



ICOM Education 21

Museum
Education
and
Adolescents

Sculpturized!

Mix Your Media > Image Sound Video

■ GREET STAPPAERTS

MAIN PUBLIC OPERATION
MIDDELHEIMMUSEUM

■ BART ROOMS

PROJECTCOÖRDINATOR
PIAZZA DELL'ARTE

TRANSLATION BY KIRSTEN EASTHAM

"I would never go to a museum myself. And yet I actually do like to go. It's nice to find out more about the works of art. Sculpturized! is a good, different way of telling the story that lies behind the sculpture." (Isa, 16 years.)

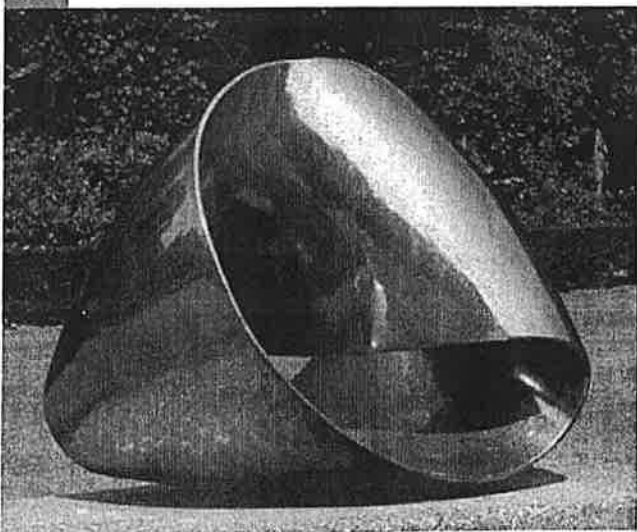
■ The open-air museum for sculpture in the city of Antwerp (Belgium) has a fantastic collection for children (5-12 years). The combination of sculpture and the environment is an idyllic setting. Through play children learn a lot about the visual language and philosophy behind the sculptures. For youngsters (12 years and older) there is a well-designed educational program for schools. It is more difficult to attract youngsters to discover what a museum has on offer in their spare time.

Are the visual arts actually the right approach for youngsters?

In 2004 we developed *WoordenWoud (Forest-of-Words)*¹, a literary journey for youngsters on a discman with texts from contemporary literature for young people that was linked to the museum's sculptures. We wanted to continue in this direction, if possible emphasizing even more the contemporary culture of youngsters.

We found a good partner in *Piazza dell'Arte*, an organization for art education in Antwerp. For ten years they have been working with a project-based method with youngsters in schools as well as with youngsters in their spare time.

As a project-partner they have great in-house expertise both at technical and at educational level. *Piazza* originated from the idea that all youngsters, regardless of their background, should be given the same opportunities to explore their full creative



Max Bill, *Eindeloze kronkel*, 1953-56
© Middelheimmuseum Collectiebeleid

potential. In actual practice this means that they try to break down the barriers – holding back youngsters – regarding art, by bringing the art experience to them through schools, youth clubs, arts centres, museums, hostels for asylum seekers, city districts or at festivals aimed at youngsters and cultural events.

"Because art is contagious and we want to pass it on to everyone..."

Piazza organizes mobile, multidisciplinary art projects for youngsters. They set up an entire project or several art workshops on location in well equipped buses, and for several days let the youngsters experiment with various disciplines, for the Middelheimproject: electronic music, video, photography, mixed media and graphic design).

Piazza works with all sorts of youngsters, regardless of their background, from 14 years onwards. This enabled them, for the past ten years, to develop a strong work relationship with schools as well as a strong project based program specifically designed for spare time and strive to further develop their successful program related to museums. A good example of this is the cooperation with the Antwerp Diamond museum with the exhibition 'Bling Bling. The Crown jewels of Hip Hop' in 2007.² For these efforts they received De Gouden Shot 2007 (The Golden Shot 2007) by CultuurNet Vlaanderen vzw which awards an annual prize to the best culture-marketing project.³

The past 10 years Piazza successfully organized over 200 – 1 week lasting – art projects for schools, resulting in a very diverse group of interested youngsters. Amongst other things we can therefore provide art projects for youngsters that they can do in their spare time. The youngsters that participate are personally committed, thus not within a structured school context. Within the school structure the youngsters are introduced to the idea of art in all its forms, to make it accessible and take down barriers, which eases the participation of those interested in doing projects in their spare time.

