

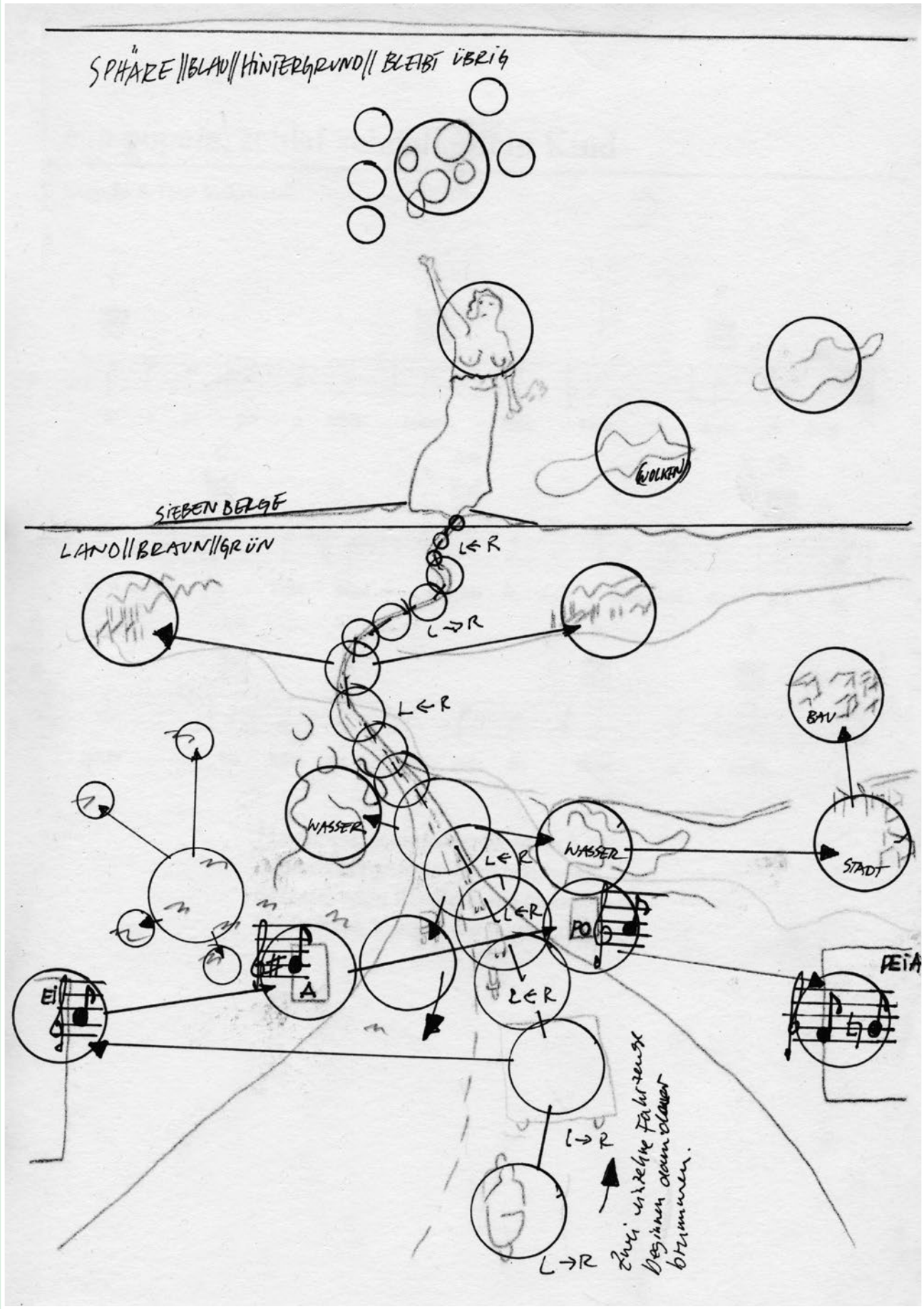
MdbK [hubs]

Skizzen zu Inklusion

Notes on Inclusion



Videostill, *Museum of Blinding Arts*,
Dirk Sorge, 2020



↑

Score sketch for soundscape for *Behind the Seven Mountains* by Wolfgang Matheuer, Sketch & Scan: Anna Schimkat, 2021

MdbK [hubs]

Mediation desks to listen, to touch, to look

The MdbK [hubs] offer reliefs to touch. Audio descriptions as well as texts in easy language, English and videos in German sign language convey further information.

MdbK [hubs] mediate the following art works:

Allegory of Redemption, 1557
Lucas Cranach der Jüngere

Life with Flowers and Fruits, 1707
Rachel Ruysch

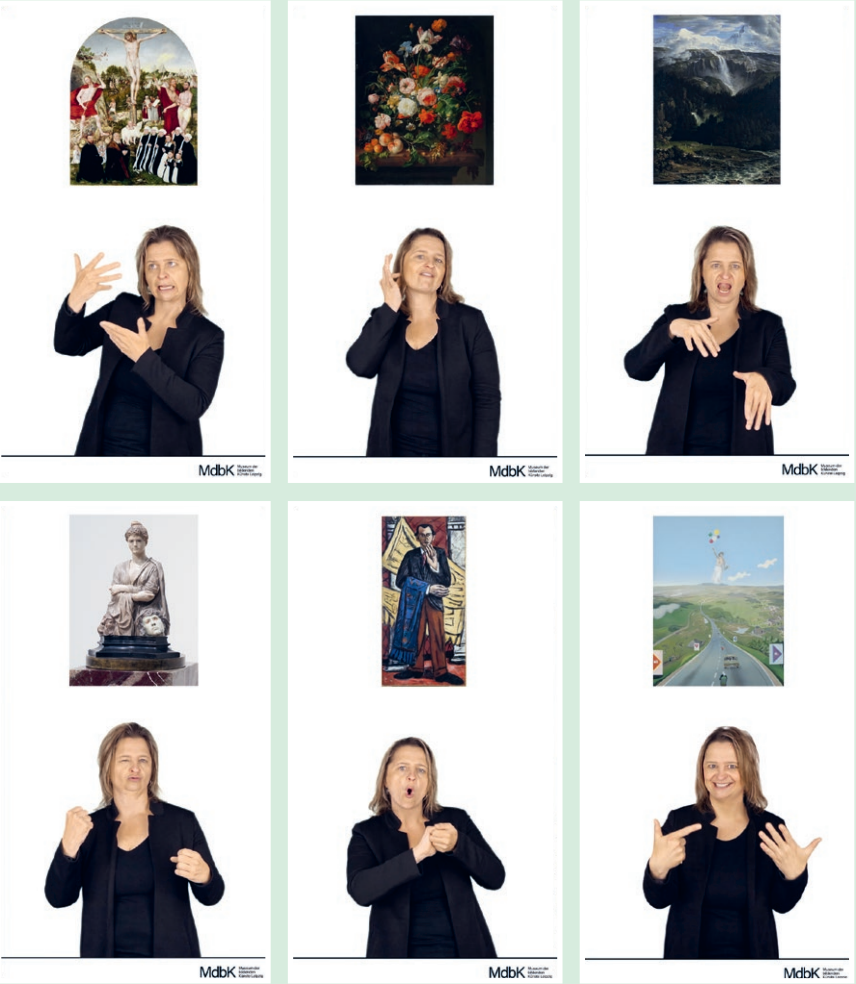
The Schmadribach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley, 1811
Joseph Anton Koch

