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# Understanding museum activity to contribute to the design of tools for cultural mediation: new dimensions of activity?

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*THEORIES AND METHODOLOGIES  
THÉORIES ET MÉTHODOLOGIES*

UNDERSTANDING MUSEUM ACTIVITY  
TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DESIGN  
OF TOOLS FOR CULTURAL MEDIATION:  
NEW DIMENSIONS OF ACTIVITY?

COMPRENDRE L'ACTIVITÉ AU MUSÉE  
POUR CONCEVOIR DES DISPOSITIFS  
DE MÉDIATION CULTURELLE :  
DE NOUVELLES DIMENSIONS DE L'ACTIVITÉ ?

By/Par ANNE BATIONO-TILLON and FRANÇOISE DECORTIS<sup>1</sup>

SUMMARY

*Understanding activity in situations of cultural mediation is a promising way to contribute both to the transformation of mediation situations and to advance the field of ergonomics. In the context of the project Labex Arts-H2H, we examine the activity of cultural mediation.*

*In this article, our objective is to examine to what extent activity models reveal new dimensions of activity and how working with museums leads us to question the existing models. Two activity models are mobilized: MARO, which looks at the potential activity of a capable visitor (Bationo-Tillon, 2013); and NAM that examines the cycle of creative and narrative activity (Decortis, 2013). In the first part of this paper, we describe the development of these two models and their theoretical bases.*

*We then describe our methodology and report the results of using these two models to map a single situation of cultural mediation (museum visit by adolescents followed by a creative workshop). This paper concludes with prospects for further research in these areas.*

**Keywords:** *Cultural mediation, Co-activity, Capable visitor, Creative activity.*

RÉSUMÉ

*Comprendre l'activité de médiation culturelle nous semble une voie fructueuse pour mettre en évidence de nouvelles dimensions de l'activité humaine notamment car il s'agit d'un domaine encore peu exploré par l'ergonomie. Dans*

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*le contexte du projet Labex H2H, nous examinons cette activité de médiation culturelle depuis plusieurs années grâce à un partenariat entre l'université Paris 8 et des institutions culturelles (la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, le Grand Palais et les Centres Pompidou Paris et Metz...). Au sein de ce papier, nous présentons et mobilisons deux modèles de l'activité de manière complémentaire, MARO qui renvoie à l'activité potentielle de rencontre avec une œuvre d'art (Bationo-Tillon, 2013) et NAM qui examine le cycle de l'activité narrative et créative (Decortis, 2013). Dans un premier temps, nous décrivons l'émergence de ces modèles et leurs socles théoriques. Ensuite, nous détaillons la méthodologie mise en œuvre pour cartographier une situation singulière de médiation culturelle (visite muséale-atelier d'écriture pour des adolescents) à l'aide de ces modèles. Enfin, nous terminons en discutant des dimensions rythmiques et créatives de l'activité mises en évidence par ces modèles au sein des situations de médiation culturelles, dimensions qui pourraient être investiguées et intéresser plus largement toute intervention en ergonomie.*

**Mots clés:** médiation culturelle, co-activité, visiteur capable, activité créative.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Whether considering everyday situations or work or training, our approach and objectives are identical. The goal is to understand these situations through activity analysis, and to do so in order to contribute to transforming the situations. In the context of the Labex Arts-H2H project<sup>1</sup>, we have conducted a four year research program to understand the relationship between art and its audience. We want to achieve a clearer view of the work involved, daily activity and specifically the activity of cultural mediation. Hence, this article explores the field of cultural mediation and examines how activity models reveal new dimensions of activity, as well as how the museum context leads us to question existing activity models. At the present time, we are using two activity models: MARO, which focusses on the potential activity of the capable visitor (Bationo-Tillon, 2013); and NAM, for creative and narrative activity (Decortis, 2013).

Our paper continues with a review of state-of-the-art research in the field of museology as it relates to young people, including stimulating their creativity. In this section, we outline the theoretical bases and development of the NAM and MARO models. Next, we describe our approach and methods using the two models to map a cultural mediation situation, in other words, we use classes of situation that are pertinent for the particular model.

1. Led by University Paris 8, in partnership with a number of cultural institutions such as the Réunion des Musées Nationaux - RMN (i.e. all major museums in France, such as the Orsay and Louvre museums in Paris) and the Pompidou Centres of Paris and Metz.

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURAL MEDIATION

### II.1. WHAT IS THE YOUNG VISITOR'S ROLE IN ACTIVITY?

In the last thirty years, studies in museology and of museum audiences were carried out by workers in the humanities and social sciences (sociology, linguistics, psychology, history, economics, etc.), with a focus on the “effect of the exhibit on the visitor” as well as the “visitor’s effect on the exhibit” (Davallon, 2002; Eidelman and Roustan, 2007). This growing interest in evaluating museum offerings stems mainly from a need to take into account the various publics, their appropriation of the exhibit and to understand the possibilities for new technologies to be used as tools in mediation (Le Marec et Chaumier, 2009).

