

Art Beyond Sight Awareness Month

October 2011: Alert II

SAVE A DATE: TELEPHONE CONFERENCE CRASH COURSE, Monday, October 17

Elisabeth Axel, founder and President of Art Education for the Blind, will open the course at 9.30 a.m. along with Beth Bienvenu, the Director of Accessibility programs for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Then, beginning at 10 a.m., additional experts will discuss a variety of topics, from how to involve your Trustees and Directors to implementing inclusive programming in a diversity of institutions. Topics will change every hour on the hour, and each session will include time for callers-in to ask questions and share their insights on the subject.

(Note: All times given are Eastern Daylight Time.)

Number to call: (712) 432-0220; Conference code: 232-2011

Some panelists will be showing pictures and/or PowerPoint presentations. If you wish to see them, follow the link and instructions below:

<https://artbeyondsight.webex.com/artbeyondsight/onstage/g.php?d=663861214&t=a>

Event number: 663 861 214; Event password: broadway

9:30 – 10 a.m.: Welcome by Elisabeth Axel, Founder and President, Art Beyond Sight, and **Beth Bienvenu**, Director of the Office of Accessibility, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

10 – 11 a.m.: Accessibility from top to bottom: how to work with directors and trustees towards museum-wide change

Discussion Leader: Christopher Reich, Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS)

Speakers: Linda Duke, Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art, Kansas State University
Tom Finkelpearl, Queens Museum of Art
Kim Hutchinson, Disability Funders Network

11 a.m. – noon: Inclusive programming in state and local history museums

Discussion Leader: Bob Beatty, American Association for State and Local History

Speakers: Karen Wade, Homestead Museum
Jessica Medlen, Conner Prairie Interactive History Park
Kat Burkhart, Carnegie Museum of Montgomery County
Mike Hill, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources

Noon – 1 p.m.: Multi-sensory museum experiences and museums of the future

Discussion Leaders: Nina Levent, Art Beyond Sight, and Alvaro Pascual-Leone, Harvard Medical School

Speakers: Elizabeth Merritt, Center for the Future of Museums
Martin Tröndle, E-motion

1– 2 p.m.: Inclusive programming in children's museums

Session Leader: Marie Clapot, Art Beyond Sight

Speakers: Claudia Setubal, Please Touch Museum – The Children's Museum of Philadelphia
Lynn Walsh, Chicago Children's Museum
John Bomhoff, Children's Museum of Phoenix
Korie Twiggs, Association of Children's Museum

2 – 3 p.m.: Accessibility in science museums/planetariums and update on ADA

Session Leader: Bob Cosgrove, NASA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Speakers: Beth Bienvenu, National Endowment for the Arts
Craig Wetli, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
Christine Reich, Boston Museum of Science

3 – 4 p.m.: Inclusive programming in performing arts centers

Discussion Leader: Bobbi Wailes, Lincoln Center

Speakers: Garry Novick, Broward Arts Center
Ann Gregg, Carnegie Hall
Ann O'Connor, Colorado Ballet

4– 4.30 p.m.: Reflections on the day and suggestions for future teleconferences

The full program is also available online at <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/change/aw-crashcourse.shtml>

Project Access for All Profiles

This week, Art Beyond Sight spoke with Doyle Land, Curator of Education for the Ellen Noel Art Museum and the Georges and Milly Rhodus Sculpture and Sensory Garden in Odessa, Texas.

Ellen Noel Art Museum, George and Milly Rhodus Sculpture and Sensory Garden

Art Beyond Sight (ABS): *How did the idea for the Sensory Garden come to fruition? Was there a specific event that led to its creation?*

Doyle Land: The garden started in the mid 1990s as a collaboration between the Museum, the Permian Basin Master Gardeners and DARS/Division for Blind Services, formerly Texas Commission for the Blind. It was a concept that the director and the museum board of trustees had at the time. Their long-range planning included an expansion of the museum to include this sculpture/sensory garden so that all citizens of the community could enjoy and experience art and so that our mission of '*Connecting People with Art*' could be fulfilled.

ABS: *You mentioned that you had experience in working with people with disabilities, so how did your experience help shape the creation of the garden?*

D.L: Before I came on staff as Curator of Education here at the Ellen Noël Art Museum I worked for the State of Texas Division for Blind Services as a rehabilitation teacher for 23 years providing direct services to blind and visually impaired adults and children. During this time I also volunteered and applied my art education background to teach art classes for both sighted and those with visual impairments at the Museum. The director of the museum at the time asked me to assist with the committee in the planning and implementation of the design of the garden. Having an understanding of visual impairments, sensory loss, and the needs of the blind community helped me to work with the committee in creating this space for such a sensory experience. I also worked with them on training staff and volunteers on blindness awareness issues. Now, as a full-time museum staff member I have the privilege of combining my background working with the blind and my love and background in the arts.