The New Salome, 1893
Max Klinger

Portrait of a Carpet Dealer, 1946
Max Beckmann

Behind the Seven Mountains, 1973
Wolfgang Mattheuer

- Structure MdbK [hubs]:
- ① Support for long poles (not in the picture)
 - ② Underrideable table design
 - ③ Headphones with auto-start function:
 - Audio description of work and table
 - Soundscape
 - ④ Work information and headphone symbol in braille
 - ⑤ Touch relief and visual reproduction of the work
 - ⑥ Short text / introduction in black letters DE+EN
 - ⑦ Graphic tactile details with pattern assignment and tactile legend
 - ⑧ QR code with further content:
 - Audio tracks in simple language DE+EN
 - Audio track in easy language DE
 - Video in German Sign Language
 - ⑨ Graphic in profile print: work – viewer



↑
MdbK [hub]
Functions of the six
mediation tables,
Photo: Katrina Blach
2022

←
Stills of the sign videos,
available via the QR codes on
the MdbK [hubs]

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Hello,

I am Jutta and I would like to do a little warm-up with you today.

Everyone should find a place in the room where he or she can start.

Then make yourself really comfortable, in a wheelchair or on the floor, close your eyes and pay attention to your breaths.

Very calmly,
concentrate on the different parts of your body.

On your head, now the right shoulder, right arm, right hand, right fingers, now the left shoulder, left arm, left hand, left fingers, now the right thigh, right knee, right lower leg, right foot, right toes, then the left thigh, left knee, left lower leg, left foot, left toes ...

Thank you for your attention.

The Mindfulness Exercise was created in the context of the joint day of action *Body knowledge. Self-Inquiry in cultural education*.
See page 16.

Jutta Tille, Polymora Inc.



↑
 Videostills, *Mindfulness Exercise*,
 Polymora Inc., Video: Daniel Remler, 2020.
 The empty space of the missing sculpture
Beethoven by Max Klinger is taken up
 by the performers.

Perceiving

Museums *preserve* objects and make them available for our shared experience of truthfulness. In turn, this perception or *taking true* (in German wahr-nehmen) produces bonds: to places, to things, but especially to other people. Against this background, museums have great social opportunities and tasks: as places of perception, they must, wherever possible, also facilitate equality between people with and without disabilities. In the museum of the 21st century, *preservation* thus means something activating, namely, generating those possibilities of perception.

Possibilities of perception – that is exactly what is offered by the MdbK [hubs], whose genesis and realization is being presented with this publication. Having originated as a single project, they quickly proved to be very compatible with other processes of change in our institution. In recent months, we have been reflecting fundamentally on the presentation and interpretation of our collections. In this context, an approach emerged from the hubs project that we now reflect in the policy of our house.

On behalf of the large team of internal and external actors, I would like to thank Carolin Rothmund, Katrina Blach and Christopher Utpadel for their extraordinary commitment to the conceptual development and realization of the MdbK [hubs]. They have advanced the project at the MdbK with enthusiasm and energy and brought it to this aesthetically most appealing completion.

We are very pleased to have been able to rely on public support in the implementation – a wonderful recognition of our work. I am very grateful to the Sächsische Landesstelle für Museumswesen, its director Katja Mieth and its staff Ulrike Modersohn-Josch and Julia Trillhof. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the Landesdirektion Sachsen (funding guideline for participation), namely, Hendrik Adolf and Sonja Kehrer.

We, the MdbK, would be delighted if the hubs enable a new perception of the collections as well as a broadened exchange between them.

We hope you enjoy reading!

Dr Stefan Weppelmann
Director, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig

From Project to Attitude

A practice report on inclusion and participation in the MdbK

How can we make art in the MdbK more accessible for people who are disabled?¹

Guided by this question, we at the MdbK have been analysing, since the end of 2019, the museum's structures and support opportunities and within the team we have developed appropriate starting points.²

With the MdbK [hubs]³, we have developed a permanent offer for artworks in the collection that – arranged in *universal design* – offers as many different access points as possible for diverse interest groups.

The hubs consist of wheelchair-accessible, lectern-like tables with a tactile relief of the corresponding artwork and an audio description, a brief introductory text in German and English as well as a QR code. The QR code provides visitors with further information in simple language (einfache Sprache) and easy language (Leichte Sprache), in English, and in German sign language. The content can be expanded at any time to include further perspectives from science, mediation formats, etc.

To develop the hubs, we established an advisory board that involved people with disabilities. Together with them and other interest groups⁴, with Tactile Studio, an agency for inclusive design, and the museum team⁵, we conceived of the mediation stations, and tested and realized prototypes with a test group. Stations were developed for six artworks in the collection in the exhibition area, plus another hub with an architectural model and a map of the ground floor for orientation in the entrance area.⁶

Use of the mediation stations is independent of temporally determined mediation formats, so that the general framework for a self-determined engagement with art is given.⁷ The focus is not on a specific offer created specially for people with disabilities and impairments, but on providing access to people with diverse needs.⁸ This becomes clear, for example, in the painting *Allegory of Redemption* (1557) by Lucas Cranach the Younger. Here,

on the hub, the groups of people depicted are elucidated, which usually only people with prior knowledge, for example, from art history or theology explain.

The selection of works was agreed upon with colleagues from the areas of collections⁹, restoration¹⁰, diversity¹¹ and education – a decision-making process that was not easy due to different demands such as the diversity of epochs and genres, a critical position towards discrimination and the fact that the number of works was limited to only six.¹² It was important to represent at least one female artist and to avoid works that reproduce exoticizing or discriminatory ideas. The way of representation of women was also discussed, whereby we agreed that no female nude should be included.¹³

Nothing *about us without us*

This slogan has its roots in the international disability rights movement of the 1980s and is now anchored as a principle in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As an approach, it is an integral part of our project conception: The advisory board that we established was composed of people with diverse expertise.¹⁴ Remuneration for the advisory board's work was based on the average fee rates for freelancers.

Exchange with the advisory board raised the museum team's awareness of different approaches and existing exclusions, but also pointed out previously neglected themes and questions concerning the artworks.

The advisory board envisaged a plenum in which members would meet. Drafts and opinions would be discussed, and formal decisions cooperatively made. Influenced by the regulations of the Covid-19 pandemic and the wish to devote more time to individual voices, we decided to divide the advisory board into individual focus groups. In addition to discussing physical, sensory and cognitive conditions, we listened to expert opinions on migration, age and mental health.

Another special feature was the inclusion of two representatives of the supervisory staff with many years of experience and direct contact to the public. The different personali-

ties and their diverse experience with art, culture and social exclusion made it possible to take a closer look at various aspects. Here are three examples of the influence of the advisory board:

- The blind/visually impaired focus group came up with the recommendation of translating images into sound, whereas we ourselves had only thought of describing the artworks through language. Works by Joseph Anton Koch, Rachel Ruysch and Wolfgang Mattheuer can now also be experienced through soundscapes by the artist Anna Schimkat¹⁵.

- People who use easy language may be interested – just like the rest of society – in complex contexts, albeit formulated in a more understandable way. There were numerous situations in which we were caught by our own ableist stereotypes that we need to shed.

