

## From art to videogames, languages are part of our world

As part of our language awareness-raising campaign: “*Conoscere le lingue è + bello*” [It’s better to know languages], we set up *Agenda 2009*: five dates where languages were able to encounter five different social and cultural areas, each with its own language: art, cooking, architecture, music, and business, to stress the way in which languages are bound to the situations around us and perhaps far more than we imagine.

The idea was that of involving the city, going to unusual places to reach a public that one does not normally find in our institutional buildings, with new partnerships, seeking synergies that would allow us to find brand new methods and a stimulating language with which to disseminate this message of a new openness to languages: *Museion* for art, *Atelier Condito* for cooking, the *Fondazione dell’Ordine degli Architetti* for architecture, the *Fondazione Gustav Mahler* for music, and the TIS Innovation park for businesses were our partners for *Agenda 2009*.

The aim was to arouse some new attention, some curiosity and to encourage language learning, to make our society one that is increasingly bi- and trilingual, in the knowledge that knowing another language – and languages in general – is a boost in any field.

“*Agenda Lingue 2009*” made its debut in April 2009, at *Museion* – the Museum of modern and contemporary art in Bolzano, with a meeting chaired by journalist, Paolo Mazzucato. Andreas Hapkemeyer, lecturer in art history at the University of Innsbruck and ex-director of *Museion* as well as coordinator of *Manifesta 7*, spoke about the relationship between art and language, with specific regard to questions linked to the introduction of the written word in art at the beginning of the last century. While paintings can, in a certain sense, be interpreted universally, the inclusion of words in art brings with it the problem of translation. The more decisive the word in terms of understanding the work, the more difficult the question.



In June, we chose to combine cooking and language, with chef Luis Agostini at the *Atelier Condito*, Bolzano. With his international experience, Agostini was able to quote various linguistic curiosities linked to food. After taking questions from the public, moderated by Roberto Rinaldi, Agostini followed his speech with a starter, or rather, an *hors d’oeuvre*, naturally, based on tongue.

In September, after the summer break, the third meeting of *Agenda Lingue 2009* was held in conjunction with the *Fondazione dell’Ordine degli Architetti* of Bolzano, in the meeting room in Via Rosmini. Languages and architecture: if the two seem to have little in common at first glance, both are in fact characteristic features of any one place. The meeting was chaired by journalist Hans-Karl Peterlini, who began by quoting Hans Heiss, who identified the recent history of South Tyrol with a complex architectural and linguistic metaphor, in which the area is compared to buildings. The keynote speaker of the evening was South

Tyrolean architect, Michael Obrist, member of *feld 72*, who works with urban architecture in relation to the city and landscape in Vienna. His articulated speech included a roundup of people who have tackled language, going on to speak about architecture as a means of communication. In a multicultural context, it is difficult to produce images that can apply to everyone.

In October, *Agenda Lingue* looked at the affinities between music study and the study of languages, with a meeting chaired by a musician and cultural manager who can express himself in five languages, Peter Paul Kainrath. This fourth meeting, organized in conjunction with the *Fondazione Gustav Mahler*, was held at the Hotel Città in Bolzano. It opened with the slogan: “*Conoscere le lingue è + bello – Sprachen öffnen den Mund*” [It’s better to know languages], which is an interesting example of how we use different expressions to say the same thing in different languages. Four young violinists from different countries and attending

the Accademia Mahler, spoke about their experiences with sound, languages and plurilingualism. All agree that language skills are an extremely important part of their work and that being musicians has aided them in that they are more sensitive to sounds. Both for music and languages, making oneself understood is different from actually studying; it is often thought that a perfect knowledge of grammar is needed to communicate, while the experience of these musicians shows that this is not always the case.

In November, *Agenda Lingue* moved to the banks of the Passirio, to the Merano Multimedia Language Centre. Organised in conjunction with the TIS Innovation Park, the evening was chaired by journalist, Hans-Karl Peterlini. A most contemporary theme was chosen to conclude the cycle of events: the world of video games, mistrusted by parents and much loved by young people. The speaker was young entrepreneur, Daniel Schmidhofer, whose passion for gaming became a career opportunity. Many believe – wrongly – that videogames lead people to isolate themselves among other things. Perhaps that was true once, but today's games are a way to get to know new things and people and also to increase curiosity about other languages.

The meeting concluded with a message launched on Facebook: trilingual is fun. Because you are never too old to learn a language. Nor too young.

Marina Mascher

