

EMAC 2014  
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Museum Work – Working for Museums

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**Museum works for children.  
Children are working for museums too...**

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# ITALY: OPEN AIR MUSEUM



# ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE MUSEUM

## Different publics have different needs

- “Full Access and Inclusion for All”

(Unesco, 2005)

- Museum exhibit can sustain  
the acquisition of capability

(A. Sen, 1999; M. Nussbaum, 2001)



# MUSEUM OPEN THE DOORS TO CHILDREN



***To be so big, to think to the smallest***

*(L. 285, 1997)*

Childhood is a public with special needs

They have many physical and sensory needs

Their communication and social skills are still developing

They like to learn through play and active exploration

They explore the museum accompanying by adults (facilitators)

They have a global style of learning (*what, why, how* they learn are strictly connected)

They are curious, consummate, enthusiastic museum visitors

*(K. Chin, 2011)*

# MUSEUM WORKS FOR CHILDREN

The access to cultural heritage is one of the right of the child

(Convention on the Rights of the Child, New York 1989)



Particularly:

Art. 12, **the right to be heard**

Art. 28, **the right to education**

Art. 31, **the right to participate fully in a cultural and artistic life**

## **Article 31**

1. States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
2. States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.

# OPEN-MUSEUM FOR YOUNG VISITORS

Museum purposes need to be:

- **children-centred**
- **adequate to their developmental stage**
- **responsive and dialogic**
- **flexible**
- **based on playing**
- **empowering**
- **...**

(B. Piscitelli, M. Everett, K. Weier, 2003)

The museum needs

strong psycho-pedagogical knowledge  
specific organizational and expositional criteria  
educational staff  
different tools  
adequate spaces and exhibits

(A. Acerbi, D. Martein, 2006)



# **SOME RESULTS FROM THE ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

*“Characteristics of educational offers  
to young children  
in science museums”*

Literature analysis

+


Empirical research

in 86 museums

from the Veneto Region (North-East Italy)

+

In-deep research in 12 museums



# CHILDREN-FRIENDLY MUSEUM

- 1) Spaces, objects, activities accessible and approachable for children
- 2) Relevant information
- 3) Good facilities



# SPACES, OBJECTS, ACTIVITIES ACCESSIBLE AND APPROACHABLE FOR CHILDREN

- Equipment, exhibits, show-windows at **child-eye level**
- **Play resources** linked with collections
- A **variety** of resources **appropriate** and **stimulating** (to interact with five senses: video, audio, smelling, manipulating, ipertextual path...)
- Active resources that can **inspire questions and inquiring** (objects children know that have some new elements to recognise, unknown objects to inspect, handle objects to explore by the senses, similar object to compare...)
- Resources to investigate (microscope, scientific tools...)
- Resources that children are **already familiar with** and that are **linked to the district** where the museum is located
- Catalogues with **activities for young visitors**
- **Flexible spaces and furniture** where to set **events for children participation** (workshops, entertainments, songs, explorations, labs, costumes role-plays...)

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

- **Orientation information and signage** to help children and carers to navigate their way around the building
- Pictures, explanations, in deepening materials **adequate to the developmental stage** (captions, panels, data sheets, interactive supports...)
- Short information or words **carers can read to children**, or they can **listen together**
- **Questions** that can stimulate new experiences or to think-over
- **Educational suggestions for carers** to help them to be more conscious of their educational role during the visit and to help them to guide children in the learning adventure
- **Tools they can use before or after** the visit to facilitate generalizational processes and linking to the daily-life

# GOOD FACILITIES

- **Safe** environment
- **Seats** and places where to **relax**
- **Indoor** and **outdoor** spaces
- Somewhere to **eat** or to **picnic**
- **Physical access** to young walkers and with buggies
- **Toilets** and **baby changing**
- **Wardrobe or cabinet** for coats and other personal objects

# DESIGNING EXHIBIT FOR CHILDREN

- **Hands-on experiences**

exciting and interactive elements in exhibitions

- **Minds-on experiences**

that require attention, time and engagement, not simply physical action

**Principles** to develop these exhibition:

- 1) They provide visitors ownership for the **duration** of the experiment time (for a commitment of interest and time)
- 2) They are designed for **one to three users at time**, to provoke and facilitate conversations (between visitors and the phenomenon and among visitors themselves...)

*(G.E. Hein, 1998)*

# CHILDREN ARE WORKING FOR MUSEUMS TOO...

What young visitors offer to the museum?

The museum becomes

- **well-aware**
- **flexible**
- **careful**
- **debating**
- **meditative**

We have to assume **children as criterion/standard** because  
“**the children-oriented word is also much more people-friendly  
(liveable for everybody)**”

We have to design

“**WITH** children the environment where they can learn and grow“ 13

*(UN, Action plan for childhood, 2002)*



# **CHILDREN ARE WORKING FOR MUSEUMS**

Children can be the defenders  
of Heritage

**THANK YOU**  
*for your kind attention*

*THANK'S to the museums  
which participate to the research*

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