It goes without saying that a form of continuation is achieved, focusing on offering substantive and technical quality, rather than achieving mere quantitative objectives.

A strong example is 'stART', the annual meeting between Piazza dell'Arte and a young creative force, in a unique location in the city of Antwerp, such as empty public buildings, a former church or academy of dramatic art...

The idea behind the 'stART-editions' is simple: Piazza offers a limited group of youngsters an intense artistic journey in their spare time with a powerful mix of disciplines and mixed media in all their variety. For the duration of one week, the youngsters and we occupy a preferably extraordinarily inspiring location and it is shaped to their liking.

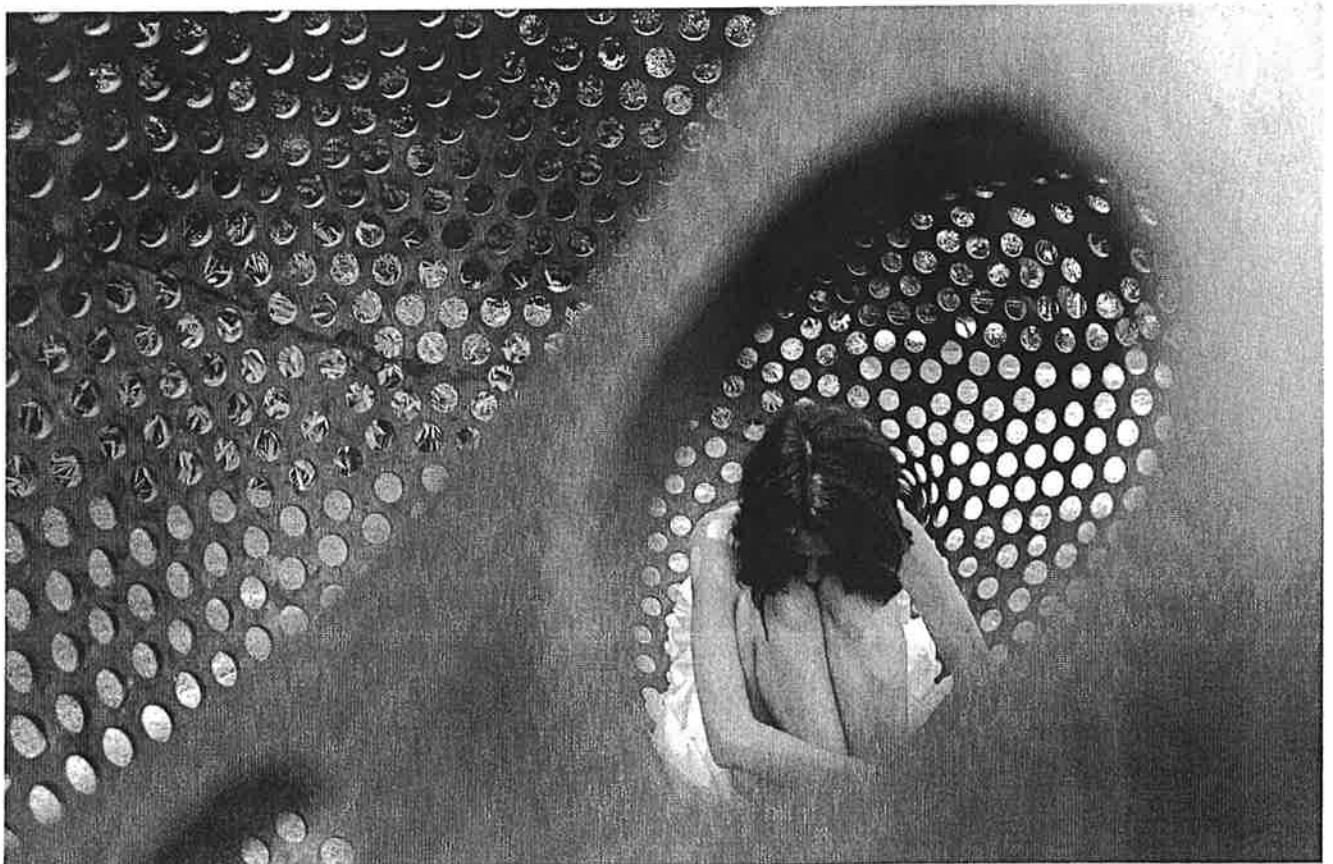


Foto-interpretation by the work of Tony Cragg
© Piazza dell'Arte

During the Easter holiday in 2009 it was stART's fourth edition, it was a huge success due to the participation of many interested and talented youngsters and the numerous visitors as well as content wise.