- Following the feedback "Much too long, complicated sentences. I won't read that and no hearing-impaired person I know would read it", the texts for the table tops were revised into plain language. Good for the project, bad for the schedule.

The role of the project team was strongly defined by a mediating function – between the advisory board, Tactile Studio, the curators, public relations, the security and technical staff, conservators, diversity staff, the carpenter and our own ideas and demands from art education. The challenge was always to do justice to all needs – to the potential visitors as well as the professions in the museum.

One concern from our project team was that the statements of the advisory board would not have a strong enough influence on the end result of the MdbK [hubs]. It would have had a negative impact on the trusting cooperation if recommendations were not (or could not be) implemented 1:1. On the other hand, to what extent could we trust that it was a representative need and not personal preferences? One possibility would have been to ask for several voices on visual, hearing or mobility impairment instead of having the advisory board cover a broad spectrum of content.

Reliable communication was important to ensure transparency to everyone involved concerning where we were in the cooperation.

The negotiation processes with the different groups (external and internal) required a high degree of flexibility and perseverance. A lot of time was needed to come to final decisions with everyone involved.¹⁶

To what extent does the MdbK as a building dis_able? And how can normative body images be broken and realities made visible through images and language?

It was inevitable that questions would arise concerning the accessibility of the hubs and the barriers they face. The financial support made it possible to hire an agency that took notes during the inspection together with a panel of experts on the topic of accessibility in the building.¹⁷

This catalogue of measures is now being evaluated in terms of the development and implementation of a new inclusive guidance system. In addition, the MdbK website is a central component for preliminary information and orientation for visitors. In the future re-launch of the website, we are endeavouring to implement with assistance software the regulations regarding accessibility.

In addition to these measures, it was important for us to discuss the topic of exclusion in the cultural sector. On a joint day of action with the Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig (GfZK)¹⁸, we invited actors from the fields of education and art to critically reflect on their own work under the title *Körper-Wissen. Selbstbefragung in der kulturellen Bildung*.¹⁹

As the MdbK, we invited the multi-abled performance collective Polymora Inc.²⁰ to artistically engage with the barriers of the museum building. They developed various performances for spatial situations, recorded them on video and then, afterwards, tried to describe the images in such a way that more points of access would arise.²¹

They were interested in the questions of whether and how one can succeed in describing in a value-free way. Is a description of

people per se an attribution, or can it open up new perspectives and break down norms?

In the workshop *wert:frei* by Polymora Inc., participants tried out performative exercises in reference to the description of movement and thus experienced the direct comparison between seeing/image and language/text. What do I name and *how*, and what do I leave out? One (who is seeing) rapidly experiences the complexity when one tries to describe oneself.

Perhaps language constitutes an exciting corrective in that it is not value-free, but names something and thereby brings it forth, in contrast to an image, which evokes ideas that hit upon worlds of experience – in other words, potential stereotypes that are not discussed because they are initially mute.

How do we get from project to attitude?

With the MdbK [hubs] and various event and mediation formats²², we have started to enable participation for more people – not merely because it is just, but because it is enshrined in law. The question is what prevents us²³ from implementing and living participation in society in a much more radical way. Probably it is the fact that still far too few people in decisive positions in cultural institutions are dis_abled. This means that many more people with disabilities would have to be involved in shaping culture in order to make appropriate content, programmes and structures. So long as this is not the case, we have to create places and situations for encounter and exchange. In our opinion, it is still not the right path if the topic of inclusion lies solely with art education in relation to project, and art education is responsible for inreach processes as the mouthpiece of those affected.

Starting from this *project*, it is our objective to arrive at a common attitude in the museum team so that questions of inclusion are inscribed in all museum work across all departments. In the future, we will need spaces and formats that offer direct exchange with the diverse urban society and from which further connections and collaborations with the

museum can arise – in which people who have thus far not been represented in the museum become co-programmers.

The Mdbk [hubs] are thus not to be evaluated as an result, but rather as an intermediate stage in a constant effort to improve accessibility. They serve as an opportunity for discussion and a place of learning, and ultimately also as a source of friction for further sustainable measures to facilitate access to and participation in the MdbK. Inclusion and participation in the museum is then no longer project work, but a self-evident attitude of art education, museums and our society.²⁴

*Katrina Blach,
Christopher Utpadel,
Carolin Rothmund
Project team MdbK [hubs]*

1 This spelling (in German: be_
hindert) highlights that people are
not disabled because of their
individual bodies, but because of
barriers and social exclusions:
[https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/
woerterbuch/behindert-werden](https://diversity-arts-culture.berlin/woerterbuch/behindert-werden),
[https://missy-magazine.de/blog/
2019/03/12/hae-was-bedeutet-
be_hindert/](https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2019/03/12/hae-was-bedeutet-be_hindert/) [Accessed: 2012.21]

2 Dr Alfred Weidinger (MdbK
Director, 2017–2020) expressed
the wish to implement an inclusive
programme. Saskia Gall, aca-
demic trainee in art education
(2017–2019), made the first concep-
tual considerations and contacts.
Christopher Utpadel, scientific
trainee in art education (2019–2021),
researched funding opportunities
and developed a concept in
collaboration with Tactile Studio
and Carolin Rothmund, head of
art education. Katrina Blach was a
research assistant in art educa-
tion (parental leave replacement)
and project manager of MdbK
[hubs] from June 2020 to August
2021.

3 The name “hubs” is symbolic of
an idea: different points of access
in the areas of touch, hearing,
seeing are brought together at
one station and, in the best case,
provide an occasion for encoun-
ters and exchange between
visitors.

4 In the following section, partici-
pation is described and differen-
tiated.

5 Various colleagues from the team
were involved. In cooperation
with Jörg Dittmer, Dr Sylva Dörfer
and Ulrike Otto from the depart-
ment Public Relations, Marketing
& Event, we made sure that the
hubs were designed in the corpo-
rate identity of the museum by
setting the materials, fonts and
design specifications.

6 Dr Stefan Weppelmann has been
director of the Mdbk since
January 2021. The ground floor is
currently being redesigned, so
the orientation station can only be
implemented once the planning
is in place. Tactile Studio has com-
pleted development of the station,
which could be produced at any
time.

7 Six hubs for six artworks is of
course a very small number in

terms of the size of the collection.
But it was necessary to develop
prototypes whose applicability and
use by visitors are first evaluated.

8 Access could be of particular
interest, for example, to families
with children, older people
with weaker eyesight or English
speakers.

9 Curators and staff of the collec-
tions: Friederike Berger (curatorial
trainee 2019–2021), Dr Marcus
Andrew Hurttig (curator 20th and
21st century painting, 21st century
graphics), Dr Jan Nicolaisen
(head of painting and sculpture),
Dr Susanne Petri (research
assistant 20th century documen-
tation and graphics), Dr Jeannette
Stoschek (head of graphics
collection).

10 Rüdiger Beck (head of restoration)

11 With MdbK [in transit], supervised
by Sithara Weeratunga, MdbK
has been participating since Sep-
tember 2019 in the programme
360° – Fonds für Kulturen der neuen
Stadtgesellschaft of the Kultur-
stiftung des Bundes. The funding
programme supports cultural
institutions throughout Germany
in representing the diversity of the
immigration society in areas of
staff, programme and audience.

