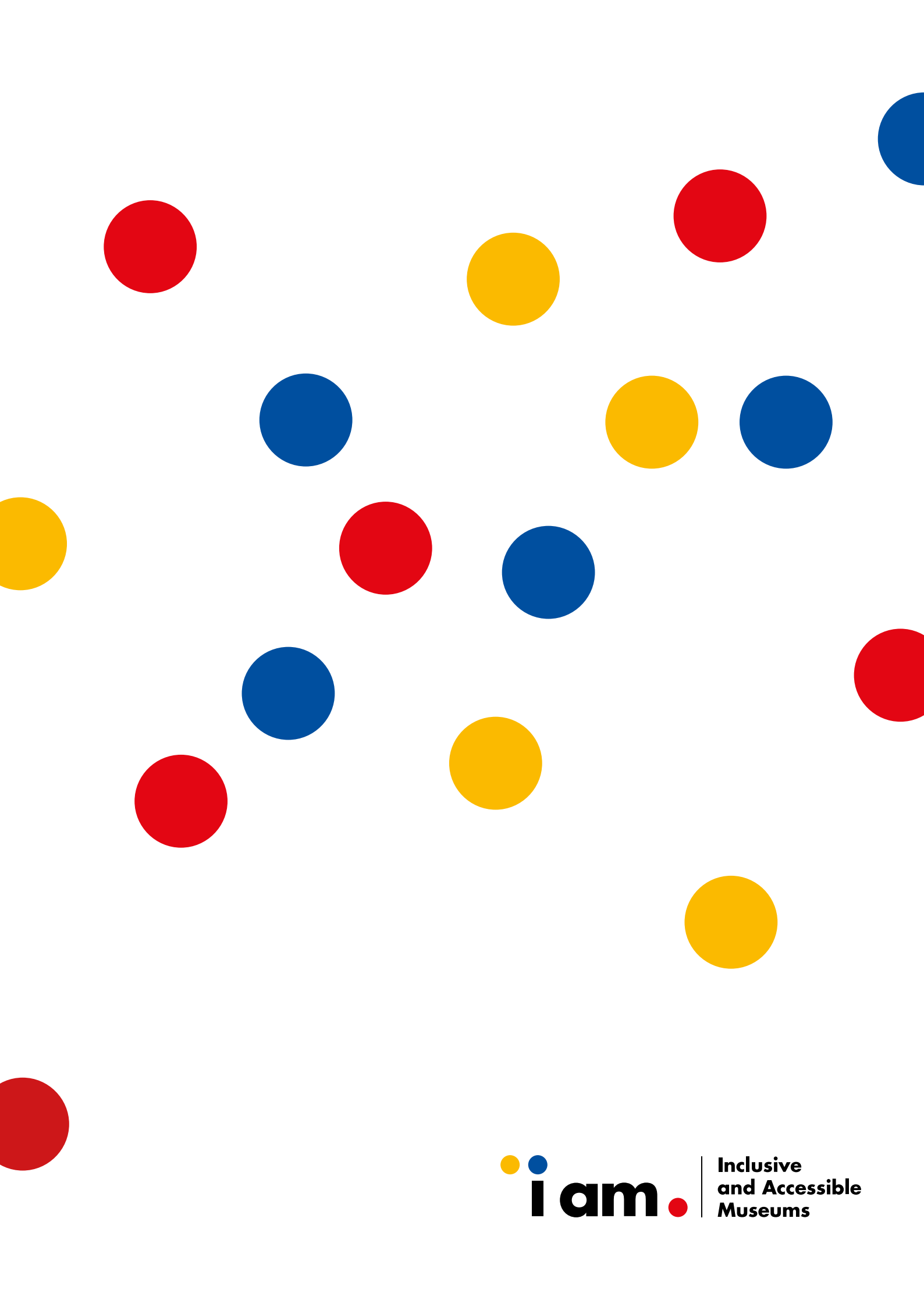






Published by

mu-zee-um, vzw

Vabamu

Berlin Wall Foundation

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

creACTIVE

MUSAC. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

Editorial team

mu-zee-um:

Lies Coghe, Veerle Derave, Ann Delye, Hilde Goossens, Eva Strobbe,
Ewout Vanhoecke

Vabamu:

Karen Jagodin, Aive Peil

Berlin Wall Foundation:

Pia Eiringhaus, Christin Nezik, Dr. Katrin Passens

Museu Calouste Gulbenkian:

Inês Fialho Brandão, Margarida Rodrigues João, Margarida Vieira

creACTIVE:

Dragan Atanasov, Aleksandra Petkova

MUSAC:

Julia Ruth Gallego, Kristine Guzmán, Izaskun Sebastián

Cover design: INDI.es

Corporate Image: Manuel Fernández | MF Studio

Book design: INDI.es

Proofreading: Michael Bunn / Rosa Mercader (líneazero edicions)

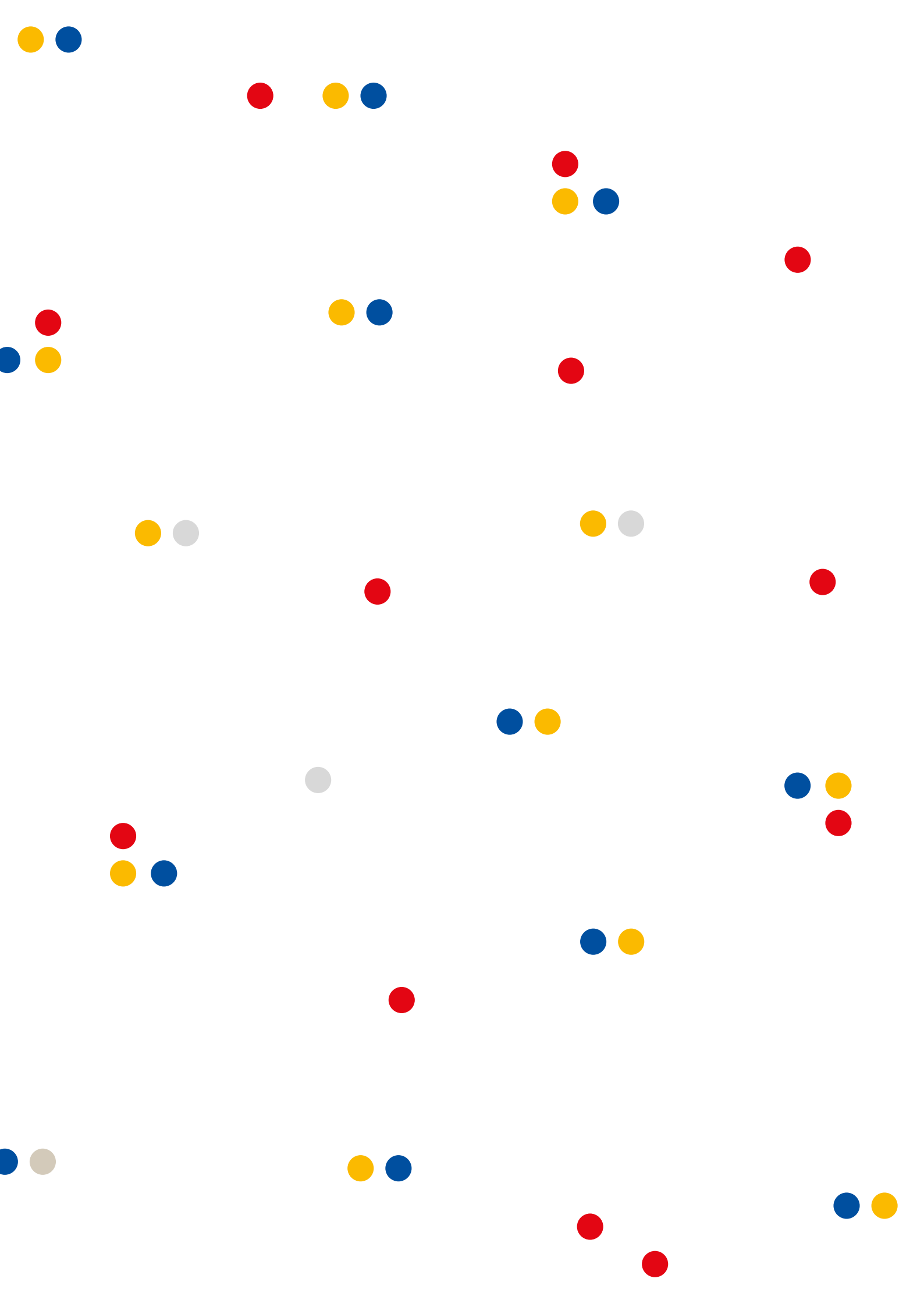
Copyright © 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or used in any manner without the prior written permission of the publishers, except in the case of short quotations.