For 5 days 'stArt 2009' offered a creative program covered by 7 workshops (Dance, Word & Performance, Electronical music, Photography, Graphic design, Mixed media & VJ'ing, Video) in the former Herman Teirlinck Studio in the centre of the city of Antwerp, where the participants all set off to work round one theme covering everything. During this edition the participants gave the artlabo – some sort of experimental 'playroom' customized to the likings of present-day youngsters with text, music, performance, and new media – the title "symbiosis, or the perfection of the jellyfish".



Music-interpretation by the work of Tony Cragg
© Piazza dell'Arte

As many as 23 talented youngsters from Antwerp (between 15 and 20 years old) were challenged to translate their interpretation of a rather abstract theme such as 'symbiosis' to a multimedia overall performance for a live audience. And that from nothing, from scratch, in their spare time, in only 5 days and in an extraordinarily inspiring location.

It is through such intensive 'spare time projects' that Piazza – with the help of for instance museum related partners – continues to succeed. On the one hand this is achieved by offering quality projects for youngsters who are really interested and passionate about growing creatively. On the other hand this is realized by partly promoting and partly through an organic growth of a group of youngsters.

And here clearly lies Piazza's mission statement and philosophy, in creating a contemporary offer for youngsters who haven't got any experience in new media or visual art in the broadest sense and yet are very passionate about it but simply never got the chance, as well as those who already have a passion for certain forms of art but just don't find a professional and contemporary space to experiment. Piazza tries to contribute to that policy on a municipal and a Flemish level, in helping them to provide the much-needed space to experiment and the opportunity for youngsters to exhibit.

"Piazza also provides underprivileged youngsters with opportunities to experiment with art. This underprivileged character one mustn't take too literally. It's more about youngsters without immediate access to means to pursue any art activities." (Bert Roymans)

By consulting Piazza and other Flemish museums that have set up courses for youngsters (e.g. the museums of Ghent with Spotters⁴ and the Antwerp Diamondmuseum with the Bling Bling project⁵), it has been proved that youngsters are best approached through projects. This creates a more visible and sustainable commitment. For this reason the Middelheimmuseum also wanted to offer projects for youngsters that they can attend in their spare time. By doing this we hope to build a gradual relationship with a group of interested youngsters which in the long run can develop further through specific projects or even organically.

Together we came up with Sculpturized! Mix your media. The starting point was the youngsters' environment and their interest in multimedia in order to encourage them to tune in to modern and contemporary sculpture. Sculpturized! is a project for 16 years and older where sculpture and mixed media meet.

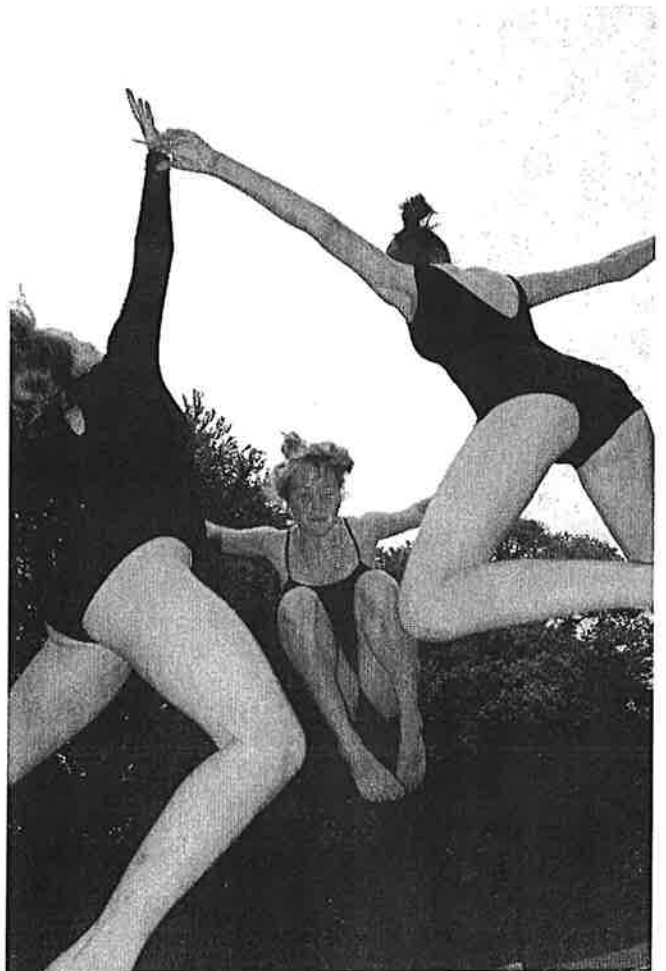


Foto-interpretation by the work of Rik Wouters, Zotte geweld, 1912
© Piazza dell'Arte