These studies evaluate visitor satisfaction on the basis of identifying the composition of the public, their practices and their needs. However, sociology research tends to view the visitor as a user or consumer rather than as an actor in and author of the visit. The result is that a number of features are often overlooked: singularity, the sense of the visit as experienced by the visitor, the visitor’s interpretation, the cultural contribution and the manner in which the visitor appropriates the mediation.

Beyond understanding the various publics, understanding mediator activity has become just as important, because mediators are the main actors in implementing cultural mediation for the public. In this respect, the accessibility of works of art and the encounters between art and its target population are examined in terms of mediation practices. We made a review of the state-of-the-art methods to determine the points of view of adolescent visitors, illustrating the discomfort of some adolescents in museums. These visitors feel like passive participants rather than active visitors, and they often consider museum visits long and boring (Bationo-Tillon et al, 2013), which contrasts with the idea that the visitor plays a role in the visit. In response to these observations, the growing trend is for museums to set up workshops where children are invited to touch, feel and create while observing an artist’s techniques (Trochu, 2009). In this sense, play and creativity merit more attention as activities that can raise awareness of art in a young public, especially when these activities provide gateways to discovery and appropriation of artworks. In that line, Hooper-Greenhill (1994) emphasizes the importance of creating an aesthetic experience in which the visitor feels competent, remains focused and is able to find meaning in what he or she sees and does.

Up to now, with the exception of several studies (Bach, Salembier, Dubois, 2010; Bationo-Tillon 2013; Folcher et Bationo-Tillon, 2012), museology has been relatively neglected by workers in ergonomics. Nevertheless, taking into account the singularity of the activity, as well as its situated and finalized nature (Rabardel, 2005), ergonomics can clarify and offer a qualitative understanding of the activity of a museum visit.

Our research proposal addresses these various issues, linking Goodman’s point of view with that of the capable subject (Rabardel, 2005): A work of art is never sure to function. The success of the encounter between

subject and art depends on the intellectual capabilities and attention span of the viewer, the environment and the circumstances of viewing the art (Goodman, 1996). The subject is the actor in this activity (the actor transforms reality and is transformed by reality). By mobilizing internal and external resources the actor forms various relationships with the world (Rabardel, 2005). This is why it is important to investigate this activity from the subject's point of view. Using that perspective we can grasp how a visitor becomes an actor during the activity of his or her visit, using resources that can enrich an encounter with a work of art as well as stimulating creative activity as defined below.

## II.2. FORMULATING A DEFINITION OF CREATIVE ACTIVITY

There is a consensus among most researchers in cognitive, social, developmental and clinical psychology that creativity can be defined as "the capacity to produce something new and yet adapted to its context" (Lubart, 2003). The result can be an idea, story or a music composition. Since the 1980's, multivariate analysis of activity has been the predominant approach in the field. It integrates a combination of factors concerning the person (intellectual capacity and personality traits), and the environmental context (physical environment, structural situation and culture). Amabile (1996) posits three components in this multivariate perspective: motivation, capabilities in a given field and processes involved in creativity. Lubart (2003) identifies six types of resources necessary for creativity and that may play a role of physical or social stimulation in producing and nourishing ideas: intelligence, knowledge, cognitive styles, personality, motivation and environment. In short, the multivariate conception of creativity includes cognitive, conative, affective and environmental factors.

We defend a developmental perspective of creativity well explored by Vygotsky (2004). He proposes that the psychological processes of creativity and imagination play the central role in the educational process. Vygotsky asserts that imagination is present in all aspects of cultural existence and that it is a prerequisite for artistic, scientific and technical creativity. Imagination is not psychologically opposed to reality, but rather is intimately linked. Creative activity is consequently every type of human activity that produces something new. As Csikszentmihalyi (2006) tends to indicate, we can consider that creativity is manifested in small things, not only in major projects.

Vygotsky defends the importance of imagination – a higher mental function that is the basis for creativity – in the development of the child and in all cultural aspects of existence. He defines the act of creation as any human act "giving birth to something new..., whether it is a physical object or a mental or emotional construct" (2004). This is how imagination and creative activity are linked, with imagination reflected in acts that reveal things capable of surprising and astonishing the subject (Decortis, 2015).

The socio-constructivist approach to creativity leads to exploration in a diachronic perspective, where the manner in which creativity manifests itself is explored through finalized acts of the subject to produce tangible

results (ideas or physical objects). Creativity can be analysed from what the subject does in a given situation and from the subject's point of view. The subject mobilizes resources within the activities that are constituent parts of the subject's relationship with the environment, with others, and with his or her emotions and bodily sensations.

