



Growing with culture

Annual temporary events, Coopculture, Venice-Rome, Italy ¹

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1.Exhibition Concept

“Growing with culture” is a program conducted by Coopculture (Rome) throughout the country, for public and private cultural institutions, and the ways of interacting with these institutions for the implementation of the service. The general program is always based on the need to develop educational activities able to explain and to guide users in the places visited. These two concepts underlie the creation of each project, but rely on specific methods whenever it is necessary to address a particular issue - such as the educational communication of antiquities. The main reason why this issue has a central value among the specific aims to keep in mind during the planning phase is that many of the places where we are called to work are large archaeological museums, such as the Museo Nazionale Romano and the Archaeological Museum of Naples, and others are among the most important archaeological sites in the world like Pompeii and Herculaneum, the Colosseum and the Roman Forum in Rome and Hadrian’s Villa in Tivoli. These observations have brought to the conception of guided tours where the main feature is an emotional type of educational mode, with theatrical performances that are coordinated to the topics explained during the visit.

¹ http://www.coopculture.it/cir_cuito.cfm?id=4 <http://www.coopculture.it/en/circuito.cfm?id=4>

This was the case in *Archaeology and Christmas*, a guided tour project that was run during the Christmas holidays. The itinerary focused on a part of the archaeological area of the Palatine Hill, highlighting its function as an upper class residential area during the Roman republican and imperial periods. The tour included a brief reconstruction of the history of Rome, from its origins until the crisis of the 1st century b.C., the crucial period of the downfall of the republic in favor of the empire.



Palatine Hill – Rome

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/siti-archeologici/foro-romano-palatino>

<http://www.villaadriana.beniculturali.it/index.php?it/1/home>

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/archaeological-site/roman-forum-and-palatine-hill>



Hadrian's Villa - Tivoli

During the Week of Culture, when all archaeological areas and museums could be accessed for free, a new project was experimented called *Theatrical Islands*, that took place at the Roman Forum and at the Palatine Hill. This project was intended for individual visitors that moved freely within the archaeological area with a leaflet containing both historical and orientation indications. This way the visitor could almost casually encounter a historical character that emerged from the past in specific spots throughout the park, and that could help the visitor have a better idea of the space and time that these places witnessed, giving substance to the individual visit with contents extracted from the pieces interpreted by the actors.



Roman Forum – Rome

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/siti-archeologici/foro-romano-palatino>

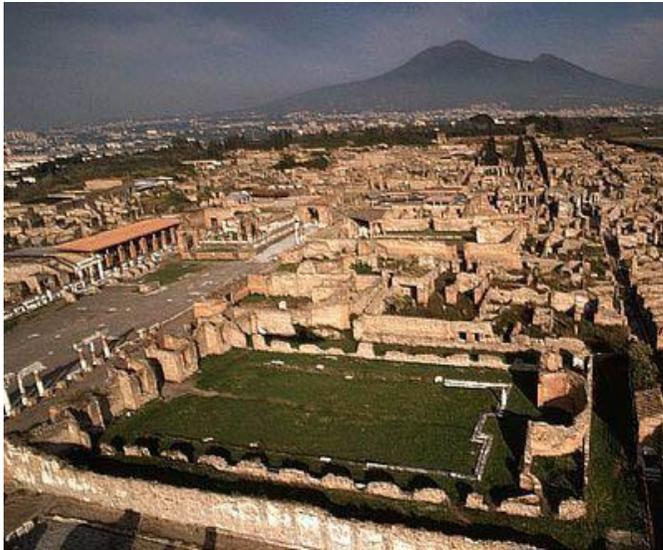
<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/musei/museo-nazionale-romano-palazzo-altemps>

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/archaeological-site/roman-forumand-palatine-hill>

<http://archeoroma.beniculturali.it/en/museums/national-roman-museum-palazzo-altemps>



National Roman Museum - Rome



Pompeii – Naples Area

<http://www.pompeisites.org/index.jsp?idProgetto=1>

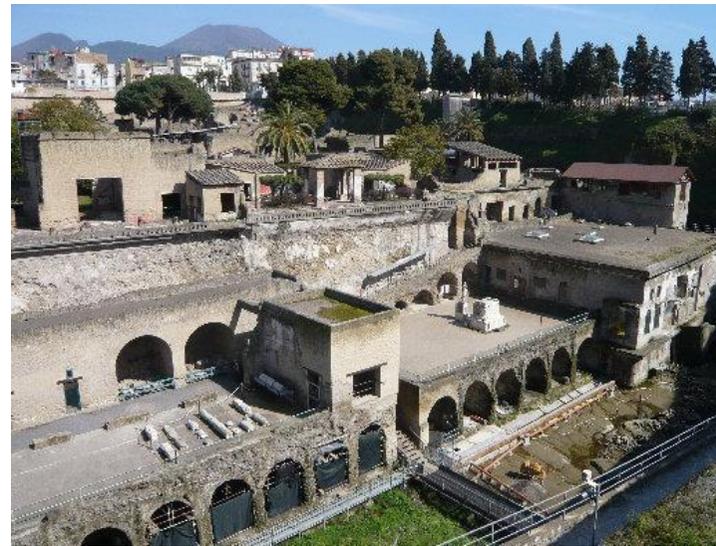
<http://www.cir.campania.beniculturali.it/luoghi-della-cultura/ercolano-scavi>

<http://www.pompeisites.org/#>

2.Reception

Planning an educational project always has to take into account the difference among recipients, according to their own knowledge and skills. The project has to have multiple goals, including the educational value that the chosen location has for the local community and the general national and international public who use it. The central element, in spite of the location and the audience, is always that of developing the general idea of communicating cultural heritage, as an element of social inclusion for the local community in all its components.