12 The decision-making process in
the team regarding the artworks
was a great advantage, not only
because of the different expertise,
but also with regard to questions
about the positioning of the future
tables in the exhibition space: it
was a joint decision with the cura-
tors to occupy the space in front
of the selected artworks with the
hubs.

13 We selected the following works:
Allegory of Redemption, 1557 by
Lucas Cranach the Younger, *Still
Life with Flowers and Fruits*, 1707
by Rachel Ruysch, *The Schmadri-
bach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley*,
1811 by Joseph Anton Koch, *The
New Salome*, 1893 by Max Klinger,
Portrait of a Carpet Dealer, 1946
by Max Beckmann, *Behind the
Seven Mountains*, 1973 by Wolfgang
Mattheuer.

14 The establishment and partici-
pation of an advisory board was
fundamental in the MdbK, as
there were no people with the

mentioned expertise among the staff. Thus we had to obtain this knowledge and these perspectives from external people and inject this knowledge back into the museum team over and over.

15
<http://www.annaschimkat.de>

16
Time to find out which aspects we want to convey and how, time for coherent formulations, time for translation into Leichte Sprache, time for the development of sign language videos, the preparation of texts for audio description, review by test groups and the adaptation of texts and tactile reliefs. Time also as a municipal institution where complex administrative procedures have to be adhered to. But above all it takes time to familiarize oneself with the new collaborations and topics – with the demand not to make any mistakes.

17
The inspection took place with Hannelore Sittner, chairwoman of the Behindertenverein Leipzig e.V., representatives of the Chamber of Architects, Lara Ludin, representative for people with disabilities for the city of Leipzig, Dr Susanne Österreich, Insel & Meile, Agentur für Museumskulturen, and Torsten Cech, Head of Security and Facility Management at the MdbK.

18
<https://gfzk.de>

19
Due to the lockdown, the day of action took place digitally on 20 November 2020. After a joint kick-off, two workshops were held in parallel: "Let's talk!" – *Bodypositivity, Körpernormierung und Mode* with #wirmuesstenma- lreden, fashion designer Eva Howitz and Lena Seik, art mediator GfZK, <https://wakelet.com/wake/t6n97V6AjkPIIR67-aFV3> as well as *wert:frei* with Polymora Inc; wakelet.com/wake/I5B_NuJ7e-HsnWN2pe2QDf
Within the framework of the day of action, the *Mindfulness Exercise* by Polymora Inc. was created as well as the contribution *Das Museum der blendenden Künste* by Dirk Sorge, visual artist, which are printed in this brochure.

20
<https://polymora-inc.org/> The collective includes Aïcha Konaté, Alexandra Schwartz, Jutta Tille and Mono Welk.

21
Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were unable to undertake any live performances on the day of action. For this reason, Polymora Inc. performed in four areas (stairs, doors, lift, Klinger pedestal) in the empty museum and documented them on film.

22
Labor Zusammenhang with the Stadtverband der Hörgeschädigten e.V., Katrina Blach and Christopher Utpadel, workshop talks *blind sehen* with Sebastian Schulze and Carolin Rothmund, *Ein Duft, eine Farbe, ein Klang*, guided tours for dementia patients and relatives with Kirsten Huwig, Almut Zimmermann, MdbK [insight]; Teilhabe im Museum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJVG0ilyxz0> [accessed: 20.12.21]

23
In this case, "us" means ableist, white, heteronormative institutions. Themes on different levels of discrimination are increasingly dealt with in cultural institutions and in the programmes, while the diverse urban community is not adequately reflected structurally, for example, in the staff. Political demands and laws for a right to participation of people with disabilities have existed for years. There are many subsidies especially in the areas of cultural participation and participation in working life, and yet the orientation towards participation in the arts sector is marginal. Why is this? In art museums, the "auratic" space and the aesthetic experience of art certainly play a role. Aids that stand in the space and tend to be aesthetically suspect are avoided from the outset – at least that is the assumption. Compare with the participation plan of the city of Leipzig, Bundes- teilhabegesetz (federal law of participation) and articles 24, 29 and 30 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNBKR).

24
Dr Stefan Weppelmann has brought the attitude "inclusion is not a project, but an attitude" into the team. The MdbK is currently working on a policy through which inreach processes are directed towards questions of inclusion and openness of the museum.



↑ Artists from Sagart e.V. examine the painting *Allegory of Redemption* by Lucas Cranach, Photo: Katrina Blach, 2021

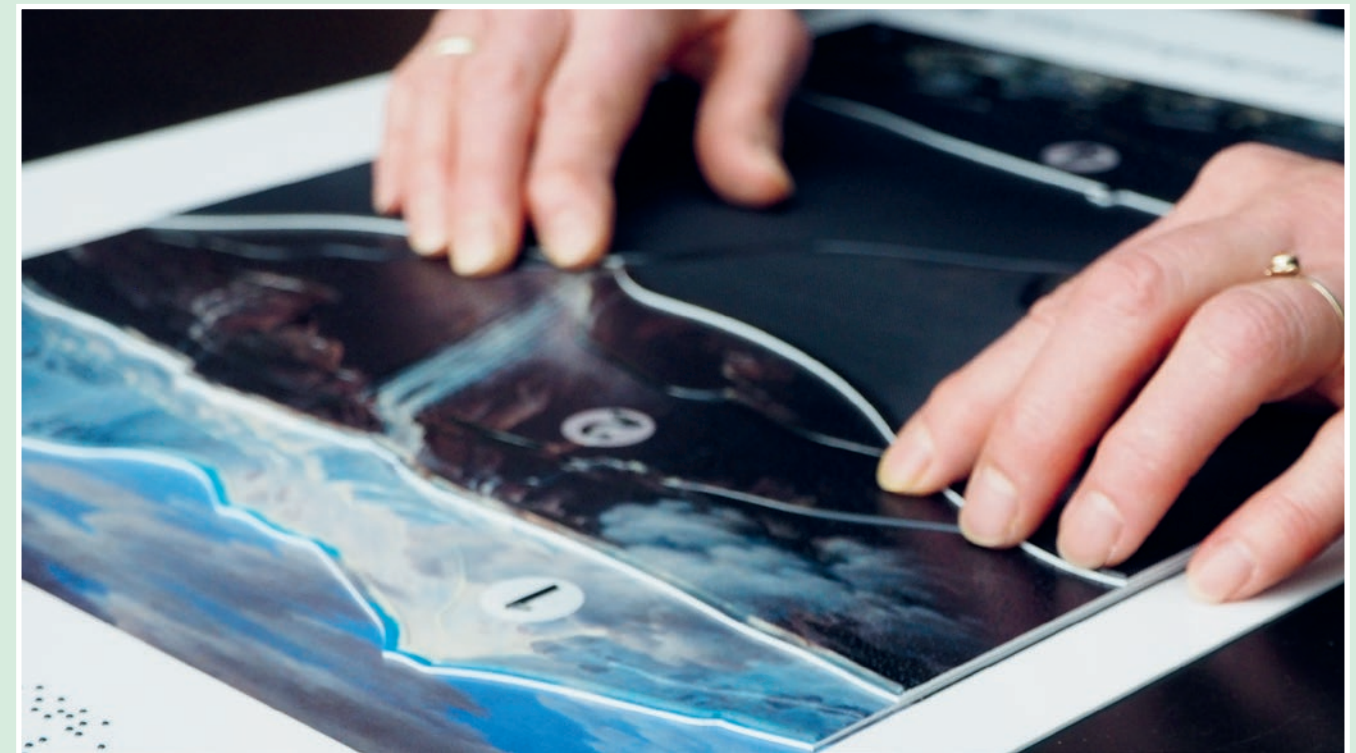


↑ *The new Salome* (replica) by Max Klinger is the subject of discussion among the supervisory staff, Photo: Katrina Blach, 2021

← Advisory Board Members with art educator in conversation in front of Rachel Ruysch's *Life with Flowers and Fruits*, Photo: MdbK, 2021



↑ MdbK [hub] *Behind the Seven Mountains* by Wolfgang Matheuer in the exhibition *Bilderkosmos Leipzig 1905–2022*, Photo: Katrina Blach, 2022



↑ Tactile relief to the Painting *The Schmadribach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley* by Joseph Anton Koch, Photo: MdbK, 2021

How does diversity work in mediation?