### II.3. WHAT ARE THE MISSIONS OF PUBLIC CULTURAL AND RECEPTION SERVICES?

A prominent feature of the European public services landscape during the 1990's and the 2000's was the increasing presence of reception, educational, pedagogical and cultural services (Fauche, 2008). These various services aim to provide a link between experts (art historians, curators, etc.), and museum visitors.

Studies aimed at defining the professional contours of cultural mediation (Fauche, 2008; Peyrin, 2010) establish that the mediator must start with the rhetoric of experts and scientists, and adapt that rhetoric to visitors. The mediator acts as a translator, which demands a combination of training in art history and a background that can bridge the gap to the museum public in all its diversity. The mediator is the "hot wire" between the work of art and museum visitors (Caillet, 1994). The goal of cultural mediation is to enable visitors to encounter museum art and help them to grasp the meaning of a work of art so they can better nourish their relationships with the world (Dufresne-Tassé, 2006). Peyrin (2010) traces the development of this profession through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, starting with guides recruited from among art history graduates at the Ecole de Louvre. Workshop tours originated at the end of the 1960's, mainly through the efforts of a small group of guides who wanted an alternative method for working with children. Marie-Thérèse Caille, a national guide, was particularly active in this development. She felt it was essential to have children look at art, talk about it, exchange ideas and discover for themselves the art techniques the guide describes. Cultural mediation consequently aims to reduce the gap between art and the public by providing keys for understanding works of art.

This literature clarifies the missions, contradictions and practices of cultural mediation, enabling us to understand its particularities. On the other hand, it does not go into the details of co-activity involving mediator and visitor. Nevertheless, we think co-activity throws light on what is occurring between visitors and a work of art, between visitors and mediators and between visitors-mediators and works of art. What do we mean by "co-activity"? This is the interaction between the activity of the guide-mediator and the activity of the visitor (adults, adolescents and younger children). In our sense, co-activity is similar to the concept of "co-configuration" (Engeström, 2006). It is one unit of analysis that includes a minimum of two interconnected systems of activity and is made up of a number of characteristics, continued relationships of mutual exchanges between subjects, their transformations over a long period of time and the mutual learning that takes place between the parties. Co-configuration thereby implies interdependence between parties that form a strategic alliance.

### III. ACTIVITY MODELS

The Narrative Activity Model or NAM (Decortis, 2013) is a four-phase construct (figure 1) intimately linked to the observation of educational situations.

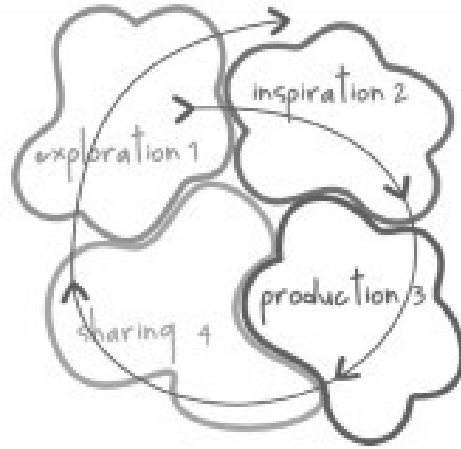


Figure 1 : Légende en français ?

Figure 1: Nam Model.

Exploration concerns the subject's interaction with the environment, which can be direct or mediated by social interactions. Inspiration favours the process of dissociation by revealing certain features that seem pertinent to the subject. It is a moment of both consideration and analysis of one's own experience. Production is where the subject externalizes the fruit of imagination in order to produce new content from previously explored resources. Sharing is when these productions are described and presented to others: the producer can discuss the production, check its effect on others and give a social existence to the production.

The MARO activity model focusses on the encounter with a work of art (Bationo-Tillon, 2013). It developed from the mutual and gradual enrichment between literature based on activity theory and numerous observations (four series of experiments Bationo-Tillon, 2013; Folcher & Bationo, 2012) as well as some sixty interviews conducted over three years at the Musée des Beaux Arts in Rennes. It integrates two approaches to activity: sensory activity and analytic activity. Sensory activity consists of the feelings and impressions developed by the subject during contact with various classes of existing situations: immersion, impregnation and imagination. Analytic activity integrates three other classes of situation: detailed description of the artwork; detachment, where art is related to stabilized fields of knowledge; and questions arising from visitors.

