

# Stimulating young minds

*Children are naturally curious. They have an innate need to discover and learn about their environment. Delphine Grinberg has devoted her whole professional career to helping children learn and experience more about the world around them through the design of stimulating interactive exhibits. She has built on this work to write a series of books that explains simple scientific concepts in an entertaining but also educational way. She is especially skilled in communicating the excitement of scientific discovery to very young children.*

Delphine Grinberg has been designing and producing scientific exhibitions for children for over 20 years. Since 2001, she has also been putting this practical experience into writing experimental science books for children. The books describe simple and amusing experiments that bring science within the grasp of the smallest of hands. Grinberg says that she “loves making a mess” with children to get them to ask serious questions about the world around them. She takes particular care to try out and discuss with children each experiment she devises, whether in a book or an exhibition.

Giving children early contact with science – children as young as four years old are able to enjoy Grinberg’s books and activities – can inspire a life-long interest. Science as a fun activity that rewards with unique and useful insights is a lesson that many children have absorbed from the pages of one of Grinberg’s books.

## **Roberval recognition**

In recognition of her body of work for children, and in particular for her exceptional contribution to science books for younger children, Grinberg was given a Special Award in the 2007 Roberval Prizes in the General Public Category. The award was specifically for one of her more recent published works ‘Expériences pour Rouler’ (Experiments in Movement) co-published by Nathan and the Villette Science Centre in France.

The Roberval Prize was created in 1986 by the University of Technology of Compiègne to promote the sharing of knowledge between science and society. The Prize focuses on works produced in the French language that enable people to understand technology in its widest sense. The prize rewards exceptional authors of works dealing with technological subjects and their relationships with science, culture and society irrespective of the media used and the sector of the public targeted. Grinberg was nominated for the 2007 European Science Communication Prize by the Roberval Prize committee.

## **A body of work**

‘Expériences pour Rouler’ was the seventh in a series now numbering twelve volumes in the *CroqSciences* collection created by Grinberg and co-published by Nathan and the Villette Centre for Science and Industry. The collection publishes work that encourages a fun and educational approach to learning using scientific activities that can inspire young children from four years old to twelve. The idea for each book is to take a simple topic and awaken the children’s curiosity by provoking them to ask questions about the world around them.

Each book is more than a simple collection of activities, but takes a scientific approach by asking questions, suggesting experiments and producing conclusions. The experiments described make use of materials readily available at home.

A fun character leads the reader through each book giving hints and tips on experiments. An introductory quiz sets the scene in all the books that usually include seven or eight easy experiments, pop-up elements and other objects to aid explanation.

Grinberg’s first publication was ‘Le Chantier’ (The Workshop) in the Kiddidoc collection and she has been actively involved in the creation of the *CroqSciences* collection for which she has written 12 titles. Grinberg’s approach to writing children’s books is based on her extensive experience as a designer of scientific exhibitions aimed at youngsters and on the genuine enjoyment she has in organising scientific workshops in schools.

## **Exhibition experience**

From 1985 to 1989, Grinberg worked at the Villette Centre for Science and Industry on the design of eight temporary exhibitions for children including ‘The Five Senses’, ‘The Treasures of Tutankarton’, and ‘The Robots’. From 1989 to 1992, she was one of four designers at the Centre for Children within the main exhibition.



The Centre for Children is an area especially built on the scale of children aged three to twelve. The purpose of this special area was to awaken their curiosity, answer their questions and encourage communication with parents and teachers. It consists of two separate exhibition arenas. One area is for the younger children (3-5 years old) and allows the little ones to explore their senses and use their motor skills. The area for older children (5-12) currently focuses on the discovery of different cultures and the challenges of communication.

In 1994, Grinberg created a temporary exhibition on packaging (*Boîtes à malice*). She then designed three 'Inventomobiles', light experimental exhibitions, which have been touring country schools and colleges since 1995. This experience with micro-exhibitions led to a collaboration on a similar project with the Caracas Science Museum in Venezuela.

She has also organised an exhibition entitled 'The Train Uncovered' for the French National Railway Company (SNCF) in 2001 and from 2000 to 2004 she was heavily involved with the content and design of the permanent scientific discovery centre exhibition called 'The Vessel' in Strasbourg.

Since 2004, Grinberg has been working with the *Palais de la Découverte* (Discovery Centre) in Paris pursuing her curative work with responsibility for updating the museum's permanent exhibitions. While she is looking towards the future of how science is presented in scientific museums, she has organised three prototype exhibitions on light (2005), illusions (2006) and earthquakes and volcanoes (2007).

Grinberg is very interested in developing science experiments for schools and has been organising workshops in primary schools in priority education zones since 2000. In this way, Grinberg is continuing to try out new ideas to inspire the next generation.

## INFO

**Delphine Grinberg**

### Category

Writer of the Year

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