A cooperation with the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences

In the summer semester 2020/21, the seminar *Diversität in der Vermittlung* (diversity in mediation) took place at the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences under the direction of Professor Frederik Poppe.

In cooperation with the museum's department of art education, Carolin Rothmund and Katrina Blach presented their concept of diversity-oriented education to the students of Kultur- und Medienpädagogik (culture and media education). Using the MdbK [hubs] and exercises to increase sensitivity in the areas of hearing, understanding and seeing, the students developed an approach to various impairments and their social and cultural dimensions. This was followed by the practical implementation: seven students in total designed interviews with members of the inclusion advisory board and, in July 2021, engaged in conversation with three people in the above three areas.

"... but please in a friendly manner – not with such a grim face."

Interview with Anja Kuhnert, social worker at the Stadtverband der Hörgeschädigten Leipzig e.V. and sign language teacher.
Interpreter: Bianca Klein and Anika Popp

Ms Kuhnert, you are a member of the inclusion advisory board. Could you please briefly introduce yourself?

My name is Anja Kuhnert, I am deaf and work in the Stadtverband for the hearing impaired in Leipzig. There I work as a social worker and sign language teacher. [...]

I started as a dental technician, but there were not many positions. Most were held by hearing people and no one could really imagine a deaf person doing this job. They wondered how it would work with communication. They were afraid of making contact, were anxious, and so I didn't find any work. But I wanted to participate in society and I came across the association of the hearing impaired. The first chairperson at the time was happy to employ me – in social aid, for association work, organization, support.

In 2001, there was an EU-funded project for social work at the Goldschmidt School in Leipzig. I did the training there and, since 2002, have been permanently employed for the city association as a social worker at the counselling centre. I also do public relations and networking work with other associations such as the association for the blind and visually impaired or the association for the disabled.

Do you regularly visit museums?

That's a good question. As a child, yes, I was more often in museums. At the moment, I practically don't go to museums at all, but I would like to go more often in the future. With me it's often the case that I don't really have the courage. Because I don't know: Can I go in here now, just like that, what's it like? That's a strange feeling for me.

The other day I was at the Baumwollspinnerei in Plagwitz. There are many different small exhibitions there. I never knew that until then. When you stand in front of the huge buildings, you don't know: Where is the entrance? Can I go in here now? Does this lead to an exhibition or where am I? I'm definitely missing the visual clues. On top of that, I have the communication hurdle. If I simply go in and someone speaks to me, it will be difficult.

What else would you add, what other difficulties do people with hearing impairments encounter during a museum visit?

It's quite rare that a deaf person goes into a museum alone. You do go to a museum if you know that a sign language interpreter is there or if you have an appointment. But then you have to make an appointment in advance. Simply a spontaneous visit is unfortunately not possible. Other deaf people usually say they feel the same way. Not in reference to this museum here, but in general.

What should a museum be equipped with to make it easier for deaf people to visit?

For me it would be important to receive a greeting in sign language via video and that everything is explained. For example, when I'm standing in front of a picture, of course I have my thoughts about it. I ask myself what the artist was thinking, but what is really missing is the intention behind it. That's why it would be nice if there were a little video with an explanation. Perhaps you go closer with a magnifying glass in the video and change your perspective.

What can hearing visitors watch out for so that deaf people can visit the museum more comfortably?

For example, when I now stand in front of a painting, it is quite typical that we deaf people stand in a semicircle around it and then see each other, but we can also look at the work of art. We deaf people need eye contact to be able to exchange ideas. We can't stand behind each other or in a throng – that doesn't work. We need the semicircle in front of the picture to be able to understand each other. Perhaps hearing people should be a bit more attentive and tap us when they want something.

Deaf people often want to touch everything a bit and tap on it. Of course that's not allowed with works of art, sometimes you have to be reminded of that, but please in a friendly manner – not with such a grim face.

What do you expect from the mediation stations, the hubs, and what is your general idea of an inclusion-oriented museum?

My ideas and expectations were that it would work without an appointment. That you don't always have to order an interpreter and go through all the red tape to get into a museum. That I could go somewhere spontaneously and that there would be videos.

Unfortunately, such videos are not normally available, and it would be nice if that is all there without always having to organize it in advance. That would be my idea. That I could just spontaneously go somewhere and visit something.

Also, for example, the texts themselves, explanations, descriptions of the artwork.

I don't read through that. The way it's written is usually too complicated, the way it's explained is too complicated. One needs a different picture. Sign language in particular is a language of its own with its own grammar, and that cannot be compared with the written German language. Everything would need to be conveyed in sign language so that we really get the same information and have the same understanding. That's because the grammar is different.

A very simple example: "I'm walking in the forest." That's what it would

be in sign language: (shows the sign). This word "in", it passes us by. Most of the time it is then the destination. "I'm walking into the forest." Is that now the destination? Or are we already there?

What else would you like to see on the part of the museum?

My wish would be that people with a hearing impairment could themselves exhibit. Then you could perceive for a start what the difference is. The hearing perspective on an artwork by a deaf person, so that we can perceive that. So that hearing visitors can perceive us. That would be a wish. That would be a goal, that a deaf artist is really allowed one day to exhibit. Not with a sharp separation, but that there is a joint exhibition programme in which both can meet.

What do you think it would take, what would have to happen for it to become normal to design an exhibition diversely?

Contact. It needs contacts. With the Stadtverband, with the Landesverband from Saxony and then one could start a call for deaf artists and simply invite them. They could hand in their works and then the various museums could say what they like and what they would like to exhibit. [...]

I know that in the beginning it is always difficult to take the first steps and to find a path. It's often a lot of stress, also making contacts and the arrangements, but in the end something beautiful always comes out of it. At least that's my idea.

When you were young, how were the educational opportunities for people with hearing impairments, for example, to attend an art school?

It's really difficult with education, there is nothing for people with a hearing impairment. In the 1950s, there was a deaf person among the students: Volkmar Jäger. But he was really the only one who studied art. [...] At that time, hearing-impaired people were regarded as waste. "Now you go here to the laboratory or to the metal department. There you do something with your hands." But real support for talent? There wasn't any.

Today, when I look around, the young people – the hearing impaired – don't seem to have much interest in art. Maybe that's partly our community, where the subject of art was not exciting in school and in education. [...] There were no descriptions of pictures, no artworks that we talked about. And for me, it was a great pity at that time that we were not encouraged more.

