points out, the term is polysemic.

Serge Chaumier and François Mairesse acknowledge that the concept remains vague, and that mediation encompasses extremely diverse activities that ultimately make it possible to define it. According to them, “cultural mediation is, or should be, much more than the transmission of information; it is above all a way of connecting with oneself, with others, and with the world.”²¹²

²⁰⁷ DESVALLÉES André and MAIRESSE François (eds.), *Concepts Clés de Muséologie*, p.46.

²⁰⁸ Appendix F: Interview with Marie-Clarté O’Neill and Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

²⁰⁹ LEHALLE Evelyne, *À l’approche du musée, la médiation culturelle*, Lyon, PUL., 1975.

²¹⁰ MERLEAU-PONTY Claire in CAILLET Élisabeth, CHAZOTTES Patrice, SERAIN Fanny, VAYSSE François (dir.), *La Médiation culturelle: cinquième roue du carrosse ?* Patrimoines et Sociétés, Paris, L’Harmattan, 2016, p.165.

²¹¹ BORDEAUX Marie-Christine, *La médiation culturelle: des dispositifs et des modèles toujours en tension*, L’Observatoire, n°51 hiver (winter) 2018, p.5-8.

²¹² CHAUMIER Serge & MAIRESSE François (2017), p.10.

In the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*²¹³, it is stated that “in museology, the term mediation has been frequently used in France and in French-speaking countries for more than a decade (...). It refers to a whole range of interventions carried out in a museum context to build bridges between what is on display (seeing) and the meanings that these objects and sites can have (knowledge). Mediation sometimes also seeks to encourage the sharing of experiences between visitors in the sociability of the visit, and the emergence of common references. It is therefore an educational communication strategy that uses various technologies around the collections on display to provide visitors with the means to better understand certain aspects of the collections and share their interpretations.

There are therefore two meanings of the term mediation.

In its strictest sense, mediation cannot include, for example, guided tours or written mediation tools (labels, catalogues, etc.), which are merely information tools, as Hugues de Varine points out. For him, mediation cannot be reduced to simple learning. It establishes a system of exchanges aimed at transforming visitors “from what they are.”²¹⁴ Cécilia de Varine points out that the mediators’ efforts must focus on seeking visitor participation. For her, mediation “begins when we rely on the people who are there...,” an approach that is the opposite of the traditional guided tour. Science museums and contemporary art museums had paved the way. Science museums had long practiced “hands-on education” with practical workshops. As for contemporary art museums, the nature of the works on display naturally raises questions among visitors. Mediation thus begins when the mediator draws on visitors to construct and co-construct their discourse.

Marie-Clarté O’Neill also advocates strict use of the term mediation. She recommends using the term museum education to refer to the support provided to visitors in museums. This term is also the one preferred in ICOM and ICOM CECA publications. Marie-Clarté O’Neill emphasises the difference between the terms mediation and museum education: museum education refers to the educational mission of museums, “a goal to be achieved,” while mediation is understood as a means of achieving this mission, a tool. Museum education, at the crossroads of informal education and culture considered too elitist, aims to provide visitors, through mediation, with structured knowledge so that they can branch out, allowing them to grow and develop. As Cécilia de Varine points out, it is based on the active participation of visitors, who are no longer mere passive recipients of knowledge.

²¹³ DESVALLÉES André et MAIRESSE François (dir.), Paris, Armand Colin, 2011, p.215.

²¹⁴ Position defended by Hugues de Varine, cartels and guided tours are instruments of information, not mediation, and Cécilia de Varine, Appendix I.

However, a broader meaning of the term mediation now prevails among the public and mediation services. It includes all means of support, including the most traditional ones.

Beyond theorizing the concept, the legislator, through the law of January 4, 2002, gave a decisive impetus to the institutionalization of mediation, endorsing mediation practices developed by pioneering museums.

2. Pioneering museums and the legal obligation of mediation

Pioneering museums

Initiatives existed well before the enactment of the 2002 law, as early as the 1970s, in innovative museums. The innovations continued. In the 1980s, Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille initiated exploratory visits for young audiences in national museums. These were treasure hunts on a printed sheet, to be done as a family. They were also behind the “*Une heure/Une œuvre*” (One hour/One work) programme me at the Louvre Museum during lunch breaks for people who worked.

As Cécilia de Varine and Anne Krebs point out, provincial museums were also very innovative in terms of audience development: they have a strong capacity for adaptation and change, particularly due to their smaller size and closer ties to their local communities, which Anne Krebs considers a key factor for success. As early as 1992, the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon offered new outreach programmes, particularly in the social sphere, in partnership with *ATD Quart Monde*. Cécilia de Varine notes that visitors themselves are often the ones who initiate initiatives by making requests. Encouraging people to break away from the Parisian mindset, Cécilia de Varine emphasizes the great capacity for innovation in mediation provincial museums such as the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Nancy, Strasbourg, and the CAPC in Bordeaux, which have been very active in this field since the 1980s.

She points out that the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*, inaugurated in Paris in 1986, was a pioneer in the field of mediation. “They invented a lot of things; I do not think anything has been invented since. They invented discussion tours, debate tours, the museum forum, co-constructed exhibitions with visitors, they had a blind person on their team who developed tactile tours, they did a lot of things.”²¹⁵ Bertrand Verine acknowledges that the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie* was at the forefront in terms of welcoming people with disabilities. Danièle Gi-

raudy also points out that their mediation service included people with physical disabilities who offered specific support and were regularly consulted to assess the accessibility of each exhibition.

The Ministry of Culture also strongly encouraged exchanges between professionals between 1995 and 2005 by organizing conferences where professionals could share their experiences, as Cécilia de Varine points out. Finally, the 2002 law confirmed, or at least recognized and attempted to disseminate, practices that already existed in these innovative museums.

Legal framework

Once again, the legislator played a decisive role in defining the role of museums and establishing their organisation.

Law No. 2002-5 of January 4, 2002, on museums in France, assigns the following missions to museums in France:

- To preserve, restore, study, and enrich collections
- To make their collections accessible to the widest possible audience
- To design and implement educational and outreach activities aimed at ensuring equal access to culture
- To contribute to the advancement of knowledge and research and to their dissemination.

This law applies only to museums in France, which numbered 1,216 institutions at the end of 2022. It harmonizes the status of museums recognized by the State, whether they are governed by public or private law. To be approved, a museum must meet four criteria:

- be managed by scientific staff from the regional or national cultural sector (curator or conservation officer),
- have its own educational service or be part of a network with other museums,
- keep an up-to-date inventory of its collections, and finally
- draw up a scientific and cultural project setting out its main guidelines.

The legislator therefore places the relationship with the public, accessibility, and education at the heart of the system, on the same level as the collections.

²¹⁵ However, some of these support systems were introduced at the Centre Pompidou as early as 1977.

Beyond this network of French museums, there are estimated to be between 3,000 and 10,000 museums or exhibition venues in France.²¹⁶

Museums are thus being assigned new roles. Alongside their fundamental educational role, they are consolidating their social function, closely reflecting societal concerns through the prism of their collections.

They are also inclusive and committed players, contributing to social cohesion by promoting accessibility for all.

These new roles assigned to museums are part of an increasingly significant international debate, particularly through ICOM.

3. A favourable international context: ICOM and ICOM CECA

Between 1946 and 2007, ICOM proposed seven versions of the definition of a museum. These definitions reflect the research of museum professionals and the perception of the changing role of museums in society. Education played an essential role in this.

In 2007, ICOM proposed a new definition of the museum: “a permanent, non-profit institution for the benefit of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, studies, exhibits, and communicates the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of study, education, and enjoyment.”²¹⁷

In 2019, in Kyoto, a new definition was proposed and rejected because it marked a major break with the previous definition, notably by removing the concept of education.

In August 2022, the ICOM Extraordinary General Assembly approved a new definition of the museum based on a consensus around key concepts: education, institution, inclusion, the social role of the museum, and the importance of the materiality of collections: “A museum is a permanent, non-profit institution serving society, dedicated to the research, collection, conservation, interpretation, and exhibition of the tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible, and inclusive, it promotes diversity and sustainability. Museums operate and communicate ethically and professionally, with the participation of diverse communities. They offer their audiences varied experiences of education, entertainment, reflection, and knowledge sharing.”²¹⁸

BEST PRACTICE 12

A tool to improve
museum education internationally

Edited by Margarita Laraignée

M international council of museums
conseil international des musées
consejo internacional de museos

M CECA ICOM
international committee
for education
and cultural action



2024

²¹⁶ LABOURDETTE Marie-Christine, *Les musées de France*, Paris, PUF, Que sais-je, 2015, p.3.

²¹⁷ [ICOM website](#)

²¹⁸ [ICOM website](#)

The Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA), one of the oldest and largest committees of ICOM, now comprising some 4,500 members from around 85 countries, plays an essential role in research and practice in the field of museum education, audience care and participation. To this end, in 2013, Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Colette Dufresne-Tassé developed a tool for analyzing educational or cultural action projects: *Best practice tool*. Designed as a practical aid for cultural action professionals, this tool represents a real step forward in the implementation of mediation programmes by providing concrete elements for analysis from design to evaluation, an evaluation that is too often neglected by mediators, as Marie-Clarté O'Neill regrets.

Faced with museum fever and its corollary, the proliferation of mediation proposals and educational and cultural programmes, all of which are considered innovative,²¹⁹ there is a need to think about, organize, and provide practical guidance on the means of mediation in order to make programmes more effective, as innovation in this field is not always a guarantee of quality. This accessible and free toolkit of best practices on the ICOM CECA website remains an essential reference and a major step forward in structuring thinking on the practice of mediation.

Alongside the institutionalization and theorization of mediation, the professionalisation of the mediator's role proved essential and was therefore imposed by law in a favourable international context. This movement went hand in hand with the broadening of the concept of the public and the gradual shift from segmented support services to the current trend of universal accessibility.

B – BROADENING THE CONCEPT OF AUDIENCE: TAILORED MEDIATION AND THE EMERGENCE OF UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

Despite considerable efforts since the Second World War, French people's habits when it comes to visiting museums and exhibitions have changed little. The 2018 survey on the cultural practices of French people revealed that 29% of French people had visited a museum or exhibition in the previous twelve months, compared with 28% in 1973, with a peak of 33% recorded in 1997.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Appendix F: Interview with Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

²²⁰ Evolution of cultural practices, 1973-2008. Extract from LOMBARDO Philippe and WOLFF Loup *Cinquante ans de pratiques culturelles en France*, Culture Études, Ministère de la Culture, 2020-2. Évolution des pratiques culturelles, 1973-2018, p. 6, sample of 9,200 people aged 15 and over in mainland France.

While school audiences remained the focus of museum policy during this period, other areas were also explored, always with a view to democratisation and accessibility, further broadening the spectrum of the concept of audience with great disparities in the diversity and quantity of mediation services offered. This led to a shift towards the concept of the family and offerings aimed at very young children. However, support for certain categories of visitors, such as teenagers, people with disabilities, and people from disadvantaged backgrounds, remains an area in development. To encompass this diversity of audiences while including them all, the concept of universal accessibility emerged.

1. School audiences: a constant focus of attention and the revival of arts and cultural education

In keeping with a long tradition, school audiences, particularly those in the early years of primary school,²²¹ continued to attract the interest of cultural policymakers during this period, which saw the great revival of arts and cultural education. Culture was then seen as a powerful social lever, a tool for integration and the construction of individual and national identity. This position still holds true today.

Although the principles of arts and cultural education were established in 1968, three major reasons led to this continued focus on school audiences.

The first reason was the ongoing desire for democratisation because, despite the policies implemented over more than fifty years, according to Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel (1966), access to culture remained the preserve of the upper social classes and those with higher education. The 2018 survey on the cultural practices of French people even revealed that the gap was widening: it was increasingly managers and those with higher education who visited heritage sites (museums and historic monuments). However, research in cultural psychology has shown that visiting museums contributes to the "formation of mental categories, tastes, and attitudes."²²²

²²¹ OCTOBRE Sylvie, *Les 6-14 ans et les équipements culturels: des pratiques encadrées à la construction des goûts*, Revue de l'OFCE, n° 86, juillet 2003. The data comes from a survey of 3,000 families carried out by the DEP during the winter of 2001-2002, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. p.4.

²²² ANTICHAN Sylvain, GENSBURGER Sarah, TEBOUL Jeanne, TORTERAT Gwendoline, *Visites scolaires, histoire et citoyenneté, les expositions du centenaire de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, Musées-Mondes, la Documentation française, 2016, p.10, quoting «Où trouver les moyens de penser ? Une lecture sociologique de la psychologie culturelle», in Ambroise B. and Chauviré C. (eds.).

A second reason was the realization that children who visited museums on school trips could influence their families to visit museums. Returning from a museum visit, a memorable event because it was unusual in the school context, children would share the highlights of their visit with their families, which could encourage a family visit where the child, proud, would take on the role of mediator.

The third reason was that schoolchildren, whether children or teenagers, were considered potential future museum visitors. School visits would enable them to familiarize themselves with museums and create a bond that would last into adulthood. Once again, this assumption was refuted by the 2018 study, but it remains firmly entrenched in museum institutions and the Ministry of Culture. According to the survey, despite active and concrete cultural policies aimed at familiarizing students with museums, visitor behaviour according to age has remained largely unchanged since 1970; there has been no noticeable increase in attendance among people who were familiarized with museum visits during their school years, even though in 2003, 75% of children had visited a museum as part of their school curriculum.

A persistent government commitment: arts and cultural education

In 1980, based on the model of ski trips, the first heritage classes were launched on an experimental basis. In 1982, these classes were introduced in several primary and secondary schools and are still going strong today. Run over several days, they enable students to discover the riches of a site, its environment, and its artistic and historical heritage. In this context, students naturally visit museums.

Museums fully embraced this government initiative for students. In the early 1980s, the Louvre Museum began offering tours for school groups. These tours, for sixth graders (ages 10-12), were closely linked to the school curriculum. In 1982-1983, under the aegis of Françoise Broyelle, a space dedicated to the first educational workshops for sixth-grade students was created in the Egyptian Antiquities Department.²²³

1983 marked a new decisive step in awakening schoolchildren to art, with the signing of an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of National Education.

Law No. 88-20 of January 6, 1988, on arts education, revived and cultural education.

That same year, Daniel Soulié and Jean-Marc Irollo were tasked with developing a programme me of workshops for the Louvre, broadening the target audience to include everyone from four-year-olds to adults and covering all departments. When the Louvre Pyramid opened in 1989, the programme me of activities offered around 40 workshop themes for all ages.²²⁴

In 1989, the Ministry of Culture extended its collaborations by signing memoranda of understanding with new ministries: the Ministry of Youth and Sports, for the development of educational and cultural projects, and the State Secretariat for the Family, for the implementation of a policy of cultural and artistic awareness for young children.

The promotion of artistic and cultural education continued with the strengthening of numerous innovations such as the *Plans locaux d'éducation artistique* (PLEA)(Local Artistic Education Plans) (1992),²²⁵ twinning schools and cultural institutions, and strengthening the partnerships between ministries.

The circular of July 22, 1998, co-signed by the Ministries of National Education and Culture and the Ministry Delegate for School Education, entitled "Artistic education from kindergarten to university," identified continuous and coherent artistic education throughout schooling as a major challenge. It marked a commitment to working towards cultural democratisation, a fundamental mission of the public education service.

The circular of March 23, 2001, set the conditions for implementing the Five-Year Plan for Art and Culture, aimed at generalizing artistic practices and extending access to culture, as desired in December 2000 by the Ministries of Culture and Communication and Education. This circular emphasized the mobilization of artistic and cultural institutions around two priority objectives: the generalization and strengthening of their educational and cultural mission and the training of artistic and cultural practitioners, mediators, and teachers. That same year, classes with an artistic and cultural focus were introduced. The following year, a memorandum of understanding for higher education aimed to strengthen the development of arts and culture in higher education. Here again, the necessary artistic and cultural training of teachers was highlighted.

²²⁴ Daniel Soulié confides that for four-year-old children, the workshops were difficult to set up because of the lack of competent staff.

²²⁵ A PLEA is a contract between a local authority, the State and cultural professionals, and is one of the elements that enable the harmonisation of initiatives taken by local authorities, cultural establishments and associations, and better use of all arts education resources.

²²³ Appendix H: Interview with Daniel Soulié.

However, despite these considerable efforts, the results of the Five-Year Plan for Art and Culture remained unsatisfactory: the objective of providing every young French person with equal access to art and culture was not achieved,²²⁶ even though the will remained firmly rooted among all stakeholders, including the State, local authorities, the DRACs²²⁷, schools, and cultural institutions.

In 2005, the Ministries of Culture and Communication, National Education, Higher Education and Research relaunched a joint policy on arts and cultural education.

Starting in 2006, international consultations on arts and cultural education began, and UNESCO held its first world conference on the subject. The 2024 conference, held in February in the United Arab Emirates, resulted in the adoption of a new international framework for arts and cultural education. This new framework provides, among other things, for a greater place for arts and cultural education in teacher training, greater appreciation of local and indigenous heritage and cultures, and greater recognition of artistic and cultural skills in the world of work.

The first European and international research symposium on the evaluation of the effects of arts and cultural education, held in 2007, had already established the benefits of such policies.²²⁸

In 2016, on the initiative of the *Haut Conseil de l'Éducation artistique et Culturelle* (High Council for Artistic and Cultural Education),²²⁹ a charter for artistic and cultural education was established, complementing the framework set out in 2015 on the artistic and cultural education pathway. This charter brought together stakeholders and institutions around ten key principles and reinforced the actions conducted in schools and community networks. When he was elected in 2017, President Emmanuel Macron made the artistic and cultural education pathway a priority.

This historical overview highlights the government's strong commitment to improving access to culture, particularly the arts, for all children, although the results are still disappointing.

School visits today

Over the years, the content of school visits to museums has remained unchanged, always closely linked to school curricula, although there is now a growing desire among museums to offer visits that go beyond this purely educational objective.

Museum education departments provide teachers with a wealth of documentary resources, such as educational files that enable teachers to prepare for the visit, with advice tailored to each school level, suggestions for activities to be carried out at school, and topics for discussion. The aim is to enrich the visitor experience, which should no longer be considered a purely recreational outing. These packs also suggest follow-up activities to build on the discoveries made during the museum visit. The development of museum websites has contributed to the widespread dissemination of this information, which can benefit all audiences.

Museums also offer activities outside their walls, such as lending educational kits that are presented to the class by teachers, or workshops led by a museum mediator who visits the school. For example, the *Musée des Confluences* (Lyon) has implemented a series of programmes for elementary, middle, and high school students. For elementary school students, for example, “the museum mediator tells a traditional story and illustrates it with an object from the collection.”²³⁰ The *Musée départemental Albert-Kahn* (Albert Khan Departmental Museum (Boulogne-Billancourt) provides educational kits developed by its outreach team free of charge to all schools for a few weeks or an entire year, enabling them to discover the museum's collections.

School visits remain essential to outreach activities, and many small museums see only young schoolchildren as visitors in each day. The Louvre, meanwhile, welcomes around 500,000 schoolchildren a year, and demand exceeds the museum's capacity, as Anne Krebs points out.

Schoolchildren remain more than ever at the heart of cultural policy, with a continued focus on the fine arts, as demonstrated by the revival of arts and cultural education and fuelled by the hope that this audience will become the audience of tomorrow.

²²⁶ Report by JUPPÉ-LEBLOND Christine and CHIFFERT Anne on Art and Culture Education, January 2003. This report makes an initial assessment of the five-year plan and presents recommendations.

²²⁷ DRAC: *Direction régionale des Affaires Culturelles* (Regional direction of cultural affairs)

²²⁸ LAURET Jean-Marc, *Les effets de l'éducation artistique et culturelle peuvent-ils être évalués*, L'Observatoire, 2007/2 (No. 32), p. 8-11.

²²⁹ Created by decree no. 2013-783 of 28 August 2013.

²³⁰ *Musée des confluences website*

2. Individual visits to museums by children: a shift towards the concept of the family

While children were long unwelcome in museums, except in the context of school visits, over the past 20 years museums have rolled out a considerable number of activities to attract them,²³¹ with a marked acceleration since 2019.

In 2003, 91% of children had been to a museum during their lifetime²³², either as part of a school trip or a family outing.²³³ In the latter case, children can visit the museum simply with an adult accompanying them or take advantage of the many guided tours of all kinds offered by the museum and creative workshops.

Fun activities remain the norm for children: storytelling tours, theatrical tours, themed tours such as those at the Louvre, treasure hunts, escape games, and role-playing activities such as the 1,000 m² *Planète Pilote* space at the *Musée de l'Air et de l'Espace* (Air and Space Museum) in Dugny (north of Paris) for 6-12 year olds, where the whole family can enjoy an immersive experience and step into the shoes of a pilot, astronaut, flight attendant, and more, with some forty interactive activities.

The online offering on museum websites has also exploded with games, videos, and even podcasts specifically designed for this young audience.

These activities are usually free or available for a small fee.

Accompanying booklets and traditional activities

Self-guided tours are usually accompanied by booklets designed for different age groups, which can often be downloaded from the museum's website and/or noticed site. As already mentioned, this major trend took its first steps in the early 1980s with the launch by Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille and Marie-Clarté O'Neill of the "*visite-exploration*," a paper-based treasure hunt that could be done as a family and was the first free family visit.

Recently, a few museums have started offering these game booklets in English, such as the *Centre Pompidou*, since 2024.



Examples of accompanying booklets: National Maritime Museum, Paris (spring 2024), Musée de l'Histoire de Paris-Carnavalet, Paris (winter 2023)
(Source: photographs by Sylvie Savare)

²³¹ BAUWENS Malika, *Les enfants seraient-ils enfin les bienvenus dans les musées et les lieux culturels*, Beaux-Arts magazine n°478, mars 2024.

²³² OCTOBRE Sylvie, above-mentioned article, p.2 and 6.

²³³ OCTOBRE Sylvie, above-mentioned article, p.7: 68% of children go with their mother, 60% with their father and 55.5% with their brothers or sisters.

These booklets have various names: game booklet, adventure book, game album, explorer's guide, etc.²³⁴ These attractive accompanying booklets and other fun educational tools enable children to deepen their knowledge of the museum's collections through play, by engaging their powers of observation, imagination, and reflection, and sharpening their eyes. They are also a way of creating a bond with the accompanying adult. The aim is to use a fun approach to enhance the enjoyment of the visit, the experience, the joy of sharing this moment with the accompanying adult, sociability, and ownership of the museum, so that the visit becomes a truly educational leisure activity.

These written materials can also supplement parents' knowledge and avoid putting them in the sometimes-uncomfortable position of being presumed knowledgeable when their knowledge may be insufficient in a particular area.

While the idea of these accompanying booklets remains very appealing in theory, it comes up against a practical reality: few museums provide pencils, and fewer and fewer guides now carry them in their bags, let alone several, which would be necessary if the guide were accompanying several children! Furthermore, as Marie-Clarté O'Neill points out, the quality of the content can be mediocre, losing sight of the main objective, which is education in the sense of acquiring fundamental knowledge.

Some museums, such as the Air and Space Museum, have also designed educational bags available free of charge, based on five themes, suggesting three different activities centred around games and creative workshops.

Corinne Héreau notes that at the *Musée en Herbe*, traditional games such as treasure hunts, puzzles, spot-the-difference games, and detail games, all designed and produced by the museum, are always very popular.

Family visits

Although exploratory visits first appeared in the 1980s, it was not until the 2000s that the concept of visits or workshops with an accompanying adult participating in the activity emerged with a new name: family visits, as they are called in museum programmes.

Faced with the breakdown of the family unit, parents' busy schedules, the development of women's professional lives,²³⁵ longer working hours making grand-

parents less available and grandparents increasingly active and therefore less inclined to look after their grandchildren,²³⁶ museums began offering activities that would allow adults and children to enjoy a special moment of exchange and sharing, at least for the duration of a visit or workshop.

Starting in 2016, the *Musée en Herbe* expanded its programme of parent/child workshops, where parents are now invited to participate in creative activities.

Since around 2015, some museums have been developing family booklets aimed at children, but also at those accompanying them. The *Centre Pompidou* provides families with a family booklet available at the reception desk for children aged 6 and over. In this case, the accompanying adults find themselves, de facto, in the position of mediator, of expert, as the booklet often suggests that they explain and show things, which ultimately runs counter to the initial objective of the booklet, which is to provide an opportunity for informal education and sharing. Similarly, Daniel Soulié confides that the Louvre does not offer strictly child-focused mediation, but only family mediation: "we don't talk strictly to children, we talk to the adults accompanying them."

Family learning weekend activities are flourishing in many institutions, such as the museums of the *Paris Musées* network, the *Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*, the Louvre-Lens, the *Bourse du Commerce* (Paris), and the *Centre Pompidou*. During school holidays, festivals and workshops are available to families to take part in.

Some museums also offer shows, concerts, and even film screenings for the whole family, such as the *Musée d'Histoire naturelle de Toulouse* (Natural History Museum in Toulouse).

Dedicated spaces

While Anglo-Saxon museums, still pioneers in this field, remain exemplary in terms of creating spaces dedicated to young people, French museums are continuing to set up permanent spaces for children, within the limits of the space available. In France, many museums have moved into old buildings whose architecture is not suited to the constraints of welcoming visitors and displaying works of art. In addition, some buildings are subject to laws relating to the protection of historic monuments. Furthermore, the allocation of space within the museum can also be a source of tension between the outreach teams and the curators looking for wall space to display the works. Cécilia de Varine points out that the

²³⁴ VAN DORPE Audrey and SCAMPS Lucie, *Des livrets pour accompagner les enfants dans les musées*, La Lettre de l'OCIM, 2008.

²³⁵ In 2016, in France excluding Mayotte, 67.6% of women aged 15-64 participated in the labour market (30% part-time) compared with 75.4% of men (7% part-time). The gap in activity rates between women and men has narrowed considerably, from 31 points in 1975 to 8 points in 2016. Source: *INSEE website*

²³⁶ On the "decline of cultural transmission": Association *Enfance et Musique*, evaluation report, February 2011 by PÉBRIER Sylvie. *Enfance et musique website*.

²³⁷ Since 2013, *Paris Musées* has grouped the city's museums and central services.

spaces dedicated to educational workshops at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon in the 1990s were converted into offices in 2001-2002.

At the end of 2021, the Louvre Museum opened a space called the Studio Louvre, modelled on the workshops in the museums of Montreal and Toronto. This venue has been a great success, welcoming 420,000 visitors in 2023. However, the Studio is not reserved for children alone, which makes it highly innovative. It is an inclusive space that welcomes families and schoolchildren, students, young professionals, visitors from the social sector, and people with disabilities.

Some museums opt for temporary dedicated spaces, usually in the spring and summer, such as the Atelier Rodin, a 400 m² space within the museum of the same name in Paris. This fun, cultural, and multi-sensory venue is open to children accompanied by an adult, free of charge and without reservation. This venue was a great success in 2022, attracting 30,355 visitors in 68 days.

The *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon has also opened a temporary space dedicated to children from March 21, 2024, to June 23, 2024, open to all with the admission ticket.

Reading the presentations of these spaces, their missions have evolved considerably over time: they are no longer simply rooms hosting workshops for children, but places for children and their companions to socialize, share, and play. The Louvre Museum has made it an inclusive space for welcoming, sharing, and learning for all.

3. Babies: people with cultural rights and the strengthening of the parent-child bond

In this vast cultural awareness initiative, a new audience has been the subject of study and attention since 1989 with the signing of the *Protocole Culture – Enfance* (Culture-Childhood Protocol): very young children are considered²³⁸ as individuals with recognized cultural rights.