Co-funded by the European Union. The views and opinions expressed are, however, those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union, the European Commission or the Agency for International Programs for Youth. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

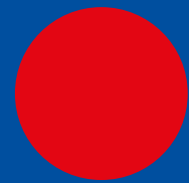
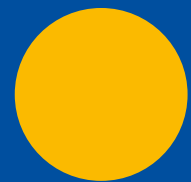
Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union





Contents

9	Introduction
12	Persons with disabilities as museum visitors: is this not yet a vested right?
21	Who are we?
37	IO1: Virtual Museum Tours
40	Pre-recorded Interactive Tour
47	Interactive Live Tour
52	Pre-recorded Insights
56	Live Insights
60	Virtual Class
64	Case Study: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum
71	IO2: Sensory Journey
79	Case Studies
80	Case Study 1: mu-zee-um
88	Case Study 2: Vabamu
96	Case Study 3: Berlin Wall Foundation
106	Case Study 4: creACTIVE
112	Case Study 5: Calouste Gulbenkian Museum
122	Case Study 6: MUSAC
131	Appendix
134	Endnotes
136	Contacts
138	Acknowledgements



Introduction



This e-book provides an insight into the key findings of the **I AM (Inclusive and Accessible Museums)** project. The project, funded by the Erasmus+ program (Key Action 2), was implemented between June 2021 and June 2023 by partners from six European countries: mu-zee-um (Belgium), Berlin Wall Foundation (Germany), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal), MUSAC (Spain), VABUMU (Estonia) and creACTive (North Macedonia).

The partnership brings together the expertise and creativity of a number of very different institutions. Art museums, history museums, memorial sites, an art education organization, and a youth organization have joined forces to bring their specific competences and experiences to a cooperation project. The aim is to enable participation in cultural life and the culture of remembrance. We are united by the desire to make our institutions more inclusive and attractive, especially for young people with learning disabilities.

In this way, the project seeks to bring history, art, and culture closer to young people so that they can expand their views of the world, interact with other members of society and develop personal competences. By combining each partner's resources, competences and experiences, we believe that we can help build a safe learning environment adapted to the needs of our visitors.

Our reflections gave rise to the idea of developing a methodological "toolbox" for educational work that opens up new approaches to our topics and sites for young people, especially with learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities¹. Furthermore, it was important for us to share our experiences and make them available to colleagues in other museums. This e-book is a guide to the two intellectual outputs that we have developed.

Intellectual Output 1 (IO1) is a proposal for Virtual Museum Tours. These tours have been especially relevant during the COVID-19 outbreak, when many museums were forced to reach out to their audiences digitally. We have developed five different types of virtual tours that museums or memorial sites can adapt to their programs: prerecorded interactive visit, interactive live visit, prerecorded insights, live insights and a virtual classroom.

Intellectual Output 2 (IO2) is entitled Sensory Journey and is directed at young people with learning disabilities. The Sensory Journey is a methodical approach for enriching our experience of a museum or memorial site using different senses. Educators, youth workers, and mediators can create their own sensory tools so that young people with learning disabilities can explore a museum or memorial site and gain access to the works, exhibited objects or topics by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling.

