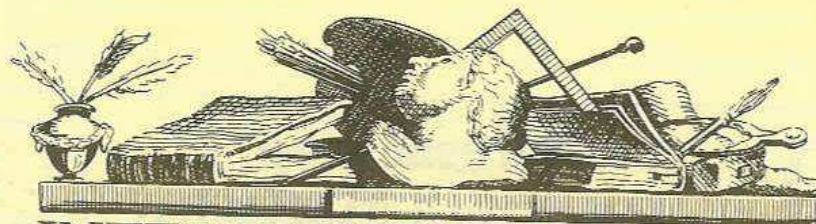


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Exhibitions Guide



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Museums 25

Arts management

The secrets of the ideal exhibition

July saw nearly 200 arts professionals in Turin to discuss this hot topic

TURIN. "What makes the ideal exhibition?" Is it the profit at the end of the day or the quality of the visitors' experience? Does it matter if the subject has already been aired a dozen times elsewhere (think of Monet and Mapplethorpe, now re-surfacing in the smaller cities)? And anyway, how do you achieve the ideal exhibition?

These questions were discussed at a two-day conference held in the Royal Palace, Turin, 18-19 July. Nearly 200 delegates, mostly museum marketing specialists from Europe and the US, gathered to exchange professional wisdom on a subject that is increasingly essential

to the financial well-being of cultural institutions.

The organisers, as in the previous four years, were the French marketing firm Agenda. Sponsorship, to a characteristically Italian high standard of hospitality, was by the regional government of Turin, and the media sponsors were The Art Newspaper and the *Giornale dell'Arte*.

Among the many speakers, Charles Saumarez Smith, director of the National Gallery, London, revealed that there had been attempts to dissuade him from holding a show of Russian landscape painting as it was feared that no one would come. In the event there were nearly

70,000 visitors. The Berlin journalist Bernhard Schulz reminded everyone of how Catherine David managed to turn the critics against her Documenta X right at the opening press conference by being aggressive and hostile, while her amiable predecessor, Harald Szeemann, always disarmed the media with quotable sound-bites.

The broadcaster and chairman of trustees, Loyd Grossman, gave tips on how to get TV interested in an exhibition without paying for it. Ben Weaver of the marketing company, General Assembly, described how to get more out of sponsorship than mere cash by reaching

visitors through the sponsor and benefiting from brand association. Arthur Cohen of the New York marketing firm La Placa Cohen showed how to reach out to the kind of public that usually avoids museums, while Nigel Semmens of the National Gallery, London, and Katharina von Chlebowski of the Berlin State Museum analysed specific, successful media campaigns.

And if you think you are being watched at an exhibition, the likelihood is that you are: Alessandro Bollo of the arts management group, Fizzcarraldo told how visitor tracking has now come now to Italy as well.

FIVE-POINT GUIDE TO THE IDEAL EXHIBITION

According to Gail Dexter Lord

President, LORD Cultural Resources Planning & Management, Toronto, and LORDculture, Paris



- **Re-presentation of works of art** as a result of new research, resulting in juxtaposition of works not often seen together, a new thesis about the artist, the group or the theme, or re-presentation by means of what the French call *mise-en-scène*
- **A transformative experience:** in other words, surprise and discovery of new attitudes, values or appreciation of meanings. This is the essential visitor experience that exhibitions can deliver.
- **A self-directed experience.** Visitors may choose an audio or human guide but the possibility of a self-directed experience is always there.
- **Engagement of visitors of all types;** scholars, learners, artists and people in the art business, relaxation seekers, escapist, cultural tourists, first-time visitors or diligent students.
- **Transparency as to the sources of the exhibition's viewpoint.** As a medium of representation, the exhibition is actually ill-suited to the omniscient presenter (even though we have been accustomed to this approach in the past). Exhibitions are more suited to a multiplicity of voices.

THE SCOPE FOR "TURNER" ...