Once again, the Ministry of Culture has taken up the issue, building on the early childhood plan presented in November 2016. An interministerial protocol extending the 1989 protocol was signed in 2017 to promote artistic and cultural awareness among young children, focusing on the commitment of the Directions régionales de Affaires Culturelles (DRAC) (regional directorates for cultural affairs) and local authorities.²³⁹

²³⁸ The strong impact of the three-part documentary *Le bébé est une personne*, broadcast in 1984, which revolutionised the relationship between mothers and their children. This statement is based on the work of Donald Winnicott, Bernard Martin and Françoise Dolto.

²³⁹ Between the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry of Families, Children and Women's Rights.

A significant acceleration in the *Éveil artistique et culturel* (artistic and cultural awareness (EAC) of young children and in the *Lien enfants parents* LEP) (bond with their parents was brought about by the recommendations of the report by Sophie Marinopoulos, psychologist and psychoanalyst specializing in children and families, entitled *A national strategy for cultural health: promoting and sustaining the cultural and artistic development of children from birth to age 3 in connection with their parents*, published in January 2019. It is based on extensive scientific research on child development, children's needs, and family structure. In this report, Sophie Marinopoulos coined the term "cultural malnutrition" and "cultural health," defined as "the health of our relationships," with relational health being at risk.²⁴⁰ The social dimension, democratisation, and access to culture for all, with the child-parent bond as the foundation, were at the heart of her reflections. Artistic and cultural education would naturally follow this artistic and cultural awakening in the early years.

The importance for artistic and cultural awareness from birth is now widely accepted in the scientific community, but some museum professionals, such as Danièle Giraudy, question the relevance of activities aimed at very young children.

It should therefore be borne in mind that the value of museum visits or workshops for very young children lies in building or strengthening the bond with the accompanying parent, providing an emotional and relational contribution, with the museum object serving as an interface and a pretext for establishing this fundamental parent-child bond. The Ministry of Culture offers inspiring initiatives throughout France on its website.

Many museums now offer activities for babies and their parents, such as baby tours of Paris museums.

The *Mille Formes* (Thousand shapes) project provides an interesting example of this new focus on early childhood. Opened in 2019 in Clermont-Ferrand, in collaboration and partnership with the Centre Pompidou, *Mille Formes* is "the first permanent centre for introducing 0-6 year olds to art, with an artistic programme designed and produced specifically for this (very) young audience."²⁴¹ It is a 700m² space, completely open and where parents actively participate in activities in accordance with a charter of "rules of conduct." The exhibitions, co-created with artists, change every three to four months and provide an opportunity to experiment with manipulation and sensory awareness, in the spirit of the *Centre Pompidou*: doing things together and understanding art through doing. A sign explains that not everything can be touched in a mu-

²⁴⁰ [Ministry of Culture website](#)

²⁴¹ [Ministry of Culture website](#)



seum. Over the last five years this space has welcomed more than 120,000 visitors.

In 2025, another *Mille formes* space will open in Montpellier, again in collaboration with the Centre Pompidou.

For its part, after opening a space for 2-5-year-olds and 6-10-year-olds in the Children's Gallery, the *Centre Pompidou* opened Station 0.2 in 2022, a new space for toddlers and their parents. This space hosts exhibitions and provides a sensory experimentation ground for a "creative moment of sharing and discovery."²⁴²

Finally, among the emblematic measures of Jacqueline Eidelman's mission report, *Musées du XXI^e siècle* (21st Century Museums),²⁴³ published in 2017, it is written that museums must be open to younger generations and that museums in France are encouraged to sign the Môm Art Charter for children and families. The Môm Art association aims to "help museums, cultural sites and other cultural institutions improve their welcome and services for families".²⁴⁴

Cultural policy promoting education and artistic and cultural awareness has been championed and remains a key driver of projects carried out in museums, even though some museums have gone beyond the requirements set by legislation and regulations.

Children aged 0 to 10 can now benefit from a wide range of activities designed for school visits or individual visits. This young audience is inherently captive and dependent. Young children can only visit museums when accompanied by a teacher or adult. The situation is quite different for teenagers.

4. Teenagers and young adults: a neglected audience because they are difficult to win over?

Long a favourite of museums for school visits since the late 19th century, teenagers remain a visitor group to be won over for individual visits, even if their appetite for cultural venues remains strong.²⁴⁵

From middle school onwards, supervised museum visits become more sporadic: middle schools offer fewer cultural outings of this type, and, at the same time, teenagers become more independent within the family, seeking to assert their

²⁴² [Centre Georges Pompidou website](http://www.centrepompidou.fr)

²⁴³ [Ministry of Culture and communication website](http://www.culture.gouv.fr).

²⁴⁴ [website of the Môm Art association](http://www.mom-art.org).

²⁴⁵ *Évolution des pratiques culturelles 1973-2008*, LOMBARDO Philippe, WOLFF Loup, *op. cit.* p.6 And 45% of 15-19 year olds visited a museum or exhibition in the last twelve months in 1973 and 49% in 2008.

identity by pursuing their own cultural interests, such as cinema, video games, concerts, etc. Interest in museums is waning, even among those who said they strongly enjoyed museums.²⁴⁶

However, there has been an increase in the number of activities aimed at teenagers. Once again, the *Centre Pompidou* is a pioneer in developing initiatives for this audience. In September 2010, Studio 13/16, a 200m² space, was opened. It offers “workshops, interactive elements, videos, and unusual discoveries” as well as encounters with artists and live performances in front of teenagers.²⁴⁷ With its strong focus on the present, Studio 13/16 makes extensive use of digital tools and social media, where its activities are regularly promoted. In ten years, this venue has welcomed nearly 80,000 visitors.

Beyond the activities offered in these dedicated spaces, museums are creating activities that consider the specific tastes of this teenage audience, Generation Z (young people born between 1995 and 2012), with a particular focus on digital technology and video games. This generation was born with technology and is highly proficient in all digital tools: 94% of 15-29-year-olds own a smartphone.²⁴⁸ Museums are therefore rolling out digital activities with interactive devices and escape games, which are very popular with teenagers. The Louvre Museum has offered guided tours by other teenagers and mini night-time tours for children aged 12 and over.

However, it is noticeable that there are very few differentiated offerings for teenagers who are likely to come alone, as individual visitors, with family visits dominating museum activities.

The offer would benefit from being more targeted by refining the programming according to smaller age groups.

The Ministry of Culture seems to have considered the specific characteristics of this teenage/young adult audience by creating an innovative scheme inspired by the Italian example: offering young people a financial incentive to encourage access to culture and to intensify and diversify their cultural and artistic practices: the Culture Pass. Launched in 2019 in a few departments, the Culture Pass for 18-year-olds was rolled out across the whole country in 2021. In 2022, this tool was extended to schools, thus becoming part of the arts and cultural education policy. Young people can now benefit from it from the age of 15. This scheme, via a mobile app or website, entitles users to a credit²⁴⁹ based on their age, for cultur-

al spending classified into 13 categories of cultural venues and goods: films and videos, cinema, conferences and meetings, games, video games, books, music, artistic practices, live performances, creative art materials, musical instruments, as well as museums, heritage, and architecture. At the end of 2021, there were 800,000 users.

The study²⁵⁰ showed that the 2,000 cultural venues listed on the app (museums, heritage sites, art galleries, etc.) offered more than 30,000 deals, and 46,000 bookings were made by some 35,000 beneficiaries in 2021.

It is interesting to note that the *pass Culture* (Culture Pass) has helped to perpetuate the practice of visiting museums.

Another striking fact is that social media, particularly Instagram and TikTok, are real influencers in the choice of visits made: 55% of young people say they have made a visit after hearing about it on social media.

Teenagers and young adults therefore show a real interest in cultural institutions, but the specific offerings available to them remain too very rare and far between or unsuitable.

5. Museums for all: social inclusion and universal accessibility

The term “non-public,” coined in 1968 in the Declaration of Villeurbanne has evolved because it could be perceived as contrary to what it was intended to combat, namely the lack of access to culture for a whole section of the population. It is now customary to use the terms: disabled audiences for people who are unable to travel to cultural venues (the sick, people with very limited mobility, the elderly, prisoners, etc.), remote audiences for people living in rural areas, isolated audiences to refer to social isolation, and people with disabilities.

As Marie-Clarté O'Neill points out, museums, in their physical capacity as exhibition spaces, should be easily accessible to all. Whatever the disability, there is a way to facilitate access to this material heritage.

The administrative organisation of mediation services reflects the interest shown in specific audiences. Some museums have created sub-services dedicated to these audiences, such as the *Musée d'Orsay*. The *Centre Pompidou*, for its part, has opted for a “disability officer” reporting directly to the president. On the other hand, the *Musée de Cluny-Musée National du Moyen Âge*, for example, does not divide its “cultural action” department into different types of audience, and the same is true of the *Musée de Bretagne*, which mentions a mediator who speaks Breton but has no positions defined according to audience type.

²⁴⁶ OCTOBRE Sylvie article cited above, p. 5.

²⁴⁷ *Centre Georges Pompidou website*

²⁴⁸ *INSEE website* - For 2021, 95% of the population aged 15 or over own a mobile phone and, more specifically, 77% own a smartphone, 36% of the over 75s.

²⁴⁹ 20 € for 15-year-olds, 30 € for 16 and 17-year-olds, 300 € for 18-year-olds, valid for two years, and a duo offer to share cultural discovery with someone else. Press release from the Culture Pass organisation, 3 May 2022.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Social sphere, disadvantaged and remote audiences

Although initiatives began to be carried out in the 1960s for so-called specific groups, thanks to the institutionalization of the cultural democratisation project and the government's desire to maintain social cohesion, they multiplied rapidly from the 2000s onwards. It is clear that the beneficial effects are evident, particularly in terms of "statutory revaluation" and "restoration of self-esteem" for the audiences concerned.²⁵¹

Social field

As Cécilia de Varine points out, as early as 1992, the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon, a pioneer in this field, offered workshops and tours for adults from disadvantaged backgrounds at the request of ATD Quart Monde. The Louvre Museum has been running initiatives for young people in integration since 2010, according to Daniel Soulié. Today, the museum offers guided tours, storytelling tours, and workshop tours for groups from the social sector. Free visits are also available.

For example, specific programme mes for young people in integration are divided into two parts: three hours at the host organisation, starting with a viewing of the Beyoncé and Jay-Z video, followed by a day at the Louvre with a meeting with a Louvre employee, a tour, lunch, and a discussion in front of the works.

Like the Louvre, most museums in France now offer guided tours tailored to people from disadvantaged backgrounds, free visits with training opportunities for social workers who come with their groups, and workshop visits.

However, a guided tour can be a difficult task due to the heterogeneity of the group, as the social field covers a wide range of individual situations (people in very precarious situations, single mothers, unemployed people who have exhausted their benefits, young adults receiving income support, immigrants, homeless people, etc.) and the sometimes inappropriate behaviour of participants who are unfamiliar with this type of venue.²⁵² This therefore requires specific training for museum mediators and reception staff, who are sometimes reluctant to welcome this audience.²⁵³

²⁵¹ MONTROYA Nathalie, SONNETTE Marie and FUGIER Pascal, *L'accueil paradoxal des publics du champ social dans les établissements culturels*, Culture & Musées 26 | 2015.

²⁵² Visitors to museums are subject to numerous injunctions aimed at preserving the works of art and the peace and quiet of other visitors: no touching, no shouting, no running, and so on.

²⁵³ In January 2013, an underprivileged family was expelled from the *Musée d'Orsay* for social discrimination, according to the ATD Quart Monde. *Article in Le Monde*.

Although many museums now have specific offerings for socially disadvantaged audiences, in reality, the number of people who benefit from them remains low compared to school audiences, for example.

Two agreements have provided a framework for organizing actions to promote equal access to culture for disadvantaged groups: the *convention Culture – Justice* (Culture-Justice Agreement) signed in 1986, renewed and expanded in 1990 and 2007, and the *convention Culture – Santé* (Culture-Health Agreement) signed in 1999, renewed and expanded in 2010.

The Framework Law No. 98-657 of July 29, 1998, on combating exclusion, supplemented this mechanism. It stated that "equal access for all, throughout their lives, to culture (...) guarantees the effective exercise of citizenship." This law was extended in 2009 in the Charter for the Welcome of Social Groups, intended for cultural institutions, as part of the "Living Together" mission. "This Charter suggested mediation tools tailored to "people who do not allow themselves to frequent cultural institutions because they find themselves in a situation of exclusion or social or economic vulnerability," thus defining who the so-called social sector audiences were. However, the regulatory arsenal proved insufficient and long overdue in view of the many actions conducted by associations in favour of the social field for decades.

As a result, the association *Culture du Cœur* (Heart culture) was created in 1998 to compensate for the inequality of access to cultural practices that persists in the absence of a decree implementing the 1998 law. Thirty-four structures are spread across the country and provide valuable support to professionals in the social field, as access to cultural activities is considered a lever for the integration and re-engagement of marginalised and excluded people.

The ATD Quart Monde association, founded in 1957, is also very active in the fight for the cultural rights of all and promotes partnerships with museums.

Since 2015, the Fabre Museum (Montpellier) has been designing, in partnership with CIMADE, *Groupe SOS Solidarité* and CADA Elisa, mediation projects specifically dedicated to refugees and migrants. From December 2016 to May 2017, a programme me was offered in partnership with the Louvre Museum, consisting of the opening of a sculpture gallery that could be touched, as well as multisensory interpretation spaces, with a sensory approach at the heart of the mediation discourse. This programme me consisted of five sessions, a visit followed by a workshop led by a visual artist.

Associations therefore play an essential role in bringing together people from the social sector and museum institutions.

OBJECTIFS DE DÉVELOPPEMENT DURABLE



Museums are now committed to developing a policy of environmental and social responsibility. In 2011, the Louvre was the first museum to create a position of sustainable development officer and was one of the first to sign the Charter for Sustainable Development for Public Institutions and Companies.

Some museums make no secret of the fact that these social initiatives have a positive effect on sponsorship, as sponsors are sensitive to the need to take effective action in favour of this category of visitors. More prosaically, they also sometimes help to fill exhibition rooms and scheduled tours that are under-attended.²⁵⁴

Remote or disadvantaged audiences

For remote or disadvantaged audiences, institutions are continuing their outreach activities, like those carried out in schools: museums are reaching out to audiences in hospitals, retirement homes, prisons, and remote areas with few or no cultural institutions, particularly rural areas. Since 2010, the Louvre has been running programmes in retirement homes, as highlighted by Daniel Soulié.

The launch of *Micro-Folies* in 2017, as part of the “*Culture près de chez vous*” (Neighbourhood Culture) action plan, supported by the Ministry of Culture and coordinated by *La Villette* in conjunction with twelve national institutions

At the international level, in 2005, as part of its 2030 Agenda, the United Nations adopted seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Museums have a vital role to play, both in the eco-responsible development of exhibitions, for example, and in access to education, the participation of all audiences, and their well-being.

Espace Public Espace Privé

Proposition plastique des ateliers du Musée Fabre

Ainsi, il s'agit de rendre compte du rôle de l'art dans la ville et, plus spécifiquement, de la sculpture publique dans le paysage urbain avec. Nous avons pris trois points d'appui thématiques, et transversaux. Tout d'abord, la “politique” et le rôle des commanditaires dans la naissance des projets d'installation dans l'espace public;

Ensuite, le “lieu”, comme réceptacle d'un travail artistique et, en retour, comme porteur de sens pour les citoyens;

Enfin, “la réception”, avec le rapport des individus aux espaces modifiés par les sculptures contemporaines ou non.

Ce sont donc ces trois thèmes que l'on retrouvera lors de notre visite et notre expérimentation plastique hors ateliers.

Nous avons choisi de travailler autour de l'œuvre sculptée de J. Préault : Jacques Cœur, présent dans les salles du musée Fabre de Montpellier.

Pour ce premier rendez-vous deux temps sont proposés : une visite dans les salles, puis un travail d'approche plastique, numérique à partir de photos de l'œuvre de A. Préault.

En ateliers, ont été produits des pochoirs (procédé plastique destiné au Street Art, art de rue). Ce travail poursuivra notre questionnement sur espace public/espace privé, en utilisant comme moyen la technique du graffiti.

Tenant compte des difficultés d'accès à la langue des participants, a été construit et communiqué en amont à la Cimade, un lexique des termes spécifiques ainsi que des questions liées à cette thématique :

- Espace Public Espace Privé
- La commande publique
- La sculpture commémorative
- L'art public
- Le 1% artistique
- Le Mécénat
- Qu'est-ce qu'une sculpture ?
- Qu'est-ce que commémorer ?
- Quel est l'enjeu d'une sculpture commémorative dans l'espace public ?



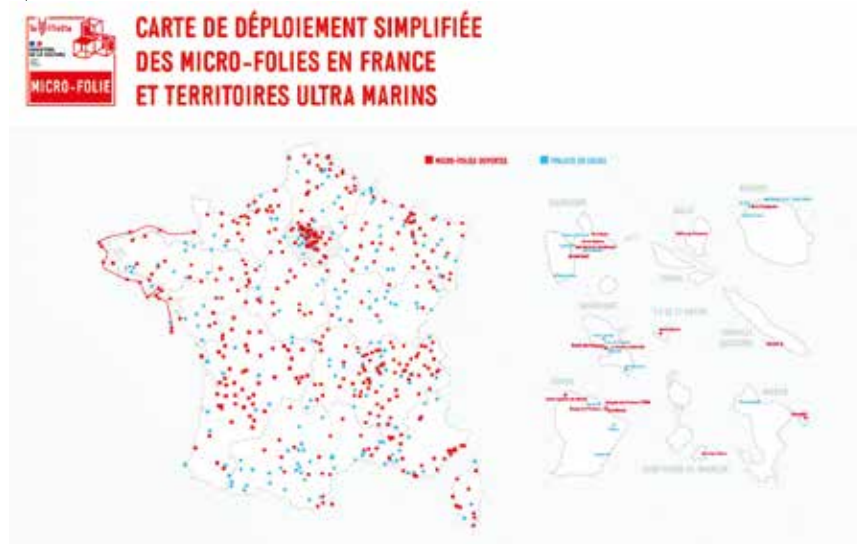
PREAULT Antoine Augustin (Paris, 1810 - Paris, 1879)



Workshops at the Fabre Museum, Montpellier, in partnership with CIMADE
(Source: excerpt from CIMADE magazine 2016 *Musée citoyen*, [Fabre Museum website](#))

²⁵⁴ MONTROYA Nathalie, SONNETTE Marie and FUGIER Pascal, *op. cit.*

(Source: [La Villette website](#))



remains exemplary.²⁵⁵ True “third places”²⁵⁶ and local cultural facilities, *Micro-Folies* are “modular spaces (red structures designed by architect Bernard Tschumi) offering fun access to works from the greatest national museums thanks to the Digital Museum, the heart of the initiative, which presents more than 3,200 digitized works from a network of 205 partner cultural institutions, whether national, regional, or international. *Micro-Folies* also offer activities that complement the Digital Museum, such as a FabLab, a Virtual Reality space, a stage, and a *Café Folie* (café, library, game library, etc.).”²⁵⁷ These allow visitors to discover digitized masterpieces in very high definition, projected onto large screens and tablets. A mediator is responsible for running the Digital Museum. A thousand *Micro-Folies* were planned for the end of 2022, and in July 2023, there were around 400 in mainland France and abroad.²⁵⁸

In 2011, MuMo (mobile museum) was founded by Ingrid Brochard, an entrepreneur deeply committed to cultural life, with the aim of making modern and contemporary art accessible and reviving mobile museums. In 2021, the Art Explora

Foundation, created by Frédéric Jousset, a philanthropic entrepreneur working to promote cultural democratisation, joined forces with the *MuMo x Centre Pompidou* project. This museum truck travels the roads of France to meet residents. The uniqueness of this mobile museum is that it presents original works of art. In addition to exhibiting works open to everyone, “schools, social and medico-social structures, families and all residents of towns and villages,” *MuMo x Centre Pompidou*, which travels throughout France, Africa, and seven other European countries, also offers discovery workshops.²⁵⁹ The *MuMo x Centre Pompidou* presents two exhibitions per year, with 50% of the stops in villages with fewer than 2,000 inhabitants and in neighbourhoods designated as “*Quartiers Politiques de la Ville*” (Urban Renewal Areas). The *MuMo x Centre Pompidou* is a real success, with 20,000 visitors per year (55% of whom are students, 7,000 from elementary school and 4,000 from middle and high school).²⁶⁰

In prisons, Daniel Soulié recalls that the Louvre began collaborating with them in 2008/2009. In 2022, the museum exhibited ten reproductions of masterpieces in the courtyard of the Poissy prison.²⁶¹ In 2013, French visual artist Philippe Mayaux exhibited an original work, a first, in the gymnasium of the Osny prison in the Val-d’Oise. The artist, accompanied by a curator from the *Centre Pompidou*, presented his work and talked with the prisoners. Workshops were also offered. Since 2011, the *Centre Pompidou* has been presenting works as part of the programme *Un jour, une œuvre* (One day, one work) in various locations such as shopping centres, community centres, town halls, etc. The artist or a curator presents the work.

MuMo x Centre Pompidou
(Source: [Art Explora Foundation website](#))



²⁵⁹ [Art Explora Foundation website](#)

²⁶⁰ [Art Explora Foundation website](#)

²⁶¹ GUILLOT Antoine, *Publics empêchés*, France Culture podcast broadcast on 15 February 2013.

²⁵⁵ *Centre Pompidou, Versailles Castle, Cité de la musique-Philharmonie de Paris, Avignon, Institut du monde arabe, Louvre, Musée national Picasso-Paris, Musée d’Orsay, musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Opéra national de Paris, Réunion des musées nationaux - Grand Palais and Université.*

²⁵⁶ Conceptualised in the 1980s by the sociologist Ray Oldenburg, a third place is a space for social interaction, set up by a group of people to serve an area.

²⁵⁷ [La Villette website](#)

²⁵⁸ ROUFFAUD Camille, ALMA (2023, 4 July). *Micro-Folies: a potential for archives?*

Disability and universal accessibility

“When it comes to disability, it was not easy to obtain accurate figures because many criteria had to be considered, making it difficult to implement a coherent and appropriate cultural policy” notes Bertrand Verine. A recent study by the *Direction de la recherche, des études, de l’évaluation et des statistiques* (DRESS) (Directorate for Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics) has remedied this situation.

According to the DRESS study, published in 2023, *Le Handicap en chiffres* (Disability in figures), “6.8 million people aged 15 or over, or 13% of this population, report having at least one severe limitation in a physical, sensory or cognitive function, and 3.4 million (6%) report being severely restricted in their usual activities due to a health problem. In total, depending on the criteria or combination of criteria used, the number of people with disabilities or dependent on others can vary from 2.6 million to 7.6 million people aged 15 or over living at home in 2021. For people aged 15 to 60 alone, this figure varies from 0.9 to 3.3 million.”²⁶² In addition, there are more than 140,000 people aged 16 or over living in specialized institutions for the care of people with disabilities. In 2021, 4.8% of children aged 5 to 14 living at home in France (approximately 400,000 children) have a disability, whether due to a severe sensory, physical or cognitive impairment, or a significant restriction in their daily activities.”²⁶³

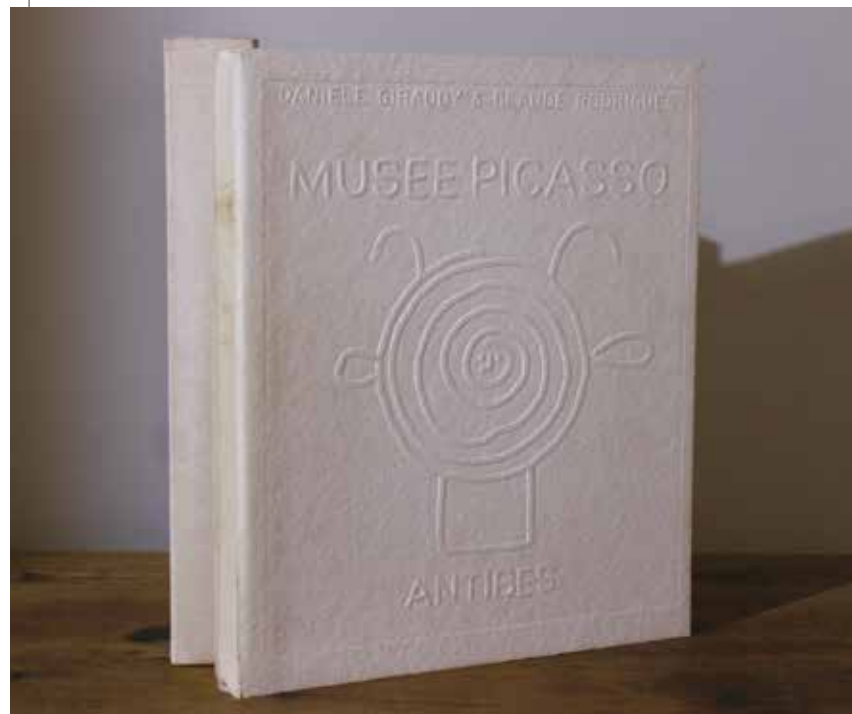
These figures speak for themselves: people with disabilities are not a marginal population, but they have long been marginalized and excluded from the social fabric, particularly from access to culture and cultural institutions.

In terms of legislation, consideration of disability is fairly recent in France’s cultural institutions. It initially focused on physical disability, with museums being required to make their buildings accessible. Since the 1975 law, there has been a proliferation of laws, decrees, and orders on this essential issue of physical accessibility to buildings. While motor disabilities were the first to be taken into consideration, however progress still needs to be made.

Other disabilities were then considered, such as visual and hearing impairments. It was not until the 2000s that museums began to address mental disabilities.

As is often the case, some museums were pioneers and preceded legal requirements by implementing appropriate measures, such as the *Cité des Sciences et de l’Industrie* and the Louvre Museum.

Excerpt from *Caresser Picasso*, Danièle Giraudy, Claude Garrandès, 1992
(Source: [Claude Garrandès website](#))



Under the leadership of Jean Galard,²⁶⁴ the cultural department of the Louvre Museum was created in 1987. From that date onwards, it introduced training for Louvre guides so that they could comment on the works in sign language.²⁶⁵ A specific mediation team was dedicated to people with disabilities.

In 1991, Danièle Giraudy proposed the first tactile tour of a permanent collection in a French museum, at the Picasso Museum in Antibes. In the book *Caresser Picasso* (Patting Picasso), the first art book in relief for the blind, the tactile images were reproduced on Canson paper, which Picasso loved to use.²⁶⁶

While the 1975 law included the word “disability” in its title, subsequent legislation opted for broader terms aimed at encompassing all people who might be excluded from cultural venues. Then, the term exclusion was replaced by the phrase social inclusion, which was more suited to a new museum paradigm, the museum as a welcoming place, inclusive and open to all.

²⁶⁴ Jean Galard was born in 1937 and was director of the cultural department of the Louvre from 1987 to 2002.

²⁶⁵ *Histoire du Louvre*, op. cit, vol II, p. 564.

²⁶⁶ *Histoire du Louvre*, op. cit, vol II p. 564.

²⁶² These figures include the elderly, who sometimes have several types of disability.