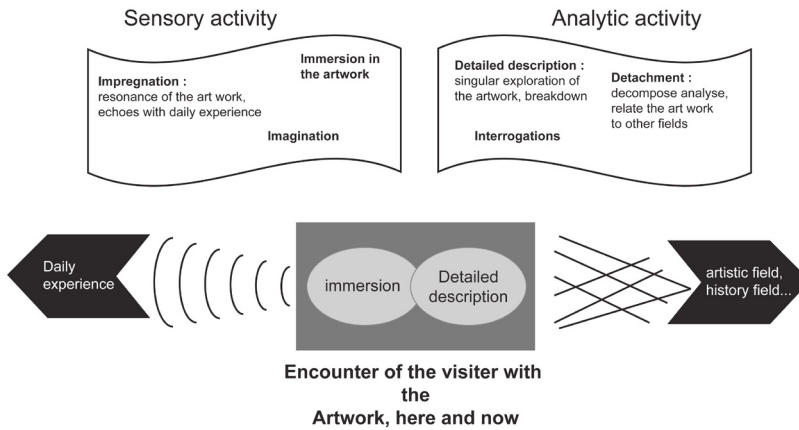


Figure 2 : Légende en français ?

Figure 2: MARO Model or the model of the activity of encountering a work of art.

These activity models refer back to the potential activity of a capable visitor. They do not correspond to activity as it occurred in each singular creative or museum situation, but rather to the potential activity of encounters with works of art and creativity deployed in all its aspects. In this manner, our understanding of the potential of creative activities coalesces in the encounter with a work of art.

The various classes of situation of these models may be concomitant or sequential. They may not all be deployed and they remain dependent on factors like the works of art, visitors and guides. These models constitute a conceptual toolbox for describing the real activity of visitors and guides in a singular situation of mediation, taking into account the connections of classes of situation within the sequences of activity and revealing the absence of classes of situation or repeated connections in some classes of situation. We therefore consider the visitor as a subject capable of acting, of transforming by mobilization of internal and external resources that enable him or her to respond to the object of his or her activity (Rabardel, 2005). In this way, studying human and creative activity implies visualizing them in the perspective of the diversity of instruments and resources at the disposal of the subjects mobilized by the activity.

#### IV. APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Our approach consists in mobilizing these two activity models to map and describe a cultural mediation situation in order to understand the dynamics of the activities that are deployed. These activity models enable us to obtain a concise and efficient representation of the complex processes at work in cultural mediation, which can then reveal the dynamics of



activities within these singular situations. These activity models are mobilized in order to clarify the activities of cultural mediation during museum visits and during the production and creation activities of workshops, both from the point of view of visitors and guides/mediators. In addition, these models are instrumental in identifying the dynamics of activities occurring within the mediation and in qualifying the rhythm of the co-activity. The status of these models is discussed so as to conduct ergonomic interventions for professionals in cultural institutions, and also to develop tools for reflexive practices that can improve the conditions of mediation situations and the design of new tools.

#### IV.1. A SINGULAR MEDIATION SITUATION: MONUMENTA WRITING WORKSHOPS

Among the situations studied, we focused on a singular mediation situation for adolescents: a writing workshop at the Grand Palais in Paris in context of the Monumenta exhibit. This workshop was provided for adolescents visiting to the exhibit. Activity models were mobilized to clarify questions: what do these models reveal about the absence or presence of certain classes of situation, their alternation, their connections and their dynamics? What do the models reveal in terms of what emerges from co-activity?

#### IV.2. SITUATION AND DATA GATHERING

Within the framework of a project with Centre National des Arts Plastiques (CNAP), we studied visitor reception of the mediation approach developed for Monumenta 2011. This contemporary art exhibit is an annual event held in the main exhibition hall of the Grand Palais in Paris, France. In 2011, sculptor Anish Kapoor was commissioned to create the monumental installation that he called "Leviathan". It is an inflated, 15-ton, red PVC sculpture, 37 meters high, with a volume of 72,000 m<sup>3</sup> in four spherical or oval chambers. Visitors enter the exhibit through the interior, which is lit from the outside. They exit into the exhibition hall where they can see the outside of the sculpture. There were several phases in the writing workshops for secondary school students (Figure 3). First, the mediators welcomed the visitors, explained how the workshop would be conducted and handed out notebooks (5 minutes). Next, they accompanied the young visitors in exploring Anish Kapoor's installation. This exploration began by visiting the inside (20 minutes) and continued to the outside (20 minutes). After the students finished these visits, the mediators led them to a table set up in the exhibition hall, where they played the surrealist games of "Chinese Portrait" and "Exquisite Corpse". The workshop continued with the adolescents producing personal narratives about the sculpture, either in the form of role-playing or another format of their choice (letter, poem, personal diary, etc.). The visit ended with a round table discussion where each visitor read his or her narrative to the other participants and mediators.