Would you like to say something in conclusion, perhaps express a wish?

Yes, my wish for the future is that more museums are designed to be barrier-free. That is a great wish of mine. If one museum becomes barrier-free, then perhaps the next one will become barrier-free – like a project that keeps on spreading.

Interview by Sophia Neef and Antonia Mock, students of Kultur- und Medienpädagogik (culture and media education) at the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, accompanied by Carolin Rothmund, MdbK.



↑ →
Interview with Anja Kuhnert, sign language
interpreters and students of Merseburg Univer-
sity, Photos: MdbK 2021



"That one understands what it's all about."

Interview with Steven Wallner, counsellor at the competence centre Leben mit Handicaps e.V. (living with handicaps)
The interview was recorded with television technology.

Voice Over: Diversity in mediation, an interview on Leichte Sprache (easy language). The presenter Nele is visible. Nele has shoulder-length hair, wears a striped shirt and a light-coloured cloth jacket over top. She is standing in a large open room with a light, smooth stone floor. In the background is a large matt glass facade that fills the room with daylight.

Today we are in the MdbK. MdbK is the abbreviation for Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig. Here we are looking at the hubs and talking to Steven Wallner. He checks texts in Leichter Sprache. These can be leaflets, websites or even the texts for the hubs. "Hub" is emblematic for encounter place. Here in the museum, six tables are currently being built where artworks are described. There are tactile images, an audio description or QR codes with which the paintings or artworks are described in sign language. The museum's goal is to break down barriers and create a place that is accessible to everyone. To implement this successfully, there is a specific workgroup. The technical term for the workgroup in this context is inclusion advisory board. The inclusion advisory board also includes people with a disability or impairment who help to design the tables and create the hubs. On to the conversation.

Voice Over: Nele enters an exhibition room through a high, heavy wooden door. Nele and the interview guest Steven Wallner can be seen at the hub to the artwork *The New Salome* by Max Klinger. Steven has short dark hair, glasses, an earring in his left ear, a light-coloured T-shirt with the logo of the Berufsbildungswerk Leipzig, a pair of patterned shorts and is sitting in a wheelchair. Nele and Steven are looking at the hub, which looks like a wooden desk with a slightly slanted tabletop. Mounted on the left of the table is a reclining sculpture – that is, a model – of the sculpture *The New Salome*. To the right are three material samples to touch, and texts. Steven tries on the headphones attached to the left side. Nele and Steven turn away from the artwork. The interview takes place in a large bright room directly in front of the hub. Steven Wallner is on the left and Nele is sitting on a black chair to the right in the picture. Two paintings are hanging behind Steven.

Thank you once again, Steven, for taking the time for our interview about the hubs here at the museum of fine arts. My first question is: Could you briefly introduce yourself again, for all those who don't know you?

I am Steven Wallner. I am 34 years old and work in a sheltered workshop and partly in an external workplace in the EUTB counselling centre.

Could you explain what is understood by easy language?

Easy language means that it is understandable and has pictures so that the content is easier to understand. Difficult words are also explained. Sometimes it's not like that in the "normal" language world, for example, in the newspaper or on the internet.

How long have you been doing this?

Good question. Actually, for a long time. Maybe since 2015.

And how did you get into it?

I was asked and I said yes. Then we did a test on what one has to pay attention to.

Why, in your opinion, is easy language important?

Steven Wallner: So that not only I, but also older people understand it. With easy language, the texts are not so long. Right now we're making the city's website in easy language. We also once did something with laws.

And is there anything else you would still like to put into easy language?

What interests me in general with public offices: when someone comes and one doesn't say – if you automatically get one sheet in normal language and another in easy language.

What would you say are the differences between this easy language and Einfache Sprache (simple language)?

It's important that the sentences are short and that there is a picture next to them that explains everything again in detail, or you can see in the picture what it's about. It's important that the pictures are in colour, not black and white. And that the font size is at least 14 points. Because font sizes such as 12 are too small, especially for the visually impaired. It's also important not to use words that are too long ... You can make a long word, but you have to make sure that it's not too long, because then you would have to hyphenate it. You also have to make sure you don't have too many long words.

And how is it with measurements or with dates that go back far into the past?

I think they're better as numbers than written out as words.

You work in the counselling centre "Leben mit Handicaps" in the VILLA. Are there any cultural institutions in Leipzig that you would say are very committed and make an effort to advocate for accessibility? Or are there houses where you would say that somehow more could happen?

Right now I wouldn't know exactly where. But what I would wish for is for easy language to be used almost everywhere. Especially in administrative offices.

When you have the counselling centre, you work with easy language ...

Well, I don't work only with easy language. I also advise people.

- | Exactly. Did you also work on the translation of the hubs?
 - | Yes.
- | And did several people work on one text?
 - | For the project, we were asked if in general we wanted to be involved. Stefanie Bergmann and I were there. I still remember that.
- | What did you pay particular attention to when translating?
 - | That one understands what it's about.
- | One final question in conclusion: What would the perfect barrier-free museum look like to you? What would you like to see there?
 - | That wheelchair users can get in easily and that there is also something to touch for blind people. That one knows what it's all about.

Interview by Joshua Accinelli, Martin Böhm and Nele Günther, students of Kultur- und Medienpädagogik (culture and media education) at the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, accompanied by Katrina Blach, MdbK



↑ →
 Interview and video recording with Steven
 Wallner in front of the sculpture and the
 MdbK [hub] *The new Salome* by Max Klinger,
 Video & Photos: Joshua Accinelli /
 Martin Böhm, 2021



“One should involve the target group earlier ...”

Interview with Sebastian Schulze, freelance editor and audio scriptwriter

| Good afternoon, Mr Schulze! Could you briefly introduce yourself?

| My name is Sebastian Schulze. I am a member of the advisory board with a focus on blind and visually impaired because I am myself blind.

| Mr Schulze, how do you perceive your surroundings?

| By hearing, smelling and touching. Since I am blind, I have to rely on the other senses. The sense of sight is the main sense, as we all know, and that's simply gone. When I'm outdoors, I orientate myself also by wind, for example, and in buildings, like here in the museum, by the acoustics.

| For me, art means first and foremost perceiving works visually.

| How do you perceive visual art? What role do memories play?

| I perceive visual art through description and touch. Well, I don't go to museums and feel the artworks, because the alarm system would constantly go off, but at home I have small sculptures and objects. Beautiful things that one can touch, just as a sighted person hangs many pictures in the flat to look at them.

Because I became blind later, memory also plays a big role. I studied art history in my sighted days and thanks to my photographic memory I still remember a lot of it. I like to remember it because I went blind already in my late twenties.

| What exactly did your involvement in the MdbK advisory board look like?

| The first thing we thought about in the advisory board was how we could bring the artworks closer to blind and visually impaired people in a tactile way – that is, how to design reliefs that reproduce the visible image. We also thought about which small details or fragments of the respective artwork should be highlighted individually, and likewise as reliefs to touch.

It was also about how the corresponding table should be set up: Where should we mount the white cane holder? Where should the listening station be located and where should the headphones hang? How should the corresponding hubs be positioned in relation to the artwork and in the exhibition space? What, at all, can be communicated in Braille? I also raised the museum staff's awareness to the severe disability of blindness. For example, with tactile objects that the staff member Ms Blach had to feel blindfolded without having seen them beforehand. So that people with sight get a feeling for how blind people behave. What matters? And how tactile does the corresponding relief have to be so that one can feel well with one's fingers what is visible in the painting for the sighted?