²⁶³ [DRESS website](#)

The phrase social inclusion, which appeared in the 1970s, became widely used in France from the 1990s onwards. Supported and funded by the state and subject to a heavy legislative arsenal, museums, long perceived as places of social exclusion catering only to a cultured elite, paradoxically became agents of social inclusion, guarantors of social cohesion, thereby justifying their continued existence.²⁶⁷

In 2001, the *Commission Culture – Handicap* (Culture and Disability Commission) was created as “a forum for dialogue and consultation between the ministries responsible for culture and people with disabilities, the main associations of people with disabilities, people with disabilities themselves, and the cultural and artistic community.”²⁶⁸

Furthermore, to promote inclusion, Law No. 2005-102 of February 11, 2005, on equal rights and opportunities, participation, and citizenship for people with disabilities, broadened the scope of the 1975 law and made universal accessibility a requirement. Museum teams are committed to this not only by “bringing buildings into compliance, but also by designing mediation tools for the optimal comfort of visitors with disabilities (motor, mental, visual, or hearing) during their visit.”²⁶⁹ The implementation of an accessibility chain must begin at the entrance to the building and its surroundings and extend to the content of permanent and temporary exhibitions and the various mediation tools offered to visitors.

At the international level, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006 recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to participate in cultural life on an equal basis with others.

In addition to regulatory texts, voluntary agreements have been added.

On June 1, 2006, two agreements were signed: the *convention Culture - Handicap* (Culture-Disability Agreement), which aimed to develop partnerships between medical-social institutions and cultural facilities, and the *convention Culture – Tourisme* (Culture-Tourism Agreement), which aimed to promote the certification of cultural sites and a policy of access to the arts and culture for people with disabilities. A new Culture-Tourism Agreement was signed in 2009, focusing on the need to increase information and communication about cultural venues, to promote and raise awareness of the label *Tourisme et Handicap* (Tourism and Disability label), to adapt the evaluation grid for obtaining this label, and to encourage research and publications in this field.

²⁶⁷ BARRÈRE ANNE, MAIRESSE François (dir.), *L'inclusion sociale, les enjeux de la culture et de l'éducation*, Paris, Les Cahiers de la médiation culturelle, L'Harmattan, 2015.

²⁶⁸ [Ministry of Culture and communication website](#)

²⁶⁹ Ministry of culture and communication - Article: *L'accessibilité universelle d'un musée de France*.

The order of September 26, 2014, makes training in welcoming people with disabilities mandatory for establishments open to the public that receive more than 200 people.

The interministerial definition of accessibility is as follows: “the reduction of the mismatch between, on the one hand, the possibilities, skills and abilities of a person and, on the other hand, the resources of their environment that enable them to participate independently in *city life*”.²⁷⁰ For the Ministry of Culture and Communication, accessibility for all, whether the difficulties are physical, intellectual, cognitive, visual, or auditory, means:

- “Access to places: a question of architecture and reception.
- Access to cultural industry products, works and knowledge in an active manner: a question of scenography, adaptation of cultural offerings, technical devices and human mediation.
- Access to heritage and knowledge as a member of the public: a question of adapting cultural offerings, human mediation and, where necessary, compensatory measures. The aim is to make the public an active participant in their cultural practices, enabling them to learn about and appreciate this heritage, and to appropriate it so that they can in turn pass it on to those around them.
- Access to information, tools for thinking, critical discourse, cultural exchange, and civic expression: a question of adapting information and communication media, learning, and language proficiency.
- Access to artistic practices as a participant: professional practices: a question of adapting curricula and learning techniques, combined with the provision of technical facilities; amateur practices: a question of human mediation, combined with the provision of technical facilities”.²⁷¹

Aware of the difficulty of implementing this legal obligation of accessibility, the ministry, in conjunction with partner associations representing people with disabilities, has made available on its website a questionnaire to help with diagnosis and assessment, the purpose of which is to highlight the ministry's expectations in this area.

In addition, since October 2017, establishments open to the public must make available a public accessibility register, the purpose of which is to inform the public about the degree of accessibility of the establishment and its services. The *Délégation Ministérielle à l'Accessibilité* (Ministerial Delegation for Accessibility) offers a guide to help with the preparation of this register.

Here are a few examples of the measures developed for people with visual, hearing, or mental disabilities.

²⁷⁰ [Ministry of culture and communication](#)

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Visual impairment

In France, it is estimated that 3.1% of people aged 15 and over, or approximately 2.2 million people, suffer from visual impairment after correction,²⁷² with a high prevalence among the over-60s (5.3% of over-60s report suffering from visual impairment after correction).

For people with visual impairments, audio remains the preferred medium. Braille is popular among people who are blind, but it is estimated that only 10% of people with visual impairments use it. Apart from cases of total blindness, large print can also be effective. Visually impaired people also use “optical aids such as monocular, technological aids such as smartphone magnifying glasses or the Seeing AI app, or reading by a third party who may be a companion, a member of staff or a visitor”.²⁷³ The most used mediation tools are therefore audio guides provided by the museum (60% of respondents use them), adapted group tours organized at specific times (49%), tactile maps (46%), and assistance from a museum mediator (40%). Museums are developing tactile panels that reproduce the reliefs of the works on display and sometimes even the materials used. Audio guides are also increasingly being enhanced to include audio description, as at the *Musée d’Orsay*, which marks a significant improvement in adaptation to this type of disability. As Bertrand Verine and Danièle Giraudy point out, the traditional content of audio guides is not at all suitable for visually impaired visitors, and audio description is essential.

Touch is also very popular with blind visitors, but touch in museums remains a sensitive issue due to the justified constraints of conserving works of art. Bertrand Verine, who has been totally blind since the age of five, notes that the development of this sense in schools and museums remains under-exploited in France, unlike in Spain, Canada, and Italy, where, for example, in 1993, the creation of the Homer d’Ancôme State Tactile Museum, which houses touchable reproductions of sculptures such as Michelangelo’s *David*.²⁷⁴ In France, museum reserves are full of reproductions that could be used! Bertrand Verine also regrets that some museums, wanting only to “tick the box” of legal obligation, have developed tactile devices that are of no interest or have introduced a completely arbitrary policy of allowing works to be touched. However, significant efforts have been made.

In 1995, the Louvre Museum opened the *Galerie tactile* (Tactile Gallery), which was replaced in the fall of 2023 by the Sculpture Discovery Area. The museum offers multisensory tours: visitors can wander around using a tactile guide line, touch casts of works, read labels in Braille, and listen to audio descriptions along the

way.²⁷⁵ This 80m² space is also suitable for deaf visitors, visitors with reduced mobility, and young visitors.

The *Musée du Quai Branly* also offers tactile guided tours and freely accessible facilities such as five tables with relief reproductions of artifacts accompanied by texts in Braille, large print, and audio devices. A tactile exploration guide is also available: a booklet with relief reproductions of objects with explanatory text in Braille and large print, and an audio description tour. 3D models and tactile maps of the museum make it easier to find your way around.

Original devices using new technologies are multiplying, such as in Perpignan, at the Hyacinthe Rigaud Museum, which offers an audio-guided tour using a free smartphone app that locates and guides visitors using Bluetooth beacons distributed throughout the museum, directing them to the various museum services and to the works described in audio description, thirteen of which have been reproduced in relief.²⁷⁶ Bertrand Verine praises the efforts made by some small provincial museums, which are more responsive and attentive to visitors’ needs.

Associations continue to play a vital role in researching and supporting access to museums for people with visual impairments. The *Fondation du Toucher* (Touch Foundation), of which Bertrand Verine is the scientific director, aims to promote tactile perception. In practice, for example, the *Musée d’Orsay* has enlisted the services of *Souffleurs d’Images*. Created in 2008 by the *Centre Recherche Théâtre Handicap* (CRTH), the *Souffleurs d’Images* service develops human and personalized mediation for visually impaired people. A “souffleur” (whisperer), a student in drama, circus arts, applied arts or art history, describes and whispers into the ear of blind or visually impaired spectators the elements that are invisible to them in exhibitions or during a show.²⁷⁷

Bertrand Verine emphasizes the training of people in charge of mediation for audiences with disabilities and the need for co-creation or at least validation of the proposed measures, as he does with the *Pavillon Populaire* in Montpellier.²⁷⁸

Deaf and hard of hearing

In France, it is estimated that 2.6% of people aged 15 and over, or approximately 1.8 million people, suffer from hearing loss after correction²⁷⁹, again with a high prevalence among the over-60s (6.2%).

²⁷² D Report of the DRESS above mentioned, p. 39.

²⁷³ [Evelity website](#)

²⁷⁴ The pioneering tactile museum in Athens which opened in 1984 was restricted to only sight impaired until 2004. Bertrand Verine hopes to open a tactile museum in France with the Touch Foundation (*Fondation du toucher*).

²⁷⁵ VAZZOLER Marine, *7 visites de musées accessibles au public malvoyant et aveugle*. BeauxArts Magazine 28 septembre 2023.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁷ DESPERAMONT Joan, *Les Souffleurs d’images*, Les Cahiers de l’École du Louvre 7 | 2015.

²⁷⁸ Exhibition space devoted to the art of photography since the end 1990s.

²⁷⁹ Report of the DRESS on disability above mentioned p.39

Technology has enabled enormous progress to be made in accommodating this group. The magnetic induction loop (MIL), invented in 1947, isolates users from ambient noise, thereby facilitating communication. MIL transmits sound signals from a sound system or microphone directly to hearing aids, regardless of distance, ambient noise, or reverberation, making it the universal accessibility device of choice for associations for the hearing impaired. The decree of December 8, 2014, requires all establishments open to the public and providing a public service to be equipped with BIM systems that meet the specifications of standard NF EN 60118-4. The system is indicated by the pictogram of a crossed-out ear + T. Thanks to this technology, hearing-impaired visitors can enjoy auditorium programme ming, guided tours, and audio guides.

Museums also offer video guides (audio guides in French Sign Language) and tours in French Sign Language²⁸⁰ for visitors who use sign language.

Intellectual disability²⁸¹

With a view to promoting inclusion and accessibility, museums are beginning to consider visitors with psycho-cognitive impairments such as autism spectrum disorders or hypersensitivity causing heightened sensitivity to sensory stimuli. Welcoming these visitors to museums remains complex and even contradictory, as people with autism are often marginalized, isolated, and withdrawn, while museums are, by their very nature, social and open places. Furthermore, welcoming these visitors requires specific training for mediators.

In 2018, the Louvre Museum organized visits to understand the difficulties encountered by these individuals and considered solutions to address them, with the help of a specialized educator. In 2019, the museum made information sheets available on its website for certain areas of the museum (the Khorsabad Courtyard, the medieval Louvre, and the museum's masterpieces). These sheets outlined the objectives of the visit, provided explanations of the works, listed the materials needed for the visit, and included visual aids that could be printed out to facilitate the visit. In addition to traditional guided tours, the museum now offers storytelling tours, workshop tours, and an autism programme for organisations that work with people on the autism spectrum, which includes a series of two sessions at the organisation and one at the Louvre or the Delacroix Museum.

Some museums, including the Louvre, provide sensory maps that identify sensory cues according to type, such as light, smells, and sounds, in different ar-

Sensory map of the National Maritime Museum, Paris
(Source: [National Maritime Museum website](#))



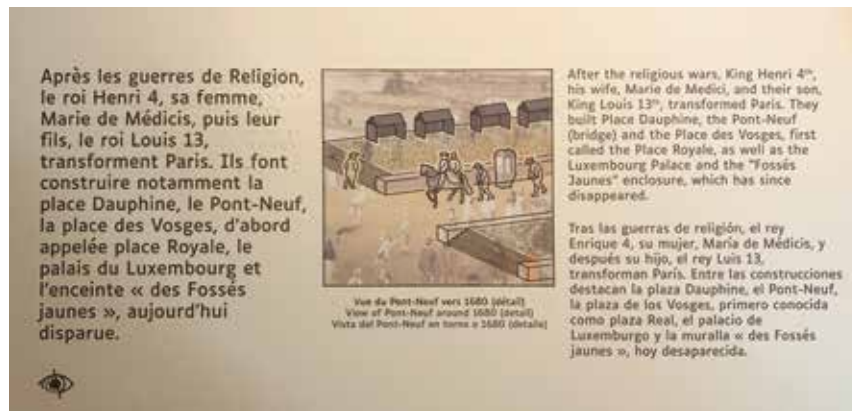
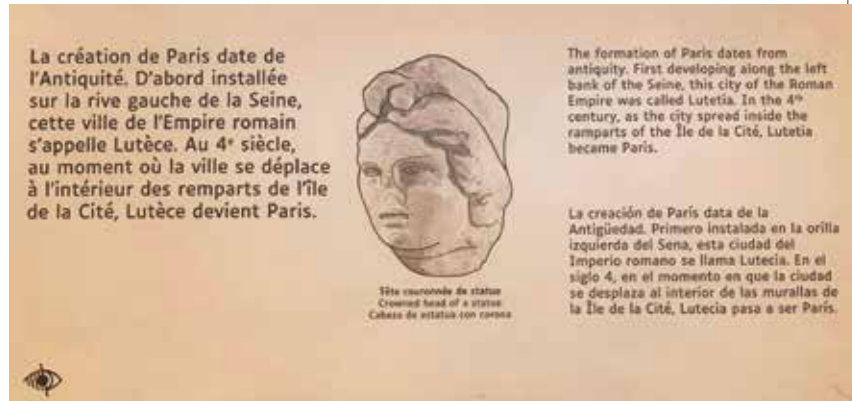
eas. For example, the National Maritime Museum (Paris), which reopened in November 2023, has paid particular attention to accessibility for these visitors, offering a sensory map and visiting slots with a softer scenography. *La Bulle* the bubble), the first relaxation area created in a museum, is a *Snoezelen*-inspired space, co-designed with people with disabilities, but open to all. ICOM CECA awarded the 2024 Best Practice Award to Lucie Aerts, head of the Mediation Department, and her team for the excellence of the universal accessibility approach undertaken by this museum.

In this quest for calm and comfort, animal-assisted therapy made its first appearance in spring 2025 at the *Anne de Beaujeu Museum* (Moulins). Cosmos, a young Australian shepherd, now accompanies "sensitive" visitors, children and teenagers from Ulis classes or medical-educational institutes (IME), adults from day hospitals, etc., during specially adapted educational workshops.

For people with intellectual disabilities, dyslexia, the elderly, or those with poor French language skills, the FALC (French acronym for Easy to Read and Understand) method is increasingly used in cultural institutions. This method was developed in 2009 by eight European countries in collaboration with the association Inclusion Europe. It aims to simplify and make accessible documents in written, electronic, or audiovisual formats. "This method is based on two

²⁸⁰ LSF *La langue des signes française* is a gestural language recognised officially in 2005 and used by hearing impaired people.

²⁸¹ This paragraph is completed by the ones on Museum-therapy and art-therapy.



dimensions, each of which corresponds to a set of rules:

- Easy to read: recommendations on the layout of information (spacing, font size, illustrations associated with the text, etc.).
- Easy to understand recommendations on the content of the information (choice of words, sentence structure, organisation of information)".²⁸²

Museums use this method to write visitor guides that are available on site, usually available at the museum reception desk or downloadable from the museum's website. Labels and room panels written according to the FALC method are also appearing, although they are not commonly provided for every object or room. The *Musée de l'Histoire de Paris - Carnavalet*, which reopened in May 2021, followed accessibility guidelines for some of its labels, sparking a heated

debate about abandoning the use of Roman numerals "which can be an obstacle to understanding"²⁸³ in favour of Arabic numerals.

It is interesting to note, as Marie-Clarté O'Neill points out, that written materials produced using the FALC method providing concise and easily accessible information are, in fact, read by all audiences,

Museums have therefore gradually developed a range of measures as part of an approach to include people with disabilities. The solutions are varied: sensory kits, textured books, audio devices, etc. New technologies have facilitated the development of new tools: magnetic loops, reading machines, video magnifiers, multimedia tablets such as iPads, audio description, smartphone tours via the museum's Wi-Fi network, etc.

Many resources are also available on museum websites to help visitors plan their visit independently: booklets, interactive virtual tours, animated films in French sign language, podcasts with subtitles, etc. Great care is taken to ensure a warm welcome, with wheelchairs sometimes available and, more often, walking sticks, walking frames, magnifying glasses, torches, drop-off points, access ramps, etc.

Finally, some museums have embarked on extensive programmes to redesign their museum layout to make it compatible with universal accessibility criteria. In 2012, the *Musée d'Aquitaine* inaugurated an ambitious sensory tour, described as exceptional by Bertrand Verine, to make its entire collection accessible to all, with 29 stations spread across 5,000 square meters of permanent exhibition space covering 400,000 years of history²⁸⁴. These stations, which are intended for everyone and not just visitors with disabilities, alternate between "relief images, facsimiles of sculptures, models of buildings, scent boxes, etc. Braille labels are integrated into the stations, as well as comments recorded on an adapted audio guide."

ICOM CECA has naturally taken up the issues of universal accessibility and inclusion by creating a special interest group, coordinated by Raffaella Russo-Ricci and Viviana Gobbato, to encourage museum professionals to reflect on concrete actions to be taken to promote the welcome and support of all audiences within museum institutions.

While schoolchildren remain the main target audience for mediation activities, the attention paid to all categories of visitors has improved considerably since the 1990s. As Anne Krebs points out, the offer, which is varied and much better structured, considering a fine segmentation of audiences, attempts to meet the objectives of inclusion and accessibility, and is supported by increasingly

²⁸² My impaired trail

²⁸³ Noémie Giard, in charge of the *musée Carnavalet*, [article in the Figaro](#) published 17 March, 2021.

²⁸⁴ Ministry of Culture website [Art & accessibility](#)

innovative technologies. It is interesting to note that innovations for specific audiences have very often benefited all audiences, which is now covered by the term universal accessibility.

However, initiatives in favour of social issues or disability, which have been a legal requirement for universal accessibility and inclusion since the 2005 law, could be further improved and expanded. People with disabilities complain about the lack of guided tours or facilities designed for them, as Bertrand Verine points out, due to the lack of specific training for specialized mediators.

Finally, one audience seems to have been neglected: adult art lovers. Daniel Soulié points out that, since the 2010s, the Louvre's policy has been to give priority to first-time visitors and, above all, foreign visitors. The offering for knowledgeable amateur visitors has shrunk considerably: in the early 2000s, the Louvre offered 37 activities per day, compared to between four and five today.



*Mediators today:
a profession
under threat
from new trends
in visitor support*

Since the mid-1990s, the profession of mediator has begun to organize itself. Recognition of a specific profession requiring appropriate and solid training is therefore still recent. Marie-Clarté O'Neill points out that, for mediators to be able to provide their audience with structured knowledge, they must master both the content of their discourse and the tools to deliver it effectively.

Paradoxically, while it is still seeking legitimacy, particularly in relation to the scientific field of conservation and restoration, the profession of mediator is already facing fierce competition due to changes in the forms that public engagement now takes, where, ultimately, anyone can present themselves as a mediator.

We have identified four paths in the evolution of mediation²⁸⁵, between contemplation and consumption, in which the professional mediator no longer necessarily has a privileged place: object-centred mediation-education, socially engaged mediation centred on societal issues, contemplation-centred mediation focused on visitor well-being, and finally consumer-centred mediation focused on the visitor-consumer.

A – PROFESSIONALISATION AND ORGANISATION OF MEDIATION SERVICES

1. The introduction of specific training courses: mediator as a profession

When the *Musée d'Orsay* opened in 1986, Roland Schaer set up an independent cultural department. Marie-Thérèse Caille²⁸⁶ was appointed head of the Children's Space in 1987. The distinctive feature of this cultural department was that all its members were from the Ministry of Education, including teachers, professors, and schoolteachers.²⁸⁷ Until the early 1990s, teachers were still very much involved with curators in providing support to visitors in regional museums. Volunteers, who had no specific training and often came from societies of 'friends of the museum', also played a significant role in educational activities.

It was not until the professionalisation project in the early 1990s, led by the public department of the *Direction des musées nationaux* (National Museums Directorate) and supported by Élisabeth Caillet and Evelyne Lehalle, that the need for specific training in mediation was recognized.

Cécilia de Varine points out that when she was hired at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon in 1995, the tours were led by "about fifteen ladies from the Lyon bourgeoisie who had studied art history," and she admits that there was "a bit of improvisation everywhere." Appropriate training was therefore necessary.

Article 7 of the 2002 law states: "Every museum in France shall have a department responsible for welcoming the public, dissemination, activities, and cultural mediation. These activities shall be carried out by qualified staff." This article is fundamental because it imposes a training obligation. The first specific training courses in mediation date back to the 1980s. Teachers, who until then had been numerous in services dedicated to activities, gradually gave way to professional mediators who had undergone specific training, most often as part of courses in information and communication sciences. The *Association nationale de formation et d'information artistique et culturelle* (National Association for Artistic and Cultural Training and Information) (ANFIAC),²⁸⁸ formed in 1986 from the merger of the ATAC and the *Centre de formation national d'Avignon* (National Training Centre of Avignon,) offered training on a variety of topics to prepare people for jobs as cultural project managers. This professional body has contributed to the professionalisation of the cultural mediation sector.

²⁸⁶ She had been twenty years at the education department of the Louvre created after WWII by Germaine Cart.

²⁸⁷ PEYRIN Aurélie (2010), p. 35.

²⁸⁸ Dissolved in 1993.

²⁸⁵ In its wider sense.

The *École du Louvre*, under the impetus of Marie-Clarté O'Neill,²⁸⁹ offered an introductory course in mediation in 1985, and museum education was given a prominent place in the overhaul of museum studies that it developed in 1990. Its teaching breaks with the traditional model of top-down mediation, or "filling a vase." It is based on the notion of constructing structured knowledge: once the objective has been defined, a key step in any mediation programme, the mediator develops mediation tools to achieve it and then evaluates them.

Universities introduced mediation training courses in the early 1990s. In 2000, twenty-four universities offered degrees in cultural mediation and communication. However, in 2008, the majority of practicing museum mediators (63% of whom were women) had degrees solely in art history, which is surprising given that specific training programmes for mediators existed.²⁹⁰

Marie-Clarté O'Neill emphasizes the need for dual training combining in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, for example in art history for mediators in art museums, with training in mediation as a tool for museum education.

Today, training in cultural mediation takes place over five years after high school, at university or at *École du Louvre*. However, the latter offers a degree programme in Museum Studies, with a choice of seminars on mediation, and follows the latest innovations: in 2023, Gaëlle Piton, creator of *Slow Visites* in France, came to present her method²⁹¹ Private schools offer three- or five-year courses. *Grandes écoles de commerce* (business schools) also offer training in this field and, in the case of *ESSEC* (*École supérieure des sciences économiques et commerciales*, Higher school for economics and commercial sciences) and *Sciences Po* Paris, even offer double degrees with *École du Louvre*. The offer is therefore plentiful, however professional integration has become very difficult. The status of the profession remains precarious with fixed-term contracts, often as temporary workers or self-employed contractors, and remuneration is low.²⁹² The hiring of successive interns remains common, with internships often remaining a requirement for obtaining a degree. Corinne Héreau says that the *Musée en Herbe* has four employees and twenty interns.

²⁸⁹ At that time head of service for conference visits organised by the *Direction des musées de France* (French museums directorate), in collaboration with Roland Schaer, head of the cultural department of the *Musée d'Orsay*. The option *Médiation* was created by Marie-Clarté O'Neill in the programme me of the second cycle of studies at the *l'École du Louvre* in 1990. She also lectured at the *École du Louvre*.

²⁹⁰ PEYRIN, Aurélie, *Les modes de professionnalisation de l'accompagnement muséal. Profils et trajectoires des médiateurs*. in *Sociologie de l'Art*, vol. opus 11 & 12, n°1, 2008, p. 139-169.

²⁹¹ Annexe G: Interview with Gaëlle Piton. One must note that the *École du Louvre* has always paid attention to the evolution: from 1948 onwards, she proposed training lessons for the museum guides (in *France confrenciers*) dealing with young people.

²⁹² PEYRIN Aurélie, *Les modes de professionnalisation de l'accompagnement muséal. Profils et trajectoires des médiateurs*. in *Sociologie de l'Art*, vol. opus 11 & 12, n°1, 2008, p.139-169.

In addition to this basic training in mediation, specialisation is necessary. The legal obligation of universal accessibility emphasises that "technology and technical tools cannot replace human support, and it is specified that mediation and reception teams are required to be trained in welcoming and communicating with specific audiences: mental disability, audio description, Alzheimer's disease, French sign language, lip reading, etc. Training is therefore also provided by medical and social organisations and associations, some of which specialize in the museum field."²⁹³ The website of the Ministry of Culture and Communication provides useful practical guides and examples of visitor itineraries suitable for people with disabilities. Anne Krebs emphasizes the need to adapt through training related to the challenges facing mediators today, because "we must accept that museums change with society and their audiences."

Danièle Giraudy highlights the significant evolution of the terms used to describe the role of guide over the centuries: "The vocabulary speaks for itself, evolving gradually over half a century as practices have changed: we have moved from tour guides to facilitators, from mediators to tactile facilitators for the blind, and from digital facilitators in the age of social media to smartphone-based tour companions with QR codes."²⁹⁴

2. Informal training: growth in online resources and exchanges between professionals

In addition to these supervised, certified training courses, many other resources are available to mediators to enrich their knowledge and exchange ideas with other professionals. The development of digital technology facilitates access to a wide range of resources, albeit of varying quality.

A multitude of freely accessible websites offer ideas for mediation tools and devices, which are a source of inspiration for museum mediators and also allow them to learn from experiences abroad.

Events such as Museomix, a three-day international creative marathon and a veritable "laboratory for innovation to develop new forms of mediation and reflect on its uses in cultural venues",²⁹⁵ go even further by inviting the public to participate in multidisciplinary teams in the design of a mediation programme.

ICOM CECA plays a major role in reflecting on the place of mediation in museums and its objectives, thanks to exchanges and information sharing between museum professionals. Numerous resources are available, free of charge, on the organisation's

²⁹³ Site of the Ministry for Culture and communication – see above mentioned article *L'accessibilité universelle d'un musée de France*.

²⁹⁴ Above mentioned interview with Danièle Giraudy by Brigitte Gilardet.

²⁹⁵ Museomix website an event created in 2011 and held since then annually.

website. The Best Practice Award, which is given each year to mediation programmes that comply with the Best Practice tool, promotes the sharing of experiences.

Other initiatives include the European Art Explora Academy of Fine Arts Prize “to renew the dialogue between the arts and the public,” which “supports innovative practices in terms of access, participation, and audience engagement.”²⁹⁶

The Mêtis association, created in September 2017 on the initiative of three young museum researchers, is a platform for meetings and exchanges between museum professionals, offering numerous high-quality articles and conferences.²⁹⁷

The Ministry of Culture and Communication also provides useful information on mediation through numerous publications, the organisation of conferences, and the presentation of innovative initiatives on its museum mediation platform.

Museums can also draw inspiration from the experience of other institutions, which have developed rich and comprehensive websites that make information easily accessible.

Finally, the rollout of NICTs²⁹⁸ or in French *Nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication* is accelerating the spread of ideas. The huge potential for using these tools to support museum visitors offers new prospects. Digital technology not only makes it possible to support traditional mediation methods, but also to create new ones.

Mediators therefore have numerous sources of information and technical resources at their disposal to perfect their craft, explore new avenues, validate their intuitions, and compare ideas to improve their practice.

However, this easy access to resources on the internet and museum websites, with the proliferation of content such as educational files, podcasts, interviews, films, etc., poses a real threat to the future of the profession of mediator. Anyone can now access a considerable amount of scientific data and create high-quality content without necessarily having any training in art history, for example. Websites and tutorials also offer ideas for workshops, so creativity is no longer a determining quality for mediators. In such a context, how can mediators maintain their position and stand out from amateurs who present themselves as mediators? An understanding of the relationship between visitors and pedagogy in the transmission of knowledge could be a distinguishing factor, but these subjects are not currently included in mediator training programmes. Tools for assessing the quality of mediation, such as the Best Practice tool offered by ICOM CECA, remain a guarantee of the quality of the services offered.

