

1. Description

The **Museum auf Abruf** (Museum on Demand, MUSA) is the City of Vienna's museum for contemporary art. The Museum (and the City of Vienna in general) has been engaged in accessibility issues for a long time. All openings are simultaneously translated into sign language for the hearing impaired. The integration of blind visitors is a logical step towards this broad accessibility of the house and its exhibitions.

The program proposed and implemented by ArteConTacto consists of two parts: Firstly, regular guided tours of approx. one hour and a maximum of 10 participants. Fifteen works can be touched, either the original, or a 2-dimensional diagram, or (in one case) a 3-D representation of the object. Guided by an art historian and at least one social worker, according to group size.

Second, a set of materials that allows the blind visitors to explore the exhibition by themselves, or in the company of friends and family, whenever they want.

The program and its materials were developed in close collaboration with the two national associations for the blind, and a state-owned school for the education of the visually impaired.

2. Materials

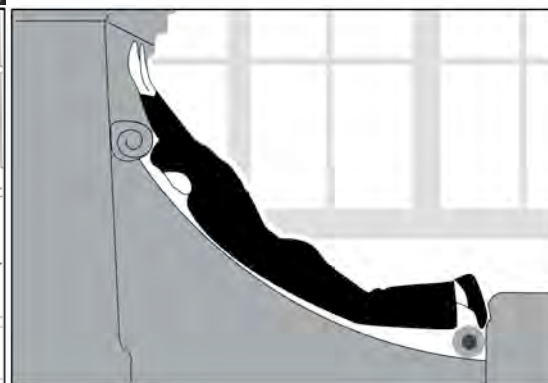
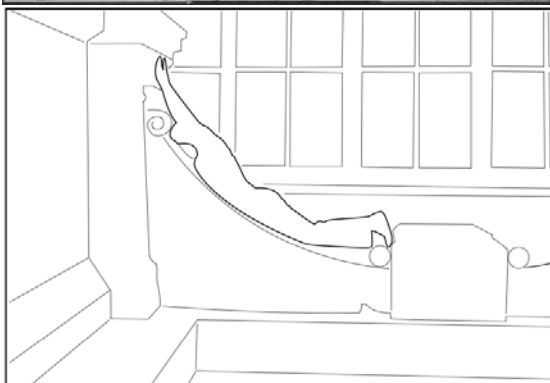
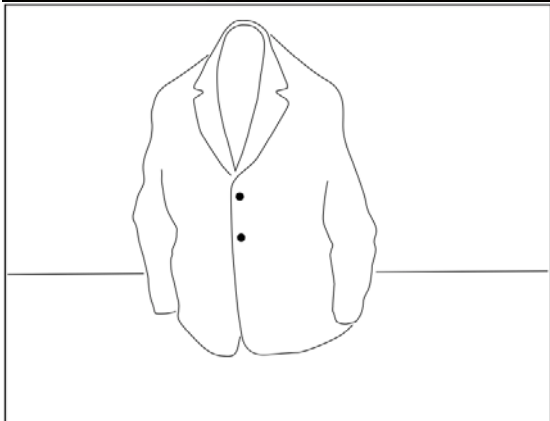
Besides Braille wall tags for the selected works (besides the normal wall labels) and a navigation system through the galleries, a specially designed kit helps the visitor to navigate, perceive and understand the exhibition.

2.1. THE KIT



We have produced four kits for blind visitors who want to visit the exhibition, either alone or accompanied. The kit consists of a folder that integrates a tactile map, a set of diagrams and an MP3 player for the audio.

2.2. TACTILE DIAGRAMS



Some of the works in the exhibition are photographs. These photographs have been converted into 2 tactile diagrams each: One that uses lines and another for surfaces. While the first gives a first impression and helps to situate recognize things, the second one can give more details on the textures, plasticity, textures, etc. In certain cases, the diagrams differ slightly, for example, to show a detail. The technology used is the ViewPlus Emprint SpotDot that prints Braille and ink on the same page.

2.3. MP3 PLAYER

The audio guide has been developed in DAISY, a special format for audible books for the blind. It works with prerecorded “real” voices, which are then assembled by the computer into MP3 files, from a word document and within seconds. The complete audio book can be downloaded on the museum website and installed on the visitor’s own Daisy player.

For those who do not bring their own player, we use an iPod Shuffle to reproduce the MP3s. This player works without a display and can be navigated easily.



Each work of art is described in three parts: 1. Author, title, year and technique; 2. Formal description; 3. Interpretation and artist details. The fourth file is the description of how to get to the next work. The names of the MP3 files are “speaking”, as they can be reproduced by the iPod, by pressing and holding the “next button”, in order to show the listener his position.

Example (originally in German, translated here into English):

12-Urteil1.mp3 → The 12th file on the iPod (the first 11 are on the museum and how to find it) gives the title and details of the first work, a sculpture by Andreas Urteil

13-Urteil2.mp3 → Formal description of the work

14-Urteil3.mp3 → Interpretation, artist details, etc.

15-Way-Fischer.mp3 → the way to the next work, a sculpture by Judith P. Fischer

2.4. NAVIGATION SYSTEM AND MAP





A special tape that has a very rough surface provides the navigation system in the galleries. The way through the exhibition corresponds the tactile map. The last minute changes to the installation could be integrated into the navigation system and the tactile plan, with some compromises. The originally planned round-trip could not be maintained. Of course, also the audio text had to be revised, as the route through the exhibition changed drastically. Above, the original plan, below, the new version, glued on the inside cover of the folder.



3. Evaluation

We evaluate directly all events, materials and visits to the museum in order to adapt the program (or parts of it), if necessary. The evaluation of the materials was especially important. We asked blind people to use them and speak out loud what they saw or noticed. These recordings were used to elaborate the next version. The process was repeated three times, until the test persons could not imagine any further improvement.

Every visitor (be it in the guided tour or alone) is also invited to provide feedback, by means of a questionnaire, with the help of the museum staff.

Improvements are made on detection of problems, a final usability report will be provided to the museum and the collaborating associations.

4. Possible adaptation and other applications

Once the program is up and running, we will address other museums and the City of Vienna, in order to join the initiative. We could imagine producing a cultural kit for blind visitors to Vienna that can be picked up at the airport or at the Tourist Offices and covers several monuments or venues.

5. Contact information:

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