



des mots
d'la dynamite

Weaving with Material and the Senses

A cultural mediation project in daycare centres (8 months to 5 years old)



For the Des mots d'la dynamite company, cultural mediation is an opportunity to make wonderful discoveries while developing a privileged contact with toddlers and their caregivers. It's through play, exploration and sharing that we experience each workshop. We meet with the toddlers regularly throughout all of the stages of the making of our shows and this is why we declare them to be co-authors of our productions.

Between January and April 2017, we visited six groups of children of 18 months to 5 years of age, at the Autour du Monde CPE, located in the Parc-Extension neighbourhood, where our offices are also situated. *The Weaving with Material and the Senses* project allowed us to meet each of these groups three times in order to present different workshops to them, each related to the company's three shows for early childhood. This project allowed us to meet the children, create new ties with the educators and learn more about their reality, about the inherent differences between age groups and about the constantly renewed relationship that children have with the imaginary.

Our workshops proposed a few excerpts from our shows in reduced format and participatory activities in which the children were invited to explore through their senses. Theatre, story, song and music, shadow and object theatre, puppets and movement theatre made up this vast panorama of art offered to the children. The little ones were supported gently and sensitively through this first contact with artistic experience.

The series of workshops ended with a multidisciplinary event at the Parc-Extension venue: **The Alley of Little Secrets**. This artistic tour for toddlers presented several performances and installations offered by established and emerging artists. The children wandered through mini-shows and free playing zones, discovering curiosities and new encounters.

CREATING A VILLAGE

The artists from the *Where I Live show* introduce themselves. They are happy to meet each other. They speak to the children and get to know them. Arms make up bridges. We back up to now become a neighbourhood. The children participate in the creating of a village by arranging houses and cloth dolls on the ground. Before everyone embarks onto unfamiliar roads, the older ones open the passageway with their illuminated shoes, which see far ahead. It makes you want to go on an adventure too.



SHARING THE ROAD

The children take turns putting on little cars that light up. They wander through paths, colliding with other racing cars trying to find a way through. The children freeze upon seeing a stop sign; sometimes shove the passersby, and the little houses and clustered neighbourhoods. They become conscious of their feet, of their bodies and of the chaos sometimes created by life in society!



LISTENING, PLAYING, FEELING

After a musical excerpt from the *Slow Magic* show is presented, the children get close to and become acquainted with the sounds produced by all of these bowls spread out on the ground. Just the sight of these colourful and fragile objects is itself palpating. Instead of immediately imitating the artists, the children drink an imaginary liquid, straight from the bowl. Little by little, sounds are heard, and then amplified. The toddlers get to know the object, and there they are turning the bowls upside down, grasping them and feeling them. This breakable material is uncommon in the lives of toddlers, after all.



ENCOUNTERING RHYTHM

Among older ones, the game is played in a group. The artists create codes with them, asking them to play louder or softer, faster or slower. Music becomes a language, through which we communicate with the help of signs. Then, the artists propose short rhythmic combinations, which the children reproduce. The sounds become music, produced with ardour and eagerness.



SHAPES, SHADOWS AND SOUNDS

The artist Anne-Françoise Jacques produces sounds through the rubbing of small objects. These sounds accompany animal shapes, which appear as shadow theatre, manipulated by Steeve Dumais. The simple shapes create a small forest of pine trees, and then more and more abstract shapes are presented; the children participate by saying what they see. Steeve uses shadow to enlarge or shrink the shapes, and at the same time, transmits a few basic notions of shadow theatre to the educators.



TREES AND SEASONS

Two tree-women enter and set up several accessories and musical instruments throughout the space. They sing and play music. They make forest sounds (birds singing, branches cracking), and lose their leaves. They tell stories to the children, who listen, fascinated. These excerpts from *Scenes from a Tree* recreate the seasons through gentleness and good humour.





NURSERY RHYME FOR A PUPPET

While we hum a nursery rhyme while playing the xylophone, a little man of wool tours a snowy landscape. The time has come to say goodbye, for he is now big enough to continue his voyage on his own. With goodwill, a tree-woman cuts the cord holding him back and wishes him goodbye.

ANIMALS, TEXTILES AND LANDSCAPES

This workshop ends with the arrival of summer and a tapestry of landscapes. The children are invited to come close to the tapestry and to play with an animal wrapped up in red wool. They explore different textures, then come into contact with the others and create scenes, which soon surpass the limits of the tapestry. The tree-women create bridges and paths through which to roam, using their arms and backs. The exploratory game extends itself into several parallel adventures, which intertwine and coexist.



THE ALLEY OF LITTLE SECRETS

Our series of workshops ended at the Parc-Extension venue, with an event held for the daycares of the neighbourhood. Short films, free playing zones, visual installations and short performances all contributed to creating an inviting path for the groups of children who wandered through, discovering several artistic worlds.



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A special thanks to the artists who participated in this project:

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Montréal The logo for the City of Montreal, featuring a stylized red fleur-de-lis.

Québec The logo for the Province of Quebec, featuring a blue cross with white fleur-de-lis symbols in each quadrant.



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