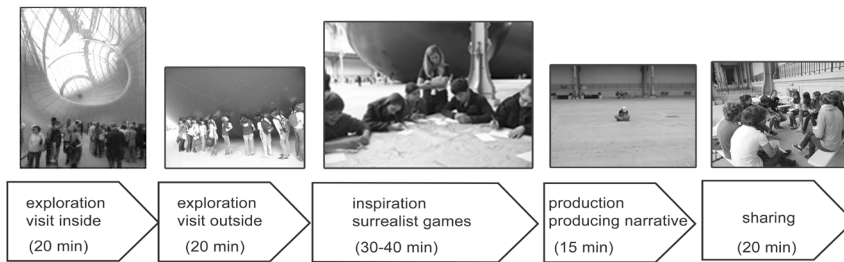


Figure 3 : Légende en français ?

Figure 3: Chronological record of the workshop.

A total of six workshops were recorded. Each was led by two mediators. There was an average of fifteen participants per group, approximately 12 to 14 years old. We observed the writing workshops, conducted informal interviews with the mediators at the end of each workshop and we took photos during the visits and workshops. Our observations involved taking notes and recording, then transcribing the audio exchanges between the mediators and the participants. The interviews enabled us to obtain immediate feedback and the points of view of the two mediators on the functioning of the workshop. We decided to photograph situations illustrating the co-activity of the adolescents and the mediators, as well as the notebooks of the young visitors.

## V. RESULTS: WHAT DO THE ACTIVITY MODELS TELL US?

First, we will explain what happened during the visit to the installation, and then we will describe the workshop using the phases of games and creative writing that concluded in sharing individual experiences.

### V.1. THE RHYTHM OF CO-ACTIVITY DURING THE VISIT OF THE INSTALLATION?

The visit to the installation corresponds to the NAM model's definition of exploration. In addition, we think the MARO model provides a structure useful for a detailed description of the co-activity of exploration. In fact, the first type of co-activity sequence identified coincides with the family of analytic activity where the mediator occupies the space of the speaker and the visitors are the listeners, taking notes looking at the installation or drawing. We call this type of sequence "*Sowing Visit*". A distinction is made between these visits and a second type of sequence that corresponds to the family of sensory activity where the mediator calls upon the visitors to speak. This type of sequence becomes polyphonic, revealing variations in the feelings and impressions of visitors as a result of their encounter

with the installation. We call these sequences “*Harvesting visits*”<sup>1</sup>. Verbal exchanges concerning the exploration of the work of art were recorded in workshops and subsequently transcribed to serve as the basis for this analysis. Table 1 below is a 20 minute excerpt on the discovery of the interior of the installation.

Chronological continuity of the sequences		Mediators	Visitors	MARO Model	NAM Model
Time	1-Harvesting visit (about 8 minutes)	71 words-2 mediators Questions and incentives to speak, write and draw	6 students-61 words Expression of feelings, impressions	family of sensory activity	exploration
	2-Sowing visit (about 8 minutes)	460 words-2 mediators Statements/description/incentives to take notes	22 words-2 visitors 1 question-1 request for greater precision	family of analytical activity	exploration
	3-Harvesting visit (about 4 minutes)	104 words-2 mediators/ questions/incentives/ Index	62 words-8 visitors Expression des sensations, expressions	family of sensory activity	exploration
	4-Sowing visit (about 3 minutes)	200 words-2 mediators Statements	0	family of analytical activity	exploration

TABLEAU 1 : *Légende en français ?*

TABLE 1: Number of words and structure of phrases of mediators and visitors during the workshop.

Firstly, let us mention that this alternation of sequences of *sowing visit* and *harvesting visit* occurs throughout the visits and workshop as well as during the exploration of the inside and the outside of the installation. During the “*harvesting visit*” sequences, the visitors and mediators speak about the same number of words, whereas during the “*sowing visit*” sequences the mediators speak much more than the visitors.

1. “Sowing visit” is meant to convey the fact that the guide “sows” ideas concerning the work of art. The visitors are free to take or to leave these ideas, or to pick and choose. “Harvesting visit” was chosen to describe the moment when feelings and impressions can be exchanged, and when the diversity of a group of visitors can be fully appreciated.

