

# “What does it have to do with me?”

## The Learning Museum, or How the Principle of Aesthetic Research Makes Cultural Education More Accessible

by Lena Seik

The work of the Art Mediation Department at the Museum of Contemporary Art Leipzig is directed towards children, young people, and adults. In creative, project-related learning modules designed to stimulate exchange and interaction between the members of groups, urgent questions are addressed concerning the society in which we live. The GfZK understands itself as a “learning museum,” entering into a dialogue with its visitors and constantly reflecting on and expanding its working methods. As well as developing participatory concepts to accompany its current exhibitions, the GfZK opens itself up to the world outside of the spatial boundaries of the institution. On site, in the districts concerned, themes and contents are developed and new areas of activity created, either on a temporary or permanent basis. The GfZK acts as a partner, a driving force or the initiator of such projects. The principle of aesthetic research is always the methodological basis used. In the following, the conceptual and working approach is illustrated by the example of two projects.

### **Focus: Self-empowerment**

Art mediation activities at the GfZK focus on breaking down hierarchies, encouraging people to actively participate and collectively experience processes of knowledge and activity. This applies both to events and activities that are directly connected with exhibitions and to the varied project work undertaken with various target groups inside and outside of the museum building. Mediator concepts and participative activities are, of course, an integral factor in the planning and design of exhibitions. They enable visitors to acquire the skills needed to assimilate the contents in an independent way. In addition to dialogue-style tours, specially developed formats play an important role in formal and content-based mediation work. Here a special mention should be made of Julia Schäfer, a curator at the museum, who views her curatorial tasks as an integral part of art mediation processes.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a team of art mediators prepares specific mediation tools for each exhibition, enabling visitors to develop an independent approach to the contents under discussion.

At this point, the Pick-Box is particularly worthy of mention. For several years now this box on wheels, containing material, tasks, and background information, has been a constant companion at every exhibition. Its primary function is to help children to experience exhibitions in an active way. However, it can also be used by adults, or by old and young together, to make new discoveries and associations. The tasks it contains are openly formulated, animating people to link the contents of the artistic positions with their own living environment, rather than imparting knowledge and facts.

Visitors are motivated to take their first step towards an independent approach to works of art by asking them questions such as: “Where have I seen something like this before?” “Does this work of art remind me of anything?” and – the key question, which is given the highest priority in art mediation at the GfZK – “What does it have to do with me?” The materials in the Pick-Box inspire visitors to ask questions and to reflect. They empower people to develop a personal approach to the contents presented, which are intended to be discussed and applied to daily life.



Pick-Box for exhibition *Appropriation of the Present*, ©GfZK 2012

### **Museum versus public space**

The Pick-Box is one possible mediation tool that can be applied to the contents of an exhibition. In this case, it is directly linked with the museum space.

The spectrum of art mediation as an aspect of cultural education is, as we know, diverse, and operates in a number of various ways. It takes place in all kinds of different areas of education and culture. It encompasses art lessons at school and participative local projects. Cultural education is a key concept used to describe educational projects with an artistic, creative, or general cultural focus. Cultural education, and hence art mediation, should be made accessible to everyone. Just recently, in its new publication “SCHÖN, DASS IHR DA SEID (GLAD YOU ARE HERE),”<sup>22</sup> the *Rat für Kulturelle Bildung* (German Council for Cultural Education) makes a plea for the establishment of a legal right to cultural participation, and at the same time speaks of a human right to cultural education. We can only agree, assuming that cultural education is meant not in the sense of a transfer of knowl-

edge through learning facts, but as something that can only be achieved through trying out, experimenting, and participating, enriching the wealth of experience of the individual concerned and strengthening his or her own autonomy and maturity in social processes.

The Museum of Contemporary Art is, naturally, a place of cultural education. The exhibitions and collection form the basis of the museum institution, and may in themselves be seen as a kind of art mediation. They confront people with current topics relating to society, and invite them to take part in personal and public discussions. The third pillar is the educational mandate, i.e. art or cultural mediation. It is defined primarily through the contents addressed by the museum in its exhibitions and programmes. Some of these educational activities take place within the institution in an altogether classic sense, in that they are developed specifically for the exhibitions and carried out in the exhibition space, for example the Pick-Box mentioned above. Dialogue-based tours or short projects in the exhibition rooms also belong to this category. The activities of the GfZK Art Mediation Department are always on view in the presentation room, where project documentation and results are displayed. The workshop rooms are also continually accessible to visitors to the exhibition – even when they are being used by project groups.