ABS: *How is the garden designed to be a "unique experience"? What are the functions of each entity in the garden?*

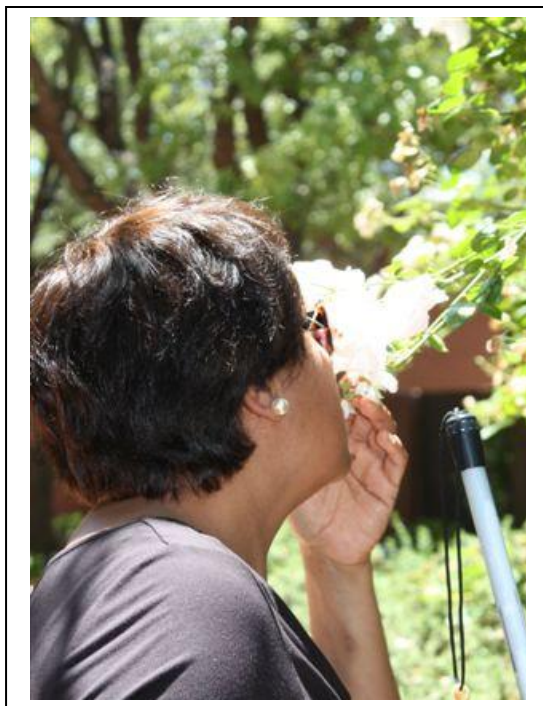
D.L: The garden is a unique experience in that it combines both aspects of art and nature. The garden is a space that is easy and safe to mobilize about, having raised beds for ease of reach that are filled with sensory plants. The Master Gardeners assist in choosing plants that are not only hardy and appropriate for this area of Texas but are aromatic, have interesting textures as well as being vibrant or contrasting in color.

All of the sculpture in the garden is meant to be touched. One granite sculpture by artist Jesus Moroles is musical and can be 'played' with a mallet. The sculptures in the garden are both realistic and abstract in nature and provide for interesting discussion. Another sculpture that is quite unique was completed by the artist Jesus Moroles, the community, and adults who are blind. This ten-foot-tall granite sculpture, entitled 'Portal,' is the signature of our Sculpture and Sensory Garden, with its completion involving the entire community.

The garden provides a place for hands-on experiences for children who have never seen or felt a tomato growing on a vine, had a butterfly land on their arm; heard the quiet humming of a hummingbird; felt slick, wet granite; or created music from a rock. It provides a space for being creative, learning how nature and art correlate, and how experiences with nature can become a work of art.

ABS: *How do visitors respond to the Sensory Garden?*

D.L: We have had a great response from the blind community. Many return here with family members to not only experience the garden, but to explore the galleries as well. We also provide art classes for adults with visual impairments and incorporate the garden with the lessons. The community, including the local university and state offices, use the garden for training others who work with the blind. The garden is also used for special events, college classes, girl scouts, and public and private schools to teach blindness awareness topics.



Participants identifying plants by touch and smelling the different fragrances.

CORNER BOOKSTORE

Art Beyond Sight: A Resource Guide to Art, Creativity, and Visual Impairment

Elisabeth Salzhauer Axel and Nina Sobol Levent, Editors

The American Foundation for the Blind and Art Education for the Blind joined together to co-publish this one-of-a-kind resource that provides vital information on all aspects of exploring art and creativity by people who are blind or visually impaired. Developed by Art Education for the Blind, this beautiful, fully illustrated manual is the result of a decade-long international collaboration among researchers, art educators, teachers of visually impaired students, psychologists, museum professionals, and blind and sighted art enthusiasts. The 504-page resource guide includes a section of reproducible pages for classroom or workshop activities.

To purchase it go to:

<http://www.afb.org/store/product.asp?sku=978%2D0%2D89128%2D850%2D3&mscssid>

Phone: 1-800-232-3044

Fax: 412-741-1398

Or for International

Phone: 412-741-1398

Fax: 412-741-0609

In the UK: www.amazon.co.uk

**For information on special Awareness Month programs,
visit the online calendar at <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/change/aw-calendar.shtml>**