To understand what is happening Table 2 below shows two sequences of interaction between sowing and harvesting visits:

harvesting visit/ sensory activity	sowing visit/ analytical activity
Mediator: “Gather around. What are your first impressions? Anything you say can help you later in the workshop. You can write it down.” V1: “references”. V2: “squashed head”. V3: “It’s too beautiful”. V4: “oppressive”. V5: “It’s dodgy”. V6: “Hurts my head”. [...]                     V7: A vacuum”. V8: “The universe”. V9: “A hot air balloon”. V10: “A big Swiss cheese”. V11: “You’d think we are in a uterus”. V12: “Like a pajama”. V13: “In the belly of a whale”. V14: “Like we took a baby’s place in amniotic fluid”.	Mediator: “ Do you know what a Leviathan is?” M 1:... “ It’s a sea monster mentioned in the bible, in the Book of Job, it’s like we are inside a monster, a body, the red color, internal organs”. M2:... It’s taken from the story of Jonah who was being tested by god, who lived inside a whale. When he escapes, all his references have changed. He feels very small and doesn’t know how to situate himself in the world, his references are muddled, and our story parallels Jonah. We’ve changed a bit, our vision has changed, but when we escape, we sigh with relief, return to the light, air breathable, almost like being born again, we are expelled from the sculpture, and are different when we get out.” [...]                     M1: “Take notes”

TABLEAU 2 : Légende en français ?

Table 2: Excerpts of a harvesting visit sequence and a sowing visit sequence.

The excerpt of the “*harvesting visit*” shows that the mediators’ involvement consists of posing questions and encouraging the visitors to explore the sculpture with all of their senses and to express, draw and write at the height of their emotions. On the side of the visitors, it is important to mention that a number of adolescents expressed subjective experiences consisting of feelings and impressions. Herefore, the mediators’ involvement during sensory activity is to discover the feelings and impressions of the visitors through the expression of their points of view on the sculpture and its characteristics, but also to provide support for the diversity of the adolescents’ points of view and to encourage them to share what they experienced. Co-activity consequently allows arrays of feelings and impressions to emerge from the encounter with the work of art, with the variety stemming from the diversity of the students. As these arrays of feelings and impressions are being formed, the visitors and the mediators listen to each other while the adolescents gather and annotate fragments they hear, and express their feelings and impressions.

The excerpt of the “*sowing visit*” sequence shows how the mediators occupy the spaces of verbal expression. In fact, sometimes the visitors do not participate at all, or their participation is limited, (e.g. questions or requests for more details). The participation of the mediators consists

of providing facts about the artist, about art history, about the context in which the work was created, while recalling the elements previously expressed by the visitors (i.e. loss of reference, the whale, etc.). The visitors listen, take notes and visibly try to understand because they ask for clarifications when the occasions arise.

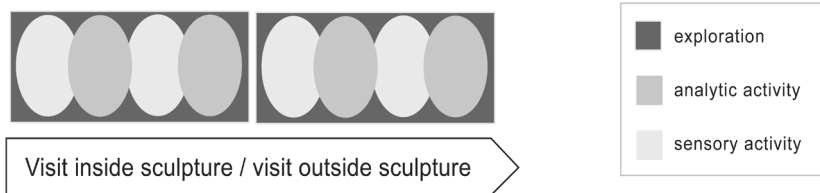


Figure 4 : Légende en français ?

Figure 4: Chronology of classes of situation during the exploration of the sculpture.

The mediators set the tone for both harvesting visits and sowing visits by alternating their approach (Figure 4): sometimes encouraging visitors to express themselves, always taking care to encourage the diversity of points of view (families of sensory activity). Sometimes they transmit stabilized elements of knowledge by monopolizing verbal communication long enough to give details, explain, make connections and provide perspectives. This places visitors in a listening mode where they do not often interrupt the mediator (family of analytical activity). In co-activity the visitors adjust, synchronize with the mediators, creating a back and forth exchange where they take turns speaking, and where sensory co-activity and analytical co-activity also alternate.

The rhythm of co-activity is set by adjustments in the activities on both sides, as well as by an alternation of the registers of sensory and analytical activity brought about by the mediators. This rhythm and “switching on” of co-activity give rise to verbal exchanges that circulate, intermingle, metamorphose and develop with mutual impregnations as the visit continues. The result is that the systemic point of view provides better understanding than examining the separate parts. Something emerges and circulates, and it consists of feelings, words, impressions, drawings by the visitors as well as the knowledge dispensed by the mediators. In short, there is an intertwining discussion among the participants.

## V.2. THE RHYTHM OF CO-ACTIVITY IN CREATIVE WRITING

The second part of the workshop takes place in the main exhibition hall of the Grand Palais. In a corner the adolescents find their notebooks, pens and colour felt tip pens on big tables covered with Kraft paper. We continue to clarify co-activity by using the NAM model to examine what the mediators and adolescents are doing. “Exploration”, the first class of situation of the NAM model, took place during the visits to the inside and outside of the installation.

### V2.1. Inspiration

The mediators mobilize resources derived from the field of art and the surrealist movement in order to accompany the adolescents in the “inspiration” class of situation. The linking of sequences varies little from one workshop to the next. Only two workshops out of six did not include the “Exquisite Corpse” sequence, preferring to devote more time to preparing personal narratives.