The aim was that the artistic-minded content – created by the youngsters – would be transferred to a digital medium which could be used by other youngsters (and also other visitors) visiting the park. This would enable visitors to experience the sculptures in an alternative way, along a digital route in the park itself but seeing it through the eyes of the young creators.

"I love coming to the Middelheimmuseum to walk and sketch and when I saw the announcement of Sculpturized! on the museum's website I was interested to look at the sculptures in a different way, thus with multimedia." (Çaro, 21 years)

Finally we were able to start this past summer!

During 10 days 14 sculptures were studied, re-assessed, touched, interpreted and (digitally) manipulated in the music, photography, video, multimedia and graphic design studios. For each and every sculpture, modern or contemporary, figurative or abstract, a story was created with lots of loving care; the creation of a context. A context which values the sculptures and will undoubtedly inspire other visitors as they walk through the museum.

The youngsters seized the opportunity to reflect on the sculptures, the environment and the beaming sun, and their fantastic workshop mentors stimulated them to take a step further in their own experiences with the works of art; they philosophized and developed a vision on imagery and visual language, in which they succeeded – in a very natural and refreshing way – to incorporate fascinating layers in their interpretations.

"It seemed to be a unique opportunity to interact with the great works of art that are exhibited here and on top of that to be able to give your own interpretation." (Ruven, 17 years)

Het Zotte geweld (The Crazy Virgin) by Rik Wouters became even more crazy, more intense, Luciano Fabro's 'Bathers' were transformed into real nymphs (*according to the young creators "Four young women bathe together with classical marble beauties by Fabro"*), the youngsters were faced with the Two Figures for Middelheim by Juan Muñoz (*"While I was watching the work I instantly felt that they were unhappy and that they were forced to the trees"*). Het Zuilenvoeljoen (The Pavilion with Pillars) by Charles Vandenhove came to life (*"Especially the unclear meaning appealed to us to portray our own interpretation of this work, a story about the unknown and the road paved between heaven and hell"*) and the work by Per Kirkeby was transformed into a present place as well as a place of the past. Fenster by Isa Genzken was a way of *"looking at the world, therefore we came up with a television with images of the world and life on earth"*. The "minimal" road by Carl André became a catwalk as well as a musical instrument, de Eindeloze kronkel (the Endless Ribbon) by Max Bill represented a skating ramp and a musical course for marbles. Envelope by Tony Cragg became a sound-recording named *"Envelope Wobble"* (*"This work of art inspired us to create a dubstep recording, all sounds are recorded with state of the art recording-equipment, forks & spoons and naturally the bronze work of art itself. No ready-made samples for us!"*). In addition Envelope also inspired the young artists to use it as some sort of shell for the fourteen interpreted works from the park: in an animated film that is meant to introduce the complete project the sculpture



Luciano Fabro, De badenden, 1994
© Middelheimmuseum

represents a graphic icon from which – throughout the openings – different works of art emerge.

Each of these works are an experiment using a variety of graphic 'tools' ranging from collage, drawings, typographies, photo editing, illustrations, to moving video images. A result of extensive graphic experimentation by the youngsters using their own visual language, derivatives of their visual language and visual language in general.

The youngsters created a content that will inspire other visitors to open one's mind to other views on modern and contemporary sculpture. Simultaneously, also for the museum staff a new context arose through the creations and interpretations by this youthful force. Once you get carried away by these multimedia creations, the sculptures will never look the same again!

path along the 14 sculptures and receives a signal when any information is available, which makes the tour a bit more playful. Visitors carrying their own i-Phone simply key in one of the numbers of the fourteen sculptures to retrieve the multi-media information; their navigational function is as yet not used.

As from 1 April 2010 this multimedia sculpture route will be realized! Followed by a period of evaluation and adjustment. Naturally the participating youngsters and their friends and classmates will also be involved during this process. In this stage we will also be assisted by EDM (Expertise Centre for Digital Media) of the University of Hasselt (project iDiscover).⁸

Currently (phase of post-production) we cannot yet draw up the balance sheet and assess the added value of Sculpturized! of what is on offer at the museum.