Aside from step-by-step instructions, case studies with photographs and videos are included so that educators, youth workers, mediators, or other museum staff can be inspired by this cooperation project.

With this e-book, we would like to enter into conversation with colleagues at museums and memorial sites. We welcome your feedback and comments on the tools we have developed.

The I AM-Team

Berlin / León / Lisbon / Oostende / Skopje / Tallinn in spring 2023



Persons with disabilities as museum visitors: Is this not yet a vested right?

Geert Van Hove
Ghent University

Introduction

A few years ago, I walked into the MSK in Ghent (Museum for Fine Arts) with a group and one of my fellow visitors takes me by the arm in one of the rooms, points his finger at one of the works and says, "This is a De Saedeleer." I smile kindly at him and reply, "Yes, there are many beautiful paintings here in this room." My companion repeats "De Saedeleer" ... I try to move a little closer to the work, hoping (secretly) to get a better look at the nameplate to the right of the painting. My fellow visitor follows me closely. I see that the work is, indeed, attributed to Valerius De Saedeleer, one of the famous Flemish landscape painters who was part of the Latemsche school for a time. I look admiringly at my fellow visitor and say, "You sure know a lot about art, don't you?" He replies, "It's in my art books at home." This De Saedeleer connoisseur is a man slightly over 40, he lives with 4 others in a house where each has his own bedroom/sitting room and where some rooms are also shared. His personal space includes collecting art books. When listening to music, he spends many hours looking through those books. I think it is fair to say that enjoying art is really one of his main hobbies. By the way, this man is usually described as having Down Syndrome.

It is a Sunday morning in 2014 and it is very busy in the SMAK – Museum for Modern Arts in Ghent – (the inhabitants of the city are allowed to visit "their" museum for free on Sunday mornings) so... I walk with two other people through the halls featuring the work of Berlinde De Bruyckere. We had been waiting for this: "our" Ghent artist was allowed to appear in in some rooms of *our* museum. In one of the rooms, the work *Cripplewood* is on show, the work that touched many people at the Venice Biennale. We enter the room and our companion of the day is immediately very impressed. He approaches the artwork with great circumspection, pointing to what lies in the room in terms of (literally) a large artwork. He moves closer to it and moves away

again, bends his knees a little, and peers through openings in the work. He looks at us and says, "Beautiful..." Immediately, he moves closer again and repeats the word, pointing at it, looking through openings, distancing himself... Occasionally he makes movements with his arms and hands and we, who know him well, know that he does this to release a little energy. He makes these same movements every time he finds something very beautiful or exciting... More than 20 minutes later, he seems to calm down a bit and indicates that he wants to walk on to another room. Immediately, he asks if there are any stairs, as he dislikes stairs very much. Just before leaving the hall, he turns around once more and says, "I want to buy a book." Later in the museum shop, he saunters without hesitation to a pile of books lying there, especially for this exhibition. "This is the book I want," he says. He leafs through the sample copy and clearly looks for *Cripplewood*. Once he's found it, he looks at us and says, "Nice..." Later, he steps into the museum's coffee shop, taking good care of a large paper bag that contains his latest acquisition. "The book is for home," he says, "I'm going to look at it in my room because it's beautiful."

I am not writing this brief introduction lightly. I hope to show how some (intellectually) disabled people enjoy all the beauty that can be found in a museum, on the one hand, and on the other, the unifying power of experiencing and enjoying a museum together.

Persons with disabilities in museums: isn't this a right?

In 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities² was adopted by the United Nations. This is a legally binding document. The 185 countries that have so far ratified this Convention have undertaken to adapt their laws to the requirements stipulated in this international agreement.

For museums and their functioning, a number of interesting openings are presented by this Convention. Articles 3 and 9, for instance, stress the importance of accessibility. Here, we are clearly not only talking about the physical accessibility of buildings.

In turn, Article 30 of this Convention states that people with disabilities have the right to participate in the cultural life of the community in which they live. Article 30.1 refers to "access to cultural materials" and "access to places for cultural performances and services such as theaters, museums, cinemas, libraries and tourism services, and as far as possible, enjoy access to monuments and sites of national cultural importance".