Since 2005, when the department first opened, one thing has been confirmed again and again: art mediation is justified within the rooms of the museum. It can provide insight into questions concerning our society. It can raise such issues in the immediate vicinity of the work of art, trigger discussions and animate us to collectively search for solutions to problems. However, in order for this to happen, visitors have to come to the institution. We must work on the assumption that they will find their way to the museum, which everyone knows as a place of learning, experience, and action.

### ***Why should the museum expand?***

The museum sees itself as an educational establishment that is open to everyone. But what if certain obstacles prevent people from observing the educational opportunities available within the rooms of the museum? How can free access to cultural education be guaranteed if the personal, infrastructural, spatial, social, or cultural situation of children, young people, or adults stands in the way?

Our answer is that the museum must move away from its fixed rooms and go to the target groups concerned. The institution expands, no longer confining itself to the museum space. It leaves the building and works on site, anywhere where it might need to be. From this point forward, the exhibition space is just one aspect of many in the large sphere of art mediation, which expands to cover the entire city. The institution travels to city districts and rural areas, or operates internationally and digitally. It expands beyond the circle of people who visit the exhibitions and members of the mediation team and becomes a group of people who work, participate, and address social problems together in the outside world. They do this in a way that one would expect of (contemporary) artist practitioners: in an inquiring, process-oriented way, from an aesthetic point of view, in public, involving others. These active people analyse their environment, directly intervene, provoke irritation, confront the community, and incite controversies. A commitment to contemporary art on a local scale provides an awareness of methods and approaches in the same way as it would in an exhibition space. In this case, however, the transfer path is possibly shorter and the scope of action more direct. The outside activities may be linked with specific exhibition contents found in the rooms of

the museum, but this is not necessarily the case. This also belongs to the idea of opening up or ease of accessibility, and incorporates all the current questions of the group, community, society, and related discussions.

### ***The learning museum***

In this process of opening up and extending its radius of action, the mediation team acts as a representative of the museum, as an agent of the institution. By constantly relocating to new sites and being confronted with new situations, each one of which being completely different from the last, the team must be extremely flexible in its way of thinking and acting. No situation, no location, no community is the same as another. Thus, the institution must learn. It must adapt to existing circumstances and react accordingly.

Each mediation project is new and different – from the starting point right up to the finish. Target groups differ in age, background, subject orientation, and previous knowledge. A kindergarten group in the town centre is faced with a different set of circumstances in its immediate environment than young people from a school in the surrounding villages. Middle school students from a prefabricated housing estate on the outskirts, living in difficult social situations, have different future prospects and motivation levels than grammar school pupils from the Montessori school complex in the same area. Clients at an establishment for the rehabilitation of the mentally ill devote their attention to the personal concept of "work" whilst pursuing creative activities, whereas the employees of a company producing bathroom fixtures look for opportunities for the further development of their products.

The mediation team must adjust to each situation and react individually. As a result, one might think that each project starts from scratch and runs in a radically different way, each process being completely unpredictable. This is of course not the case. Naturally, no project is the same as another. Nevertheless, the procedure and structure always follow a certain plan or method.

### ***The method of aesthetic research***

(Gohlis Space Pioneers)

This method can be illustrated using the example of a long-term project with kindergarten and primary school children. The project, entitled "*Raumpioniere Gohlis* (Gohlis Space Pioneers)," was concerned with Georg-Schumann-Straße in the north of Leipzig. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this street was a magnificent main thoroughfare, lined with imposing *Gründerzeit* and Art Nouveau houses and numerous shops. Following the destruction of the Second World War and the GDR era, several sections were redeveloped. However, the street was never returned to its former glory. Today it is faced with various problems: heavy traffic, dense development, high levels of air and noise pollution, the endangerment of existing structures, a large number of unrenovated, partly disused buildings and shops, few green spaces, and scarcely any children's playgrounds.

Both the kindergarten and the school are situated on a side street, in the immediate vicinity of Georg-Schumann-Straße. A distance of around 500 metres separates the two. This section of the street was to be examined over a period of two years. At the same time, both groups were to be given the opportunity of working together during certain phases of the project.