²⁹⁶ *Artexplora website*

²⁹⁷ *Mêtis website*

²⁹⁸ NICT: new information and communication technologies, all technologies enabling digital information to be processed and transmitted.

3. Slow recognition of the profession of mediator

Despite the introduction of high-quality training programmes, mediation remains the “poor relation”²⁹⁹ in museums. Mediators struggle to find their place “in terms of the hierarchy of professional values within museums,” notes Anne Krebs. There is a rivalry between conservation and mediation to “determine who has the authority to speak about the museum, its productions, and the dialogue with visitors.”³⁰⁰

Marie-Clarté O'Neill cites two reasons for this situation: the lack of fundamental research in mediation and the lack of applied research and evaluation of the programmes offered, which would enable the research to be validated.

Anne Krebs agrees with this observation regarding research. Museums are scientific institutions, and mediation must establish itself as a science in the same way as art history, for example, or conservation-restoration, which, although recent, have acquired the status of scientific disciplines.

As for the evaluation of mediation activities, they are necessary for fundamental research, but also, in practice, as Anne-Sophie Grassin points out, they make it possible to tailor mediation to the needs of visitors, to ensure the impact on visitors, and to defend mediation projects to museum management.³⁰¹ Cécilia de Varine emphasizes that carrying out such evaluation is very complicated to implement in France, precisely because of “the authoritarian stance of the expert’s voice.”³⁰²

At the Louvre, Anne Krebs prefers the term “action research” because the term “evaluation” can scare mediators who fear being monitored. Moreover, this term does not correspond to the work carried out. In fact, this evaluation work is conducted with the teams that carried out the projects, in a spirit of co-construction, which allows for quick adjustments if necessary. All studies are archived and available for consultation, even by other museums, upon request. Small structures, such as the *Musée en Herbe*, do not conduct formal evaluation because adjustments can be made immediately, as Corinne Héreau points out.

To justify the absence of evaluation, some cite the financial cost, the extra workload, and the lack of specific skills among staff. This evaluation work requires skills that mediators do not necessarily possess; it is a job for specialists, as Anne-Sophie Grassin and Anne Krebs point out. An effective and free solution is to call on universities near the institution or the *École du Louvre*, as suggested by Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Anne Krebs.

²⁹⁹ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy.

³⁰⁰ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs and Appendix I: Interview with Cécilia de Varine.

³⁰¹ Appendix C: Interview with Anne-Sophie Grassin

³⁰² Cécilia de Varine points out that in the United Kingdom, evaluations with the public are systematic and adjustments are made immediately

Beyond the lack of evaluation, there is a shortage of archives on the tools designed and produced in museums themselves, as well as at the national and international levels. Some mediators therefore think they are inventing tools that already exist elsewhere! The professionals interviewed agree that archives are essential, as they save valuable time in the design and evaluation of projects. However, Daniel Giraudy, who also acknowledges the need to build archives, confides that when she created the Children's Workshop at the *Centre Pompidou*, she deliberately chose not to describe the activities so that the mediators could retain their spontaneity. Cécilia de Varine points out that while mediators remain free to act as they see fit, they are required to write mediation reports explaining the content to be conveyed and the methods used to achieve this. As for Anne-Sophie Grassin, she (and her team) draws up a project sheet for each activity, defining the desired objective, describing the process, identifying the internal and external actors, and setting the budget. This is a practice that, if properly archived by the museum, would be worth spreading.

In addition to these two fundamental reasons, on a practical level, the profession struggles to organize itself into a professional network, speak with one voice, and defend the interests of the profession. In 1999, mediation professionals, then a fledgling profession in the process of being invented, organized themselves into an association. The association *Médiation culturelle*, on the initiative of Cécilia de Varine, was created in response to the threat of the arrival of youth jobs³⁰³ heavily subsidized by the state and therefore less costly for local authorities. This association brought together “around thirty professionals from the seven or eight main institutions in the Rhône-Alpes region.” The association was dissolved twenty years later and no association or union representing all cultural mediators took over, as the profession was too heterogeneous and the consensus necessary for such a grouping was lacking.³⁰⁴ However, in 2008, a founding conference was held in Paris, which finalized the work carried out between 2004 and 2007 to define a *Charte déontologique de médiation Culturelle* (Code of Ethics for Cultural Mediation)³⁰⁵ setting out the guidelines desired by the association.

4. The organisation of mediation services

During the 1980s, in the name of decentralisation, the Office for Cultural and Educational Action gradually withdrew its funding to encourage local authority museums to set up independent educational services. In 1985, the Central Service changed its name once again to become the Museum and Cultural Action Service.

In 1986, the first independent public service was created at the *Musée d'Orsay*, followed a year later by the Louvre. However, the *Service central* (Central Service) retained responsibility for “managing lecturers (recruitment, scheduling), publications and audiovisual programmes”³⁰⁶ the latter two activities being shared with the *Réunion des Musées Nationaux* (RMN). The creation of an autonomous public service in each museum, staffed by competent personnel, was thus encouraged by the Central Service, but came up against the problem of the financial cost of such a service.

The recognition of the importance of audience engagement and the gradual professionalisation of the role of mediator was reflected in the massive recruitment of support staff, which quadrupled between 1975 and 2001, rising from 475 to 1,918 people in regional museums.³⁰⁷

Internal mediation service

Within museum institutions, the mediation service may have different names and may or may not be part of the visitor services department, reflecting the history of the museum and the strategy of its management.

The evolution of the names of the departments responsible for mediation and their position in the museum's organisational chart thus reflect the importance given to these services.

For example, at the Louvre Museum, in 2019, this department was called Mediation and Cultural Programme ming. In 2022, it was renamed the Department of Mediation and Audience Development³⁰⁸ and remains a fully-fledged operational department.³⁰⁹ This change demonstrates the desired link between mediation and audience development, with mediation enabling new audiences, and/or audiences requiring adjustments to mediation measures, to be reached. At

³⁰³ Law n°. 97-940 of 16 October 1997 on the development of youth employment activities.

³⁰⁴ PEYRIN Aurélie, *Les modes de professionnalisation de l'accompagnement muséal. Profils et trajectoires des médiateurs*. in *Sociologie de l'Art*, vol. opus 11 & 12, N°1, 2008, p.139-169. It highlights the failure of professionalisation.

³⁰⁵ Available on the [ENSSIB website](#)

³⁰⁶ PEYRIN Aurélie (2010), p. 27.

³⁰⁷ PEYRIN Aurélie, *Démocratiser les musées: une profession intellectuelle au féminin*, Travail, genre et sociétés 2008, n°19 p. 65 à

³⁰⁸ [Musée du Louvre website Activity report 2019](#)

³⁰⁹ [Musée du Louvre website activity report 2022](#)

Universcience, the Scientific Mediation and Education Department³¹⁰ is an autonomous department, independent of the Audience Development and Communication Department. It could therefore be considered that mediation carries greater weight in these structures. At the *Musée d'Orsay*, in 2024, the Artistic and Cultural Education and Mediation Department is one of the four departments within the Audience Department.³¹¹ Its name demonstrates its strong involvement with school audiences. At the *Palais des Beaux-Arts* in Lille, the two departments, the guides and the mediators, and coordinators of educational workshops, are attached to the Directorate for Visitor Reception and Involvement.³¹² This last example highlights the importance of the value attributed to those involved in mediation and the importance of public participation.

The mediation department may also be responsible for mediating between several museums to optimize the allocation of resources, particularly in the context of inter-municipal cooperation³¹³ such as that established, for example, in the Greater Rodez urban community, which manages the Fenaille Museum, the Soulaiges Museum, and the Denys Puech Museum.

The mediation department³¹⁴ is structured around the head of mediation and is ideally composed as follows:

The head of mediation designs mediation projects and programmes for the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions, organizes events such as activities and workshops, and supervises, in collaboration with the conservation departments, the production of mediation tools such as audio guide content, educational booklets, labels, leaflets, room information sheets, and signage. The manager coordinates the team of mediators and tour guides and works in collaboration with the communications department.

The mediator, acting as an intermediary between the collections and the public, develops strategies to encourage encounters between the object and the visitor through the organisation of exhibitions, workshops, conferences, and publications. To do this, they must be proficient in digital tools and various other information and communication tools, be able to draw up a budget and conduct evaluation to ensure the relevance of the mediation.

A mediator with specific skills is responsible for designing, implementing, and evaluating projects and offerings tailored to a specific social audience or people

with disabilities. For children and school groups, a specially trained arts and culture educator is responsible for mediation activities.

The profession of tour guide has been regulated since the beginning of the 20th century. It is now governed by Article L22-1 of the Tourism Code and Article 109 of Law N°. 2016-925 of July 7, 2016, on freedom of creation, architecture, and heritage. Only holders of a professional tour guide card are qualified to conduct tours in French museums.

Artists and visual artists are also called upon, as has been the case since the 1970s at the *Centre Pompidou*, to give guided tours. They oversee creative workshops for all audiences, young and old.

Outsourcing of mediation activities

For reasons of cost, flexibility, particularly during major temporary exhibitions, and for issues related to specific skills, some museums choose to outsource all or part of their mediation activities. Cécilia de Varine is opposed to outsourcing, a trend that was initiated by the *Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*. She argues that it makes it impossible to maintain a close relationship with visitors.

The RMN-GP (*Réunion des Musées Nationaux-Grand Palais*) offers its expertise to museums for both the organisation of exhibitions and the programming of related events. Every year, around 100 lecturers and art historians equipped with digital tablets give 56,000 hours of lectures at the *Grand Palais*, the *Musée du Luxembourg*, and 16 partner museums throughout France (including the Louvre, Versailles, the *Musée d'Orsay*, the *Musée National Marc Chagall* in Nice, and the *Musée National de la Préhistoire* in Les Eyzies-de-Tayac). The RMN-GP also organizes workshops for children, as well as lectures and screenings. It offers visitor assistance tools such as audio guides and digital applications.³¹⁵

Private companies can also be called upon. The *Pont des Arts*³¹⁶ company, for example, works at the *Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac* Museum, the Louvre Museum, the Louis Vuitton Foundation, the Rodin Museum, and the *Mucem* on mediation projects. Since 2009, the company *La Boîte du souffleur* has been offering theatrical tours in which actors guide visitors through the collections, combining fun and education. The Maurice Denis Museum (Saint-Germain-en-Laye), the Albert-Kahn Museum (Boulogne-Billancourt), the Toy Museum (Poissy), and the Barbizon School Museum have all used their services.³¹⁷ Finally, the management of a museum, including mediation activities, may be entirely delegated

³¹⁰ [Universcience website](#) including the *Palais de la découverte* and the *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie*, Paris.

³¹¹ [Musée d'Orsay website](#)

³¹² [PBA Lille website](#)

³¹³ TOBELEM Jean-Michel, *La gestion des institutions culturelles, Musées, patrimoine, centres d'art*, Paris, Armand Colin, 3rd edition, 2017 p.265.

³¹⁴ Ministry of Culture and Communication website, [article Les métiers du musée](#).

³¹⁵ [RMN-GP website](#)

³¹⁶ [Pont des arts website](#)

³¹⁷ [laboitedusouffleur.fr/](#)

to a private company. For example, Culturespaces has been managing the Jacquemart-André Museum in Paris since 1996.

Stemming from a legal obligation, the profession of mediator now benefits from appropriate training and has found its place within the museum organisation. However, the profession would gain legitimacy with more fundamental and applied research in the field of museum education, the systematic evaluation of the tools used by mediators, the establishment of a systematic archiving system, and the creation of an entity capable of protecting its interests.

This is even more necessary as the profession may seem to be under threat from the growing number of people from a variety of backgrounds who are called upon to lead new forms of mediation in museum institutions.

B – EVOLVING MEDIATION AND THE FOUR PATHS OF MEDIATION: IS THE ROLE OF THE MEDIATOR UNDER THREAT?

For this section, the term mediation will be used in its broadest sense, as it is now commonly used by professionals.

As Marie-Clarté O'Neill points out, museum education must lead to the development of knowledge: knowledge, know-how, and interpersonal skills. To build effective mediation, mediators must question the nature of the knowledge they wish to develop and set themselves a goal.

Mediation establishes a link between visitors and museum collections. This link is normally provided by a mediator who is present, as in guided tours, or through the work they have done beforehand in creating the written or digital materials distributed in the museum or on the museum's website.

The Covid-19 health crisis in 2020 had a major impact on the acceleration of digital technology in the museum world. While the six long months of museum closures during lockdowns may have called into question the very survival of some venues, for many it was also an opportunity to take the leap into the digital age by developing their websites by adding content, creating virtual tours, games, and contests to stay in touch with the public; developing their social media presence; broadcasting podcasts; and other innovations, as revealed by the ICOM survey on "Digital Strategies of Museums During the Pandemic and the Future of Public Participation."³¹⁸

Given the multitude of devices and tools available to museums, some of which have been presented here, an exhaustive list would be futile, but they can be

grouped into four major trends that are emerging today in the three-way relationship between object, visitor, and museum: object-centred mediation-education, engaged mediation focused on societal issues, mediation-contemplation focused on visitor well-being, and finally mediation-consumption focused on the visitor-consumer.³¹⁹

1. Object-centred mediation-education in the light of new technologies

The persistence of traditional support tools and devices

It is interesting to note the persistence of traditional support methods that place the object at the heart of their discourse, such as guided tours, lecture tours, and lecture series, which are free or paid depending on the institution. These remain the main mediation activities aimed at adults. Many museums only offer this type of mediation for adults who are not socially disadvantaged or disabled.

For greater freedom and flexibility, following an ancient tradition dating back to the 18th century in cabinets of curiosity,³²⁰ mediators are present in the rooms of certain institutions, available to visitors who can ask them questions at any time. The Louvre-Lens and, in Paris, the *Palais de Tokyo*, the Louis Vuitton Foundation, the Cartier Foundation, the *Bourse du Commerce*, and the *Musée en Herbe* promote this type of free, posted mediation.

The Socratic maieutic technique³²¹ and the "method of looking" are used to encourage interaction with visitors, but the educational function remains essential: the transmission of knowledge remains at the heart of the system.

For Cécilia de Varine, the mediator's job is to engage visitors by asking them questions, making eye contact, and encouraging them to look at the object so that they can construct a narrative together. The mediator starts with the object and provides contextual information. The object and the way it is viewed are at the centre of mediation. The success of such a visit depends on the mediator's ability to listen and adapt. Traditional written devices directly related to the object, such as labels, room panels, banners, booklets, and all editorial activities, particularly catalogues, still have a place of honour in museums. However, the content of written material in exhibition rooms is evolving and the medium for publishing is tending to become digital. Legal requirements for accessibility, coupled with

³¹⁹ The terms object-centred mediation-education, engaged mediation focused on societal issues, mediation-contemplation focused on visitor well-being, and finally mediation-consumption focused on the visitor-consumer.

³²⁰ Anne Krebs speaks of "mediation in the rooms, at the service of the visitors", a very important method for her.

³¹⁸ [ICOM website](#)

the influx of foreign tourists and varying levels of general knowledge, are forcing changes to traditional written tools, making them more readable, easier to understand and translated into foreign languages.³²²

For Daniel Soulié, museum mediation, in written form, is essential, as it is the only form that is directly accessible, independent, open, and free. Ideally, it should include a simple label of no more than 250 lines, a fifteen-line room panel, and a map.³²³

Despite a shift away from text mentioned by Anne-Sophie Grassin,³²⁴ which is linked to a decline in attention spans, text in museums remains “highly cultural,” linked to the history of museums in France, and is “absolutely necessary to support the thesis of an exhibition or to enlighten visitors, since labels are the first element, the first clue that conveys meaning.” In terms of design, it should be noted that there are two major conflicting trends: a tendency to remove labels and a tendency to make them longer.

In contemporary art museums and exhibitions in particular, there is a growing tendency to remove labels, on the grounds that they create a barrier between the object and the visitor, preventing them from seeing the work. At the exhibition at the Maillol Museum in Paris, *Le Monde de Steve McCurry* (Mc Curry’s world),³²⁵ the photographs were completely unlabelled. Two other attempts had been made previously, in 1973 and 2009.³²⁶ On the other hand, longer labels are becoming necessary to introduce interdisciplinarity³²⁷ alongside art history, for example, building bridges with other disciplines such as history or sociology and, above all, in the last ten years or so, to take into account the work carried out in the context of post-colonial studies,³²⁸ which is necessary for contextualizing the creation and provenance of the work.

³²¹ CHAUMIER Serge, MAIRESSE François (2017) p. 139, the mediator as «cultural midwife».

³²² ROUXEL Benjamin, *Traduire pour le visiteur*, Traduire/239/ 2018, p. 24-33.

³²³ Daniel Soulié notes that cartography is becoming widespread, and points out that at the *Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet*, the map serves as an introduction to the sections.

³²⁴ Appendix C: Interview with Anne-Sophie Grassin. She talks about Marzia Varutti’s work on decentring in relation to texts.

³²⁵ From 9 December 2021 to 29 May 2022.

³²⁶ *Équivoques* exhibition in 1973 at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris; *Les désordres du plaisir* in 2009 at the *Abattoirs de Toulouse* in GILARDET Brigitte, *Revue de cartels*: « il n’y a rien comprendre, il a tout à voir » (there is nothing to understand, there is everything to look at), published on 17 July, 2017.

³²⁷ As Georges Henri Rivière points out, the term is ambiguous: “the choice we have made, we recognise in advance, is ambiguous, on the borders of transdisciplinarity and pluridisciplinarity”, *Musées et interdisciplinarité*, *Museum*, Vol. XXXII, n°1/2, 1980. Today, it is perhaps more common to speak of “decompartmentalising” the contents and texts of simple and developed labels to consider a “cross-disciplinary approach” to collections.

³²⁸ MAIRESSE François, *Muséologie, colonisations et domination*, ICOFOM Study Series 49-2 | 2021.

Labels thus provide a variety of information depending on the nature of the object: information on iconography, provenance, the work’s intended recipient, the object’s function, how it works, technique, materials, contextual elements of its creation, references to literary and musical sources, etc. The content, vocabulary, and syntax must be simple and clear, as Daniel Soulié emphasizes. Since 2015, the Louvre Museum has been undertaking a major project to rewrite and translate its 38,000 labels into English. This also includes bringing them to a height suitable for children and wheelchair users.

The content of the labels is always subject to research and reflection: at the *Palais des Beaux-Arts* in Lille, the labels have been redesigned since 2019 according to a highly innovative typology: standard label, annotated label (maximum 600 characters), illustrated label, family label, label with literary excerpt, and guest label (open to other scientific disciplines).³²⁹

It should be noted that there is a fine line between popularisation and simplification: the desire for simplification cannot come at the expense of scientific content and the fundamental and historical role of the museum, which remains the transmission of knowledge and the intellectual enrichment of visitors.

To clarify and decipher the wealth of information provided on its labels, the *Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac*, inspired by the work carried out at the Brooklyn Museum in New York, has added an explanatory page about the labels to its visitor guide.

The emergence of artificial intelligence available to all, notably with ChatGPT, represents a real revolution in information processing and content production.

In 2017, Ask Mona, created by Marion Carré and Valentin Schmite, launched the first chatbot, a conversational agent using AI to help visitors prepare for their museum visit by answering their questions and helping them book tickets and activities. The chatbot quickly proved to be an effective tool for assisting visitors in the museum. Smartphone-based visitor assistance via chatbots is now used by many museums for tours of their permanent collections (*Centre Pompidou-Metz*, Albert-Kahn Departmental Museum) or exhibitions (*Rouge*, from March 20 to July 1, 2019, at the *Grand Palais*, and *Rothko*, from October 18, 2023, to April 2, 2024, at the Louis Vuitton Foundation).

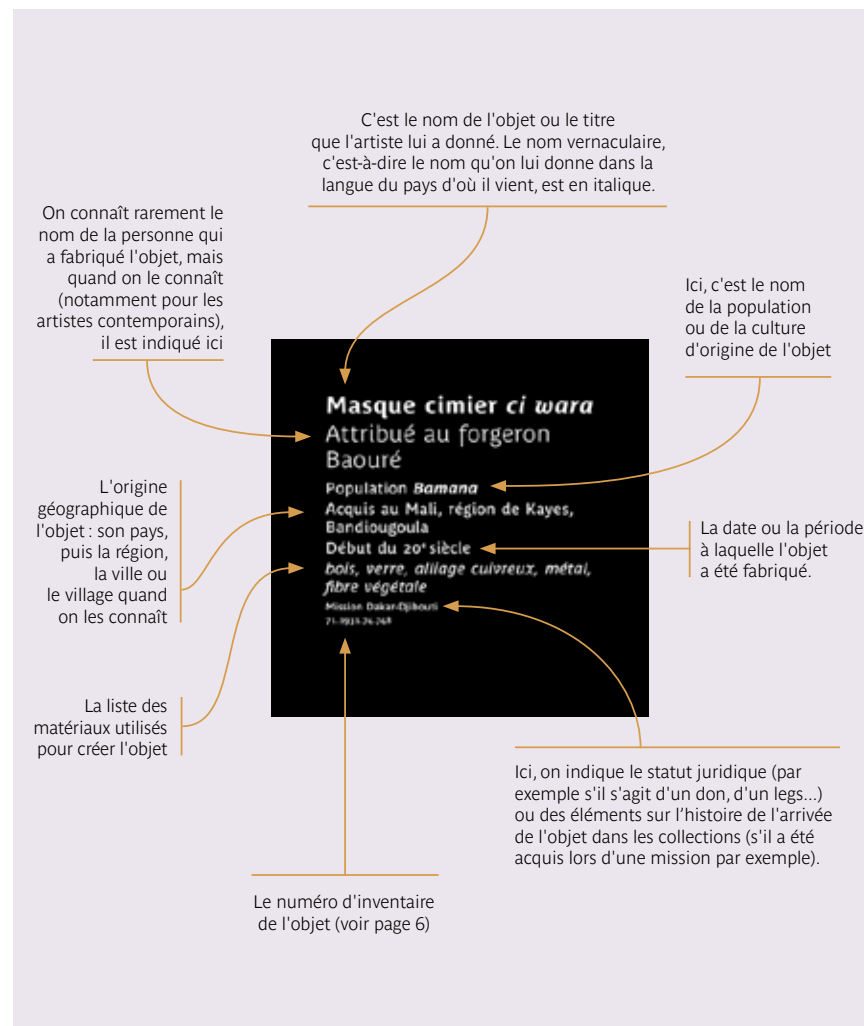
ChatGPT, launched in its first version in November 2022, could be a major ally for mediators and curators in creating texts (labels, room panels, website content, etc.), visuals, and preparing on-site visits, as this tool has powerful generative capabilities that enable it to produce customized texts.

³²⁹ As evidenced by the conference of 5 July, 2024, organised by the Ministry of Culture and the FEMS (*Fédération des écomusées et des musées de société*) on the theme «*Déconnecter et décroisonner: pour des approches transversales des collections*», webinar available in replay.

5 Décryptage d'un cartel

Une fois l'objet présenté dans les vitrines, il vous reste à découvrir d'où il vient et comprendre sa fonction au sein de la société qui l'a créé. Pour vous aider, vous pouvez lire les cartels (les étiquettes qui présentent l'œuvre). Ouvrez l'œil car ils sont parfois accrochés sur le côté des vitrines. Des multimédias les complètent et décrivent le contexte d'usage, la signification, la technique de fabrication des objets, l'identité de celles et ceux qui les ont créés.

Savez-vous lire un cartel?



Excerpt from the Guide to the collections of the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris
 (Source: [website of the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac](#))

However, artificial intelligence (AI) should still be used with caution, as it is not yet completely reliable in searching for information and can even give seemingly accurate but incorrect answers, known as hallucinations. Its quality therefore remains unstable, and only paid versions have access to the internet and thus to a huge amount of open content data, including that of museums. Finally, biases related to the training data used by this tool must also be considered. On the other hand, artificial intelligence is proving to be very effective in producing sounds, writing texts, rewriting them to simplify them using the FALC (*Facile à lire et à comprendre*, easy to read and understand) method, adapting them for young audiences, and translating them into any language. AI thus saves a huge amount of time and money by avoiding the need for external service providers such as translators.

However, the incredible potential of AI can be perceived as a threat to museum professionals, particularly mediators. Will AI replace people in museums and generate all the content offered to visitors on its own? Museum professionals agree that AI will remain a simple tool to aid content creation and cannot replace the mediator as a physical person.

ChatGPT, a true virtual assistant, is the subject of intense debate within the museum community. ICOM France organized an evening debate in November 2023 on the theme: "What about tomorrow? Artificial intelligence and museums".³³⁰

The emergence of AI therefore raises questions about the transformation of the profession of mediator and requires support for teams. The use of AI may change the relationship between objects and visitors, who will be able to use AI to generate content that interests them and thus enjoy a completely personalized and autonomous visit.³³¹

The ethical issues and the subject of training teams in the use of AI³³² remain open.

Audiovisual and multimedia: tools for visitor empowerment thanks to the digital revolution

The *Musée des Arts et traditions populaires* (Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions) introduced audiovisual technology (video and audio guides) to museums in 1972. These early devices also made it possible to present what later became known as intangible cultural heritage in a more relevant way (such as dance and song). The

³³⁰ [ICOM France website](#).

³³¹ *Ibid.* Example from Canada, with the mood trails at the *Musée national des Beaux-Arts du Québec*. The conversational agent greets visitors as soon as they arrive and offers them a fully personalised tour tailored to their needs, with several possible interpretations for each work on display.

³³² To improve the performance of prompts, use chain of thought prompting to break down the steps in the task to be performed.

latter is becoming increasingly important in today's museums,³³³ with audiovisual and multimedia emerging as the best adapted media for its dissemination.

Some professionals were quick to warn against the use of tools such as audio guides. Danièle Giraudy, for example, remains hostile to them because they are not adapted to their audiences and focus the public's attention solely on the works on display, but major technological advances have led to significant improvements.

In 1989, the Louvre Museum introduced Acoustiguides,³³⁴ which were used by only 1% of visitors at the time, a modest start. This mediation tool offers, in different languages, an informative commentary on selected objects along a predefined route. This tool, which has undergone significant technological developments,³³⁵ remains available in many museums.

When it opened in 1986, the *Musée d'Orsay* offered the first interactive terminal. Since then, interactive touch tables³³⁶ and multitouch tables, such as the Museotouch Explorer, have multiplied.³³⁸ Some museums boast about the abundance of multimedia tools available in their spaces, such as the *Musée de la Romanité* in Nîmes, which states on its home page that it has 65 devices, describing itself as an "interactive" museum.

These tools allow visitors to explore the object on display, providing additional information: the object can be animated, subjected to reflectography, magnification or other physical and chemical exploration processes. The aim is clearly educational, even if the form is playful. The object is laid bare, dissected and analyzed until it becomes a new object. Geneviève Vidal³³⁹ points out that "it would seem that the image is not just a representation of the object, but an autonomous object with all its own aesthetic qualities, to such an extent that (visitors) have photographed the Museotouch screen." Ultimately, the real object is almost distanced from the visitor.

³³³ As evidenced by the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by UNESCO on 17 October 2003, the term ICH first appeared in the early 1990s, and the *Musée des Arts et Traditions populaires* was at the forefront of the presentation of this type of heritage on audiovisual media.

³³⁴ Activity report of the Louvre 1990, p. III-III2.

³³⁵ Audioguide on New Nintendo 3DS at the *Musée du Louvre*, for example.

³³⁶ Sometimes designed by artists, such as Thierry Fournier's *Pariétale* interactive table in the Gargas cave in Aventignan in 2010.

³³⁷ VIDAL Geneviève, *La médiation numérique muséale, une renouvellement de la diffusion culturelle*, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018, p.73, multipoint touch table tested in 2011 at the *Musée des Confluences* in Lyon, the qualitative survey showed the public's interest in this device.