<b>Chronological linking of the sequences</b>	<b>Mediators</b>	<b>Visitors</b>	<b>NAM Model</b>	<b>MARO Model</b>
1- Chinese Portrait (about 30 minutes)	Giving instructions and encouraging adolescents “You can post things on the paper tablecloth like on a smartphone wall ...	Writing-drawing-laughing Reciting out loud	INSPIRATION/ SHARING	Sensory activity
2- Exquisite Corpse (about 20 minutes)	Giving the instructions and encouraging the children	Writing Reciting out loud laughing	INSPIRATION/ SHARING	Sensory activity
3- drawing up a personal narrative (about 15 minutes)	The mediators withdraw	Going off alone and individually writing	PRODUCTION	Not applicable
4- oral rendition of the narrative (about 10 minutes)	Mediators and adolescents take turns listening to narrations and applaud them		SHARING	Not applicable

TABLEAU 5 : Légende en français ?

TABLE 5: Chronological linking of the creative writing activity sequence.

In this second part of the workshop, mediators use surrealist games to inspire visitors.

During the first stage, the Chinese Portrait, the mediators’ proposals form the fabric of the inspiration. The mediators make ten proposals along the lines of: “if the Leviathan was a plant...” / “if the Leviathan was an animal...”. After each mediator proposal, the adolescents have a few minutes to imagine, draw, write, sometimes discuss with their neighbours and look at what their neighbours have written or drawn. Between proposals the mediators go around the table, looking at what each adolescent has done, encouraging them to draw and to keep work they don’t like, rather than striking it out just draw next to it. The mediators also play an important role in getting the adolescents to evoke, draw and name results of their

creativity that might normally be censored or at least be rarely broached in the school environment. So, when an adolescent draws buttocks, they encourage him or her by saying that they are well drawn. These are violations of taboos as described by Rodari (1996). After each proposal, the mediators launch a round table discussion, asking the adolescents to recite or describe what they wrote or drew. The mediators and adolescents listen and use their imagination when their turn comes. These round tables are punctuated with laughs and applause.

In the second phase, the Exquisite Corpse, 3 or 4 adolescents compose their own phrase related to the sculpture. They are told not to take into account the preceding cooperative efforts. As with the Chinese Portrait, there are sequences of sharing that elicit the same laughs and applause.

Let us try to understand what the mediators are accomplishing through these games, and how it is related to the “fantastic binomial” as described by Rodari (2010). These games provide for various dissociations and random new associations that create something unusual. In this manner, the adolescents have to use their imaginations to establish a relationship. Freed from their normal semantic context, the words are characterized in new ways. This is the concept of “strangeness”. Through these games, the mediators encourage the visitors to free themselves from their normal use of language and to reconsider words and the power of words to conjure up ideas, as well as reconsidering their experience with the work of art by listening to the impressions of others. In other words, the inspiration of the visitors and their experience of sharing are at the core of these surrealist games. The mediators are using the games to get the adolescents to create new images. They make the most of what each individual imagination produces, encouraging each adolescent to go further, to recognize their personal potential for creativity. It seems important to mention once again that it is the young people who are providing the content of this imagination-based writing, and the mediators who are encouraging them to express themselves without going into their feelings or their imaginations. The mediators use various resources to get the adolescents to allow their sensitive material emerge: questions, fantastic binomials, encouragement to write, draw and play.

### *V2.2. Production*

To close the workshops, the mediators give instructions that may vary marginally depending on the workshop. They ask each visitor to produce his or her personal narrative concerning the installation. The mediators ask half of the workshops to draw lots that assign roles in writing about the installation. The other workshops have more options.

### *V2.C Sharing*

Applause punctuates the “sharing” of narratives. We see the same structure as in co-activity, which alternates between moments of personal writing and moments of co-activity where mediators and visitors are involved in the same activity: listening, laughing and applauding.

The co-activity of creative writing in this second part of the workshop appears to be woven from personal and group activities. Time for personal activities is essential so that the visitor can select and develop a narrative. This is the moment when the young visitor gathers and collates his or her narrative about the work of art.

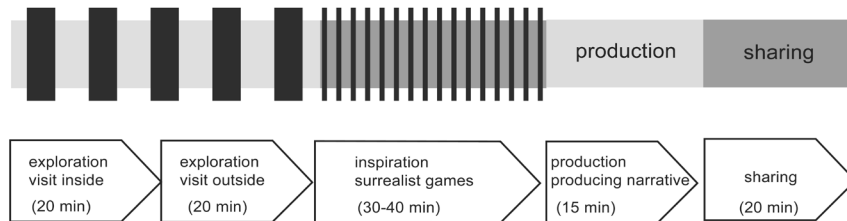


Figure 5 : Légende en français ?