In this regard, Article 30.2 also refers to the measures that must be taken to provide people with opportunities "to develop and utilize their creative, artistic and intellectual potential".

In pursuing the right to participate in cultural life, one of the central concepts of the Convention is crucial. It concerns "reasonable accommodations"³. This means changing something in an environment to make it accessible for persons with disabilities. It is a measure that neutralizes the effects of an inaccessible environment with which a disabled person is confronted.

This Convention could inspire museums not only to work on physical accessibility but also to draw up programs and undertake actions to enable people with disabilities to participate fully as visitors, artists, employees and as sponsors... This could be done to promote museums as places where objects of value and importance for art and culture can be enjoyed together by everyone.

Going to the museum as an expression of the 'desire' to belong: are people with disabilities not human beings, then?

In a recent fascinating book, Dan Goodley⁴ notes that people with disabilities are not fully regarded as human beings. By not supporting them in their desire to gain access to certain social and cultural phenomena, we still regard them as unworthy and unable to participate.

Together with Orhan Agirdag⁵, we note that "deficit thinking" – thinking in terms of deficits – is often deployed at times when

a distance is identified between what is expected of citizens as “normal” and certain “target groups” that do not seem to reach that expected level.

Agirdag tries to clarify, through Bourdieu’s insights, that ‘cultural capital’ (including insights into phenomena such as art as an expression of a particular community’s culture) is not just something unidimensional: people do not just have a lot or little cultural capital; it is also fascinating to try to understand whether people also have “other” cultural capital.

But how can people with disabilities build cultural capital, and how can we learn from the possible different perspectives they often have if they remain excluded from getting to know the artifacts belonging to the local culture? Why do we continue to make the unilateral consideration, for people with disabilities, that singing childish songs and tearjerkers is something that belongs to “them”⁶? Are they, then, doomed to go through life as “eternal children”?

However, there is good news to report: we can do something about it. We can take actions such as those described further in this report. Goodley (2020:45) argues that our desires are always relational: a consequence of our relationships and associations with humans and nonhumans, bodies and culture, individuals and society, humans and machines... We feel and emote in the relationships we have with others. People with disabilities (simply because they are humans) go through a permanent process of “becoming”. Deleuze and Guattari do not use the term “becoming” for nothing⁷. This “becoming” is best nurtured and is something we can build on in connection with others (Goodley, 2020:49). Those others can listen to people with disabilities in their desire to belong and meet people and ... take them to a museum, for example.

Museums as safe places: can people with disabilities also develop through safe rituals?

Our colleague (and the mother of a son with a disability) Katherine Runswick-Cole⁸ writes the following about the label “intellectual

disability”: intellectual disability is always profound because it enlarges, disrupts, pauses, questions, and clarifies what it means to be human. Intellectual disability “disses” (or disrespects) the human, but it also desires it.

Including people who are often in danger of not being taken *au sérieux* (and worse still, often denied basic human needs) in activities and processes “that belong to human beings”, such as enjoyment of the arts, is by no means a soft option. We will always have to balance the particularities of people with disabilities with what is expected of people who participate.

We often hear it said that people (including people with disabilities) need safety. Now, isn’t safety often built through/via rituals?

So, let’s suppose museums are prime places to try out/build this.

With regard to rituals, Bronwyn Davies goes back to the concept of “ritornello”⁹ as elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari. This term, taken from music, is translated philosophically here to show how environments, such as museums, can work. Rhythm and milieu are basic in the ritornello. Visiting a museum can become part of a set of rituals that certain people perform in our culture. Rituals provide security (“I know what can happen”) on the one hand; on the other, there are always possibilities to learn and grow (“What do I like to see/hear?”, “What am I affected by?”, “What can I share with others?”...)