³³⁸ Bertrand Verine points out that the majority of tactile tables are not, in fact, all adapted for the visually impaired

³³⁹ VIDAL Geneviève, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

In November 2009, the Louvre Museum offered an iPhone app for the first time.³⁴⁰ Now, QR codes³⁴¹ can be used to replace labels, room booklets, and even audio guides. Digital technology makes it easy to access objects; all you need is a cell phone or better a smartphone, and 94% of French people owned a cell phone in 2020.³⁴² Visitors can access a web page, continue their research on the internet via hyperlinks, or even access an audio file to listen to a commentary. In this context, digital technology once again augments traditional methods, but it can also come between the real object and the visitor, creating a distance if the visitor remains focused on their phone.

Digital technology can also be a source of innovation with the use of 3D or, more recently, Augmented Reality,³⁴³ for example with the interactive tablet, HistoPad, invented by the company Histovery.

Virtual Reality,³⁴⁴ after a slow start in the 1990s, has been hugely successful since 2014. Wearing a headset, visitors are transported to a new, virtual world, thanks to a 3D screen and motion sensors. For example, the *Cité de l'Architecture* offers a tour inside the Pyramid of Cheops. In early 2019, the *Musée de l'Orangerie* implemented this process for Claude Monet's *Les Nymphéas*, and in 2020, the Louvre Museum did the same for *La Joconde* with the *Mona Lisa Beyond the Glass* project, which can also be downloaded to smartphones.

Finally, digital technology allows objects to travel virtually to visitors' homes or to other regions, in line with the democratisation of culture.

Online museum mediation on museum websites³⁴⁶ (podcasts, descriptions of works, virtual tours, online conferences, etc.) has grown considerably with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. It brings the object to the visitor-internet-user, who no longer needs to travel. As the institution is the source of the content, this guarantees its scientific quality. It also maintains a continuous link between the online visitor and the institution during the three stages of the encounter: before, during, and after the visit. However, reading on screens requires including

³⁴⁰ Louvre Museum Activity Report 2009, p. 149.

³⁴¹ Quick response code, made public under an open licence in 1999 and developed spectacularly in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

³⁴² [Statista website](#).

³⁴³ Augmented Reality: enrichment of a real environment perceived through our five senses, by adding information and digital content.

³⁴⁴ Virtual Reality: creation of a completely artificial environment accessed via technical devices

³⁴⁵ BINDÉ Joséphine, *Immersive art fever*, BeauxArts Magazine, October 2019.

³⁴⁶ July 1995, inauguration of the first museum website at the *Musée du Louvre*. Computers have been used in museums as databases since the early 1980s. In 1989, the *Musée dauphinois* in Grenoble offered free access to the iconography database in connection with the exhibition *Quelle mémoire pour demain* in *Les musées à la pointe des NTIC*, PESQUER Omer et MAGRO Sébastien, *Revue Nichons dans l'internet*, autumn 2015.

brief messages³⁴⁷ and therefore appropriate writing, “made up of short texts (and which) aims to popularize scientific knowledge”.³⁴⁸

Social media, particularly YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and more recently TikTok, are part of this same phenomenon and enable museums to broaden their audience to a new, younger audience³⁴⁹, to provide information about the museum before a visit, but also disseminate knowledge. The limited format of these networks requires brevity and simplification of content, and a rigorous choice of images. The *Musée d’Orsay* has been on Instagram since March 2012 and has 1.5 million followers in 2025. It offers presentations of works, one or more photographs, accompanied by a written commentary and a detailed caption in French and English. Since 2019, it has been regularly publishing the programme *Une œuvre/un regard* (One work/one view) on YouTube. These are short videos (less than ten minutes) in which an artist, a public figure, or a curator presents a work of art. Finally, it disseminates information about new exhibitions for promotional and communication purposes. This requires the arrival in museums of new digital-related professions (community manager, social media manager, online traffic manager, moderator, etc.), whether integrated into the structure or not, who become new points of contact for mediators. Some mediators are undertaking training in these areas.

Digital technology also makes it possible to respond to the demand for access to culture for all. In spring 2024, the Art Explora Foundation launched the Art Explora Festival with the world’s first museum ship, offering free cultural and artistic experiences, exhibitions, virtual reality experiences, performances, conferences, concerts, and film screenings.³⁵⁰ Combined with exhibition pavilions on shore and collaborations with venues in cities, the boat will travel to 15 Mediterranean countries between spring 2024 and December 2026. The museum ship, which stopped in Marseille from June 6 to 18, 2024, during the Olympic torch relay for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, can accommodate 2,000 people per day on board, where it offers “an immersive exhibition designed in collaboration with the Louvre, a sound experience developed with Ircam, and artist residencies,”³⁵¹ with the clear goal of promoting cultural democratisation.



Art Explora museum ship
(Source: [Art Explora website](#))

³⁴⁷ TELIER Max, *À l'ère du numérique l'attention se perd*, France Culture podcast, listened to on 22 April 2022: Google has measured the average attention span of millennials: nine seconds, eight seconds for goldfish ... And they spend 5 hours 48 minutes a day in front of their screens.

³⁴⁸ VIDAL Geneviève, *La médiation numérique muséale, une renouvellement de la diffusion culturelle*, Bordeaux, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018, p.25.

³⁴⁹ The Louvre's research department conducts studies on the various social networks, as Anne Krebs points out.

³⁵⁰ [Art Explora website](#)

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*



Multi-user touchscreen table at the Musée de l'Homme, Paris
(Source: photograph by Sylvie Savare, November 2022)

All of these digital support tools place the object back at the centre of mediation, but in the most innovative ways, offering an object that can be modified, viewed from different angles, enlarged, “augmented,” and ultimately becoming an object other than the one presented in the museum space, a substitute, rich in new scientific content about the source object.

However, innovative as they may be, these digital devices,³⁵² most often produced by external service providers, are prone to rapid obsolescence, recurring technical problems, and high maintenance and management costs. Anne Krebs points out that some of these devices were removed from the Louvre immediately after the Covid-19 pandemic, as visitors no longer wanted to touch the screens. She also notes that the use of this type of device is linked to different cultural habits: Japanese people, for example, are reluctant to share a touchscreen table. Finally, studies show that visitors who use these tools generally have both “educational capital and technological capital.” There is a real digital divide, particularly among older people. Marie-Clarté O’Neill also mentions the excessive density and complexity of the information provided by these digital devices, which led to some of them being removed from the Louvre in the 1980s.

While they empower visitors in their quest for information, they can also isolate individuals, who find themselves alone with the device, whether it be a touchscreen table, connected headphones, a smartphone, a computer screen, or something else. Aware of this digital isolation, innovations are emerging.

For example, at the *Musée de l’Homme* (Paris), a touchscreen table offers a game that requires several players around the table, thereby promoting social interaction.

One might question the limits of these tools based on the use of digital technology, which imposes a distance, given that physical proximity to an object seems essential to its understanding and appreciation. For Anne-Sophie Grassin, “the real image in a museum is the work itself.” However, they allow us to see the object in a different way and often to gain a deeper understanding of it. They allow visitors to refocus their attention on the object. Technology must be, as Danièle Giraudy says about the *grotte Cosquer* (Cosquer Cave,) “at the service of the wonder that you are discovering. It is not the goal, it is the means, it does not betray, it makes it visible.”

These tools which use artificial intelligence and digital technology to improve existing systems or create new ones, remain a real asset in terms of cultural democratisation and facilitating access to culture. However, they could ultimately challenge the existence of the profession of mediator, even if professionals do not seem to perceive any real threat at present, insisting on the need for human contact with a mediator.

³⁵² Anne Krebs calls them technical social devices.

2. Socially-focused mediation and multidisciplinary: in search of innovative experiences

Alongside this refocusing on the object, museums are increasingly opening their doors to major social issues with strong commitments to, for example, environmental issues, decolonialisation, the question of restitution, the status of women, reflections on identity and gender or LGBTQIA+, as the recognition of minorities.

Multidisciplinary is also the order of the day: dance, music, performance, theatre, cinema, and more now have their place in the museum, offering a different interpretation of the works.

The engaged museum

Anne Krebs points out that museums remain very sensitive to social movements and adapt to them rather than anticipating them. Museums are increasingly seeking to accelerate social and societal change. Over the past ten years, lagging behind Anglo-Saxon countries, museums have been confronted with social issues related to postcolonialism and, more broadly, wokeness. Adapting to these changes is complex and requires consensus within the museum, as a scientific institution, on the understanding of these phenomena: the way we look at objects changes over time, allowing us to discover them in all their facets.³⁵³ However, Daniel Soulié cautions with an example: while the museum's social commitment is legitimate, and while it is necessary to address the issue of provenance and the thorny question of restitution, we must be careful not to go too far, as in the case of the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin, which ended up no longer displaying any objects.

Museum commitments to societal issues through exhibitions or the redesign of labels, for example, if chosen by museum management and curators, have a direct influence on the work of mediators. The latter will have to adapt their discourse, their approaches and respond to the increasingly numerous questions from visitors on the most sensitive subjects.³⁵⁵ This adaptation of the mediator's discourse is most often the result of a process of co-construction with the people directly concerned by the subject in question, according to the principle "Nothing

about us without us," and the discourse can no longer be solely institutional. The museum, as a sounding board, thus opens its space to minority communities³⁵⁶ through associations. The *Musée d'Aquitaine* collaborates with the Queer Code association and *Girofard* to design mediation activities, the *Centre Pompidou* with the Big Tata collective, and the *Musée d'histoire de Lyon* (History Museum) with BRRRazero on LGBTQIA+ archival issues.³⁵⁷ While exhibitions on LGBTQIA+ heritage have been multiplying over the past five years, either by adopting a historical angle, by touching on the theme of the exhibition, or by featuring iconic figures from the queer community, the *Centre Pompidou* seems to have been the first to engage with gender issues in 2009 with the exhibition *elles@centrepompidou*.

The exhibitions therefore echo the themes at the heart of current affairs, essential subjects that raise profound societal issues such as decolonisation, restitution, the status of women, the recognition of minority groups, climate change and sustainable development, and questions around identity and gender.

The subjects may also be inspired by lighter news headlines, such as the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024. Once again, the mediation facilities have adapted to this theme by offering, in addition to a multitude of exhibitions on sport and its representations, highly original and even surprising activities, which are excellent communication tools. The Louvre Museum has thus "set its sights on the Paris 2024 Games."³⁵⁸ From April 24 to May 31, 2024, the Louvre offered a sporting experience, *Run at the Louvre*, designed by choreographer and dancer Mehdi Kerkouche: for one hour, at 8 a.m., before the museum opened, sports coaches guided participants through the museum for four ten-minute sessions of physical activity: yoga, dancehall, cardio, and disco. These sessions, although expensive (€38 full price), were a great success. The admission ticket also allowed visitors to visit the exhibition *L'Olympisme. Une invention moderne, un héritage antique* (Olympism: A Modern Invention, an Ancient Legacy!) free of charge and to visit all the collections throughout the day.

This type of initiative allows visitors to discover the collections in a different way, but the mediator is completely absent from the activity. It is therefore an experience in which the transmission of knowledge no longer has a place.

³⁵³ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

³⁵⁴ On the question of restitutions: museums censor themselves by not illustrating certain works to avoid controversy and diplomatic incidents. This was the case for a long time, as Daniel Soulié points out like with the MNR - Musées Nationaux Récupération (National museums recuperation) entrusted with the 2,200 works of art looted and not returned after WWII.

³⁵⁵ Anne Krebs points out that curators are also questioned directly by visitors. Providing appropriate responses is the subject of reflection and training within the Louvre

³⁵⁶ This term is now preferred to "minorities".

³⁵⁷ MAGRO Sébastien, *Comment les musées s'emparentent des identités LGBT*, Le Quotidien de l'Art, issue no. 2860, 27 June 2024.

³⁵⁸ [Louvre Museum website](#)



*La Forêt, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Louvre Museum, Paris
(Source: photograph by Sylvie Savare, November 23, 2022)*

Multidisciplinarity: towards new interpretations of objects

Museums are also increasingly opening their doors to other artistic and scientific disciplines in order to attract new audiences and spark the curiosity and interest of loyal visitors. As a result, dance performances are becoming more common: Boris Charmatz at the Louvre in 2016, and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, also at the Louvre, in the fall of 2022, who presented the show *Forêt*, a “museum project for eleven dancers.” Outside the museum’s opening hours, this show offered visitors a chance to wander through the heart of the Louvre, notably in the *Grande Galerie* and the *Salle des États*, following the dancers as they stopped in front of certain works to interpret them through movement and music. In these exceptional visiting conditions, far from the daily crowds, the spectator became a visitor, with the dancer providing a perspective, a key to interpretation, playing on the expression of emotion.³⁵⁹

Anne-Sophie Grassin points out that the Musée d’art contemporain du *Val de Marne* (MAC VAL) also calls on contemporary dancers, “but with mediation objectives” established in advance with the mediation team, so it is a co-creation.

³⁵⁹ [Louvre Museum website](#)

During these events, no traditional accompaniment is offered to the audience, but they cannot be considered mere spectators of a live performance. The dancer acts as a mediator, using their body as a tool for mediation and interpretation of the object. Visitors are free to linger over the museum’s works during this danced promenade.

Young audiences can also benefit from the multidisciplinary nature of museums. For example, in 2021, the Nantes Museum of Fine Arts designed a week-long programme for fifth-grade students on the theme of “Experiencing dance at the museum.”³⁶⁰ Introductory workshops to contemporary dance were held in the auditorium with professional dancers, but also with mediators who took part in the exercises with the children, and then in the museum’s galleries. At the same time, the pupils took part in themed guided tours of the collections, with a particular focus on works depicting dancers and a deeper attention to feelings and emotional reception. The transmission of knowledge, even though a new lens, was thus ensured. A true collaborative effort between dancers and mediators, this initiative allowed the children to see the collections in a new light and develop their artistic sensibilities.

The opening of museums to different means of artistic expression, intended to foster a fruitful dialogue between the works and another artistic or scientific discipline, demonstrates that museums are in tune with the times. The museum is no longer a temple, outside of time and the world; it lives in step with the times and is a committed player. There is a renewed focus on visitors’ interest in seeking new experiences. This trend is growing considerably, but leaves little room for professional mediators.

3. Contemplative mediation focused on visitor well-being

A third avenue for the development of mediation, which is predominant today, is organized around the individual, in recognition of their individuality,³⁶¹ by investing in new areas: personal development, participation, sensory mediation, sensorial mediation, and museum therapy. Marie-Clarté O’Neill points out that this shift, which took place in the 1970s and placed the visitor at the centre of the museum’s concerns, is accelerating today. However, this shift, which favours the public at the expense of collections, “is not necessarily justified”: “there are people, at certain times in their lives, who need to be open to the wonders of

³⁶⁰ [Musée des arts de Nantes website](#)

³⁶¹ BOUTAUD Anne-Sophie, *La France de 2019: plus critique et plus altruiste*, results of the survey *La France des valeurs*, as part of the European Values Study, 2019, CNRS journal, highlighting, among other things, the desire for personal fulfilment and the rise in values linked to individualisation, and in parallel and almost paradoxically, a surge in altruism.

the world.” Certain forms of mediation focused on well-being, by encouraging contemplation, seem to be able to reconcile the two approaches (priority to the visitor/priority to the collections): contemplating a work in depth, if it provides sensory pleasure and a feeling of well-being, it also enriches their knowledge of the object in a different way. Anne-Sophie Grassin therefore encourages the diversification of contemplation-based visit formats at MAC VAL, giving a voice to various specialists alongside art historians.

Several initiatives promote visitor well-being: creative workshops, participatory approaches, sensory mediation, sensorial mediation (one of the categories of sensory mediation) and, finally, museum therapy and art therapy.

Creative workshops and personal development

During the 1970s, sociocultural activities focused on the individual with a view to integrating them into the community and promoting social cohesion by encouraging their active participation.³⁶²

Since the 1990s, there has been a shift towards a marked focus on personal development, individual well-being, health, and the exploration of visitors’ sensations and feelings. These approaches are based on the fundamental contributions of cognitive science, neuroscience, and educational innovations.

This holistic approach to visitors involves the implementation of various mediation measures, in particular workshops for adults, a time for oneself. Workshops for children, such as those developed by the *Musée en Herbe* in 1975, workshops offered in youth and cultural centres, and workshops held in science museums have served as sources of inspiration.

The first workshops for adults were set up in 1977 at the *Union centrale des Arts décoratifs*. With the inauguration of the pyramid in 1989, the Louvre Museum launched creative workshops for adults. Today, there is a wide range of workshops on offer, although it remains much smaller than that aimed at young people and much smaller than a few years ago, as Daniel Soulié points out.

Over the past fifteen years or so, *Do It Yourself* workshops have appeared. Since 2009, FabLabs, a contraction of *fabrication laboratory* or *makerspaces*, have been developing. These are creative workshops that use new technologies (3D printers, lasers, scanners, milling machines, digital embroidery machines, etc.). The mediator takes a back seat and may even be absent; knowledge is then built up through interaction between

users. The mediator can also suggest using these digital tools as part of a workshop linked to an exhibition, such as the exhibition *Mondes flottants, du Japonisme à l’art contemporain*³⁶³ (Floating Worlds, from Japonism to Contemporary Art) at *Les Franciscaïnes* in Deauville, where a digital painting workshop on the theme of Japonisme is offered. In December 2014, the Louvre Museum inaugurated a temporary FabLab for the launch of *#tous à l’œuvre* (#everyone to the artwork).³⁶⁴

Since 2018, these workshops have found an unexpected and surprising extension in North America, with disciplines such as yoga, shiatsu, do-in-shiatsu, qi gong, and Pilates entering the museum. The workshop takes place in two stages: a presentation of a few works followed by an immersive session among the works. The presentation of the works is not necessarily led by a mediator; the external contributor, a teacher in one of these disciplines linking body and mind, is usually responsible for this brief mediation work in front of the works. Anne-Sophie Grassin and Gaëlle Piton regret that, in this type of activity, the object takes a back seat, even if the experience can be interesting. At the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Rennes and the *Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet*, Daniel Soulié noticed that no link was made with the collections during these sessions. While not opposed to them, he questions their relevance.³⁶⁵ Finally, in terms of the conservation of the works, such activities can raise some concerns: risk of damage to the objects, falls, harmful fumes, etc.

While this trend contributes to individual well-being, it also and above all helps to attract new audiences and build loyalty. The Guimet National Museum of Asian Arts in Paris, the *Louvre-Lens*, *Les Abattoirs* in Toulouse, the Fabre Museum in Montpellier, the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, the Bonnard Museum in Le Cannet and many others have followed this trend towards the well-being of all. In spring 2018, the *Centre Pompidou* went one step further by offering *Art Detox* mornings one Sunday a month to revitalize traditional mediation, with *Un dimanche, une œuvre* (One Sunday, One Artwork) conferences using a multi-sensory approach. The morning began with a do-in-shiatsu session, allowing participants to discover the masterpieces through movement, followed by a snack prepared and presented by Alain Passard, the three-star chef of *L’Arpège*. The session ended with a lecture by an art historian, critic, or artist. In 2019/2020, the *Art Detox* mornings consisted of a meditative and relaxing practice (reiki) followed by an olfactory reinterpretation of the works and finally a lecture with an art historian. This is in line with the philosophy behind the creation of the Centre: the museum as a place of life, sharing, and innovation.

The beginnings of this refocusing on the individual were initiated with participatory approaches, which are increasingly popular today and involve visitors in the life of the museum.

³⁶² George Hein’s constructivist approach, taken up by Eileen Hooper Greenhill, inverted pedagogy, inclusive pedagogy, empowerment, mind maps and heuristics and according to 7 fundamental educational principles: importance of the 0/5 years period, social relations, benevolence, attention, commitment, consolidation, immediate feedback.

³⁶³ From 22 June to 22 September 2024.

³⁶⁴ Ministry of culture and communication website

³⁶⁵ Daniel Soulié notes that at the *Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet*, the session even takes place in an adjoining room, far from the collections.

Participatory approaches

Beyond creative workshops and building on the principles that guided the creation of ecomuseums, participatory approaches³⁶⁶ have multiplied over the last twenty years, strongly influenced by initiatives in Quebec, England, and Switzerland. They place the individual at the centre of the relationship with the museum and the object. "Participation is a means of responding (in particular) to equal access to culture and recognizing cultural rights."³⁶⁷ For some, participatory approaches contain an element of the unexpected, whereas cultural mediation involves content and results that are defined in advance.³⁶⁸ However, it seems clear that these approaches are part of the visitor experience in the museum world, complementing more traditional mediation so that visitors feel more involved, in line with the principle of "doing with, not for." For example, the exhibition *Les Flammes*, held at the *Musée d'Art Moderne* (MAM) in Paris, included a collection, described as a "participatory and evolving project": objects deposited by visitors during the exhibition were displayed in a showcase.³⁶⁹

Participatory display case in the exhibition *Les Flammes, l'âge de la céramique* (Flames, the age of ceramics), October 15-February 6, 2022, Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris (Source: photographs by Sylvie Savare, 2022)

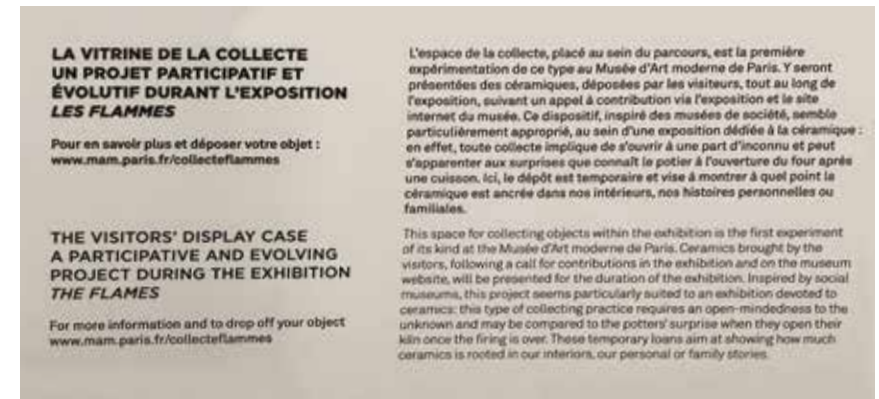


In addition to collecting objects, testimonials, and knowledge, other participatory approaches exist, such as co-designing exhibitions and displays, co-creating cultural projects, and participating in cultural mediation.

Digital technology also plays a major role in this relationship with the individual. Initially, websites offered forums for discussion. Today, participatory and contributory web practices³⁷⁰ are developing, notably at the *Centre Pompidou*, the *Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac* and the *Musée du Louvre*. The *Musée du quai Branly*, which has a presence on MySpace, Dailymotion, Flickr, and YouTube, submitted the digital catalogue *Diaspora-l'expo* in 2007 to Internet users, inviting them to "share their experiences of the African diaspora."³⁷¹

These various examples of mediation tools and devices show the essential place that the pursuit of well-being for all, considered in its entirety, has taken in museum institutions, which are gradually becoming centres of well-being, museum-cities, and museum-forums, placing the individual at the heart of their concerns.

Moreover, in recent years, new terms have emerged to describe public services/mediation, further evidence of this evolution: visitor experience management, hospitality management, education centre, and visitor experience, all of which favour a holistic approach to the visitor, whose relationship with the object and the collections is only one element. It places visitor well-being at the centre of the action and of this three-way relationship between visitor, museum, and object.



³⁶⁶ DUBOIS Marie-Dominique, *Démarches participatives, fondements et pratiques actuelles dans les institutions muséales*, In situ, 41/2019.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ MAM Paris website

³⁷⁰ VIDAL Geneviève, *La médiation numérique muséale, une renouvellement de la diffusion culturelle*, Bordeaux, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018 p.28. Crowdsourcing.

³⁷¹ Ibid., p. 38.

Sensory mediation

It is not easy to define sensory mediation. Anne-Sophie Grassin, head of visitor services, mediation, and cultural action at MAC VAL (the Val-de-Marne contemporary art museum), is also coordinator of the ICOM CECA Special Interest Group on Sensory Mediation, where she works with other mediation professionals to define the concept. Anne-Sophie Grassin emphasizes that “sensory mediation... involves an approach through the external and internal senses and/or emotions and/or the body and/or the imagination. For us, the sensory is all of this. Consequently, the senses are an integral part of the sensory dimension. But be careful, not everything that is sensory falls within the field of sensory mediation, because we defend the idea that sensory mediation should be in service of engagement with the work (otherwise it is not mediation).”³⁷² “The challenge is to be able to appeal to everything that constitutes the individual visitor, and thus enter into a holistic dimension rather than a strictly intellectual one.”³⁷³ The use of the term “sensory mediation” is recent: Anne-Sophie Grassin points out that, thanks to disability legislation, many projects appealing to the five senses had already been launched.

This new approach to mediation, mainly³⁷⁴ intended for fine arts, art, and history museums, is based on the observation of an attention crisis,³⁷⁵ more specifically in the museum world,³⁷⁶ a crisis of responsiveness to works of art. It is estimated that visitors spend 28 seconds in front of a work of art.³⁷⁷ Some began to be alarmed by this frenzy among visitors, this lack of attention³⁷⁸ and concentration, and are now campaigning for a slower pace of visiting so that people can savor and take their time. The internationally successful novel *Les yeux de Mona* by Thomas Schlessler, published in France in 2024,³⁷⁹ praises contemplation and taking time: entering a museum to see only one work and taking the time to contemplate it. The typology of visits that encourage sensory awareness is expanding.

The Slow Visit³⁸⁰

In 2009, Phil Terry, head of the consulting firm Creative Good, launched the Slow Art Day programme³⁸¹: visitors were asked to stay with an artwork for at least ten minutes, concentrate, analyze the details, and then discuss them within the group. In ten years, 1,500 experiences of this type have been conducted around the world. The aim is to focus attention on the present, to live in the moment, facing the artwork, in full sensory awareness.

In France, this movement was initiated in 2017 by Gaëlle Piton, a sophrologist and certified meditation practitioner, with the aim of linking mediation and meditation to promote the democratisation of art. She conducted these mediation/meditation experiments, “a step aside”,³⁸² which she called *Slow visite*,³⁸³ at the Paul Éluard Museum in Seine-Saint-Denis with middle school students for seven years, then with general audiences, in close collaboration with the museum’s mediator, Lucile Chastre, each according to their skills. The strength and originality of this innovation lies in this co-construction, which nourishes the practice of each participant. The museum mediation offered by the mediator is developed based on the visitors’ feelings that emerge through the meditation guided by the sophrologist. Gaëlle Piton now offers slow visits for all audiences, including families, in other museums.

This type of visit makes art accessible to everyone because it involves the body and allows even the most knowledgeable audience to see the object in a new light. For Gaëlle Piton, the aim of slow visits is to give the observer freedom to talk about art, equip them to see that they already have this freedom, and reaffirm about their relationship with the works.

³⁷² Appendix C: Interview with Anne-Sophie Grassin and interview about sensory mediation with Anne-Sophie Grassin 27 January 2023. [Métis website](#)

³⁷³ Appendix C: Interview with Anne-Sophie Grassin. Anne-Sophie Grassin bases her research on Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences.

³⁷⁴ Gaëlle Piton argues that slow visits can be adapted to any type of object.

³⁷⁵ Theorised by Yves Citton, as Anne-Sophie Grassin points out.

³⁷⁶ Appendix A: Interview with Véronique Andersen.

³⁷⁷ Study carried out by the American Psychological Association, in 2017, at the Art Institute of Chicago; the same duration was found at the MET in New York in 2001.