Based on this project, a principle can be identified that is applied to all projects organised by the GfZK Art Mediation Department: the principle of aesthetic research.<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of the entire process, a theme is established. Participants identify questions they find particularly interesting about this theme. Then they search for paths that might help them to answer their questions. Under the supervision of an alliance consisting of teachers and experts such as art mediators or designers, artists, etc., they are encouraged to find forms of their own. They are introduced to new methods and techniques which will help them to make their personal process transparent, and to archive, collect, and collate their results. These include scientific methods such as the interview or the statistical survey. But the procedure alone, the search for a possible answer, has similarities with research processes from science and art. The reward is the journey and the journey is the reward. The attempt to answer the initial question remains simply an attempt, one possibility amongst many.

The method is therefore wholly directed at the process, at the activity of experimenting and researching. What happens within a group during this process can take many different forms: related to the examination of a street, for example, the result could be a collection of portraits of the people who live there. Real or imagined stories could be told and recorded in writing. The information could be based on interviews or memories of one's own. Old and new maps could be compared and set in relation to one another, and so on.

The end result is the outcome of an individual journey, and for this reason it is rarely predictable. This makes this type of work extremely interesting and varied; however, it also demands a high level of flexibility on the part of the experts, to ensure that processes run smoothly in a technical sense. They must also have a fundamental understanding of the procedure, allowing for mistakes and failure along the way. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that each participant experiences personal development, taking previous knowledge and interests into account and recognising these as resources. Working on the principle of aesthetic research or research-based learning provides unlimited possibilities for liberal, self-determined learning, encouraging, and supporting people to develop and utilise their creative abilities.

The outcome is often portrayed in the form of process documentation or creative design. It can be presented in the form of a newspaper, a weblog or an exhibition. A staged performance is also possible, summarising the process documentation in a small production. Again, anything is allowed here. The members of the group decide which form of presentation is the most suitable.

In the case of the "Gohlis Space Pioneers,"<sup>4</sup> the basic research theme was Georg-Schumann-Straße. The children were introduced to the theme in the form of an initial question: "Is Georg-Schumann-Straße a place for children?" The schoolchildren wrote down their thoughts on this topic, each of them having the opportunity to contribute their previous knowledge from the very beginning. The answer was a unanimous "No!" The main reason given for this was the heavy traffic and the related risk of accidents. Additionally, the pavement was considered too narrow for playing. In an opening event, the participants prepared a large drawing of the street. Here again it became apparent that traffic and air pollution were major issues. In the ensuing period, the groups of children began to do research on the street, taking various aspects into account. The children from the kindergarten



went for walks along the street and side streets. In a kind of searching game, they photographed numbers and characters. The discoveries they made were subsequently evaluated and discussed at kindergarten.



Space Pioneers Gohlis, *Exploring Georg-Schumann-Street*, ©GfZK, 2012



Space Pioneers Gohlis, *Exhibition Opening at Georg-Schumann-Street*, ©GfZK, 2012

The primary school children explored the area in their way. They examined certain aspects, for example particular types of doors and entranceways, which they drew and made up stories about. Through various different types of approaches, the groups came closer to the surface and substance of the street in a formal and creative sense. One could say that they drew up an inventory, including doors, houses, street corners, animals, building sites, etc. The artistic media used to do this were photography, models, painting and drawing, collages, and texts. The many individual aspects were put together in a presentation designed in collaboration with adults, which was displayed directly on the street. The participants were successful in securing the local authorities as a cooperation partner, and part of the presentation was held in their rooms. Contact was also made with a local shop-owner. As two of his shops were empty at the time of the project, the shop windows could be used as an exhibition display. The children curated exhibition areas themselves. At this point in the proceedings, the museum came to the fore as an exhibition venue, serving as an example of possible types of exhibition design. Here, certain types of space and aspects of public relations work were analysed with the children. The design of posters for the street exhibition was also a part of the process for which the children were responsible.

In the process of aesthetic research, active co-determination and decision-making with regards to the further course of events plays a vital role. In this way, the children were able to consciously observe the various processes involved in the project. This aspect was continuously encouraged by means of reflection and evaluation.

In the second year of the project, the Space Pioneers decided to examine the street with regard to its inhabitants. This confronted the children with people who had their own opinions on the state of the street and life in general. They visited people at their workplaces, e.g. a baker, a pharmacist, or a librarian, and whilst hearing their stories, they also learned how to conduct an interview. Finally, the project resulted in the children formulating visions of their own: groups from the kindergarten and the school created models in order to express their wishes for a lively, more hospitable street. These featured limited traffic zones, playgrounds and gardens, fruit and vegetable stores, a swimming pool, and a football field, above which traffic was redirected over a bridge.