Foto-interpretation by the work of Luciano Fabro
© Piazza dell'Arte

This past autumn we (Middelheimmuseum, Piazza and a number of youngsters) worked on the postproduction of Sculpturized!

We worked towards an end product on PDAs to lend out to museum visitors as well as the possibility for visitors to download the content in advance to their own smartphone/i-Phone through the digital platform Storynations.⁶ The company Navitell⁷ is our partner for both applications. By using both options we want to aim at a very broad (young) public. However, the technical finishing touches were not simplified by these matters as we had to take into account two different requirements at the end stage. The PDA which can be hired in the museum is steered by navigation. The visitor can take any

However, we did discover that the creation of Sculpturized! turned out to be of important added value for the participating youngsters. The 4 learning strategies on art educational theory by Jan De Braekeleer⁹ – based on the various learning styles of Kolb – are clearly represented in the artistic-sense process of the project. The youngsters participated in *active working*, completed a creative process in which the works of art formed the starting point for the youngsters who learned as they were going along to experience through workshops and active ways of creation.

In addition, there was the matter of a *receptive working*; they learned how to use and encourage all of their senses whilst creating their own artworks, during the cross medial



Graphic interpretation by the work of Luciano Fabro
© Piazza dell'Arte



Video-interpretation in progress by the work of Charles Vandenhove,
Zuilenpaviljoen, 1984-1992
© Piazza dell'Arte

experiments in the various workshops; following this there would be a feedback moment with feedback for the young creator during which stage the Piazza mentors would challenge them to reflect and to contemplate their own work, making this *reflective working* to be a constant factor in their own creative process; and the productive process of the project meant that the artistic end product was created solely by the youngsters themselves.

"The link between the idyllic environment and the sculptures and the creative anticipation hereon to create a harmonious unity is a significant motivator to join Sculpturized!" (Justin, 17 years).

But the participation of the youngsters also benefitted at a personal level.

Providing insight and interpretation seems to be necessary when you want the participant – after following the workshop – to be able to control the learning process without any guidance. The participant must understand what he has learned, his own weaknesses and strengths and that what is holding him back in the ability to learn something.¹⁰ For this we need feedback and not just feedback from Piazza-mentors, but also from museum staff, the curator, friends, classmates, parents and so on.

The appropriate feedback can be a huge boost.

Through this form of socializing and communication, the youngsters learned to – within their peer group as well as towards their mentors – improve how to voice and express their own visions on personal and social development, enabling them to take a step forward in their journey towards well-balanced, creative and responsible adults. During the 10-day project we noticed that their self-confidence, their ability to communicate and solve problems increased and that they became more familiar with visual language and were also encouraged to take a critical stand towards this.

Each individual needs the opportunity to optimally develop his or her abilities, personality and a range of different kinds of intelligence. People who are concerned about their self-fulfillment aspire to achieve totality, perfection, justice, simplicity, beauty, goodness, unity, truth, honesty, etc Yet it is important that one takes into account and respects the presence of multiple intelligences. Art and creativity are means to further develop social and common skills by youngsters. The youngsters are stimulated to sharpen their knowledge, behavior and personal thoughts and their thoughts on society. The social and common relevance of such a creative and educational incentive is not to be underestimated, creating awareness in society is therefore crucial. Increasing the number of youngsters who experience self-fulfillment and self-realization answers the demand of society and trade and industry for more balanced, creative and communicative citizens and staff!¹¹

"I find it very interesting to work outdoors and to learn more about the sculptures and to create something together in a group with multi-media.

And also the knowledge that what we create will be used by other youngsters." (Katrijn, 17 years)

Sculpturized! also benefited both organizers.

Our mission was to strive for easy access and equal opportunities to give the youngsters a chance to actively experience art in a professional context. It was a project for youngsters to participate in their spare time, however, the end product will also have important educational benefits. The youngsters forced the museum to creatively deal with the art collection and what the museum had to offer educational wise. They created an inventive end product to present the collection to youngsters as well as other visitors. Sculpturized! will certainly bring an end to the compulsory museum related school trips. Therefore we would like to create a precedent towards the museum-sector and strive for more cooperation regarding museums in which the active and creative interpretations by youngsters lie at the very centre.

