



Although Israeli-born, Orna Cohen moved to France in 1978 to study theatre, educational science and psychology.

In September 1980 she began volunteer work at the French cultural centre in Lagos, Nigeria.

She returned to France in 1984, settling permanently in Paris. This was when she joined the publicly funded La Villette museum which was seeking a „mother figure for the children’s area“ of the future *Cité des sciences et de l’industrie*. Orna Cohen was put in charge of design and production of this area which opened its doors to the public in March 1986 under the banner of the Inventorium.

As a response to the Inventorium’s nationwide success, in 1990, the *Cité des sciences et de l’industrie* chose to enlarge the exhibition space and modify the concept to make it even more innovative. Orna Cohen was appointed project manager with responsibility for setting the future *Cité des enfants* in motion. She trained a team in the skills required for the emerging sector of children’s museology.

In 1992, the year that the *Cité des enfants* first opened, Orna Cohen established a new concept of travelling modules in the town of Aubervilliers. The „Inventomobiles“ were to travel around schools in France and then abroad, even as far as Africa.

Three years later, Orna Cohen set up a temporary exhibition on the theme of electricity which enjoyed considerable success and was later developed into a travelling exhibition in France and abroad.

In 1998, Orna Cohen switched her attention to the field of learning with the „Desire to learn“ exhibition which ran for two years at the *Cité des sciences et de l’industrie*.



Orna & Co
Exhibition Design

This would prove to be a turning point in Orna Cohen's career as she moved into social sciences and began working with European colleagues on the groundbreaking „Social Lab“. Exhibitions increasingly became experiments in their own right allowing visitors to go beyond any personal prejudice to identify their own potential and limits while fostering social creativity.

Orna Cohen subsequently developed two exhibitions – experiments at the CSI:

2003 „Me games“ – situations requiring visitors to communicate and cooperate aimed at highlighting personal capacities and skills

2004 „Scenes of Silence“ – A dramatised approach bringing the deaf and the hearing worlds together – in cooperation with Andreas Heinecke, Germany.

At the same time, Orna Cohen extended the concept of the „Social Lab“ to cover the world of work and businesses, with a series of events such as the „Rallye de l'Apprendre“ (learning treasure hunt) in partnership with APM, and the „Casino for communication“ for Novoferm.

Between 2001 and 2005, Orna Cohen also taught on a post-graduate course in child and adolescent psychology on the theme of „cognition and museography“ at Université Paris 8. She developed tools enabling students to assess the impact of exhibitions on visitors. Several theses were written on the subject.

In 2005, Orna Cohen set up her own company and produced several exhibitions abroad in Tel Aviv, Frankfurt, Mexico, etc.

In 2004, Orna Cohen was made a „Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres“ by the French government.



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