

THE ART BEYOND SIGHT AWARENESS MONTH

October 2011: Alert III

REMINDER: This Coming Monday, October 17, Is the Telephone Conference Crash Course

When you get to your office this coming Monday, don't forget to grab a tea or coffee and dial into the annual **Telephone Conference Crash Course**.

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

9:30 a.m. EDT: **Elisabeth Axel**, founder and President of Art Education for the Blind, and **Beth Bienvenu** the newly appointed Director of Accessibility programs for the National Endowment for the Arts, **will open the all-day course**. Then, beginning at 10 a.m., there will be hourly sessions on the following topics – with open discussion at the end of each session as well as at the end of the day.

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

An institutional commitment to accessibility can only succeed with the support of a museum's leadership. During this session, museum professionals will share and compare experiences with trustees who have fostered a passion for accessibility within their museums and those who have faced resistance to the implementation of inclusive practices. The importance of inclusiveness to foundations and other funding sources will also be discussed as well as case studies exploring the role of directors and boards in leading change in this important area of operations.

11 a.m. – noon: State and local history museums

Experts from American Association for State and Local History institutions share strategies, challenges, and successes in offering accessible history-based programs and activities for visitors/participants of ALL abilities. Included in this panel are presenters from a small museum in central Indiana, a medium-sized museum in Southern California, and a large outdoor history site. Join this discussion on ways to incorporate more accessible programs in the history realm.

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

Learn about museum experiences that involve sensory engagement and interactions that are accessible to people with sensory disabilities and accommodate different learning styles. Also discussed: recent research in neuroscience and biometrical studies that gives us a new perspective on the cognitive and sensory landscape of a museum visit, and new insights into

future design of museum experiences and exhibits. This session will also look at current trends in accessible exhibits, especially as enabled by new technologies, and future possibilities in designing spaces, exhibits, and programs that are engaging and accessible for all.

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

Staff from Children's Museums and the Children's Museum Association share their efforts to develop inclusive programs for all audiences. They discuss exhibition and program implementation, training needed for staff and docents, and common challenges faced in sustaining and marketing the programs. Anyone who works with children in a museum setting will benefit from this session.

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

This session is devoted to presenting best practices and innovative approaches to exhibit design in science museums and planetariums, including discussion of the harmonization of Universal Design principles with Federal regulatory accessibility standards. The panel will also discuss experiences with collaboration between exhibit design staff and accessibility expertise inside and outside their organizations in creating accessible exhibits, programs and facilities. Updates on important changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations and accessibility standards that will take effect in 2012 will be pinpointed, along with how museums can adopt simple practices and acquire Federal agency guidance to be compliant with the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

3 – 4 p.m.: Accessibility in performing arts centers

Representatives of performing arts centers discuss inclusive programming at their institution: the importance of welcoming new patrons, staff and artists trainings, in-house and community programs, and ADA requirements. Also addressed will be issues of accessibility for various audiences, outreach programs in correctional facilities and hospitals, ASL and touch tours, and artist pre-show talks for people with vision loss and other disabilities.

4.00 – 4.30 p.m.: Reflections on the day and suggestions for future teleconferences – an open discussion

Discussion leaders and guest speakers for each session were highlighted in our last Alert. They can be found at:

<http://www.artbeyondsight.org/change/aw-crashcourse.shtml>.

Some panelists will be showing pictures and/or PowerPoint presentations. To view 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

Project Access for All Profiles

The Please Touch Museum–Children’s Museum of Philadelphia

This week, Art Beyond Sight interviewed Claudia Setubal, Program Manager and School Readiness for the museum, The Please Touch Museum–Children’s Museum of Philadelphia, to learn more about its recently opened Access/ABILITY, a traveling exhibition developed by the Boston Children’s Museum.

Art Beyond Sight (ABS): *How did the access/ABILITY exhibition come to be hosted at the Please Touch Museum? From what I understand, it was a traveling exhibition, so why did you feel it was important that access/ABILITY came to the Please Touch Museum?*

Claudia Setubal (C.S): The exhibit was developed by the Boston Children's Museum; Please Touch Museum has a temporary exhibit space that houses various changing exhibits that correspond to our programming throughout the year. Access/ABILITY tied in with the museum's efforts to reach out to all children, and especially those families who might be hesitant to visit because of real or perceived barriers.