To what extent do the hubs make art more accessible to people with visual impairments? What are their advantages and disadvantages?

We'll start with the disadvantages, because there aren't that many: First you have to find the hubs. If I now imagine going to the museum alone with a blind person, I would have to know beforehand: Where are the tables? That's why it's an advantage for us to have a sighted person accompanying us. Furthermore, when teaching art to people who are blind from birth, one reaches the limit when it comes to teaching colours: it's logical for people who have never been able to see to not know what red, blue, green, etc. mean. This can be conveyed neither by description nor by different surface structures in relief! I cannot now think of other disadvantages. I mean, it's a sophisticated system based on tactility and acoustics: you can listen to descriptions of the pictures, you can feel the pictures through the relief, you can read in braille what the picture is called and who the artist is, and fragments of the picture have also been produced tactilely. All in all, there is really a great opportunity, I would even almost say a guarantee, of getting to know the pictures without seeing them. That's what matters, and that's what inclusive exhibition and educational culture means to me, because one can bring artworks closer to people who are blind from birth, for example. And if the relief has been produced particularly well, orientation in the artwork is guaranteed with the fingers just as well as with the eyes. Sighted people see with their eyes, blind people with their fingers or ears.

How do you assess the participation opportunities for people with disabilities when it comes to the question of accessibility and inclusion orientation in museums?

Very great, if you approach the target group. I know many people who want to get involved, who don't just want to be users, but also producers. You simply have to ask the people who make take up such an offer whether they want to be involved in the production. In this way, you can involve them either in an advisory or in a testing capacity. Such advising and testing is definitely necessary before completion if you want to achieve an optimal result. I have had the experience of being asked only after the completion of a project whether it is okay. It is indeed nice that we, as blind and visually impaired people, are then asked, but if the test doesn't turn out so well, then you often hear: "That's a pity, but now it's too late, we can't do anything about it." So you should involve the target group earlier, which is what happened with the inclusion advisory board of the MdbK. That is a good example. That's how it should always be. I think here the advisory board has done, and still is doing, a good job. Basically, it's just like preparing an audio description in film. I myself always believe that blind authors or editors should be involved in the production of the audio version of the film. Only then is the best possible result achieved.

As has already been much discussed, the point is that institutions would have to be more diverse, for example, that people with disabilities would have to be represented on the staff, right?

Of course, it would be the absolute ideal case to employ people like us with impairments as staff. It's harder for us to find a permanent job than it is for people without impairments.

An acquaintance once told me that she was turned down in a job application because she was considered not able as a result of her blindness. That is total nonsense! Assuming a limited ability to perform due to a disability is really no justification for not giving someone with an impairment the chance to prove herself in a profession or in everyday working life.

Where do you still see potential for making museum visits more appealing for people with visual impairments?

With more barrier-free exhibitions, more digitally oriented exhibition projects.

What I also find very interesting is an interactive exhibition in which different types of art are combined in a museum room. For example, one has a room with three paintings from the Romantic period and one offers in addition an event with tactile pictures, with acoustic picture descriptions, with an inclusive guided tour and with music from the corresponding era. One can also organize a reading, recite poetry or offer dance theatre with live audio description. I find these kinds of projects exciting and they naturally make the exhibition more attractive and interesting for a larger target group.

Interview by Anne Kasten and Annika Drewes, students of Kultur- und Medienpädagogik (culture and media education) at the Merseburg University of Applied Sciences, accompanied by Carolin Rothmund, MdbK

↓ →
 Sebastian Schulze feels the relief to the painting *The Schmadribach Falls in Lauterbrunnen Valley*,
 Photos: Anne Kasten, 2021



↑
 Sebastian Schulze in conversation
 with students of Merseburg University,
 Photo: MdbK, 2021

Museum of Blinding Arts

Many people believe that blindness is nothing more than pure darkness. They think, "When it's dark, you don't see anything, so blind people just see black."

But blind-born people don't see black. They see nothing. This is difficult to understand for the sighted people, because they cannot visually imagine it. Especially for visual artists, blindness as a theme is a great challenge, because nothingness cannot be depicted in the picture. Blindness is not only caused by a lack of light.

Also if there is too much light, you don't see anything. You get blinded.

The musician Johann Sebastian Bach was severely visually impaired at the age of 65. He couldn't read or write any more, also no musical notes. As a composer, this was practically the end of his career. That was in 1750. Bach had a cataract, i.e. a clouding of the lens in his eye. Today, this disease can be cured by an uncomplicated operation. The natural lens is removed and replaced by a plastic lens.

More than half a million such operations are carried out in Germany every year.

During Bach's lifetime, however, such an intervention was not possible in this form. The surgeries and treatments were venture-some and few doctors could or wanted to perform them.

One of these doctors was Dr John Taylor. Taylor was known for difficult eye surgery and travelled across countries in Europe for couching the cataracts of some famous people. His carriage was painted with many pictures of eyes. The operations were staged like ceremonial rituals or performances.

Dr Taylor also came to Leipzig and operated on Johann Sebastian Bach there in 1750. The first operation in March was not successful, but after the second in July Bach was able to see again.

John Taylor was a physician, but he also stood in a long tradition that came from a religious, Christian context, namely the healing of the sick as a spectacle or event. In the Bible there are a whole series of stories about the healing of blind, paralyzed and deaf people. One example is a chapter in the Acts of the Apostles in which Peter and John come to a temple in Jerusalem. They meet a paralytic there.

This engraving by Nicolas Dorigny shows the scene in front of the temple. Between decorated columns stands about a dozen people with antique clothes – some of them are bearded. In the foreground, a man sits on the ground and looks at two men standing right in front of him. To his right, separated by a column are two naked boys. One holds a man's robe with both hands. The other carries a stick with two pigeons hanging on it.

In the Bible, the paralyzed man is carried every day to beg in front of the temple. He also asks Peter and John for alms, but instead receives a miracle healing from Peter: "He grabbed him by the right hand and pulled him up. In an instant his feet and ankles became firm. He jumped

to his feet and walked. The man went into the Temple with them, walking back and forth, dancing and praising God.”

The person with a walking disability is used here to show a miracle to the other people in the temple. The miracle is to convince them that Jesus Christ is almighty and therefore the Son of God.

The Bible represents the medical model of disability. Instead of adapting society to the needs of people with disabilities, they are cured. They should become ‘normal’, so that they no longer disturb.

In the Bible, however, not only miracle healings are carried out for the ‘needy sick’ and people with disabilities. Disability is also used as punishment to convince unbelievers of the power of God.

In another Acts of the Apostles, Paul punished the Jewish sorcerer Elymas for trying to prevent a Roman official from believing in the Christian God. Paul said to Elymas, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and unable to see the sun for a time. Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.”

The Roman official witnessed this glare and thus believed in the power of God. He then became a devout Christian.

Nicolas Dorigny also shows this biblical scene in a copper engraving. In a palace-like building with ornate pillars, round arches and high ceilings, there are a good dozen people – again in antique robes. A man sits centrally on a throne that stands on a stone pedestal. He has a wreath of leaves on his head. At the right edge of the picture stands a man pointing with his left outstretched arm at another man in the left half of the picture. He closed his eyes and stretched both arms forward. The feet stand far apart like in a walking motion.