Space Pioneers Gohlis, *Future models on Georg-Scumann-Street*, ©GfZK, 2013

The process of aesthetic research allows all involved parties to make new discoveries. They are actors in a constant, dynamic series of procedures. Work on such projects is experienced as extremely lively, multi-faceted, and sometimes surprising. Project supervisors and participants work together and are required to react in a flexible manner. There is more than one way of achieving the same goal. Sometimes the path is stony, and research can lead to a dead end. In such cases it is necessary to stop and think, look for solutions, run through alternatives, and remain curious. The joint approach of the project group must remain optimistic, open and process-oriented at all times. The research expedition can be successful only if this is accomplished.

## **UEBEL&NEISS**

Aesthetic research is an open process that brings the previous knowledge, personal interests, and infrastructural conditions of each of the participants together under one roof. In this way, project work can be adapted to any situation – an essential prerequisite for working with the pupils in the following project. *UEBEL&NEISS* is the name of the first fashion label from Leipzig/Grünau. It was founded in 2013 as a school project. Since then, the label has increasingly func-

tioned as a flagship and identification feature for the district culture of the young people of Leipzig Grünau. It began in a cooperative process of aesthetic research.<sup>5</sup>

The district of Grünau is one of the largest prefabricated housing estates constructed in the former GDR, situated in the west part of Leipzig. Once conceived and built as a living area for thousands of working people, we can now only speak of Grünau as being a dismal satellite area on the outskirts of the cultural metropolis. Following the political and social changes after 1989 and the associated redevelopment of Leipzig's *Gründerzeit* houses, which are typical for the city, living in Grünau became an unattractive alternative. The new buildings, which had formerly been highly sought after, now became council housing. Cultural institutions, restaurants, and cafés closed. Only a very small number of these still exist today, alongside a few newly founded initiatives (including a young people's theatre and a skating arena). The picture of Grünau is dominated by prefabricated buildings and green spaces. The inhabitants mainly belong to low-income households. The centre of the district consists of two shopping malls, which function as a centre of commerce and communication for the residents.

At the 94th School, students can attain a secondary or comprehensive school certificate. Social problems affecting the families, along with poor future prospects, result in a grave lack of positive learning attitudes. Linked with this, there is an increased risk of frustration, lack of respect amongst the pupils, and a refusal to attend school.

The idea of the label arose in a collaboration between the 94th School and the GfZK, assisted by experts from the fields of communication and fashion design. Since 2011, the school and the cultural institution have formed a partnership within the framework of the nationwide programme "Kultur.Forscher! (Culture.Researchers!)" This programme has taken on the task of bringing to life and consolidating alliances between schools and cultural institutions. The principle of aesthetic research was the method used. Alongside other projects aimed at forging links between culture and schools, in the school year 2012/13 the project team developed the idea of founding a fashion label. The starting point was for the pupils to perform an analysis of their immediate living, learning, and acting environment: Leipzig Grünau – first as regards contents, and later in an aesthetic sense.

This analysis began with the observation of a central public area not far away from the school, featuring a traditional supermarket, a Russian food store, a hairdresser's, a clothing shop selling merchandise from China and Vietnam, a pub, and a physiotherapy practice. In spite of the shops, the whole area appears deserted. In an initial examination of this location, striking details were recorded using photographs and drawings. Back in the classroom, the area was analysed on the basis of this material, and conclusions drawn regarding the district. Further ideas arose on how the examination could be continued: the pupils pointed out a group of adults drinking alcohol, referring to them as "bums." A discussion ensued concerning the use and meaning of this word, during the course of which it was described as negative and discriminating. The group agreed that no one knew exactly what caused the adults to meet up during the daytime and drink alcohol. If they wished to find out, the individuals concerned would have to be asked. Several students said that they would not dare to do this, but one pupil agreed to conduct an interview. Unfortunately, this undertaking never materialised. But the picture of the empty, bleak area with the drinking adults remained, as a prominent image of the district.



Another picture of the district, however, is that of a home and a place of residence. The young people spend most of their time in their local neighbourhood. Few of them make their way to the attractive town centre, which is considered too far away and too expensive. They feel at home in Grünau where they know the ropes; furthermore, it is where their friends live. This is quite clearly seen as a positive aspect, and was articulated as such again and again. Other advantages are a nearby lake and the wasteland areas between the prefabricated blocks, which have now been made into green spaces.