³⁷⁸ On 23 and 24 March 2024, the MAC VAL proposed the [Festival of Attentions](#), a reflection on an unconstrained relationship with time, on attention to the world, to oneself and to others through artworks.

³⁷⁹ Thomas Schlessler, *Les yeux de Mona*, Paris, Éditions Albin Michel, 2024.

³⁸⁰ Appendix G: Interview with Gaëlle Piton.

³⁸¹ [Slow Art Day website](#).

³⁸² PITON Gaëlle, *Et si l’on faisait un pas de côté ?* Paris, Éditions Leduc, 2022.

³⁸³ Gaëlle Piton has chosen to avoid registering the term ‘slow visit’ in order to protect it from being misused by other people. She reminds ... mediator.

Hypnosis at the museum

Since 2022, the Cluny Museum has been offering, for the first time in France, guided tours under hypnosis for adults, led by Juliette Verga Laliberté, a master practitioner in hypnosis. These 45-minute tours, called *Cluny tranquille* (quiet Cluny), are based on a sensory approach “where attention is focused entirely on the works. These timeless moments offer an opportunity to forge a relationship with the works, but also to listen to oneself. The hypnotic state allows more direct access to the imagination and a subtle connection with the external senses (the five senses) and internal senses (balance, perception of temperature, perception of the body’s position in space, perception of all sensations).³⁸⁴ Anne-Sophie Grassin points out that surveys of visitors have been conducted at the Cluny Museum-National Museum of the Middle Ages on sensory mediation. They revealed that this holistic approach to visitors helped develop several skills: “developing concentration, increasing enjoyment of the artwork, allowing for greater autonomy and, in short, seeing the museum in a different light.”³⁸⁵

The *Cérémonie du regard* (Ceremony of Looking)³⁸⁶

Other forms of mediation focused on attention, mindful visiting, and the use of the body are offered in museums such as the MAC VAL, again under the impetus of Anne-Sophie Grassin. Véronique Andersen regularly offers a tour at the MAC VAL based on a protocol she developed after many years of experience in museum mediation, called the *Cérémonie du regard* (Ceremony of Looking). After a period of relaxation and meditation, the group (of about fifteen people) is led to a work of art. Véronique Andersen stands behind the visitors. Without knowing the name or title of the work, visitors are invited to look at the painting in silence, moving closer, stepping back, positioning themselves to the side, directing their gaze from bottom to top, then from left to right. The whole body is engaged and becomes “an active element of contemplation.” Then comes a time for participants to share their feelings. Finally, Véronique Andersen provides some scientific information about the work, so the cognitive elements come last, leaving room for emotion and feeling. Here again, the long time spent in front of a single work (thirty minutes) encourages the discovery of details, deeper reflection, and an attempt to interpret the work that a distracted or overly quick glance would never have allowed.

³⁸⁴ [Cluny museum website](#)

³⁸⁵ Interview in Mêtis, *op. cit.*

³⁸⁶ Appendix A: Interview with Véronique Andersen.

Sensory awakening

At the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, Isabelle Martinez offers visitors an introduction to wutao and sensorial awakening for a more sensory approach to the works. Isabelle Martinez defines herself as a museum wellness designer. During the visit, a relaxation period is offered, after which Isabelle Martinez actively guides participants in focusing their attention on the works without giving scientific explanations, but punctuating her comments with relaxation, stretching, and breathing exercises.

The risk with such sensory mediation proposals, which remain very marginal in programme ming, is that they attract people to museums who have no scientific training or training in museum mediation and who would replace the mediator. At trade shows dedicated to the museum field, there is a growing number of companies offering this type of mediation to guide the public towards deeper contemplation, raising questions about the quality of the scientific information provided, when it exists. Are we not moving away from one of the essential objectives of museum education, which is the transmission of knowledge, in favour of well-being? Anne-Sophie Grassin points out that “sensory mediation is carried out by humans, for humans, and, when activated in a highly subjective and specific way, enhances scientific information, and therefore knowledge, with a form of mediation that starts with the work, leads to an experience, and returns to the work. The sensory is the means, but the goal or purpose is the work, the discovery of the work.”

Finally, these visits, which involve external contributors, are costly and sometimes unprofitable, as Corinne Héreau of the *Musée en Herbe* points out.

Sensorial mediation

Mediation is increasingly taking into account the individual as a whole by appealing to all the senses. Sensorial mediation, which is part of sensory mediation, has been growing rapidly since the late 2000s. In this desire for self-awareness and the pursuit of well-being, in a conception of the museum as a “centre for well-being,” sensorial mediation has a place of choice. It starts from the observation that sight is not the only sense that can be engaged during a visit. Touch, hearing, smell, and even taste can also be used to provide a comprehensive understanding of the work through holistic stimulation of the visitor, in order to give meaning and evoke emotions. Stimulating multiple senses arouses curiosity, activates the desire to learn and understand, and promotes memory retention. The *Musée du Saut du Tarn* in Saint-Juéry (Tarn)³⁸⁷ seems to have been a pioneer in sensorial mediation.³⁸⁸ In 2008, this museum offered a museography based entirely on the senses for the *Traverse sensorielle* exhibition.

³⁸⁷ [Museum site](#). The museum is located in the heart of a former metallurgical site and traces two centuries of industrial and social adventure.

³⁸⁸ *Le Quotidien de l'art*, SITEM edition, April 2024, p. 13.

Sight has always been the primary focus in museums, but now mediation tools designed for everyone, not just visitors with disabilities, are being installed in collections and exhibitions to engage the senses of smell, hearing, touch, and even taste.

Touch is a sense that is stimulated during workshops, but also during hands-on activities, particularly in science and architecture museums, which often offer free-access construction games in addition to workshops to help visitors understand how certain architectural elements are built. The *Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine* has provided a game with wooden pieces that can be used to build a vault to understand the function of the keystone.

The sound dimension remains the most used.³⁸⁹ Logically, museums displaying musical instruments, such as music museums and ethnographic museums, were the first to offer music listening devices.³⁹⁰ These devices, which are essential complementary elements, are most often individual headphones. The usefulness, purpose, and very form of the instrument can be understood through the sounds it emits; the sound dimension is an integral part of the object. Sound devices are now offered to support mediation, helping to contextualize the object and aid its interpretation in many museums, including fine arts museums. In the Brancusi exhibition (March 27 to July 1, 2024) at the *Centre Pompidou*, for example, a sound shower, a directional loudspeaker, has been installed in front of the artist's record sleeves, allowing visitors to better understand his tastes and artistic universe and providing a transdisciplinary context for his creations. The *Musée des Confluences* (Lyon) goes even further in its use of sound devices by deciding to do without images in its *Cabanes à histoires* (story huts) which are outdoor sound devices that offer a different way of experiencing the museum's collections. These huts tell a short story lasting six to eight minutes about emblematic objects from the museum.

This type of approach radically rethinks the relationship with the exhibit and hopes to pique the curiosity of visitors/listeners. Olfactory devices are also appearing in museums and encourage visitor engagement by creating a "kind of reality effect."³⁹¹

The *Institut du monde arabe* (Arab World Institute) offered this in its 2016 exhibition *Osiris, mystères engloutis d'Égypte* (Osiris, Mystery of the Sunken Egypt). The experience continued with the exhibition *Parfums d'Orient* (Perfumes of the Orient) (September 26, 2023 – March 17, 2024), which was punctuated by innovative olfactory devices. Whether through olfactory ambiance, scented artworks,

or educational and sensorial devices, the sense of smell was constantly engaged, supporting and complementing the written materials and the guide's commentary during guided tours. Thanks to technological advances, particularly artificial intelligence,³⁹² it will become increasingly easy to recreate smells.

Taste, meanwhile, is exploited, for example, during tasting tours offered in wine museums, notably at the *Cité du Vin* in Bordeaux, which offers a sensorial tasting tour and tasting workshops.³⁹³ The *Musée de Montmartre* (Paris) offers a tour of the vineyards followed by a tasting and free admission to the museum.³⁹⁴ More surprisingly, art museums are taking up the idea: the Lambinet Museum (Versailles) offers Art and Wine tasting tours, which allow visitors to discover, in the evening, in a calm atmosphere, "five local wines and five key works during a sensorial tour of the Lambinet Museum in the company of oenologist Olivier Delorme and a member of the museum team."³⁹⁵ The Fabre Museum in Montpellier organizes a monthly wine tour "combining wine and art," "a dual-voice tour with a winemaker from the Languedoc Grés de Montpellier AOC who reveals all the secrets of the works and the customs of the time in terms of wine."³⁹⁶

Finally, the *Palais de Tokyo* launched a few totally unexpected experiments that put the body in the spotlight in 2018: the nude tours³⁹⁷ in collaboration with the *Association des naturistes de Paris*. The *Musée Maillol* (Paris) offered nude tours for the exhibition *Hyperréalisme. Ceci n'est pas un corps* (Hyperrealism. This is not a body) from 8 September 2022 to 5 March 2023 and is planning to repeat the experience for the *Elliott Erwitt retrospective* (23 March to 15 August 2023). Another way of putting the body into play.

Museotherapy or the therapeutic virtues of art

Leslie Labbé³⁹⁸ explains the difference between museotherapy and art therapy. Museotherapy consists of "therapeutic support using the museum environment. The difference with art therapy, because that's often how we approach it, is that

³⁹² *Odeuropa* project launched and funded by the European Union on safeguarding olfactory heritage. The idea of olfactory heritage was born in Japan in 2001. Article by LEHALLE Evelyne above mentioned

³⁹³ *Cité du vin* website, Bordeaux, Sensory tasting tour via sensoria, from 26 March to 3 November 2024. *Cité du vin*

³⁹⁴ An engraved glass is even offered ! *Musée de Montmartre* website

³⁹⁵ *Musée Lambinet, Versailles*, website

³⁹⁶ *Website of the Musée Fabre, Montpellier*.

³⁹⁷ VIENNE Martin, *Tous nus au Palais de Tokyo, Beaux-Arts*, 11 May 2018, 7000 applications received for 160 places. Visitors are required to be naked.

³⁹⁸ LABBÉ Leslie, *La muséothérapie, Analyse des potentiels thérapeutiques du musée*, *Les Cahiers d'études de l'Observatoire de l'OCIM*, 2021.

³⁸⁹ Sound can also be an exhibition in itself.

³⁹⁰ SCÉLLES Julie, *Les dispositifs d'écoute dans les lieux d'exposition*, 16 March 2015. *Dispositifs d'écoute*

³⁹¹ LEHALLE Evelyne, *Sentir les parfums des tableaux*, *Nouveau Tourisme Culturel*, 2023.

we're not necessarily going to have an artistic practice, but we're going to use the museum with all its resources, its spaces, its characteristics, to have a therapeutic approach and support care."³⁹⁹

The first art therapy projects were carried out in the United Kingdom as early as 1944,⁴⁰⁰ followed by the United States and Canada. The first experiments in museum therapy took place in the 1980s and 1990s, again in English-speaking countries. Museum therapy did not make its entry into French museums until much later.

In 2016, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, then directed by Nathalie Bondil⁴⁰¹ who forged the concept of museum therapy, opened a space dedicated to art therapy and education, the *Atelier International d'éducation et d'art-thérapie* (International workshop for education and art-therapy).

Boosted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which made museums aware of the role they could play in promoting health and well-being, museum therapy is now booming. Museums are now one of the recognised non-medical treatments for certain pathologies.

"Faced with a work of art that we appreciate, our brain secretes multiple beneficial neurotransmitters: dopamine, involved in movement and vitality, serotonin, often called the 'happiness hormone', and endogenous morphine, which soothes pain and reduces anxiety," explains neurologist Pierre Lemarquis⁴⁰², chairman of the association *L'Invitation à la beauté* (Beauty invitation). This kind of contemplative care is likely to make people want to get better. In a report published in 2019, the WHO⁴⁰³ confirms that visiting cultural venues is a source of well-being (*care*)⁴⁰⁴ and even healing (*cure*).

In 2018, there were around a hundred supervised practice projects aimed at specific audiences suffering from illnesses. These projects are run in partnership with medical and social services, based on a typology of traditional activities and strongly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon model: "adapted visits and workshops, packs to accompany the activities carried out outside the centre, conversational mediation, etc."⁴⁰⁵ In 2008, the *Palais des Beaux-Arts* (PBA) in Lille was a pioneer in welcoming groups of autistic people to artistic practice workshops and to discover works of art, by "providing adapted activity content, spaces and welcome."⁴⁰⁶

³⁹⁹ DELPIERRE Margot, *Muséothérapie ... France Culture*, January 2023.

⁴⁰⁰ NAULEAU Méliissa, *Pratiques muséales à vocation thérapeutiques. Musée + Art-thérapie = Muséothérapie*, Lettre de l'OCIM, n°175, 2018, . Projects carried out "with the help of the painter Adrian Hill (1895-1977), recognised as one of the founders of art therapy.

⁴⁰¹ Art historian, currently director of the museum at the *Institut du Monde Arabe*.

⁴⁰² LEMARQUIS Pierre, *L'Art qui guérit*, Paris, Hazan, 2020.

⁴⁰³ WHO and UN websites

⁴⁰⁴ The concept of *care* was first developed in the social sciences around twenty years ago.

⁴⁰⁵ NAULEAU Méliissa, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰⁶ PBA Lille website.

In 2014, the PBA, the Dallas Museum of Art and the *Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal*, with the support of the FRAME (French American Museum Exchange) network,⁴⁰⁷ decided to pool their expertise, which led to the drafting of a downloadable museum guide for welcoming autistic people.⁴⁰⁸

In 2014, inspired by the *Meet me* programme at MoMA (New York), the *Musée de la Musique* (Paris) set up the *Au rythme du souvenir* (al ritmo de la memoria) project for people with Alzheimer's disease, with two cycles of experimental visits. Drawing on this experience and wishing to share it, the museum has developed a working methodology that can be consulted and downloaded.⁴⁰⁹ The CALMAN project in Nice, designed in 2015 for people with Alzheimer's disease, followed suit.⁴¹⁰

Many museums now offer guided tours for people with Alzheimer's and their carers. Mediators do not always receive the appropriate training to deal with visitors suffering from neurodegenerative diseases or other neurotypes such as autism. Some of them say that they are sometimes at a loss when it comes to dealing with this type of public and their reactions, and that it is difficult to mediate for two types of public at the same time: those accompanying them and those with conditions requiring adapted support.

Museums are committed to supporting the needs associated with other conditions, such as addiction and anorexia nervosa.

In 2015, the *Musée d'Aquitaine* (Bordeaux) launched a hospital workshop project for people receiving treatment for anorexia nervosa.⁴¹¹

The *Louvre-Lens* has launched a *Louvre-Lens-Thérapie* programme where, at each session (twice a month), led by an art therapist and a cultural mediator, the works of art in the museum or the park "provide a pretext for contemplation and introspection".⁴¹²

The *Cité des sciences et de l'industrie* even offers individual meetings with a health professional.⁴¹³

Finally, to support the museum in its new role of caring for visitor-patients, since

⁴⁰⁷ FRAME works for equal access to art for all audiences.

⁴⁰⁸ PBA website.

⁴⁰⁹ Ministry of Culture website

⁴¹⁰ Ministry of culture website/Alzheimer

⁴¹¹ In 2006, this museum produced an exhibition entitled *Ados à corps perdu* on the theme of anorexia nervosa as part of the *Mémoires du corps* project, making the museum a cultural mediator at the heart of key health issues. The exhibition was presented at the International Museum of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (Geneva) from 22 June 2016 to 8 January 2017.

⁴¹² Louvre Lens website

⁴¹³ Cité des sciences website

⁴¹⁴ An "idiocy" for Cécilia de Varine.

2022 France has been offering museum prescriptions:⁴¹⁴ the doctor prescribes a visit to the museum. Some museums welcome these patient-visitors free of charge, and sometimes the visits are funded by patient associations. As with a sensory visit, the experience will be based on the expression of feelings and emotions. The *MO.CO, espace Montpellier contemporain* (Montpellier contemporary space), was a forerunner when it launched the pilot project *L'Art sur ordonnance* (Art by prescription) in 2022, on the initiative of Professor Philippe Courtet, head of psychiatric emergencies at Montpellier University Hospital, for people who had experienced depressive crises but were not hospitalised. This is complementary care to the treatment of depression. Patients can visit the exhibition and take part in hands-on workshops, such as drawing, led by an artist. As studies using neuroimaging have shown, contemplating works of art stimulates brain regions and activates the reward system associated with pleasure. It also enables patients to combat loneliness by joining a group of patient-visitors, to rediscover a sense of meaning, and to develop an artistic sensibility or even new skills.

The *Palais des Beaux-Arts* in Lille employs a full-time art therapist who offers one hundred and forty sessions a year, as prescribed by the museum, for patients referred by the various hospital departments in Lille,⁴¹⁵ initiatives made permanent with the signing of an agreement in September 2023. The sessions last two hours and begin with a visit to the collections, where the works are carefully selected. The art therapist then invites the visitor-patients to express their feelings and observe. The art workshop extends the visit.

Attention to well-being and personal development is a natural extension of the museum's outreach activities, which are also carried out beyond the museum walls, with marginalized visitors, in hospitals, prisons and so on.

In this way, the mediator sees health professionals, psychotherapists, art therapists or professionals from sectors linked to well-being such as sophrology, meditation or relaxation come into the museum. Most of the time, the emphasis is on working together, but some people do not require the presence of a cultural mediator.

Very few cultural mediation courses take an interest in museotherapy. However, since 2021, the *École du Louvre* (Master 1) and the *Institut National du Patrimoine* have been offering a seminar in museum therapy led by Nathalie Bondil.

On the other hand, art therapy courses, based on courses in psychology and open to all, sometimes even without pre-requisites, are on the rise. Since the start of the 2023 academic year, Claude-Bernard-Lyon-1 University has offered a university diploma in *Cultural Prescription: Arts and Health*, aimed exclusively at health-care professionals.

⁴¹⁵ In particular, medically assisted reproduction, Alzheimer's patients, cancer patients, addiction patients and child psychiatry patients.

The majority⁴¹⁶ of these museum practices, which aim to enhance the visitor's well-being and even health, are based on the contemplation of the object, allowing for a deeper understanding and a different view of the object, using all the senses and the body. All these practices, even those that neglect interpretation and the transmission of knowledge, promote familiarity with the museum institution and enable new audiences to be reached.

This holistic approach to the visitor is undergoing considerable development, but there is still very little that is being offered. Anne-Sophie Grassin, Gaëlle Piton and Anne Krebs point out that these tours are complementary to other types of visits, not a substitute for them.

As well as considering the visitor's well-being, the economic rationale remains a crucial issue for museums, which also see the visitor as a customer to be seduced.

4. Consumer mediation focused on the visitor-customer

As part of an economic and financial rationale that takes into account, in particular, the drop in subsidies granted to national museums since 2012 (excluding exceptional aid linked to the Covid-19 pandemic),⁴¹⁷ museum institutions are developing strategies to increase their own resources. In addition to patronage, donations and bequests, and participatory funding for the acquisition of artworks, the development of the museum's facilities and ticket sales are two major ways of increasing resources.

In 2017, venue development, which includes the rental or concession of spaces (shops, restaurants, receptions, seminars, etc.), brought in €40 million for national museums.⁴¹⁸ Most museums now have a shop, a restaurant and a performance space, such as an auditorium.

The museum is becoming a real place to live, a museum-city whose appeal can be enhanced by a bookshop, a garden, etc. Visitors become customers, consumers of the spaces and activities available to them, without necessarily having to visit the permanent collections or exhibitions.

⁴¹⁶ With the reservations made in this chapter concerning certain practices.

⁴¹⁷ Exceptional support of €234 million to assist public establishments as part of France relance, a total budget of €4.083 billion (excluding public broadcasting), i.e. an increase of +7.5% compared to the initial finance law for 2021, source: Ministry of Culture and Communication website.

⁴¹⁸ *Vie publique website, Musées nationaux : quelle stratégie de financement ?* (National museums: what funding strategy?) published on 20 November 2018.

Even before the Covid-19 crisis,⁴¹⁹ museums were trying to attract French visitors, who were sometimes intimidated by museums and reluctant to step through the doors. To win back foreign visitors, and to persuade online visitors to actually go to the museum, museums are also trying to be fun, spectacular and innovative.

Games and entertainment

The playful vein, which is now also being exploited for adults, is embodied in activities such as escape games. These escape games first appeared in French history museums in 2016, then in science museums in 2017 and art museums in 2018, in order to “make the visit a more interactive experience (visitors are equipped with iPads) and appeal to young people ... a new arty leisure activity”.⁴²⁰ This was the case at the Louvre with the *Project Exodus-Les couloirs du temps* in 2018. Treasure hunts and investigations are also very popular, as was the case for the opening of the exhibition *La Fabrique du luxe* at the *Musée Cognacq-Jay* (Paris) “by candlelight with musicians in baroque costumes”.⁴²¹ These games offer a different way of discovering the collections, drawing visitors’ attention to specific details in the works: “it’s all about seeing and observing”.

Games are a way of reaching a public that is less familiar with museums. However, while some games provide a genuine contribution of scientific knowledge about the collections and the works, others remain simple entertainment.

Visits using live performances are also fun and entertaining. Over the last ten years or so, these theatrical, singing and dancing tours have become increasingly popular. These tours, led by actors, singers and dancers, allow visitors to discover the collections in a light-hearted and entertaining way, while at the same time imparting scientific, historical and aesthetic knowledge about the works and touching visitors’ sensibilities.

The spectacular and the immersive

Finally, following the example of spectacular museum architecture, one of the avenues of mediation is tending towards the spectacular in the exhibition, where the entire exhibition acts as a mediator.⁴²² Immersive exhibitions, heirs to panoramas and dioramas, provide an eloquent example of this new trend. We are

witnessing a veritable “immersive art fever”.⁴²³ This concept of total immersion originated in 1976, when “Albert Plécy founded a digital art centre, the *Cathédrale d’images* (Image cathedrals), renamed *Carrières de Lumières* (Image quarries) in 2012 when it was taken over by *Culturespaces*”.⁴²⁴ In 2018, the *Atelier des Lumières* (Light workshop) opened in Paris. Video mapping allows visitors to be totally immersed and to discover the projected works in detail. For museum professionals, these digital art centres are not part of the museum field, but they are undeniably popular with the public⁴²⁵ and have inspired museums.

Museum institutions have opened their doors to this new process of total immersion, sound and image, which is still inaccessible to people with visual impairments, as Bertrand Verine points out. The first museum event was the exhibition by Japanese artist collective TeamLab, specialists in immersive digital art, at the *Grande Halle de la Villette* in Paris *Au-delà des limites* (Beyond the limits) from 15 May to 9 September 2018. This was a “series of interactive and immersive installations in which visitors were surrounded by 360° images that changed with their movements”.⁴²⁶

Museum professionals have added meaning to this technology, and the immersive process has also become a mediation tool, as illustrated by *Expo Pompéi* at the *Grand Palais*:⁴²⁷ “an immersive tour takes visitors to the heart of Pompeii, from the time of its splendour to the tragedy of its destruction, through 360° projections in very high definition, sound creations and 3D reconstructions of streets and dwellings. Combining technology and archaeology, the exhibition tells the fascinating story of this city and the (re)discoveries made possible by the excavations carried out through the ages, right up to the present day”.⁴²⁸ Because of the pandemic, the exhibition had to close its doors, but the *Grand Palais* allowed visitors to enjoy a virtual visit thanks to the *Pompeii at Home* exhibition, featuring videos, virtual reality and augmented reality. Although clearly advertised as fun and spectacular, the exhibition had a real educational purpose, based on high-quality scientific content and extremely accurate 3D reconstructions.

Immersive exhibitions also appear alongside a main exhibition to add another, more entertaining or more sensory dimension to the exhibition. For example, during the *Van Gogh at Auvers-sur-Oise* exhibition, the *Musée d’Orsay* called on the start-up LucidRealities to create an immersive exhibition, a virtual reality experience accessible with the purchase of an additional ticket. This experience intro-

⁴¹⁹ BINDE Joséphine, *la fièvre de l’art immersif* (Immersive art fever), *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, October 2019.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*: the Gustave Klimt exhibition attracted 1.2 million visitors from 13 April to 6 January 2019.

⁴²⁶ *Club innovation website*

⁴²⁷ From 1 July to 29 October, 2020.

⁴²⁸ *Grand Palais website*

⁴¹⁹ 61% visitor decline in 2021 compared to the reference year 2019, *Fréquentation des musées et monuments: 2021 (presque) aussi déprimante que 2020* (Museums and monuments visits: 2021 (almost) as discouraging as 2020), *Journal des Arts*, published on 21 January 2022.

⁴²⁰ BINDE Joséphine, *Les escape games à l’assaut des musées*, *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, December 2018.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² CAILLET Élisabeth and MAIRESSE François use the term spectacularisation

duced an emotional and sensory dimension: the voice of Marguerite, Dr. Gachet's daughter, guided the visitor and, thanks to "hand-tracking, the visitor can feel the materiality of the painting, play with the colours and the brushstrokes".⁴²⁹

Curators are now using technology to show works in different ways and take visitors on a journey as part of a spectacular exhibition. This makes it possible to impart knowledge while using technology to attract a wide audience not necessarily familiar with museum institutions. Vincent Delieuvin, head curator of sixteenth-century Italian painting at the Louvre, supported the *Mona Lisa Immersive Exhibition* project⁴³⁰ for which he was scientific advisor, believing that "the *Mona Lisa*'s status as a masterpiece has distanced it from us".⁴³¹ The curator's scientific contribution added meaning to the sensory. Here, the logic of broader accessibility was added to the logic of the spectacular exhibition. Danièle Giraudy pointed out that this immersive exhibition was very expensive for visitors, and that it was impossible to meet their expectations and answer their questions.

The technologies used in these new forms of exhibition are real mediation tools. They bring together an object, or even the entire museum space, and a visitor, but in another reality, one that is also meaningful.

In addition to the undeniable and essential contribution of new technologies to the museum spectacular, scenography,⁴³² since the 1980s, has tended to occupy a growing place at the frontier between artistic creation, marketing, communication and mediation.⁴³³ If the exhibition makes sense as a mediation device, then the exhibition's resources play an active part in it: lighting and dramatisation effects, choice of colours, pedestals, choice of pathway, signage and displays all serve the narrative intended by the exhibition curator. In this sense, the scenography can be seen as part of the mediation process. The picture rails of the exhibition *The Golden Age of English Painting, from Reynolds to Turner*⁴³⁴ were painted in bright colours reminiscent of English interiors or the walls of Tate Britain, reinforcing the narrative of the exhibition and creating a unique atmosphere. Exhibitions at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* also use spectacular scenography to attract visitors and draw in audiences unfamiliar with museums. The exhibition *Thierry Mugler, Couturissime* is a remarkable example of this, combining multimedia devices, olfactory devices, sound showers, dramatisation through lighting

effects... a profusion of tools in the service of an exhibition on a visionary and prolific designer.⁴³⁵ The combination of these spectacular mediation tools was such as to contribute to the total autonomy of the visitor immersed in the artist's creative universe; human mediation became superfluous if not impossible because of the enveloping sound atmosphere.

Permanent collections are also beginning to be equipped with spectacular displays. The *Musée de la Marine*, reopened in November 2023, has focused part of its communication on immersive scenography: visitors can enter the world of the port with stacked containers serving as display cases, or a giant ship's bow housing a 360° screen, or find themselves submerged in an immense digital wave evoking the situation of shipwrecked sailors.

This fourth way of developing mediation tends towards the integration of all the elements of the museum field into a vast territory, a "mediation whole", which brings together mediation, marketing, communication, visitor policy, scenography and the very architecture of the museum, all of which create links between the institution and the visitor, the frontier between these different fields being increasingly tenuous.

