

Guest Editorial

In Cooperation with SIGEMM: A special issue on museum education and mediation

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Although the Canadian Review of Art Education (CRAE) regularly features manuscripts focused on art museum education, this is the first issue that is entirely dedicated to theory and practice in this area of art education. As research in museum education continues to blossom in Canada (Allard, 2015), we were excited about the prospect of developing an entire issue on this area. Approximately two years ago, we approached Anita Sinner, who was then the Editor of CRAE, with a proposal to create a publication in collaboration with the Special Interest Group on Education and Mediation in Museums (SIGEMM). We are thrilled that this collaboration came to fruition. The development of the issue began amidst change—Boyd White became the editor of CRAE after Anita Sinner and Marie-France Bérard started her tenure as the President of SIGEMM after Virginie Soulier in 2015. Throughout this time of change, it was clear that our desire to create an issue focused on museum education and mediation was well supported by all.

The support for the issue's theme, "Museum Education and Mediation", parallels the increasing attention being paid to educational concerns in museums. This has been especially evident over the past three decades, which coincided with the advent of SIGEM. In the spring of 1986, two Quebec-based groups dedicated to museum education—the *Groupe de recherche sur l'éducation et les musées* (Université du Québec à Montréal) and the *Groupe de recherche sur les musées et l'éducation des adultes* (Université de Montréal)—began to meet informally to discuss their research at the annual conference for the Canadian Society for Studies in Education

(CSSE). In 1993, Michel Allard, the head of the UQAM group, and Colette Dufresne-Tassé, the leader of the UdeM group, decided to invite researchers in the field of museum education from a variety of universities and professionals from diverse museums to form a group dedicated to examining issues in museum education (Allard, 2015). This new interest group—the *Special Interest Group on Education and Museums* (SIGEM)—was and remains affiliated with the Canadian Educational Researchers' Association (CERA) and the CSSE. Since its creation, SIGEM has hosted annual meetings as part of the CSSE's conference during the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. The meetings offer a bilingual forum for specialists from a variety of fields across Canada and from abroad to gather and discuss pressing theoretical and practical issues related to museum education and cultural mediation.

Last year, the group changed its name to the *Special Interest Group on Education and Mediation in Museums* (SIGEMM), which mirrors changes occurring in the museum world. With this name change, education is emphasized as both scholarly research and hands-on practice that affects all components of museums (Soulier, 2015). Cultural mediation is now a prominent term in museum-related circles in Quebec (Lafortune, 2012) and many parts of Europe (see the Museum Mediators: <http://museummediators.eu>). It often refers to the resources and communication approaches used to develop meaningful, high quality relationships between visitors and works of art (Lafortune, 2012). This far-reaching term emphasizes the overt and tacit efforts to create significant encounters in museums. These elements of the new name make a push for even more pluridisciplinary work within the fields of museology and heritage (Soulier, 2015) and, in parallel, underscore the multifaceted factors that affect museum audiences' learning experiences.

In creating this special issue on museum education and mediation, we decided to highlight this turning point for this interest group. The annual meetings of GISEMM regularly lead to the development of a publication that features the proceedings of each event. This issue of CRAE offers a forum for the proceedings of the 2015 annual GISEMM meeting, as well as articles from researchers and practitioners whose work is in concert with the aims of GISEMM. Eleven of the authors in this issue are active members of GISEMM and five are members of the Canadian Society for Education through the Arts (CSEA), the host organization for CRAE. The articles you will find in this issue emphasize various aspects of education and mediation in museums and the authors employ various lenses to explore these areas, thus emphasizing the pluridisciplinarity of this special interest group. Additionally, the authors explore a multitude of areas of museological practices, including evaluation, training, outreach, visitor studies, school-museum collaborations, and archives, to name a few. These manuscripts feature multimodal approaches, dialogue-based learning, critical and political readings, holistic understandings of visitors, and dynamic partnerships. These approaches push against traditional and outdated transmission-based, and exclusory practices in museums. The authors' writings highlight the richness of museum education research and practice in Canada and abroad, as well as the quality of exchanges that occur at GISEMM annual meetings. For more information about GISEMM, we invite you to reach out to the leaders of this special interest group.

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