UEBEL&NEISS, Image of Grünau, ©GfZK, 2012

The label name UEBEL&NEISS arose from these two contrasting pictures. Common language codes played a role: the words “übel” (nasty) and “nice” often being used in the young people’s everyday language to express rejection or acceptance.

Divided into two groups, the students turned their attention towards different aspects of the project: one being the development of the outer appearance, and the other the background of the theme of fashion and clothing. Research was done into the following questions: Where do I buy the fashion items I like? How much does the clothing cost? Where is it made? To this end, pupils went on excursions to clothing shops in the district, questioned and photographed fellow students and combed through the internet. During this process, the group discovered that most clothing is not made in Germany, as they had expected, but in Asia. As a means of comparison, students visited the Leipzig fashion designer Franziska Eichhorn in her studio. She explained the process of creating a piece of clothing, from the initial idea to the finished item, and demonstrated just how lengthy, time-consuming, and expensive it is.

In brainstorming sessions, the group responsible for creative development came up with the name and colour scheme. In cooperation with the interaction designer Tristan Schulze, the style of lettering was then developed, which was to be the distinguishing feature of the label from then onwards.



UEBEL&NEISS, Developing Corporate Identity, ©GfZK, 2013



left: UEBEL&NEISS, Silk screen printing Session, ©GfZK, 2013  
right: UEBEL&NEISS, Photo Shooting, ©GfZK, 2013

The first t-shirt collection was printed using a screen printing process. The first overall appearance of the label was captured in a photo session. This shoot took place on site in the young people’s residential area. The final activity in the project, and at the same time the starting signal for a new phase, was the development of a video. The young people worked with a dance teacher to develop a series of choreographic movements, which were then put together in a dance video. The celebratory opening took place in July 2014, at a one-day event in the district’s shopping centre, where the Grünau label was presented for the first time.

The activities involved in the project took place in various different locations – in and around the school, in the district, at the workplaces of the experts (screen

printing workshop and studio), and also in the museum, whose rooms were used as a "design office" for the label's name and appearance. In reference to the description of the "learning museum," it should be mentioned that the institution was required to show a maximum degree of flexibility. Not only did the project locations gradually spread out over the entire city, but the team was continually expanding. The initial cooperation between a teacher and a mediator grew to become a network of experts, including the two designers, the people from the screen printing workshop, the dance teacher, and all those responsible for structural district and school affairs. The group of young people also expanded: fellow pupils, approved by the group, were recruited for the photo shoot. The publicity gained by wearing the t-shirts and publishing the video roused the interest of other young people. The number of people involved in the project increased, along with the level of motivation for a new chapter of UEBEL&NEISS.

In the current school year, 2014/2015, the pupils are starting up a student company. A new collection is going to be created, consisting of printed t-shirts and specially sewn items, which will be promoted publicly. The label attracted the attention of a well-known musician and rapper, who expressed an interest in working in collaboration with the young people. All processes related to the label are now going to become more professional and more structured within the framework of the company. In this way, different procedures become more tangible and make sense to the young people, for example the fact that it is important to attract attention so that the clothing is sold, in order to be in a position to invest in new fabrics. They are gaining the experience that public attention makes it easier to gain potential sponsors, who in turn help with the realisation of ideas, for example by enabling them to rent a shop at an affordable price. These experiences also generate motivating impulses concerning the future career prospects of the students.

### ***Does it all sound too good to be true? Dampeners and downers***

The two above project examples are described in detail, with the focus on their feasibility. They are intended to encourage people to get involved in open processes, to cooperate and to explore new territory. However, they should not detract from the fact that integrated project work can require a tremendous amount of effort. In some cases, a project can fail due to various factors, or a well thought-out, excellent project idea is never put into practice. The projects "Space Pioneers" and "UEBEL&NEISS" are, or were, also sometimes affected and disrupted by unfavourable influences. The GfZK art mediation team has experienced failed project ideas or unproductive co-operations. Mention is made below of some unfavourable factors that can be encountered – both of a general nature and directly related to a project. No pretence is made of trying to solve the problems, for in most cases the circumstances are so complex that only individual solutions are viable.