Since the 1980s, a wide range of museum support services have been helping to foster the development of each individual, whether perceptual, cognitive, affective or social. On the one hand, the visitor, recognised as an individual, is perceived and understood as a whole, and all his or her senses are stimulated. On the other hand, the museum space, both physical and virtual, acts as a mediator, creating bridges between the visitor and the museum, and between the visitors themselves.

⁴²⁹ Comments by Alessandra Bogi, head of production at the start-up Lucid Realities, in *Le Quotidien de l'art*, *op. cit.*

⁴³⁰ From 10 March 2022 to 21 August 2022, *Palais de la Bourse*, Marseille.

⁴³¹ GUILLAUME Florence, ULLMANN Charlotte, *La Joconde au doigt et à l'œil*, *Beaux-Arts Magazine*, May 2022, p.38.

⁴³² Or *expographie* or *muséographie* in the *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, *op. cit.*, p. 660.

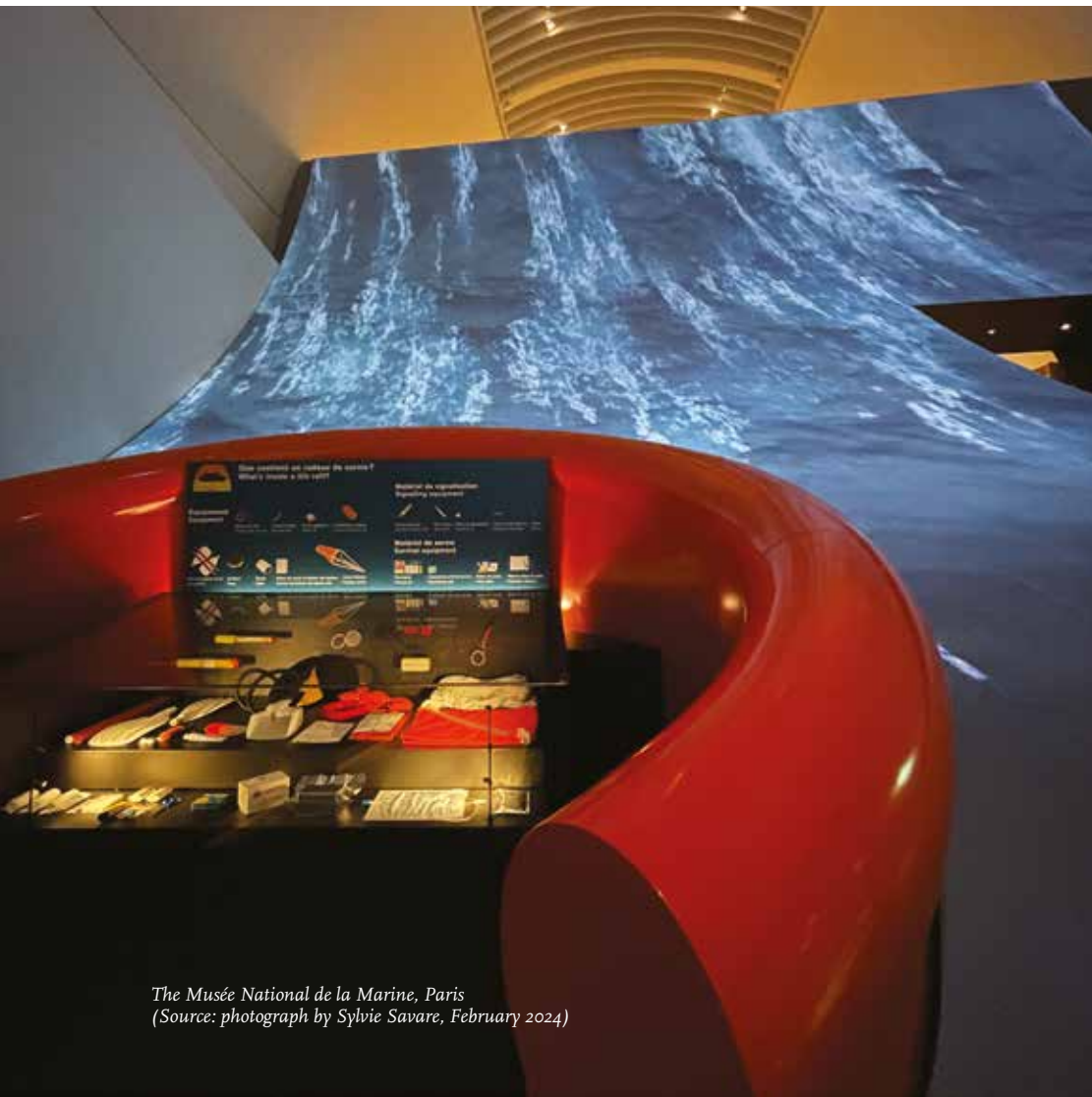
⁴³³ CAILLET Élisabeth, CHAZOTTES Patrice, SERAIN Fanny, VAYSSE François (dir.), *La médiation culturelle: cinquième roue du carrosse*, p.16-17, having scenography belonging to mediation is the topic of discussion, p. 19.

⁴³⁴ From 11 September 2019 to 16 February 2020 at the *Musée du Luxembourg*, Paris.

⁴³⁵ From 30 September 2021 to 24 April 2022 at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris.



Thierry Mugler, *Couturissime* exhibition,
30 September 2021 to 24 April 2022
at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris
(Source: [Paris Secret website](#))



The Musée National de la Marine, Paris
(Source: photograph by Sylvie Savare, February 2024)

C - ALL MEDIATORS: MEDIATOR, A PROFESSION IN DANGER?

In these various initiatives to attract new audiences and meet the requirements of universal accessibility, museum institutions find themselves in competition with other professionals who may or may not work with mediators, or with associations.

The Art Explora Foundation has a network of over two thousand volunteers in France and the UK. It offers five types of missions: the *Allo Miró* mission for elderly residents of retirement homes, a face-to-face or videoconference discussion about a work of art chosen by the volunteer, the *Un pied au musée* (A foot at the museum) scheme to support associations throughout the year and create a link with the institution, talks in hospitals about art, activities in leisure centres (reading, creative workshops, etc.), and participation in the pre-selection jury for the European Art Explora Prize.⁴³⁶ No training in cultural mediation is required to become a volunteer. During the introductory seminars, it is made clear that volunteers are not intended to replace museum mediators, but the work carried out by volunteers is very similar to that of professional cultural mediators.

Without prejudging the skills of the volunteers, we can only be surprised at the expansion of this general movement where anyone can become a mediator: children who go from being participants to becoming mediators for the duration of a session, teenagers, volunteers from associations, volunteers from societies of Friends of the Museum. Daniel Soulié points out that in many provincial museums it is these Friends societies that organise the activities, without the involvement of museum management or curators. For a long time now, the museum has been promoting the conditions for sharing its vocation and its scientific knowledge with teachers in primary and secondary schools, by offering training courses and educational packs. Nowadays, given the quantity and diversity of information available, it seems easy to improvise at playing the role of a museum mediator.

We can therefore legitimately wonder about the quality of the services offered: do they fulfil the missions of good mediation? Can we give criteria for successful mediation?

⁴³⁶ Art Explora website.

The museum professionals we interviewed did not all give the same answer to the latter question: “learning things while having a good time”,⁴³⁷ “the right word for the right person”,⁴³⁸ “say things simply, but be rigorous about the content”,⁴³⁹ “make people want to come back”.⁴⁴⁰

It could therefore be argued that if the criteria for successful mediation do not meet with consensus among professionals, it becomes complicated to establish the legitimacy of the profession and protect its practice.

Conclusion

The history of museum guidance in France since the 18th century is closely linked to the evolution of the tripartite relationship between museum, visitor and museum object, an evolution linked to the purpose assigned to guidance over the centuries.

This support, or museum education, is based on the transmission of knowledge: knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills, all of which have been prioritised in turn and are now promoted as a whole, without hierarchy and often without distinction.

This study has highlighted the fact that, in France, the public authorities play a major role in the development of support objectives. The State has been and continues to be very active in cultural and educational policy, and today this policy is highly decentralised. By defining the role and functions of the museum, in line with the country’s international and socio-economic context, the State has guided the objectives and methods of supporting the public, sometimes also endorsing practices initiated by a few remarkable personalities.

Until the 19th century, the museum object was offered up for aesthetic and intellectual contemplation, for the enjoyment of enlightened amateurs and as an object of study for young artists. The first written and oral support tools appeared.

The 19th century saw the beginning of democratisation: the aim was to educate citizens to become enlightened citizens in the spirit of the Enlightenment, with instruction and moral edification as the objectives of the museum project. Popular education, with its emphasis on democratisation, insisted on lifelong education for all, supplementing or replacing school. The museum object remained at the heart of the support. The guide, the connoisseur, often a curator or a scholar, dispensed his or her knowledge of the object to an increasingly broad, passive

⁴³⁷ Appendix D: Interview with Corinne Héreau.

⁴³⁸ Appendix H: Interview with Daniel Soulié.

⁴³⁹ Appendix E: Interview with Anne Krebs.

⁴⁴⁰ Appendix B: Interview with Danièle Giraudy.

audience, during lectures or demonstrations. The museum was seen as a museum-school. At the same time, school museums were set up in schools, the forerunners of the inextricable link between school and museum that still exists today. At the time, museum education focused on intellectual knowledge and know-how.

After the Second World War, and continuing a movement begun under the Front Populaire, cultural action and socio-cultural activities, in the hands of teachers and youth workers, focused on interpersonal skills. In a particular social context, socio-cultural activities prioritised the social integration of the individual within the community. The notion that culture should be accessible to all underpinned this approach. Muesems began to take an interest in the non-audience and in the diversity of audiences, particularly children, who until then had been excluded from museums, and, to a much lesser extent, people with disabilities. On the initiative of a few extraordinary personalities, often inspired by Anglo-Saxon models, new institutions and innovative forms of support were invented to reach out to all types of publics. The object became a simple medium, a vector of communication to encourage social cohesion. Participatory approaches, culminating in the invention of eco-museums and the creation of the *Musée en Herbe*, were the most successful expression of this. The museum became a forum-museum, open to all.

From the 1980s onwards, a new period began, that of museum mediation, understood as a means of museum education, the ultimate aim of which remains the transmission of all knowledge. Mediation places exchange at the heart of the tripartite relationship between museum/visitor/object, with the transmission of structuring knowledge as its goal. The individual, the visitor, is always at the centre of the experience, but the job of the mediator, who now receives specific training, is to provide him or her with keys to understanding, to make him or her an active visitor, to participate in his or her personal development as a whole, to educate him or her in the etymological sense of the term, to guide him or her. The segmentation of the museum support services has responded to the ever-expanding typology of the public. For some years now, museums have been adopting support services that promote universal accessibility.

As a result of the museums' desire to open to everyone and to the world, and of the acceleration of the digital transition linked, in part, to the confinements of the Covid-19 pandemic, museum mediation now offers four ways of exploring collections. The first, traditional approach places the object at the centre of the mediation process and increasingly relies on digital tools to enable in-depth discovery of the object, at the risk of preferring its virtual substitute. A second approach proposes new interpretations of the object: the museum is committed

to social and societal issues and is open to multidisciplinary. A third approach places the visitor's well-being at the heart of its activities, based on emotional and sensitive contemplation of the object. These first three approaches therefore give an essential place to the object, in different ways and for different purposes. From an economic and commercial perspective, a fourth approach sees the visitor as a customer, trying to seduce him or her, with entertainment and the spectacular as the key elements.

Today, this polymorphous form of mediation gives concrete expression to the transformation of the museum. The museum is becoming a museum-city, an inclusive and committed player, and the museum as a whole is opening up to a wide range of players and digital tools that are competing with the mediators. And yet, in the absence of fundamental and applied research into museum education, this young profession is already struggling to find legitimacy within the institution, a highly scientific world. While professionals insist on the need for human contact and physical confrontation with works of art, recent advances in artificial intelligence pose a real threat to the survival of the profession and, for

some, to the very existence of museums in the coming decades.

The transmission of knowledge remains the ultimate goal of museum education. It requires specific skills. It remains an essential mission for museums, as underlined by the choice of the theme proposed by ICOM for International Museum Day in 2024, *Education and Research*.⁴⁴¹ Let us quote Emma Nardi, President of ICOM, in her introduction to the Day:

“For me, education is culture

education is reading

education is enlightenment

education is transformation

education is dignity

education is equality

education is inclusion,

education is solidarity,

education is life!”

Bibliography

MUSEUMS

- BRESCH-BAUTIER Geneviève and FONKENELL Guillaume (eds.), *Histoire du Louvre*, Vol I, II, III Paris, Fayard, 2016.
- EIDELMAN Jacqueline (ed.), *Inventer des musées pour demain* (Inventing Museums for Tomorrow), Official Report of the 21st Century Museums Mission, Paris, *La Documentation française*.
- GIRAUDY Danièle, BOUILHET Henri, *Le Musée et la vie* (The Museum and Life), La Documentation française, 1977.
- GIRAULT Yves, RASSE Paul and VEAUTE Monique, *Les musées au prisme de la communication* (Museums through the prism of communication), Hermès 61, la Revue, 2011.
- LABOURDETTE Marie-Christine, *Les Musées de France* (Museums of France), Paris, PUF, coll. Que sais-je, 2015.
- POMIAN Krzysztof, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale, I., Du trésor au musée*, Paris, Gallimard 2020.
- POMIAN Krzysztof, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale, II. L'ancrage européen, 1789-1850*, Paris, Gallimard, 2021.
- POMIAN Krzysztof, *Le musée, une histoire mondiale, III. À la conquête du monde, 1850-2020*, Paris, Gallimard, 2022.
- POULOT Dominique, *Une histoire des musées de France XVIII^e-XX^e siècle*, Paris, La Découverte /Poche (2005), 2008.
- SCHAER Roland, *L'invention des musées* (The Invention of Museums), Paris, Découvertes Gallimard, RMN-Grand Palais Histoire, 1993, 2011.

MUSEOLOGY (general works)

- DELOCHE Bernard, *Le musée virtuel* (The Virtual Museum), *Questions actuelles* (Current Issues), Paris, PUF, 2001.
- DESVALLÉES André and MAIRESSE François, (eds.) *Dictionnaire encyclopédique de muséologie*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2011.
- GOB André, DROUGUET Noémie, *La muséologie, Histoire, développements, enjeux actuels*, 5th edition, Paris, Armand Colin, 2021.
- MAIRESSE François (ed.), *Dictionnaire de muséologie*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2022.
- MERLEAU-PONTY Claire, EZRATI Jean-Jacques, *L'exposition, théorie et pratique*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2005.
- POULOT Dominique, *Musées et muéologie* (Museums and Museology), Collection Repères, Paris, La Découverte, 2009.
- RASSE Paul, *Le musée réinventé – Culture, patrimoine, médiation* (The Museum Reinvented – Culture, Heritage, Mediation), CNRS Éditions, 2017.
- DAVALLON Jean, *L'exposition à l'œuvre, stratégies de communication et médiation symbolique* (Exhibition at Work, Communication Strategies and Symbolic Mediation). Paris, L'Harmattan Communication, 1999.

PUBLIC

CULTURAL POLICIES, EDUCATION, ANIMATION, INCLUSION

- BARRÈRE Anne, MONTOYA Nathalie (eds.) *L'éducation artistique et culturelle, Mythes et malentendus* (Cultural and artistic education. Myths and Misunderstandings), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019.
- Barrère Anne, MAIRESSE François, *L'inclusion sociale, les enjeux de la culture et de l'éducation* (Social Inclusion, the Challenges of Culture and Education), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2015.
- CAUNE Jean, *La démocratisation culturelle, une médiation à bout de souffle* (Cultural Democratisation, a Form of Mediation Running Out of Steam), Grenoble, PUG, 2006.
- CAUNE Jean, *Formes artistiques et pratiques culturelles, enjeux théoriques et politiques* (Artistic Forms and Cultural Practices: Theoretical and Political Issues), Logiques Sociales, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2018.

- GAZEAU Marie-Thérèse, *L'enfant et le musée* (Children and Museums), Les éditions ouvrières, 1974.
- JONCHERY Anne, BIRAUD Sophie (eds.) *Visiter en famille, socialisation et médiation des patrimoines* (Visiting as a family, socialization and heritage mediation), Paris, La Documentation française, 2016.
- KREBS Anne, ROBATEL Nathalie, *Démocratisation culturelle : l'intervention publique en débat* (Cultural democratisation: public intervention under debate), Paris, La Documentation française, no. 947, April 2008.
- MERLEAU-PONTY Claire, *Le jeune public au musée* (Young public and museums), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2019.
- MOULINIER Pierre, *Les politiques publiques de la culture en France* (Public politics on culture in France), Paris, PUF, coll. Que sais-je ? 8th edition 2021.
- URFALINO Philippe, *L'invention de la politique culturelle*, Paris, Pluriel, 2011.

MEDIATION AND MEDIATORS

- ABOUDRAR Bruno Nassim and MAIRESSE François, *La médiation culturelle* (Cultural mediation), Paris, PUF, coll. Que sais-je ? 2nd edition, 2021.
- ANTOINE-ANDERSEN Véronique, *Regarder une œuvre d'art et aimer ça* (To look at an artwork and enjoy it), Paris, Éditions Eyrolles, 2019.
- BORDEAUX Marie-Christine, *La médiation culturelle : des dispositifs et des modèles toujours en tension* (Cultural Mediation: Mechanisms and Models Still in Tension), L'Observatoire, no. 51, winter 2018.
- BOTTON Alain de, ARMSTRONG John, *Art et thérapie* (Art and Therapy), Paris, Phaidon, 2017.
- CAILLET Élisabeth, CHAZOTTES Patrice, SERAIN Fanny, VAYSSE François (eds.) *Médiation culturelle : cinquième roue du carrosse ?* (Cultural Mediation: Fifth Wheel on the Wagon?) Heritage and Societies, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016.
- CAILLET Élisabeth with the collaboration of EVELYNE Lehalle, *À l'approche de la médiation culturelle* (Approaching Cultural Mediation), Lyon, PUL, 1995.
- BORDEAUX Marie-Christine and CAILLET Élisabeth, *La médiation culturelle : Pratiques et enjeux théoriques* (Cultural Mediation: Practices and Theoretical Issues), Culture & Musées, Special Issue | 2013.

- CAMART Cécile, MAIRESSE François, PRÉVOST-THOMAS Cécile and VESSELY Pauline (eds.), *Les mondes de la médiation culturelle* Vol 1: *Approches de la médiation*, Vol 2: *Médiations et cultures*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2015.
- CHAUMIER Serge, MAIRESSE François, *La médiation Culturelle* (Cultural mediation), Paris, Armand Colin, 2nd edition, 2017.
- DUBOIS Marie-Dominique, *Démarches participatives : fondements et pratiques actuelles dans les institutions muséales* (Participatory Approaches: Foundations and Current Practices in Museum Institutions), In Situ, Heritage Review, No. 41, 2019.
- DUREY Philippe, *École du Louvre, Jalons pour une histoire 1882-1998* (*École du Louvre, Milestones for a History 1882-1998*), Lyon, Fage, 2021.
- FRAYSSE Patrick (ed.), *Médiations culturelles innovantes : observations croisées dans deux musées toulousains* (Innovative Cultural Mediation: Cross-Observations in Two Museums in Toulouse), Les Dossiers de l'OCIM, 2021.
- GAUDIBERT Pierre, *Du culturel au sacré* (From Culture to the Sacred), Paris, Casterman, 1981.
- LABBE Leslie, *La muséothérapie, Analyse des potentiels thérapeutiques du musée* (Museotherapy: Analysis of the Therapeutic Potential of Museums), Les Cahiers d'études de l'Observatoire de l'OCIM, 2021.
- JONCHERY Anne, OCTOBRE Sylvie (eds.), *L'éducation artistique et culturelle, une utopie des sciences sociales* (Artistic and Cultural Education: A Social Science Utopia), Paris, Sciences Po, Les Presses, 2022.
- LUHERNE Cécile, *La médiation culturelle numérique destinée aux enfants* (Digital Cultural Mediation for Children), Saarbruck, European University Press, 2016.
- MAIRESSE François, VAN GEERT Fabien (eds.), *Médiation muséale, nouveaux enjeux, nouvelles forms* (Museum Mediation, New Challenges, New Forms), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2022.
- MONTOYA Nathalie, *Médiateurs et dispositifs de médiation culturelle : contribution à l'établissement d'une grammaire d'action de la démocratisation de la culture* (Mediators and cultural mediation mechanisms: contribution to the establishment of a grammar of action for the democratisation of culture). Sociology. Sorbonne Nouvelle University - Paris III, 2009.
- PEYRIN Aurélie, *Être médiateur au musée. Sociologie d'un métier en trompe-l'œil* (Being a museum mediator. Sociology of a Deceptive Profession), Paris, La Documentation française, 2010 (Aurélie Peyrin 2010).

- PEYRIN Aurélie, *Démocratiser les musées : une profession intellectuelle au féminin* (Democratizing Museums: An Intellectual Profession for Women.) Travail, genre et sociétés, n° 19, 2008.
- PEYRIN Aurélie, *Les modes de professionnalisation de l'accompagnement muséal. Profils et trajectoires des médiateurs*. in Sociologie de l'Art, vol. opus 11& 12, no. 1, 2008, pp. 139-169.
- PITON Gaëlle, *Et si l'on faisait un pas de côté ?* (What if we took a step aside?), Paris, Éditions Leduc, 2022.
- POLI Marie-Sylvie, *Le texte au musée : une approche sémiotique* (Text in museums: a semiotic approach), Paris, L'Harmattan, 2016.
- RAYNA Sylvie (ed.), *Les bébés au musée. Pourquoi ? Comment ?* (Babies at the museum. Why? How?), Toulouse, Érès, 2022.
- VIDAL Geneviève, *La médiation numérique museale, une renouvellement de la diffusion culturelle* (Digital mediation in museums: a renewal of cultural dissemination), Bordeaux, Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2018.
- *Textes et public dans les musées* (Texts and audiences in museums), Publics et musées, Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, no. 1, May 1992.

SITOGRAPHY

The websites listed below were an essential source of information and reflection and were consulted numerous times between October 2021 and May 2025.

Websites of the Ministry of Culture and Communication, the Ministry of National Education, ICOM, ICOM CECA, Légifrance, and museum websites.

List of people interviewed

The interviews took place between 2022 and 2024 and provided valuable input for my reflection.

I would like to warmly thank these people who were kind enough to give me some of their precious time.

(In alphabetical order)

- Véronique Andersen is a cultural mediator and author, creator of the protocol *la cérémonie du regard* (the ceremony of looking). (Appendix A)
- Danièle Giraudy is an academician (elected in 2006 to seat 37), art historian, and general heritage curator. She was curator at the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Marseille (1966-1971) and founder of the first children's museum (1968), founder of the Children's Workshop at the *Centre Pompidou* (1972-1981), director and curator of the Picasso Museum in Antibes (1981-1991), director of the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs* in Paris (1991-1994), director of the Marseille museums (1999-2005), and curator of the collections of the *Fondation des Treilles* in Aix-en-Provence. She is the author of publications on museology and modern art, and a member of ICOM and the International Association of Art Critics. (Appendix B)
- Anne-Sophie Grassin is head of public outreach and cultural action at MAC VAL, the contemporary art museum in Val-de-Marne. (Appendix C)
- Corinne Héreau is director of partnerships and patronage at the *Musée en Herbe*. (Appendix D)
- Anne Krebs is head of the Socio-Economic Research Unit at the Louvre Museum. (Appendix E)

- Marie-Clarté O'Neill is a museologist, president of the ICOM Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA), associate researcher at the University of Montreal, and professor of museology and museum education at the *École du Louvre*. (Appendix F)
- Gaëlle Piton is a sophrologist, coach, author of six books, creator of slow visits (museum mediation), lecturer (TEDx), trainer, press journalist, TV and radio presenter, and creator of "*Danser sa vie*" (Dance Your Life). (Appendix G)
- Daniel Soulié is head of mediation, special advisor to the deputy director of the *Musée du Louvre*, and author. (Appendix H)
- Cécilia de Varine is a project manager and trainer in cultural mediation. (Appendix I)
- Hugues de Varine was director of ICOM from 1965 to 1974 and then a consultant in community development in France and abroad. (Appendix J)
- Bertrand Verine is a sensory discourse analyst at Paul Valéry University – Montpellier 3 and scientific director of the *Fondation du Toucher* (AFONT). (Appendix K)

The transcripts of the interviews (in French) are available on the ICOM CECA website, tab Publications, Histories of museum mediation.

Chronology

INSTITUTION BUILDING, LEGAL ARSENAL, CULTURAL POLICIES, PUBLIC, SUPPORT TECHNIQUES, INTERNATIONAL

16th AND 17th CENTURIES

1559: First use, in the modern sense, of the word museum. However, until the 1760s, the word cabinet was used to refer to a public or private collection.

1648: Creation of the Academy of Painting and Sculpture.

1666: • Creation of the Academy of Sciences.

- Colbert institutes a monthly lecture on the best paintings in the King's Cabinet by a professor of the Académie for members of the Académie.

1673: The first Salon (which lasted until the end of the 19th century): works are numbered and listed in a catalogue, without commentary.

1677: Publication of one of the first catalogues, for engravings of paintings, statues and antique busts of Louis XIV.

1694: Opening of the *Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie* (current name) in Besançon, the first museum created in France.

18th CENTURY

Creation of the first museums in France and opening of drawing schools within the museums.

1720: Opening to the public of the *Galerie d'Orléans*, the collection of the House of Orléans.

1745: Appointment of Louis Daubenton to the post of guard and demonstrator at the *Cabinet du Roi*: extensive work on the methodical organisation of the collections. The *Cabinet du Roi*, a natural history cabinet in the *Jardin des Plantes*, becomes the first museum in Paris.

1750: Publication of the catalogue of paintings in the King's Cabinet.

1752: Encyclopaedia article "*Cabinet d'histoire naturelle*" (Natural History Cabinet): emphasises the dual purpose of the museum: teaching and entertainment; labels are placed next to the objects and visitors are given free or posted access to the museum, with someone on hand to answer their questions.

In the second half of the 18th century: free public courses, demonstrations and experiments in the new natural history museums, and the publication of works aimed at amateurs.

1750-1779: The *Palais du Luxembourg* and the *Galerie de Marie de Médicis* are opened to the public.

1789: Church property nationalised on 2 November.

1792: • Nationalisation of émigrés' assets and Crown property on 2 August of the Crown.

- *Projet de décret sur l'organisation générale de l'instruction publique* (Law project on the general organisation of public education) presented to the Legislative Assembly on 20 and 21 April 1792, by Nicolas de Condorcet, which can be seen as the founding text of popular education.

1793: • Opening on 10th August of the *Musée central des arts* (now the *Musée du Louvre*), followed by the *Musée des Monuments français*, the *Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle*, the *Conservatoire national des Arts et Métiers* (CNAM, 1794) and the *Cabinet d'anatomie de l'École de la santé de Paris*.

- Publication of the first catalogue of the objects in the gallery of the *Muséum central des arts* (now the Louvre).
- Opening of the Fine Arts museums in Nancy and Toulouse.

1794: • Opening of the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Tours. Creation of the *Conservatoire des arts et métiers*, opened to the public in 1802.

- Speech by Louis-François Portiez on education, the first step towards socio-educational activities and cultural events.

1797: Opening of the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Orléans.

End of the 18th century: Foreshadowing of contemporary exhibitions with panoramas. Appearance of the notion of the public as we know it today.

19th CENTURY

1801: 31 August, Chaptal Decree (creation of fifteen provincial museums).