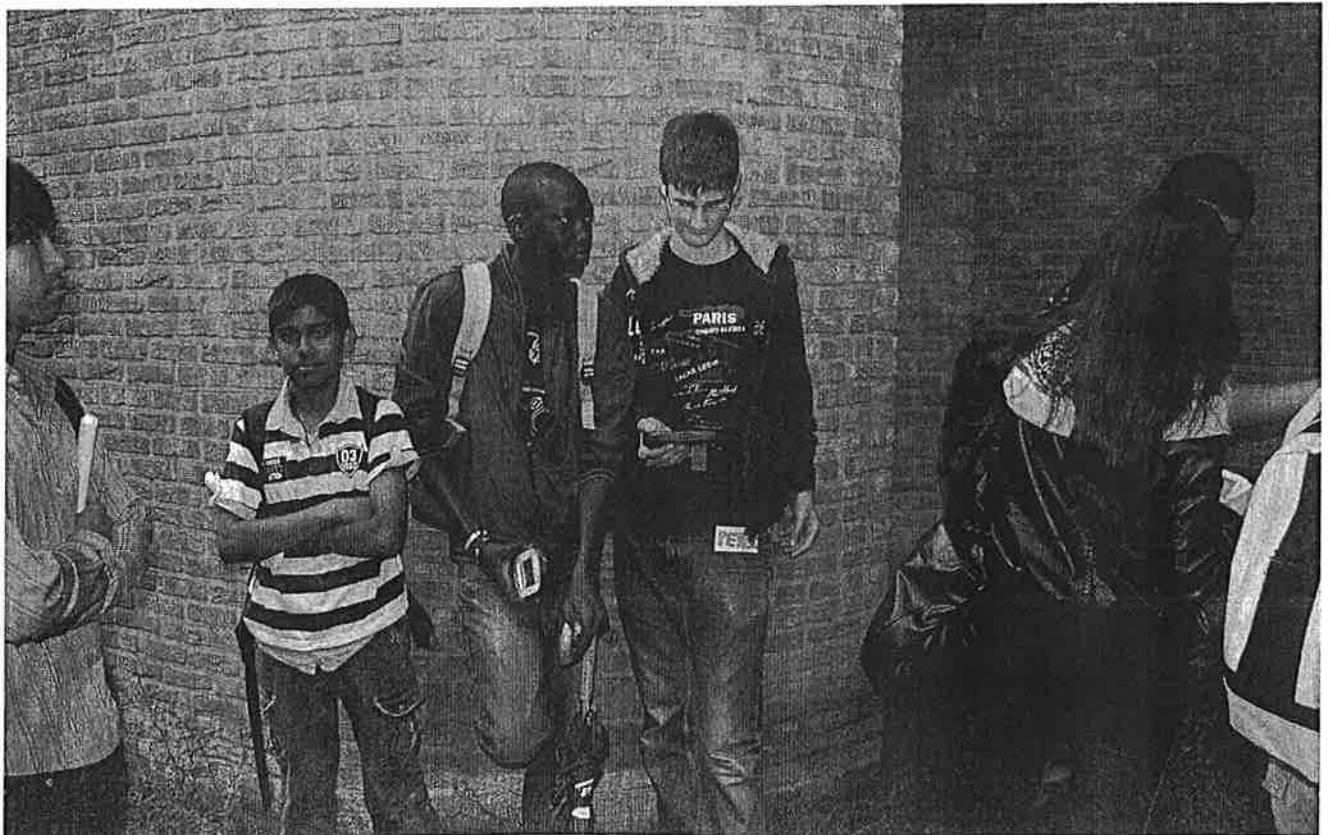
Future

In the second half of 2010 there will be a thorough evaluation of the first version of Sculpturized! (both quantity as quality

wise by questioning the broadest group of users possible) and in 2011 we would initially like to expand the tour by adding more sculptures from the permanent collection (there are 216 sculptures and now we only worked with 14 sculptures! And possibly link them to the existing audio-guide tour) and thus with more content by youngsters. In addition, we would like to research the possibility of more social interaction (the element of play) to create the possibility of communicating with other users during the visit (to work and learn together) and to create further interaction with the environment: e.g. the possibility that the user can also add content by using their own mobile phone to take pictures or make films.

As from 2012 the Middelheimmuseum would like to set up multimedia projects at temporary exhibitions held at the museum and at exhibitions in public places (e.g. such as a digital sculpture tour for bicycle trips).

