

MAISON DES MÉTALLOS - PARIS, FRANCE

Key words: place | organisational change | leadership | partnership | community rooted | by surprise | by habit | by choice | data

Synthetic data sheet

Full name	Maison des Métallos
Address	94 rue Jean-Pierre Timbaud, Paris 11 ^e , FRANCE
Legal status	Public Establishment of Cultural Cooperation
Year of establishment	2007
Website	http://www.maisondesmetallos.org/
Social media	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
Area of activities	Multidisciplinary
Kind of activities	Theatre shows, exhibitions, events, residencies
Total amount of budget	2.757.198 €
Sources of funding	public funded (City, Region): 2.069.400 € (80%) Self generated revenues: about 568.880 € (20%)
Number of employees	33
Number of annual attendances	56.000

Data refer to 2015

Background information

The XIX century building that now hosts MdM was a former music instruments factory, and then became headquarters of the Union Fraternelle des Métallos, a situation that lasted for 60 years and that left an important legacy in terms of place identity. Since the Union left in 1997, the building was run by a committee of inhabitants of the neighbourhood, who occupied it because they felt it was part of local identity. They were concerned about the forthcoming gentrification, which was starting at that time in the former working class neighbourhood. This sense of belonging of the local community had an important role in pushing the municipality of Paris to buy the venue, but also created at first some tension with the occupants as the city decided to convert it in a cultural venue run by an appointed director, that opened in 2007. So the first audience "issue" that MdM had to face, was to find the way to involve and resolve this tension. The relationship with the associations and former occupants took time to be reconstructed, but it's today an important part of the identity of MdM and of its relation with the neighbourhood.

MdM employs today 33 people, while artistic workers are "intermittent". MdM programs many activities: theatre shows, exhibitions, talks, debates, projections, workshops,

residencies for hosted or co-productions, participatory workshops and activities with schools. It also runs a bar, an activity that doesn't bring money itself, but it's conceived as public service, so an essential part of being always open and welcoming for the community. Thus one of the main issues for them is to communicate the overall identity and openness of the place, not just the copious amount of single activities, and an effort to connect people to the venue somehow independently from the programming.

MdM is also meant to be a forum for discussion and debate through arts, therefore programming has to be anchored to actuality and must be able to change accordingly.

This is a tricky issue in terms of communication, since the artistic programming is always changing, and is planned over the year every three months. Flexible programming also responds to the need to give more chances to artists, whose work is usually harshly scheduled in the current annual programming of the theatre sector, and hardly allow to show their work outside the traditional theatre seasons.

What do they do? Goals and achievements

MdM has a wide range of artistic and cultural programming, and starting from their mission they address all kinds of audiences, with a specific focus on accessibility as a democracy issue, thus they work intensively on **audience by surprise** to diversify as much as possible, building strong relationships with groups and associations active in the social exclusion field. MdM aims to bring all kinds of people to "feel at home", and runs outreach activities also outside the building in the neighbourhood to reach groups and individuals in order to foster this sense of belonging and participation and bring them in.

In the last three years the work with schools and groups has grown constantly, fostering both an increase of numbers of diverse audiences and a strengthening of the relationship with them, so that today a sensible part of audience by surprise has somehow become audience by habit, thanks to a policy devoted both to reach and retain them. This success is foreseen through an intense work of partnership building, which is essential to reach audience by surprise (schools, institutions, associations, etc.), a long and on-going process that requires a lot of time, as well as a strong attention to making the whole environment able to welcome everybody.

Since they have a more consolidated and on-going work with groups and schools, the work with individuals - those **audiences by choice** from Paris area who use to attend theatre shows but usually don't come to this neighbourhood - is a major challenge. It's a field they are experimenting on, which is difficult because of the major competition in cultural offer of Paris, and here is where outreach staff work more closely to the communication department. An audience objective related to this is to increase paying visitors: only theatre shows are charged, and most of activities for schools and groups are for free, whilst there are special and different price policies for partners card holders. Although incomes from ticketing and space rentals have grown in the last three years, increasing revenues is one of MdM's challenges.

Loyalty is an issue, also related to the programming changing over time, so they are working on a membership scheme focused on MdM's whole identity. This is also why the communication department, although working together with the Audiences one, is mainly devoted to institutional communication and press office, focusing on project brand identity.

How do they do it? Making it happen

Although the clear mission of MdM, since its establishment, was to involve and engage all kind of audience, with a strong and specific attention to those who are usually far from cultural practice, the organisation had to change over time in order to be more effective in pursuing its mission. Three main leadership and organisational changes happened between 2009 and 2013.

The first big change was in leadership as, after two years opening, two new artistic directors - Philippe Mourrat and Christine Chalas - were appointed by the municipality, also in relation to their artistic project focused on programming contemporary works with a strong attention to audiences.

The new directors changed also the way outreach staff organised the reach and engage of audiences. Since then, three persons were devoted to promote the cultural offer among all kind of audiences, but because it was not about selling tickets rather about building relationships, this distinction didn't work. Today the same persons are in charge to work each with different and specific segments: one with schools, one with groups, and one with individuals. This allowed the outreach staff to create and feed lasting relationships with different social groups, and led to an increasing of audience and loyalty in all segments.

The last important change happened in 2013, when the organisation chart was strengthened with a new function, the Chief of Audiences (*Responsable du Pôle Publics*), whose role is to develop and coordinate all activities related to audiences, linking all the frontline activities – from reception and assistance to bar service – with the background ones – outreach staff – and the artistic ones, programming specific activities before and after the events. MdM has formally no marketing department, but concretely typical marketing activities such as analysing box office data and setting strategies and objectives are also functions covered by the Chief of Audiences (*Pôle Publics*). In 2016 they also adopted a new ticket managing system that will allow better and faster understanding of visitors data, but that at the moment is still at the beginning, and they implemented a big survey to better understand their audience by habit and choice.

A part from those changes, what's specific of MdM (there are just a couple of theatres in France with the same role) is also that they have a work figure specifically devoted **to link the artistic programming with AD objectives**. The chief of Production (*Responsable de Production et Médiation*) is also in charge of Mediation and works very close with the Chief of Audiences (*Pôle Publics*). Although artistic directors choose in total autonomy artists and productions, these are always productions with a strong link to audiences, so the **Chief of Production and Mediation works with artists not only to define all production related issues and practicalities, but also to plan and build with them the mediation related activities**: meetings, workshops, and whatever can be done with and by the artists to mediate with different kind of audiences **are therefore part of negotiation and contracting**. This "mediation" side of their artistic job also forms part of the financial negotiation and logistic, and that's also why they are in charge to the production department.

At this level the Chief of Audiences, Chief of Production and Mediation and artists work together to plan activities programmed for specific targets to widen the opportunity of understanding and debate around each production.

In the complex, 13 people over 33 of the staff are directly working under the *Pôle Publics*. *"Everybody says they want more audiences. The difference is what you really do invest on it beyond words"*.

Interview: Florence Risi - Chief of Audiences Department

Interviewer: Alessandra Gariboldi – Fondazione Fitzcarraldo (Italy)

References:

Bilan d'Activité 2015, <http://www.maisondesmetallos.org>