For example, the initiative *In.Arte* addressed to schools and children, offered pupils from low cultural and educational backgrounds the opportunity to have access to the cultural heritage of the city. The subject was children's rights in history and art (the right to education; non discrimination; participation and play).



Archaeological Areas of Herculaneum - Naples Area

It also included the “speaking statues” that told the stories on ancient myths highlighting rights that are still discussed nowadays, such as the one to non-discrimination. This initiative involved about 750 girls and boys.

A Welcoming Culture was a project addressed to foreign communities in Rome. It took place at the Capitoline Museums, a place of important historical memories for the city, in order to share these with the foreign communities that each time were involved, and to aim at a type of integration that has to be cultural more than passively charitable, making the museum a place where different worlds can meet. The first visits involved about 270 people. Constant attention is given to users with a physical challenge, the hearing impaired and the partially-sighted or blind, through the collaboration with specialized personnel: particularly with the hearing impaired association “Kiasso” for guided tours in sign language (LIS and ASL) and the Colosseum videoguides, and with The State Tactile Museum “Omero” to realize tactile guided tours.

As for the event *Archaeology and Christmas*, the response of the public was very positive, and the suggestions collected pointed out the possibility to increase the theatrical interludes, extend this type of emotional tour in other sites as well, and to offer more often the opportunity to visit areas that are usually closed to the public (such as the House of Livia) with this type of visit.

3.Exhibition Design

To avoid and counteract problems such as the fragmentary nature of the object or structure, the lack of context when the object is in a museum, the distance in time and culture, the curators have come up with a methodology that includes interaction and identification moments for the user. The shared analysis of an archaeological artifact to describe its material aspect, the definition of the historical background through the stories of contemporary events or characters, the description of the function of an object or a place through the evocation of the day-to-day life around it: this way the public is carried away and the communication becomes efficient, making the location comprehensible.

Besides these special educational projects for a non-organized adult public, an important part of the activity focuses on a variety of forms of mediation (workshops, game tours, theme visits, shows, animated readings, workshops on movement), tailored on the various school age groups. The liveliness of the educational experience was guaranteed by the interactive mode in which the contents were transmitted. All of these activities, that we call “integrated and complementary”, are co-managed and planned together with professional theatrical actors and directors or other specialized personnel. All the tours were undertaken by education operators and actors that, in order to involve as much public as possible, spoke both in Italian and English, and sometimes even Latin. These collaborations gave birth to cultural products addressed to an ever more articulate and diverse public, including schools, individual tourism (local and international), and organized groups.



4.Visitors Approach-Activation/Participation

With regard to different publics, some methods were applied. In kindergarten the objective was placing the child at the center of the activity and keeping his attention up, through evocative narration. For the primary school the project was developed along the idea of turning the learning experience into a playful time. The participants took up the roles of various characters of ancient Rome. Through these simulations the children were able to learn about social, political and religious aspects in ancient day-to-day life. Middle school was addressed with alternative educational procedures, exploring and researching new contents and complex topics. Practical workshops on ancient artistic techniques such as fresco painting or mosaic were a way to further understand this very aspect of the numerous artifacts that are kept in our museums. Interactive methodologies were also used for high school students, in order to guide them to the interpretation and evaluation of topics that can stimulate questions and thoughts. A good example of this is the tour *Lingua et Litterae Latinae* that takes place at the Colosseum, and is not undertaken by an education operator as usual, but is only based on the use of an audio guide in Latin. The class is introduced to the subject by viewing a power-point presentation in school that illustrates the key words of the audio guide, the history of the evolution of language, the main parts of the monument and the building technique, in order to drive the kids to understand Latin even under a musical point of view.

5. Conclusion: “Growing with culture” project with respect to COP2

Toolkit 1 – Making Europe visible. The project takes into account cross-cutting issues such as the relationship between art and nature or the communicative potential of antiquities, used to create awareness on the fact that landscape and territory are sources of cultural, economic and historical richness and that archaeology is part of humanity’s heritage. Within this context the project focuses on overall archaeological heritage. The goals of the project stem from general principles: joining the European community’s action plan in the field of permanent learning or lifelong learning (Lisbon Strategy); drawing more and more public to cultural heritage, keeping in mind different abilities and a constant attention on creating value; sensitizing awareness on the fact that cultural heritage is a public good that must be protected as well as a factor of social integration for the local community.

Toolkit 2 – The Museum as a ‘social arena’. Particular attention is paid to social inclusion dynamics. Some programs offered children from low cultural and educational backgrounds the opportunity to access to a broadened education and the cultural heritage of the city, outside of the school walls, with a more playful approach. Moreover others programs are addressed to foreign communities in Rome and aimed at making the museum a place where different worlds can meet.

Toolkit 3 – Bridging-the-gap. The methods applied for schools were that of placing the students at the center of the activity keeping their attention up and involving them in some activities such as game-workshops, role-playing games, use of ancient artistic techniques.



Toolkit 4 - Synaesthetic translation and transformation of contents. The shared analysis of an archaeological artifact to describe its material aspect, the definition of the historical background through the stories of contemporary events or characters, the description of the function of an object or a place through the evocation of the day-to-day life around it: this way the public is carried away and the communication becomes efficient, making the location comprehensible.

Toolkit 5 - Social web and interaction with new media. The educational service relies on the use of tools available to all operators, accessible through different sources such as distribution of study materials through e-learning platforms. During the carrying out of the project, high school students were supplied with tools linked to their activities that could be downloaded for free from Coopculture internet site.

6. Further Literature, Links and Information:

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Website

www.coopculture.it