Encounters with people and artifacts can inspire as well as confuse; above all, they also offer many opportunities to emphasize the sense of “being human”: getting a ticket, receiving your visitor sticker, hanging up your coat in the lockers, getting to know the atmosphere in a museum, taking in information, and having a drink/dinner after the visit. These are small elements of a bigger picture that are recognized and provide safety after a number of times and with the necessary support. According to Davies, it is initially about the safety of having an idea about what is coming; the ritual becomes predictable, offering the contours to experiment with... Everything initially goes back to safety, a sense of recognition... these are things that provide support to grow, even if it is busy or chaotic when arriving at the museum. This working with/via rituals should not turn into something rigid, as at the same time it is always best to provide playful-unexpected possibilities... to grow, remember?

In conclusion: a letter to the I AM Team

It's nice to write an introduction having learnt that you, the museums united in this project, are looking to provide a 'toolbox', among other things. A toolbox gives ideas, it should not be copied blindly, it can be used flexibly, and can be culturally adapted. Every person with a disability is provided with opportunities to work with his/her talents, thus fulfilling the statement that the diversity within the group is often greater than the diversity between groups.

It is also nice to learn that you have returned to Loris Malaguzzi's thesis which claimed that children (humans) have 100 languages and then adults steal 99 of them. Many children with intellectual disabilities are constantly judged on what they cannot do. Going against this, Malaguzzi, an Italian pedagogue, resolutely chose creativity and experimentation to reach people. I think your project plans fit in with this perfectly.

I also learn from your approach and enthusiasm that this project aims to contribute permanently to the search for how we – together – can become "better persons". In this respect, your project dovetails nicely with the work of British philosopher Iris Murdoch. This author saw "love for others" as beginning where "the big fat ego" ends. Only when you really see others, really dare to get to know them, can you learn to love them. We live in a time when interest in the social role of museums is increasingly highlighted. I am convinced that with this project you will succeed in enabling people with disabilities to become part of the cultural environment we live in, that you do this in an attempt to get to know these people better with a lot of love, and that through these actions you become better human beings together and stand up for a better world. I am already a fan!

Geert Van Hove is a Professor at Ghent University, where his field of research is Disability Studies and Inclusive Education. He was the winner of the 2013 Gunnar Dybwad Award of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. He was the Disability Studies Professor of the Endowed Chair of Disability Studies at VUmc Amsterdam, Department of Medical Humanities 2013-2018. He received the Steven Taylor Memorial Senior Scholar Award at the Disability Studies in Education Conference (2017) in Minneapolis.



The I AM-team

Who are we?

mu-zee-um

Ostend, Belgium



© mu-zee-um

mu-zee-um is an arts education organization that promotes and stimulates the exchange between art(ist)s and the public. mu-zee-um undertakes this by organizing and creating educational projects and sessions on a local, regional, national and international level. For mu-zee-um, art is the best medium for prompting people of all ages into action, creativity, and reflection.

mu-zee-um's mission is to serve as a junction point for arts education, based at a crossroads for regional artistic educational activities with cultural actors from Ostend, the province of West-Flanders, the Flemish community, and Belgium. It brings together artists, gallerists, cultural and educational workers, and teachers, and caters to an active and diverse public, encouraging children, youngsters and adults to look and listen creatively to the vast world of arts and culture, while giving them opportunities to actively participate in a range of art forms.

mu-zee-um is a meeting place for volunteers in the fields of art-related education and schooling, and organizes training sessions for guides and mediators that aim for a high level of public negotiation.

Its starting point is creation, developing art educational projects for schools, profit and non-profit organizations, and individuals in the fields of music, multimedia, performance, literature and theater, where the artist takes on a central role. In this respect, mu-zee-um acts as a mediator between the artists and the public. Innovation in art education is of primary concern in this open house with a low threshold, where different generations and population groups can come together.

At the international level, mu-zee-um organizes youth exchanges, training courses and inclusive activities, mainly in the framework of the Erasmus+ Program. It functions as a sending and/or host organization for the European Solidarity Corps.

Vabamu

Tallinn, Estonia



© Vabamu - Sven Soome

Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom, with its branch KGB Prison Cells, is the largest active non-profit museum in Estonia. The museum is managed by the Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation. It is a place that recounts the story of the Estonian people from occupation to independence and inspires people to maintain and stand up for their freedom. Vabamu's mission is to educate, engage, and encourage Estonian people and visitors to reflect on recent history, to feel the fragile nature of freedom, and stand up for liberty and justice.