### **Education system**

Using the German school system as an example: in the year 2014, the school day at most schools, especially state-run schools, will again consist of 45-minute units of specialised teaching. The various different subjects, following one another in quick succession, are treated by all concerned as though they had nothing whatsoever to do with one another. Teaching staff work alone. One school class follows the next, hour after hour. Teachers do their best to communicate as much factual knowledge as possible - on the one hand to cover the curriculum, and on the other to give students the chance of obtaining a high performance evaluation. Students

require measurable results, dictating which kind of personal future can be expected in the best case, or which goals are completely out of the question ("You'll never manage that!"). Within this system, the personal interests, previous knowledge, and living situation of the pupils and the teachers are rarely taken into consideration, due to their diversity and the difficulty of achieving comparative measurability. As a consequence, teaching material is often far removed from the actual lives of the individuals, and is often perceived as such. In favour of the measurability of teaching results, on which the future of the pupils relies, the system is rarely challenged. A further problem is (and teachers who give versatile lessons and continually develop new ideas and possibilities should please not feel under fire at this point) that a seemingly proven method is simply adopted from one school year to the next – sometimes over generations. The motto seems to be: "If it's worked long enough, it will carry on working."

However, it need not be stressed that, especially in the sensitive situation of growing up and being confronted with social demands – particularly true of children and young people at school – the most important basic approach should be that of openness, flexibility, and improvisational talent. And most people are aware of this. Yet collaborative project work incorporating partners in and outside of school is hindered and even severely impaired by rigid, system-related factors. Here are a few examples:

- A teacher has problems introducing flexible teaching times, because it would mean pooling lesson times with another teacher. However, although the subjects they both teach are predestined to be treated in an interdisciplinary way, the colleague is not interested in cooperating. Consequently, project time has to take place between two teaching units, and the opportunity of free, process-oriented work is limited.
- The "classroom" setting has proved unfavourable for project work, but the structure of the school day does not allow students to go to another place of learning. For some projects it would certainly prove useful to leave the usual learning location – to work in a quiet atmosphere, to gain new impulses, or simply to introduce a change in routine.
- Pupils are unwilling to move to another learning location since, during the course of their school days, they have developed the attitude of "consumers" of education. This situation arises when all the initiative comes from teaching staff, whilst pupils absorb information without actively participating. Unfortunately, this kind of practice is widespread. Breaking out of such a vicious circle requires time and energy, and this process is often unrelated to the actual project contents. It can sometimes be extremely useful to regard it as a part of the project – otherwise, it can make project work extremely difficult.

The problems involved in cooperating with schools could be completely avoided by allowing project work to take place in the afternoons, after lessons. On the one hand, external partners would not be affected by the circumstances governing school and lessons. On the other hand, far more financial possibilities would be available, as most funding sources in Germany only support projects that take place outside of schools, due to the fact that Federal States are responsible for teaching development and school structures.



However, I believe that this is not the way forward, especially considering the individual's right to the accessibility of cultural education, as mentioned above. The school is an institution through which everyone passes, and as such it offers the opportunity of reaching as many children and young people as possible. As well as providing learning strategies and knowledge, schools should be a place that encourages personal development and reflection. Rather than being regulated and sanctioned, mistakes and failure should be seen as necessary aspects of acquiring knowledge and experience. This could be achieved in open processes such as research-based learning or aesthetic research, with flexible supervision and varied learning activities – even for children and young people who, for whatever reasons, do not experience cultural diversity in their everyday lives outside of school. Precisely *this* is what I consider fundamental in the call for the legal right to cultural education.

### **The practice of funding allocation**

A further factor that should be mentioned within this context is the general dependency on third-party funds. A project can certainly be successful with a minimum amount of funding. It all depends on the structural orientation, i.e. what kind of institutional infrastructure already exists in terms of space, personnel, or material resources. In an ideal case, these conditions will suffice to provide the basis of a successful cooperation. It becomes more difficult if the character of the project demands an additional budget, e.g. for the payment of artists or designers to provide special expertise and valuable outside impulses, as was the case in "UEBEL&NEISS." A workshop is currently needed for this project, situated outside of the school but not too far away. In this specific case, the project team is encountering huge problems due to an extremely limited budget. The idea of a project room arises from the following situation: since the beginning of the school year, the project group has been meeting once a week in the school art room, during lesson times. The difficulties described above are encountered: the students do not have time to leave the school building and travel to the museum, although this would enable them to work in a relaxed atmosphere. Working in the classroom causes unpleasant dynamics to arise within the group. Pupils behave "in school mode," displaying low levels of self-organisation and motivation, although it was their own choice to take part in the project. In the school building, the above-mentioned mechanism of "educational consumerism" sets in. An external location for regular meetings would help the project group to organise itself more efficiently. A room designed especially for the project could be created, at the same time symbolising the opening up of the school institution. Initial discussions have been carried out with local officials, with the idea of taking over a vacant shop that would function as a studio and display workshop, at the same time being used for publicity activities and selling clothes. These discussions resulted in the statement that the borough sees the project in a very favourable light and is happy to support it, but that no one can be expected to provide a room free of charge. The project management considered raising funds, and submitted applications for financial support. Up until now, no positive decisions have been made as far as the funding of this part of the project is concerned, and some applications were not able to be submitted. There are various reasons for this, all of which are linked with current funding allocation practices:

