

Parallel session 7: PCST as a performance: looking for new audiences

SCIENCE ON STAGE!

Susana Alonso Argul, Laura Barrufet i Miro,

*RE-CREA ACCIONS CULTURALS. Tordera 60 baixos (08012) Barcelona.
Phone 34-3 459 4580-, fax 34-3 457 2512 , E-mail: re-crea@re-crea.info*

Abstract

Reflection on the notion of science often used to be either an unpleasant, boring or very demanding task, but nowadays this has changed for the better. Evermore resources are available to bring it closer to an ever-increasing public. Our activities involve theatre as the main vehicle in the transmission of scientific concepts, in what one might call the “staging of science.” These staged science-related situations are devised to create a direct and live contact with scientific processes so that museum visitors acquire scientific knowledge implicitly through their identification with the stage character or characters.

Key words: theatre, science, emotion.

Text

Science enters our daily lives through the means of communication, our leisure time, our habits of consumption and so on.

Our work centres on the transmission of science in leisure time situations, using the arts. We transmit scientific concepts by drawing on the emotions that art provokes, and by means of theatrical characters and/or situations this access to science is enhanced. We therefore work with educational and instructive resources which foreground the senses and feelings, such as music, theatre, dance, taste and even smell. Our objectives would not be met, however, without the prime target of providing the visitor with a pleasurable and memorable approximation to science.

TIC Teatro Interactivo Científico (Interactive Scientific Workshop)

L’Aquàrium de Barcelona (Barcelona Aquarium)

The TIC Interactive Science Theatre is especially designed for the 3 to 10-year age group. The main goal of the activity is to immerse children into the world of science, enabling them to understand simple scientific processes without apparent effort.

So as to achieve this objective the visit was divided into two stages: the first consists of a visit to the aquaria which focuses on a series of practical demonstrations, with or without the use of gadgets, turning it into a playful and entertaining experience; and the second consists of a theatre play with the sea as its theme, which aims to consolidate the learning process.

Here, theatre is used as the instructive device that, drawing on its inherent playfulness, becomes the vehicle towards the learning of scientific concepts related to the sea. It is through their experience with different characters and

plots that youngsters are provided with an easy understanding of the mechanisms that rule nature.



Image 1: “1910, un paseo por la fábrica” (“1910, a stroll through a factory”). Museu de la Ciència y la Tècnica de Catalunya (The Catalan Museum of Science and Technique)

In this particular case Technology is our focus of attention: the process of the transformation of sheep wool to fabric inside a textile factory in turn-of-the-20th-century Catalonia. The activity is designed for an adult public, but also adapted for children from 6 to 18 years.

Our proposal recreates this specific moment in Catalan history through the experiences of a group of characters –a male and female factory hand, a sales representative and the factory owner. The visit incorporates the visitors as new factory workers, and by means of various theatrical skits not only do they come to understand the technological process underlying textile production but also the social tissue that forms part of the labour history of early-industrial Catalonia.

This activity explores scientific concepts and the intimate relationship between science and society at large, as exemplified in history, economy and all sorts of social situations.



Image 2: “Todo es Química / All is Chemistry”. Itinerant Exhibition, Museu de la Ciència y la Tècnica de Catalunya (The Catalan Museum of Science and Technique)

The aim of this exhibition was to show the importance of chemistry in our daily lives, its applications and its history. Due to the successful museum exhibition policy and the demand for this kind of exhibitions, it attracted a significant number of visitors from an educational and general background.

It was specifically designed with instructive activities as an integral part, which complemented it by enabling dealing with those aspects of chemistry less easily integrated into a conventional exhibition, such as experiments, historical data and anecdotes. Moreover, the difficulty of some of the scientific concepts on display required the design of a series of accompanying explanatory activities that would be adaptable to any kind of public.

The methodology used to achieve the goals above was the incorporation of chemistry workshops as theatrical skits where chemistry was directly linked to our daily life into the staging of historical encounters between chemists of great historical importance, such as Mendeleev and Mme. Curie.



Image 3.

Conclusion

When scientific concepts come to us through several senses simultaneously, they tend to leave a much stronger and broader imprint on our memories than in a strictly cognoscitive way. Leaving conceptual achievements apart, we firmly believe that intense moments of magic, amusement, solidarity and union are extremely valuable to the senses and feelings, stimulating ongoing visits to any science museum and boosting the museum visitor's will to appreciate, take care of and protect the natural environment. Therefore, when trying to make science accessible to the larger public, one should always rigorously focus on their needs, interests and individual realities, as this will boost their curiosity for unknown aspects of science. As science forms an integral part of our daily lives, we only need to establish the bridge that allows us to understand and appreciate it fully.