In 2009, Please Touch Museum launched the Autism Access program, designed to encompass all areas of the museum’s programmatic structure, from a traditional visit, to special events and mobile programming. The program creates a comprehensive welcoming structure for families of children with ASD through staff training, tools for visiting (such as social stories, special maps and quiet rooms), mobile programming and special events for families.

The Access/Ability exhibit fit nicely into the museum’s mission of “enriching the lives of children by creating learning opportunities through play” and provided an opportunity to engage our general public in the work we have done with children of varying abilities.

ABS: *How did your previous experience influence and help the educational programs that were part of the exhibition?*

C.S: We had worked with a number of Autism organizations in developing the Autism Access program, and specifically in designing mobile programming that could bring the museum experience to children who might have a harder time adjusting to a visit. We

learned that having a mobile option was useful for groups that may be hesitant to come to unfamiliar locations. As part of the access/Ability exhibit's auxiliary programming, we developed an Access Kit that showcased some of the adaptable technologies used for people of varying abilities. The kit can be brought to schools or used on the gallery floor for programming.

We had the outstanding opportunity to work with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Education staff cross-trained with child life specialists and art therapists to evaluate the accessibility of our programs. At Please Touch Museum, we continually examine the role that universal design plays in the museum. By creating programs that are open-ended, child-directed, and process-driven, we find that families feel welcome and excited about learning through play. Our theater staff developed a new puppet character named Melita. Melita has Cerebral Palsy and uses a wheelchair. We added adaptive technology to the Program Room including wheelchair accessible tables and universal cuffs.

ABS: *How did the community and participants respond to the exhibition?*

C.S: We invited various partners, including Inglis House, The Melmark School, The Center for Autism, and Easter Seals to the opening day of the exhibit. We received positive feedback from the majority of our partners, who were thrilled that we were hosting the exhibit and wanted to participate in the effort to get the word out.



Pictures courtesy of Please Touch Museum

ABS: *What do you have planned for the future in terms of accessible programs?*

C.S: PTM is committed to continuing to improve Access to the museum for all children. The museum is developing an Accessibility Committee that will engage various museum departments and outside experts to advise the museum on the next steps in improving access.

Additionally, the museum hosts a program called "Museum without Walls" in local schools, libraries and child care centers that brings mobile programming, including the Access Kit.

Finally, the museum continues to host special events for families of children with Autism and other disabilities. On July 31st, we hosted an Autism Access morning event, where the museum was open early for families of children on the spectrum. The event was very successful, with over 400 people in attendance, and will be repeated in the future.

Kudos!

The Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, NY which was featured during ViewPoints, a weekly local radio show. To listen to the podcast follow the link below:

viewpointsplus.net/bin/DLC.php?get=vp+1140+podcast.mp3 .

Envision in Wichita, KS whose program "Through Our Eyes" was featured on KMUW – Kansas Public Radio 89.1. To listen to the show, follow the link below:

http://www.kmuw.org/index.php/news/new_art_exhibition_highlights_blind_and_low-vision_artists1/

Update:



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

Elisabeth Salzhauer Axel and Nina Sobol Levent, Editors
504 pp.

Regular Price: \$79.95

Special Sale Price \$49.95

Available in paperback or ASCII CD

The American Foundation for the Blind and Art Education for the Blind have 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. Includes a section of reproducible pages for classroom or workshop activities.

The link to the bookstore page is:

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

Online bookstore: www.afb.org/store (or use the direct link)

Phone: 1-800-232-3044; Fax: 412-741-1398

International

Phone: 412-741-1398; Fax: 412-741-0609; In the UK:

www.amazon.co.uk

We welcome news of your successful programs ... send them to Marie Clapot at aeb@artbeyondsight.org.

Don't forget to check the Calendar of Events to find out how Art Beyond Sight Awareness Month is being celebrated in your area and around the world: <http://www.artbeyondsight.org/change/aw-calendar.shtml>