What the blinded Elymas sees, the picture cannot show. Only his body and gestures can be depicted.

The artist Nicolas Dorigny was actually a lawyer. At the age of 30, however, he became deaf and began to work as an artist.

People with disabilities have often been and are portrayed in art as helpless and deplorable. They were often shown as beggars who depend on donations and other support. They rarely had regular occupations.

An extraordinary case is the Greek poet Homer, who was supposedly blind. In him, blindness is not seen as weakness, but as a source of his genius and creative energy. He is one of those people whose disability is stylized into a superpower.

This engraving by Jean Baptiste Massard shows Homer in a rocky coastal landscape. In the background you can see the turbulent sea and a sky with dark clouds. Homer is wrapped in a simple sleeveless cape, looks to the sky with his mouth open, and raises his left open hand. His right hand rests on the shoulder of a boy who also wears simple, short clothes. Homer has a U-shaped string instrument on his back.

Whether Homer existed at all is still a matter of debate. Legend has it that he was the author of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. How he wrote down these texts when he was actually blind is also not known. Embossed printing as we know it today was only invented in 1825 by Louis Braille. It consists of tangible dots that stand for the letters of the alphabet in different combinations. Three years later, based on this system, Louis Braille also invented a tangible musical notation. This allows blind people to read and write notes without miraculous healing.

Johann Sebastian Bach has not experienced the invention of the notation for the blind. He died in 1750 – ten days after the second eye surgery by Dr John Taylor, presumably from a stroke. Due to the first operation, its health consequences and incorrect medical treatment, he was already physically very weakened.

On the carriage of Dr John Taylor was the Latin saying “Qui visum dat, dat vitam.”, that is, “who gives vision gives life”

However, the self-proclaimed expert in ophthalmology has performed many surgeries with fatal results. Hundreds of people have been completely blinded by him and some have died as a result of infections and other illnesses as a result of the operation. He was a charlatan. An impostor. He used the art of glare and the fear of blindness for his purposes. He made a business with the hope of highly visually impaired people who did not have the resources and tools to lead an independent life.

John Taylor died in 1772 at the age of 69, also blind.

Excerpt from the video work "The Museum of Blinding Arts", 2020, dirksorge.de

*Dirk Sorge, Visual artist
and cultural mediator*



The Blinding of Elymas, Nicolas Dorigny, after
Raffaël, Copper engraving, Maximilian Speck
von Sternburg Stiftung in the MdbK



The Blind Homer, Urbain Massard, after
François Gérard, Copper engraving, 1816,
Maximilian Speck von Sternburg Stiftung
in the MdbK

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←
Site inspection with the
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Photo: MdbK, 2021

↓
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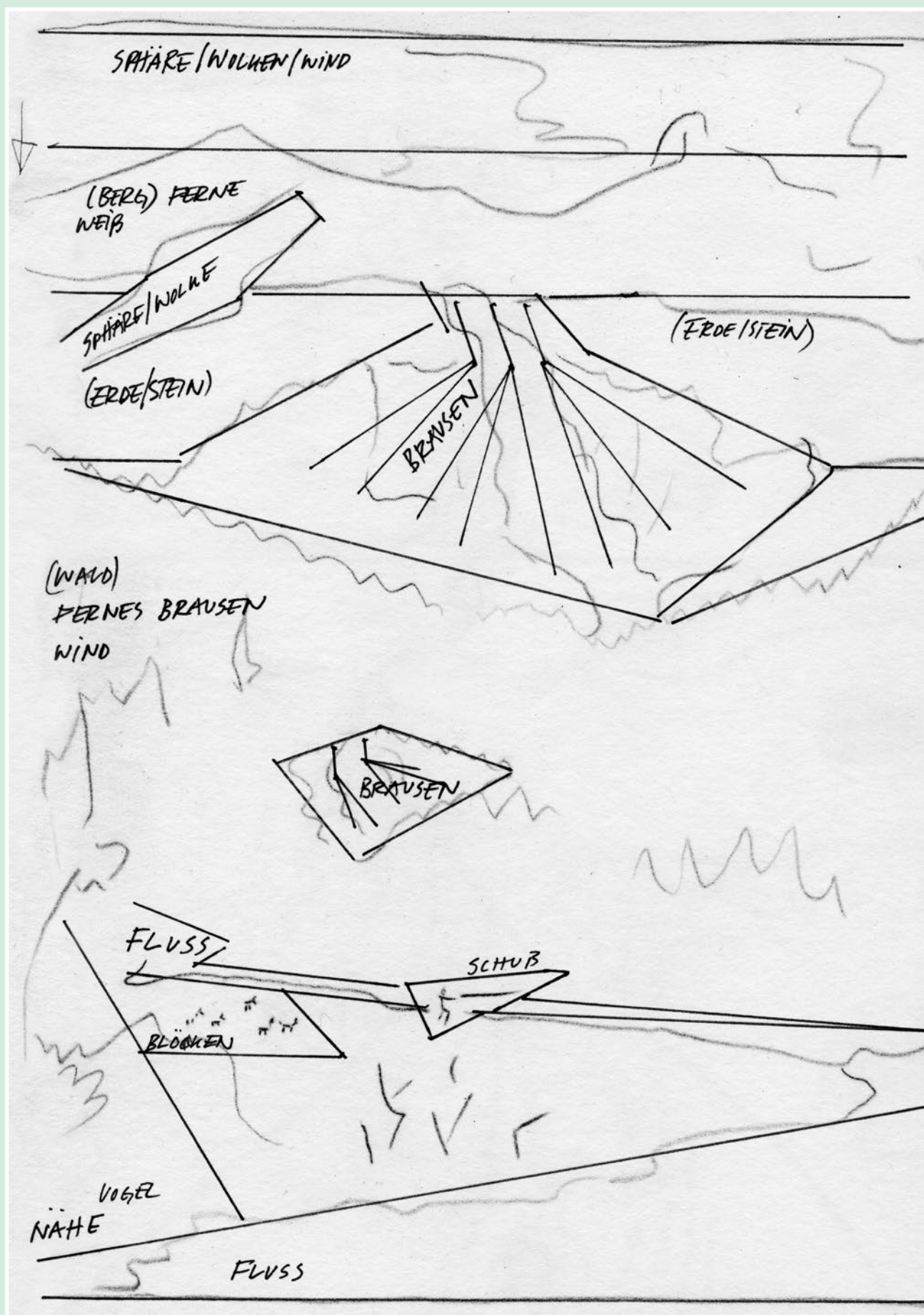
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↑

Score sketch for soundscape for
 The Schmadribach Falls in Lauterbrunnen
 Valley by Joseph Anton Koch,
 Sketch & Scan: Anna Schimkat, 2021

MdbK [hubs] refers to the multi-sensory mediation stations on selected artworks in the Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig. They are aimed at people with and without disabilities. The English title *hubs* is a symbol for the concept: different access points in the areas of touching, hearing and seeing converge at the stations and enable a shared exchange about the works. In this brochure, MdbK [hubs] are introduced and those involved share their expertise: advisory board members who have contributed to the hubs as well as artists who deal with questions of representation in the context of (anti-)ableism.