- Applications can be made only to third-party funding sources, which allow for the compatibility of teaching and cooperation partners outside of schools. However, most sponsors cannot or do not wish to provide this kind of funding.
- Sponsors have certain orientations and guidelines with regard to content,



with which the project must comply. Many options do not apply to "UEBEL&NEISS," which already has a very clear content.

- Most sponsors expect the project to have a prototype function, to be innovative and unique. In many cases, funding can only be applied for before the project has begun.

This is the dilemma with which "UEBEL&NEISS" is confronted at the present time. It is a project that takes place during school hours, was started up two years ago, and whose participants are pupils who – for all of the above-mentioned reasons – are not 100% self-motivated and self-organised. Thus, it is virtually impossible to apply for third-party funding.

This is just one example of many experienced by cultural workers in their daily working lives. The difficulties are augmented by the enormous administrative tasks involved in the allocation of funding.

All of these obstacles culminate in cooperation partners making the decision not to submit applications, which means that available funding is not utilised to the fullest. This, on the other hand, can result in project teams cutting back on their workload, so that opportunities cannot be further developed. Finally, the cooperation and the character of a project suffer as a result of the difficult conditions: even successful projects can only be carried out for limited periods of time, after which they cannot be developed any further. They are classified as having already taken place, and thus not innovative enough to be funded. Even state-funded programmes such as the programme "Kultur(t)räume □ Frühkindliche Bildung kreativ (Cultural spaces, cultural dreams – creative education in early childhood)," within the framework of which "Gohlis Space Pioneers" ran for a period of two years, are limited, with no follow-up options. Why? What purpose does the call for prototype and uniqueness serve, if no further development is wished for once the project term has elapsed? In my opinion, the constant invention of new projects cannot be the key to a functioning and constantly developing educational structure or socio-culture; furthermore, it does not meet the needs of the target groups.

#### *Closing remarks*

The open process of aesthetic research and its experimental character, which allows for highly personal points of contact, is extremely well suited to individual approaches to cultural education projects. People of all ages can participate and become actively involved. The museum, in our case the Museum of Contemporary Art and its team of art mediators, can make an important contribution by functioning as a starting point, a think-tank, or simply a source of inspiration. By behaving flexibly and constantly adapting its contributions to the given conditions, it remains a reliable partner in processes of cultural education, both inside the museum building and at outside locations. This role of the museum should be an integral feature of its self-image. Teachers should be able to approach the museum in the secure knowledge that it is a reliable partner with a rich network at its disposal, as well as a passionate attitude. This should apply equally the other way round. And even if the infusion of financial support from promotion funds dries up, this should not be to the detriment of joint project work! Setting processes in motion, learning through research, participation and involvement, taking over public spaces – all of this can be successful on a small scale, opening up new vistas for all parties involved. This should be our main objective.

*Translated by Louise Bromby*

1 For an example of this, please see the exhibitions "Puzzle", "Kunst Kunst" or "Hausgemeinschaft (Family Affairs)". <http://gfzk.de/>

2 Rat für Kulturelle Bildung. 2014. "SCHÖN, DASS IHR DA SEID" Accessed 27.09.2014. <http://www.rat-kulturelle-bildung.de/index.php?id=59>

3 Helga Kämpf-Jansen, *Ästhetische Forschung*, Salon Verlag, 2004.

4 See "Raumpioniere Gohlis": <http://www.gfzk.de/foryou/?p=2623>

5 See "Kultur.Forscher!" and "UEBELENEISS": <http://www.gfzk.de/foryou/?p=1652>

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