Figure 5: Chronology of the “Sharing” class of the situation in the workshop.

The graph above (Figure 5) shows how “Sharing” extends significantly into the closing sequence. Sharing sets the rhythm for the progress of the workshop. This situation appears an average of five times during the “exploration” of the installation. We should mention that each occurrence of the sharing class of situation involves a number of round-table-like verbal exchanges in the group. There is an average of 15 occurrences of sharing during the surrealist games, each accompanied by a round table discussion. Sharing also occurs at the conclusion of the workshop.

This sharing is polymorphic: The words and the drawings on the tablecloth allow co-visibility of the diverse points of view of the adolescents. During recitation, sharing coincides with a resonant mode of listening, laughing and applause, and appears to be preponderant in this gradual progression towards an activity of creative writing.

## VI. DISCUSSION

We will concentrate this discussion on the contributions of capable subject activity models in cultural mediation. We start with the question: how are our models useful for museum professionals and do they enable us to throw light on new dimensions of human activity?

### VI.1. INSTRUMENT FOR MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS

Our activity models appear to allow a clearer view of the work done by mediators/guides, and in that respect are useful instruments for professionals of cultural institutions. Public services cannot escape economic



imperatives and therefore need to justify their productivity by quantifying it (Edeilman & Roustan, 2007). A number of directors of public services believe the value of this type of model lies in its usefulness in formalizing and objectifying characteristics of cultural mediation activities that may escape the rational logic of work organization, namely activities based on inspiration and sensory responses.

These models are also reflexive instruments that can be used in examining the real activity of guides/mediators and, as such, they can contribute to discussions of cultural mediation in respect to the on-going changes in the profession of museum guide. Guides/mediators are currently engaged in reshaping of their profession. They have to deal with a broader range of factors that determine their activity (e.g. young children, more variety in the types of art exposed). We see these changes as a transition from a profession based on a store of knowledge to a profession where the guide is a weaver of encounters and experiences. In fact, activity analyses show that when confronted with an increasing variety of situations (e.g. children as a public, open artwork and digital resources), the object of the guide's activity is enlarged. Initially that object was to provide knowledge of art and art history. Now it consists of linking art history to the visitors' many and diverse forms of experience. This transformation of the object of the activity of guides/mediators reflects on-going changes in the profession of museum guide, and it is precipitating a debate about who and what a guide is. Some mediators/guides believe it is important to integrate the experiences and feelings of visitors, while others place priority on maintaining their status as experts on works of art. NAM and MARO are activity models that enable exchanges with guides and mediators allowing them to see that these changes are broadening the range of classes of situation rather than reducing them. From the outset, our models reveal the absence of certain classes of situation in some cultural mediation sessions. As opposed to the singular situation described in this paper, other cultural mediation situations enabled us to observe that many workshops do not include this alternation of sensory and analytical activity, and also that they provided only a small space for sharing. Using the activity models, an ergonomist can gain a perspective on the situations, detecting potential that should be followed-up and expanded for more effective action on the parts of both visitors and guides. Detecting the presence or absence of classes of situation essential for deploying creativity and a more aesthetic and sensitive relationship to works of art are, in our opinion, the first phase of working jointly with guides to foster a broader range of potential for creativity among young visitors. More specifically, these models enable us to propose an alternative vision to both the management of public services and to guides/mediators, allowing for co-construction of common references on the basis of real activity and the development criteria of both visitors and guides. This is what we are doing with the RMN. By setting up work groups composed of the public and guides and combining their particular issues it is possible to redefine common references for the profession, using the guides' know-how and experience, but also using knowledge on the development of creativity in children.

## VI.2. INSTRUMENT THE RESEARCHER CAN USE TO CLARIFY THE RHYTHM OF CO-ACTIVITY

It appears to us that these activity models enlarge the analytical grid to classes of situation, providing a systemic vision of activity rhythm. In this light, mediator/visitor co-activity can be clarified, as well as what emerges from this co-activity. The nature of what emerges will enable us to surmise whether or not the visitors occupy diverse classes of situation in the MARO and NAM models, and if they vary and alternate their relationship to the work of art. These models act like tuning forks for describing the rhythm of co-activity. In this perspective, they reveal the determining factors for creativity within a cultural mediation session: the importance of sharing, which drives a rhythm throughout the workshop, and the importance of alternating analytical and sensory registers. This exploration play, including the components of inspiration, evocation and impregnation proposed by the mediators also sustain the activity of imagination in adolescents. This playing does not involve simply reproducing what was already tried, but rather consist of a creative reworking of impressions received. The adolescents link together these impressions to create another reality. In conclusion, these activity models may open interesting research perspectives beyond the field of museology.

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