1802: • Creation of the *Direction générale des musées français* (which became the *Direction des musées de France* in 1946).

- Creation of the post of Director General of the Central Museum of the Arts, under the authority of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Launch of the *Notices* (brief booklets on the works), for a fee.

1815: Congress of Vienna, restitution of works of art looted by Napoleonic troops.

1818: Creation of a museum dedicated to living artists in the *Palais du Luxembourg* (first museum of contemporary art).

1819: Academic teaching at the CNAM, museum-school and research laboratory from 1852.

1822: Invention of the principle of the diorama, prefiguring contemporary exhibitions.

1828: Creation of the Ministry of Public Education.

From the 1820s:

- Creation of the first educational societies by intellectuals and social reformers. Objective: to provide education for adults from the working classes.
- Labour movements, particularly socialists and trade unions, active in promoting popular education by organising meetings, workshops and discussions on social and political issues.

1833: Guizot law on primary education makes primary education compulsory in France for children aged 6 to 12. Although criticised for its restrictive nature, the law opened the way to greater access to education for the popular classes and gave rise to school museums with the idea of assembling a collection of objects as teaching tools.

Second half of the 19th century:

- Appearance of labels on frames with the name of the artist, the title of the work and sometimes a caption.
- Independent interpreter-guides began to operate at the Louvre.
- The tools offered at the Louvre, for example (simple *Notices* or *catalogue raisonné*), consider both the lay and informed public.

1851: The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (London).

1852: Creation of the South Kensington Museum (London).

1855: The *Musée du Louvre* is open to the public all week, except Mondays (prior to this date, opening times depended on the category of public; copy artists and foreigners were privileged).

1864: Creation of the *Union centrale des beaux-arts appliqués à l'Industrie* (Central Union of Fine Arts Applied to Industry), which advertised its educational role.

1866: Jean Macé founds the *Ligue de l'enseignement*, which played a key role in promoting popular education, organising conferences and courses open to the general public.

1870: • Creation of the first circle of the *Ligue de l'enseignement*.

- The first signs of a movement to explore the links between museums and communities in France, with the construction of local museums at canton level, in direct contact with the local population.
- The Fine Arts department is attached to the Ministry of Public Instruction, which then becomes the Ministry of Public Instruction and Fine Arts.

1871: Petition calling for compulsory and secular primary education, under the impetus of the Parisian *cercle de la Ligue de l'enseignement*.

1878: Creation of the Trocadero Ethnographic Museum.

1879: Creation, on the initiative of Jules Ferry, of the Pedagogical Museum (decree of 13 May).

1881-1882: Jules Ferry's laws made primary school public, free, secular and compulsory, and introduced the object lesson: the birth of school museums.

In the 1880s: Educational visits to the museum for secondary school pupils in the Paris region, led by their teachers.

1880-1890: The National Natural History Museum in Paris presents naturalistic dioramas for the first time.

1882: Creation of the *École du Louvre*.

1885: *Traité de l'Administration des Beaux-Arts*, on the consideration of two types of public: "general public" and "elite public".

1898: *L'Union centrale des Arts décoratifs* developed educational activities with schools and workshops for the decorative arts.

1899: Opening of the Brooklyn Children's Museum.

20th CENTURY

1900: 600 museums in France.

1901: The 1901 Act enabled the creation of non-profit associations in France, which encouraged the development of many popular education organisations.

1910: Creation of the Association of Guides and Interpreters of the Louvre and national museums.

1920s: Some museums set up special departments for young people.

1920: Introduction of *lecture-promenades* and educational lectures (art history courses) at the *Louvre*.

1921: Introduction of free art history courses for the general public at the *Louvre*, the Rachel Boyer courses.

1926: Creation of the *Office international des musées* (International Museums Office).

1928: Creation of the first guided tour service at the Louvre.

1931: Order of 2 March: introduction of 2-hour school visits for secondary school pupils, accompanied by their teacher and led by a guide or lecturer, but these remain occasional.

1932: The Ministry of Public Instruction becomes the Ministry of National Education.

1933: Museum directors and curators recommend that the name of the artist be indicated on the frame, and only in certain cases, the subject of the work.

1930s: Introduction of free school visits and provision of time off for teaching.

1935: Creation of a “junior” section for under-fives, within the *Société des Amis du musée national d’Histoire naturelle*, which organised visits led by teachers, laboratory assistant directors and assistants.

1936: • *Front Populaire* (Popular Front): start of a cultural policy (popular culture and mass culture, cultural action) and educational control of museums as a priority. Popular education was relaunched. School-based leisure activities: organised visits and art workshops.

- First evening visit to the Louvre.
- Development of a visit plan for teachers on school visits to certain museums in Paris.
- 52,700 visitors to the Louvre attended a lecture-visit (6,400 in 1937).

1937: • Creation of the *Musée national des Arts et Traditions populaires*.

- Inauguration of the Museum of Modern Art in Paris.
- Creation of “popular Tuesdays” at the Louvre, reduced rates for unionised workers.

1938: Creation of the Museum of Man.

1939: The Louvre closes.

1940-1941: Partial reopening of the Louvre to the public and offering of guided tours.

1940s: Creation of *Maisons des Jeunes et de la Culture* to promote culture, training and artistic activities at local level.

1945: The ordinance of 13 July gives the first legal definition of a museum.

1946: • Creation of ICOM.

- The 1946 Constitution guarantees “equal access to culture” for all, and relaunches youth and popular education movements.

1947: ICOM proposes a first definition of the museum that places the collection at the heart of the definition of the museum.

1948: • Creation of two international committees within ICOM: Children’s museums (Committee n°6) and Educational work in museums (Committee n°7).

- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: culture for all, a fundamental right.
- The *École du Louvre* offers training for lecturers whose job is to address young people.

1949: Decree of 13 April creating the first educational service for national museums.

1950s: Cartels (cardboard rectangles) appear on the walls of the Louvre.

1952: • Decree of 3 January lays down the conditions for guided tours.

- Geneviève Dreyfus-Sée writes a guide on “the use of museums at the *École active*.”

1953: • Merger of the two international committees n°6 and n°7 of ICOM to become the Education Committee (dissolved in 1962).

- First children’s workshop, *l’atelier des moins de 13 ans* (workshop for under 13-years-old children) at the *Union centrale des Arts décoratifs*, extended to teenagers in 1955.

1958: French Constitution of 4 October 1958: it is the State’s responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that everyone can participate in cultural life.

1959: Creation of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and renewal of cultural policy: democratisation of culture and structuring of cultural administration.

1959: Berthoin reform: compulsory education up to the age of 16.

1960s: Start of activities aimed at socio-cultural groups (which could today be described as specific) by the public relations departments as part of the institutionalisation of the project to democratise culture.

1963: Creation of the DEPS (*Département des Études de la Prospective et des Statistiques*) to gain a better understanding of audiences.

1964: International symposium on the educational and cultural role of museums.

1965: Creation of the ICOM Committee for Education and Cultural Action (CECA).

1966: Creation of the *Association Technique pour l’Action Culturelle* (ATAC) (Technical Association for Cultural Action), which supports the training of cultural workers.

- 1967: • Launch of the Museobus in Marseille (Danièle Giraudy), social inclusion and off-site activities.
- Opening of the first children's museum for the very young inside the Longchamp Fine Arts Museum (Danièle Giraudy).
 - Opening of the first museum on the island of Ouessant, the Niou Eco-museum.
- 1968: • *Declaration of Villeurbanne*, 40 stage managers of cultural facilities around Roger Planchon: the notion of the non-audience appears.
- Amiens symposium organised by the *Association d'Étude pour l'Expansion de la Recherche scientifique* (Association for the Study and Expansion of Scientific Research) on the entry of art into educational policy (new pedagogy inspired by Freinet's pedagogy, republishing in 1969 of works dating from 1946-1954).
 - The National Museums Education Department became the Cultural Action Office. At the end of the 1970s, it changed its name once again to *Bureau de l'action culturelle et éducative*.
- 1970s: • ICOM work on the social role of the museum, in terms of responsibility for environmental protection.
- Time for animation and cultural activities. Appearance of the notion of cultural development (Jacques Duhamel).
 - Emergence of the ecomuseology movement (Hugues de Varine).
 - First initiatives for the benefit of people with disabilities.
 - The visitor at the centre of the visitor-museum-object relationship.
- 1971: • Creation of the *Fond d'Intervention Culturelle* (FIC) Cultural Intervention Fund.
- The word ecomuseum officially adopted by ICOM.
 - The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of mentally disabled people.
 - Opening of the *Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines* Ecomuseum.
- 1972: • *Declaration of Santiago de Chile* on the advent of an integral museum, open to the world and playing a social role.
- The *Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires* moves to the *Bois de Boulogne*:

new museography, introduction for the first time of audiovisuals in a museum tour, first audio guide device, simplification of texts and appearance of explanatory graphics.

- 1973: • First cartel exhibition, *Equivoques* at the *Musée des Arts Décoratifs*, Paris.
- First survey of French cultural practices launched by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs.
 - 10% for free teaching: it refers to the time allocated to high school and elementary school teachers to freely organize the curricula for their subjects.
- 1974: • ICOM formulates a new definition of the museum.
- Opening of the CAPC in Bordeaux.
 - *Centre d'arts plastiques contemporains* (CAPC)
- 1975: • The Haby Law of 11 July on education launches the introduction of artistic and cultural education in schools.
- The United Nations General Assembly adopts the Declaration of the Rights of Disabled Persons.
 - *Loi d'orientation en faveur des personnes handicapées* (Orientation law in favour of people with disabilities), the first public policy on disability for adults and children.
 - Opening of the *Musée en Herbe* in the *Jardin d'Acclimatation* (Sylvie Girardet, Claire Merleau-Ponty and Anne Tardy), exhibitions in the form of "colour boxes". First combination of a visit with a creative workshop to discover while having fun.
 - Launch of the Children's Workshop at the Pompidou Centre (prefiguration by Danièle Giraudy): learning to look, encouraging the five senses, attention to disability, educational kits, co-construction, workshops, travelling exhibitions, training.
- 1976: Creation of the digital arts centre, *La cathédrale d'images* (The image cathedral), by Albert Plecy.
- 1977: • Opening of the *Centre Pompidou* with the creation of a public service (idem in 1986 with *Musée d'Orsay* and the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*). Launch of travelling exhibitions, co-creation of exhibitions with the visitor, discovery tours, guided tours, "how to" tours, meetings with artists, access to reserves, training, multi-purpose room, increase in the number of temporary exhibitions. Basis: contact, exchange, discussion.

- Launch of workshops for adults at the *Union centrale des Arts décoratifs*, probably the first of their kind.
- *Les mains regardent* (Hands look) exhibition at the *Centre Pompidou*, designed for visually impaired children under the age of 12 (Danièle Giraudy).
- Creation of the *Mission d'action culturelle en milieu scolaire* (Cultural action mission in schools) reinforcing the school/museum link.

1978: • Creation of the *Commission Académique d'actions culturelles* (Academic commission of cultural actions).

- Exhibition *Fer-blanc-et-fil-de-fer* (Tinplate and iron thread), setting up of the children's museum train.

1979: • Launch of the *Atelier des Tout-Petits* (workshop for toddlers), for children under six, at the *Union centrale des Arts décoratifs*.

- The *Musée en Herbe* produces exhibition books for young visitors to extend the visit.

Late 1970s: First introductory workshop on architecture, at the *Musée des Monuments français* (Marie-Clarté O'Neill, Thérèse Gazeau-Caille).

1980s: • "Museum fever"

- Scenography takes on an increasingly important role
- Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Marie-Thérèse Gazeau-Caille introduce exploratory tours (a treasure hunt for the whole family) for young visitors to national museums. First self-guided family visits.
- Encouragement for the creation of autonomous educational services (progressive disengagement of the Bureau for Cultural and Educational Action).
- The Louvre offers school visits, mainly for classes of 6^e.

1980: Launch of the first heritage classes.

1980/1985: Marie-Clarté O'Neill uses the term "mediation" for the first time. Provincial museums such as the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Nancy, the *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Strasbourg and the CAPC in Bordeaux embarked on mediation, and in 1986 the term is used at the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*. Mediation is based on visitor participation and is one of the tools of museum education.

1981: International Year of the Disabled.

1982-1983: At the *Musée du Louvre*, under the aegis of Françoise Broyelle, a space dedicated to the first educational workshops for 6-year-olds is created in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities.

1983: Agreement protocole on Culture - Education between the ministries of culture and education to ensure coherence between the education and cultural projects thanks to common projects.

1985: • The *École du Louvre* offers an introductory mediation course (Marie-Clarté O'Neill).

- The Central Service becomes the Service for Museology and Cultural Action. 1986.

- Inaugurations of the *Musée d'Orsay* and the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*.

- Creation of the first autonomous public service at the *Musée d'Orsay*.

- First interactive library at the *Musée d'Orsay*.

- First use of the term "mediator" at the *Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie*.

- Signature of the Culture-Justice agreement

- Creation of the *Association Nationale de Formation et d'Information Artistique* (ANFIAC) (National Association for Artistic Training and Information): training courses on a variety of themes to prepare for jobs as cultural project managers.

1987: • Creation of the Louvre's cultural service: training for lecturers so that they can comment on works of art in sign language, specific mediation team dedicated to people with disabilities.

- Brundtland report popularises the concept of sustainable development

1988: Law of 6 January on artistic education, relaunching artistic and cultural education.

1989: • Inauguration of the Louvre pyramid. The Louvre launches workshops for adults and very young children (aged 4 and over).

- *Protocole Culture-Enfance* (Culture-Childhood): very young children are considered as people in their own right and are recognised as having cultural rights (extended in 2017, for the cultural awakening of very young children).

- Protocols signed between the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Youth and Sport, as well as with the Secretary of State for the Family.
- Introduction of acoustic guides at the Louvre Museum.

Late 1980s: The notion of sustainable development appears, replacing the notion of ecology.

1990s: • Emergence of the notion of cultural diversity.

- Beginning of virtual reality, which has been developed in museums since 2014.
- Personal development and visitor well-being taken into account.
- Appearance of the term social inclusion among the general public (first used in the mid-1970s, replacing the word insertion).
- Appearance of the concept of Care.
- Emergence of the term and concept of virtual museum.
- Increasing number of initiatives aimed at people with disabilities, but mainly visual and tactile approaches.
- *École du Louvre*: overhaul of museology teaching, major role for museum education (Marie-Clarté O'Neill)

1991: First tactile visit to the Picasso Museum in Antibes (Danièle Giraudy)

1992: • Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit democratises the concept of sustainable development

- The *Musée des Beaux-Arts* in Lyon offers workshops and visits for adults in the social field at the request of ATD Quart Monde (an organisation that brings together people who want to commit to ending extreme poverty and building a fairer society that respects fundamental rights and the equal dignity of all).

1993: Protocol agreement on the EAC (Education and Cultural action) involving 4 ministries (but without local authorities). Experimental arts education sites.

1994: Setting up of twelve experimental arts education sites.

1995: Creation of the Tactile Gallery at the *Musée du Louvre*, which was replaced in autumn 2023 by the Sculpture Discovery Area.

Mid-1990s: the mediation profession begins to organise itself.

1997: *Emplois-jeunes* (youth jobs): new jobs for young people, particularly in the fields of social and cultural mediation (created by Martine Aubry, under the government of Lionel Jospin).

1998: • 29 July 29 law on the fight against exclusion: equal access for all to cultural life.

- Creation of the *Cultures du Cœur* (Heart culture) association to compensate for unequal access to cultural activities.
- Circular of 22 July on “EAC from nursery school to university” recommends that asking “each school and establishment of school or higher education to organise, with and for young people, *at least once a year*, a special time for encounters with artistic creation and heritage”. It will not be followed by any notable quantitative effect, because of its cost. For the first time, the need for democratisation was clearly mentioned.

1999: • Charter of objectives for culture and popular education signed by the Minister, Catherine Trautmann and 8 popular education federations.

- Creation of the *Médiation culturelle association* (Cécilia de Varine), dissolved 20 years later.
- Signing of the Culture-Health

21st CENTURY

2000s: • Strong development of actions in favour of children and the social field.

- The fight against exclusion became a key issue in the public debate (a flaw in integration and still democratisation).
- Emergence of family activities/visits clearly named in the programme ming, with the accompanying person taking part: family visits.

2001: • UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

- Creation of the Culture and Disability Commission.
- Creation of the Tourism and Disability label.
- Circular issued on 23 March on the implementation of the Five-Year Plan for Art and Culture.
- Introduction of art and culture classes.
- 7 February: decree creating the National Commission on Culture and Disability.

- 2002: Law n°2002-5 of 4 January 2002 relating to museums in France: definition of the role of museums and establishment of their organisation.
- 2003: Creation of the RECA (*Réunion des établissements culturels pour l'accessibilité* - Meeting of cultural establishments for accessibility) commission led by *Universcience*.
- 2004: Conference in the United Arab Emirates on arts and cultural education.
- 2005: • 3 January the joint policy circular gave one of the clearest definitions of EAC (arts and cultural education): "Arts and cultural education combines a direct relationship with works of art, their analysis and their relationship with other fields of knowledge, as well as an introduction to the actual practice of an art". Relaunch of artistic and cultural education.
- Law of 11 February 2005 on equal rights and opportunities, participation and citizenship for people with disabilities (Disability Act): universal accessibility compulsory.
 - The United Nations adopted the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals as part of Agenda 2030.
 - Creation of the *Vivre ensemble* (Living Together) commission under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture (reflection on how to welcome so-called special audiences).
- 2006: • Opening of the Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac Museum and consideration given to welcoming disabled visitors (accessibility of the building and collections), application of the concept of universal design in the space known as *La Rivière*.
- United Nations: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
 - First UNESCO world conference on artistic and cultural education.
 - *Convention nationale Culture - Handicap* (national convention culture and disability) between the Ministry of Culture and Communication and the Ministry for the Disabled (now the Ministry of Solidarity and Health) and the Culture - Tourism agreement.
- 2007: *Freiburg Declaration* on the protection of diversity and cultural rights.
- 2008: • Ethical charter for cultural mediation.
- *Musée le Saut du Tarn*, a pioneer in sensory mediation on the long run.

- *Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille*: a pioneer in welcoming groups of autistic people to workshops on artistic practice and the discovery of works of art.
- 2009: • Creation of the *Education Pass* generalised in 2017. It gives people working in schools free access to more than one hundred and sixty museums and national monuments.
- Charter for welcoming the public in the social field.
 - Creation of the FALC (*Facile à lire et à comprendre* – Easy to read and understand) method.
 - 18 February: the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by France on 18 February 2009, aims to "promote, protect and ensure" their rights: dignity, equality before the law and enjoyment of fundamental human rights, including active participation in political, economic, social and cultural life.
 - Creation of the first mobile applications to accompany the visit and links on social networks. The Louvre launches its first iPhone application.
 - Charter for cultural establishments to welcome visitors from the social field, as part of the *Vivre ensemble* (Living together) mission.
 - New Culture-Tourism agreement
 - The *La boîte du souffleur* (The whisperer's box) company offers dramatised tours.
 - Emergence of *do it yourself*, with fablab and other makerspaces.
 - Launch of the Slow Art Day programme me (Creative Good company).
 - *Centre Pompidou* seems to have been the first to get involved in gender issues, with the *elles@centrepompidou* exhibition in 2009.
- 2010: • Start of partnerships between influencers and museums.
- Museums are abandoning the public of enlightened amateurs.
 - Proliferation of online resources: ideas for mediation systems and tools, sources of inspiration for museum mediators.
 - Interdisciplinarity (building bridges with other disciplines) in the museum, with particular emphasis on post-colonial studies.
 - Pluridisciplinarity at the museum: another interpretation with dance, singing...

- *La Piscine de Roubaix*: the first museum in France to offer a programme and workshops for people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers.
- Opening of Studio 13/16 at the *Centre Pompidou* for teenagers.
- The Louvre was the first museum to create a post for a sustainable development officer.
- Creation of MuMo, the museum truck with original works of art, exhibitions and workshops.

- 2012: • The Louvre launches a fun and interactive audio guide on Nintendo 3DS.
- Inauguration at the *Musée d'Aquitaine* of an ambitious sensory course.
 - The *Musée d'Orsay* opens an Instagram account.
 - Decrease in subsidies to national museums.

- 2013: • Development of the Best practice tool, by Marie-Clarté O'Neill and Colette Dufresne-Tassé.
- *Centre Pompidou hors les murs* (*Centre Pompidou* outreach): first exhibition of an original work at Osny prison and workshops.

- 2014: • Drafting of a museum guide for people with autism (*Palais des Beaux-Arts de Lille*, the Dallas Museum of Art and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, with the support of the FRAME network).
- Order of 26 September, making it compulsory for establishments receiving the public and accommodating more than 200 people to provide training in how to receive disabled people.
 - The order of 8 December made it compulsory for certain establishments to be equipped with BIMs (magnetic induction loops) for the hearing impaired.
 - *Le Louvre* launches an ephemeral Fablab for the launch of #tousà l'œuvre (all on the go)

Mid-2010s: The first dramatised, singing and danced tours.

- 2015: • Some museums are developing family booklets aimed at children and accompanying adults.
- Creation of the Audio visit application by the *Musée des Beaux-Arts de Lille*: videos presenting the museum, 21 works of art and practical information.
 - The *Musée du Louvre* is moving forward with the writing and translation into English of its 38,000 labels.

- The *Musée d'Aquitaine* is launching a hospital workshop project for people suffering from anorexia nervosa.

- 2016: • Law of 7 July 2016 on the freedom of creation, architecture and heritage made it compulsory for all museums in France to design a scientific and cultural project and regulate the profession of tour guides.

- Charter for artistic and cultural education.
- For the first time the *Musée en Herbe* is offering parent/child workshops in which parents are invited to take part in the creation of artworks.
- Ministry of Culture plan for early childhood.
- Olfactory devices appear in exhibitions at the *Institut du Monde arabe* (Arab World Institute).
- The arrival of escape games in French museums.

- The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, then directed by Nathalie Bondil, who forged the concept of museum therapy, opened a space dedicated to art therapy and education, the *Atelier International d'éducation et d'art-thérapie* (international workshop for education and art therapy).

- 2016-2020: Creation at the *Musée du Louvre* of the *Carte blanche aux youtubeurs* (free rein to youtubers) (now the Louvre invites youtubers).

- 2017: • Report on the 21st Century Museums Mission, *Inventing Tomorrow's Museums*.

- *Môm Art* Charter for children and families.
- Establishments open to the public must provide a public accessibility register.
- Launch of *Micro-Folies*, the first *Micro-Folie* in Sevrans.
- Creation of the MÊTIS association, a platform for meetings and exchanges between museum professionals.
- Launch of the first chatbot, a conversational agent that uses AI to prepare visitors for their visit to the museum (Ask Mona).
- Slow Visits created in France (Gaëlle Piton), experiments mediation/meditation.

- 2018: • The *Centre Pompidou* is offering *Art Detox* mornings and Sunday lectures.

- First visits dedicated to naked visitors at *Palais de Tokyo*.
- Inauguration of the *Atelier des Lumières*.

- First immersive exhibition experience: TeamLab, specialising in immersive digital art, at the *Grande Halle de la Villette* in Paris.
- 2019:
- Return of evening visits to the Louvre Museum on Saturday for young people, families and schoolchildren.
 - Opening of the *Mille Formes* centre in Clermont-Ferrand in collaboration with the *Centre Pompidou*, “the first permanent art initiation centre for 0-6-year-olds”.
 - The *Musée du Louvre* puts information sheets online to make it easier for people with psycho-cognitive disabilities to visit the museum.
 - Launch of the Culture Pass.
 - The *Musée de l’Orangerie* offers virtual reality for Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies*.
 - The *Musée d’Orsay* launches the *Une oeuvre, un regard* (One work, one view) programme on YouTube.
- 2020:
- *Plateforme des médiations muséales* (Sensory panels made available).
 - Launch of the Museum Mediation Platform (PMM) (a project run by students on a Master’s degree in Museography at the University of Artois).
 - The Louvre uses virtual reality for the *Mona Lisa beyond the glass* project.
- 2021:
- Opening of the Louvre Studio at the Louvre Museum, an exclusive venue open to all.
 - Since 2021, the *École du Louvre* (Master 1) and the *Institut national du patrimoine* have been offering a museotherapy seminar led by Nathalie Bondil.
- 2022:
- ICOM General Conference in Prague: adoption of a new definition of the museum.
 - Launch of ChatGPT
 - The *Musée d’Orsay* offers free modelling and discovery workshops for under-12s and their carers.
 - Opening of Station 0.2 at the *Centre Pompidou*.
 - First visits under hypnosis for adults at the Cluny Museum (Paris).
 - MO.CO. (Montpellier): pioneer in visitor reception with museum prescriptions, prescribed by doctors.

- 2023:
- *Musée d’Orsay: Bonjour Vincent* (Hello Vincent), the first behavioural generative artificial intelligence project to reproduce the behaviour and even the language of human beings, in this case Vincent van Gogh.
 - The interactive gallery has been replaced by a space for discovering sculpture.
 - The *Musée National de la Marine* (Paris): a universal accessibility approach (ICOM CECA Best Practice Award 2024) and *La Bulle*, the first soothing space created in a museum. Immersive scenography in the permanent collections
 - Opening of *Hangar Y* in Meudon, offering interactive immersion in mixed reality.
 - Agreement signed between the *Palais des Beaux-Arts* de Lille and an art therapist, for workshops for people referred by Lille hospitals.
 - Launch of a university diploma in “cultural prescriptions for the arts and health”.
- 2024:
- UNESCO World Conference in the United Arab Emirates: adoption of a new international framework for artistic and cultural education.
 - Launch of the museum boat for the Art Explora festival.
 - The Pompidou Centre’s first English-language book and game for children.

WORKS ALREADY PUBLISHED

in the same collection

- Brazil - may 2024

Mauricio André da Silva and Andréa Fernandes Costa (Éds)



ISBN : (BR) 978-85-60984-73-2 • (ES) 978-85-60984-74-9
(EN) 978-85-60984-75-6 • (FR) 978-85-60984-76-3

- Belgium - october 2021

Nicole Gesché-Koning (Éd.)



ISBN : (FR) 978-2-9602355-2-4 • (NL) 978-2-9602355-3-1
(EN) 978-2-9602355-4-8 • (ES) 978-85-60984-76-3



This third book in the series launched by the ICOM CECA committee on the history of museum mediation around the world presents a chronological approach to the history of this discipline in France, based on interviews with eleven museum professionals.

In France, the history of visitor services in museums from the 18th century to the present day is intertwined with the evolution of the tripartite relationship between museums, visitors and objects.

The three main periods analysed correspond to a change in the objective to be achieved, largely dependent on government initiatives, and modifying the relationship with the object. The tools and support mechanisms have constantly been adapted to the increasingly diverse types of visitors.

From the creation of museums until the Second World War, support had a dual mission: to contribute to the education of all, throughout their lives, and to consolidate the moral development of citizens. The “museum object” was at the heart of the educational approach.

After the Second World War, in line with the changes initiated under the Popular Front, socio-cultural activities took over and focused on integrating individuals into the community with a view to social cohesion and cultural development, with the object serving merely as a means of communication. With the emergence of arts and cultural education, young people finally found their place in museums, and people with disabilities began to receive some attention.

Since the 1980s, museum education, understood as the transmission of knowledge, know-how and interpersonal skills, has promoted the personal and holistic development of visitors. The “object” has become the “centre of many innovative forms of mediation”, some of which could jeopardise the future of the mediator.

“

Museum educators are geniuses of educational intuition, developed through their sensitivity to audiences and their experience in putting museum education into practice.

(Marie-Clarté O'Neill)

”