In the near future Piazza would like to further expand their museum related work, on the one hand to enable participation by schools, social-cultural centres and youngsters from underprivileged areas in Antwerp, enabling them to participate in free multimedia art projects which relate to their world. On the other hand, to be able to work in the context of a museum – content wise – with the story that a museum collection holds, being a strong partner regarding field policies on education and youth (culture).



Youngsters using the multimediatour in the Middelheimmuseum, Summer 2010

© Greet Stappaerts

Conclusion

With *Sculpturized!*, Piazza and the Middelheimmuseum have set up an innovative multimedia project that combines visual art with multimedia and is in line with the world of present-day teenagers aged 16 and upwards. In *Sculpturized!* the youngsters are the instigators as well as the new museum visitors.

By working with youngsters, both organizations worked with new methods towards a finished result: a less rigid and a more creative interpretation by youngsters. Due to the great commitment of the participating youngsters, mentors and coordinators from both organizations, each individually provided a personal contribution.

Such cooperation and the exchange of expertise is beneficiary to both parties: by working together, Piazza as educational art organization can – with respect to content – work more intensively with visual art in a museum context and the Middelheimmuseum can broaden its knowledge of youth culture and new media. Not only is the creative process significant but also the added value of the end product; a multimedia tour that will continue to be part of future public activities of the Middelheimmuseum focusing on education and far beyond, and will hopefully inspire other museums here and abroad.

■ NOTES

1. in coöperation with Villa Kakebont/Nationaal Centrum voor Jeugdletteratuur <http://www.villakakebont.be>
2. <http://www.diamantmuseum.be>
3. <http://www.cultuurnet.be/node/2094>
4. <http://www.ladda.be>
5. <http://www.diamantmuseum.be>
6. <http://www.storynations.com>
7. <http://www.navitell.com>
8. <http://www.idiscover.be>
9. André Blondeel *et al.*, (2004). *Weg-wijzer, muzische vorming en basisonderwijs is een realisatie van Canon, Cultuurcel van het departement Onderwijs van het Ministerie van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap.*
10. A. COX (2007). *Begeleidersmap Piazza dell'Arte, mission statement van Piazza dell'Arte.*
11. A. COX (2007). *Begeleidersmap Piazza dell'Arte, mission statement van Piazza dell'Arte.*

Résumé

Sculpturisez! Combinez vos médias.

Sculpturisez! est un projet où des jeunes de seize ans et plus se sont réunis autour de sculptures et de différents médias. L'objectif consistait à ce que l'interprétation de l'œuvre sculpturale – issue des jeunes – soit converti en un médium numérique pouvant être utilisé par d'autres jeunes (et également par d'autres visiteurs) qui visitaient le parc. Cela permettait aux visiteurs de regarder les sculptures d'une façon alternative le long d'une route numérique dans le parc lui-même, tout en les ayant visualisées à travers les yeux des jeunes créateurs.

Avec *Sculpturisez!*, Piazza dell'Arte et le Middelheimmuseum ont organisé un projet multimédia novateur combinant l'art visuel au multimédia. Cette approche permet d'intégrer certaines des préoccupations des adolescents de seize ans et plus. Avec *Sculpturisez!*, les jeunes sont les instigateurs ainsi que les visiteurs du nouveau musée.

Non seulement le processus créateur est-il significatif, mais il diversifie les approches possibles au produit culturel. C'est une visite multimédia du Middelheimmuseum se concentrant sur l'éducation et qui continuera à faire partie des activités publiques.

Resumen

ESculptural! Es un proyecto para jóvenes adolescentes donde la escultura se combina con otros medios digitales. El objetivo fue que los contenidos artísticos y creativos, creados por los jóvenes, pudieran ser transferidos a un medio digital que podría ser usado por otros jóvenes (e incluso visitantes) en su visita al parque. Esto permitía que los visitantes tuvieran una aproximación alternativa a las esculturas, por medio de esa ruta digital y a través de los ojos de jóvenes creadores.

Con este proyecto, la Piazza d'Arte y el Middelheimmuseum planteron un proyecto multimedia innovador que combina medios diversos y que atiende las preocupaciones de los adolescentes. En él, los jóvenes son tanto instigadores como visitantes en potencia.

No sólo el proceso creativo fue significativo sino además al valor agregado de un producto como la guía multimedia, que se ha incorporado a las actividades del museo con un énfasis educativo, y que esperamos sea inspirador para otros museos locales y extranjeros.