NoVa, or Noorte Vabamu, is the branch of Vabamu's educational activities, which brings together both value-based museum lessons that support the curriculum, as well as a self-study environment which offers courses on social subjects as well as Study Bites. The goal of NoVa is to encourage young people to think along social lines and be curious, to learn independently at a time and pace that suits them, and to broaden their horizons through museum lessons, events and discussions, as well as to actively create content themselves. The main target group of NoVa activities are young people aged 12–19, and they are the ones who attend the museum classes and discussions the most. The topics from the museum classes, educational materials and discussions that interest youngsters most are human rights, the impact of war on the individual, active citizenship and sustainability. Accessibility has been purposefully addressed in the museum since its reopening in 2018, with guided tours including both descriptive and sign language interpretation, and lessons that are adapted to the principles of immersion. The topic of virtual museum lessons, study materials and tours was raised at the beginning of the COVID crisis in 2020, prompting the museum to gradually develop services in both event formats and a self-learning environment.

Berlin Wall Foundation

Berlin, Germany



Berlin Wall Memorial. © Berlin Wall Foundation

The Berlin Wall Foundation documents the history of the Berlin Wall and the migration movements from the GDR that occurred as part and under the impact of Germany's Division and the East-West conflict in the 20th Century. It commemorates and conveys the history of divided Berlin and Germany at the historical site by focusing on the following topics: the history of the German Division and the Berlin Wall, everyday life with the Wall in East and West, migrations in divided Germany and flight from the GDR, victims of the Berlin Wall, Berlin Wall art, peaceful revolution and reunification.

The Foundation runs six memorial sites in the Berlin metropolitan area. Each location has a particular profile evolving around site-specific themes and research, local conditions and target groups, and thus educational concepts and content. Out of the six sites, the following four have participated in the I AM project:

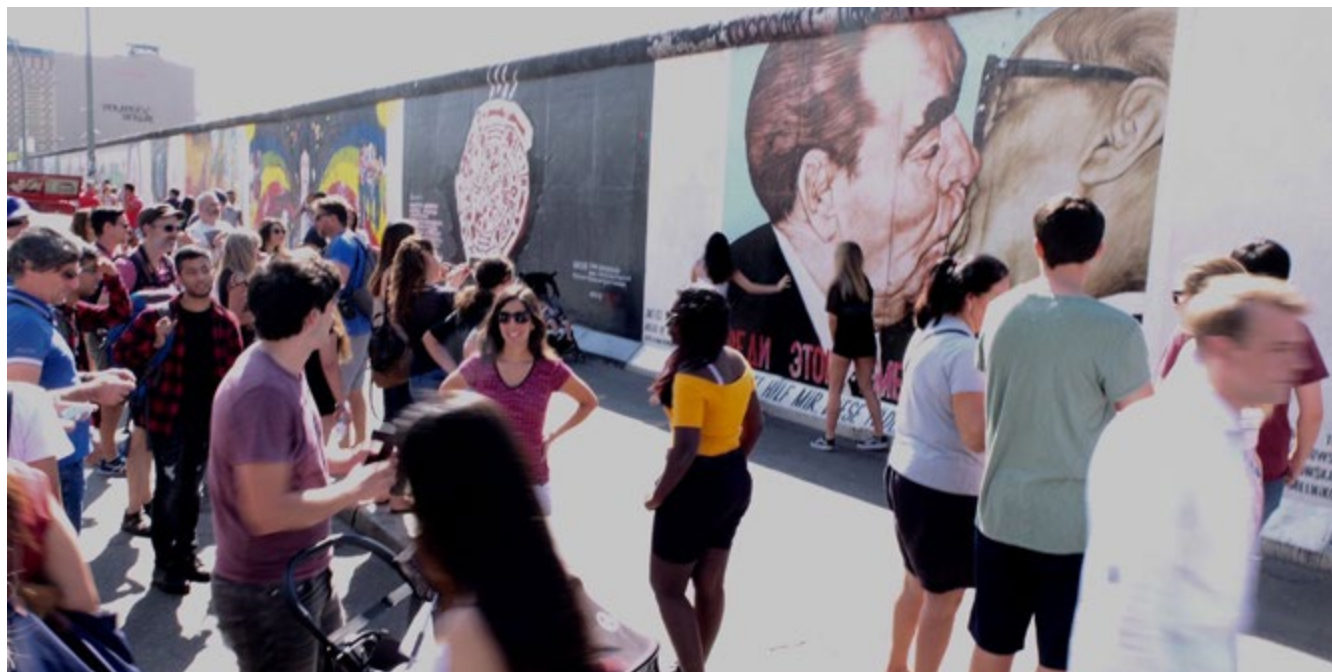
The **Berlin Wall Memorial** is the central memorial site to commemorate the Division of Berlin. It includes the only section of the Berlin Wall that has been preserved, along with the border grounds behind it. The 1.4-kilometer open-air exhibition runs along the former border strip at Bernauer Strasse illustrating the history of the Wall and its impacts on urban space and people.



Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum. © Berlin Wall Foundation

Situated in the original building, the **Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum** is dedicated to the history of flight and migration in divided Germany. This site embodies both the past and present situation of migration, since the adjacent building serves today as temporary housing for refugees.

The **East Side Gallery** is a rather complex memorial site with multilayered meanings: a place of remembrance of the division of the city and the people who died here, a testimony to the euphoria of the Fall of the Wall, and finally a reminder of the sorrowful experiences of the year of upheaval, 1990.



East Side Gallery. © Berlin Wall Foundation



Günter Litfin Memorial. © Berlin Wall Foundation

The **Günter Litfin Memorial** is located in a former watchtower. The memorial was founded by Jürgen Litfin to preserve the memory of his brother Günter, who tried to cross the border and was shot by GDR border soldiers in 1961.

The different sites of the Berlin Wall Foundation invite visitors to discover contemporary history in its local and global dimensions. Our educational work opens up multi-layered access to history for a diverse audience, taking into account their specific needs. The educational work invites participants to acquire an active understanding of history, by getting involved with historical topics, actors, and processes via the authentic site, objects and collections, as well as contemporary witnesses. Our educational program encourages a critical examination of the past, drawing attention to different, even contradictory perspectives to enable differentiated discussions oriented towards the present.



Calouste Gulbenkian Museum

Lisbon, Portugal



© Museu Calouste Gulbenkian

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation oversees various facilities such a museum (MCG), which houses Calouste Gulbenkian's private collection, a Modern Art Center (CAM) which holds the most important collection of modern and contemporary Portuguese art, an orchestra and a choir, an art library and archive, a scientific research institute, and a garden. It is located in central Lisbon.

The Foundation fulfills its mission through cultural activities and innovative programs that develop pilot projects and provide scholarships and grants for other institutions and social organizations.

Established in perpetuity, the Foundation's main purpose is to improve the quality of life through art, charity, science, and education.

Open since 1969, the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum is one of the world's most important private art collections.

The museum was built according to the most modern concepts of museum architecture, in close harmony and relationship with the garden that surrounds it. The collection is comprised of the core sections of Ancient art, Islamic art, Asian art, and European art.

As part of its mission and commitment to the public, the museum's Cultural Mediation Service, specifically the area for people with disabilities, works to ensure equal-opportunity access to the exhibitions and collection. The services motto is "Learning is Doing", with the aim of enabling discovery and creating the right conditions for building knowledge and developing lifelong skills.

Using different resources and forms of artistic expression, the mediation team seeks to encourage motivation for observing works of art based on different needs and interests:

- Broadening horizons.
- Awakening and improving intellectual abilities, namely creative and critical thinking, and processes.
- Establishing bridges between the person, the community and the spaces in which they move.

creACTIVE

Skopje, North Macedonia



© creACTIVE

The mission of the Youth Association creACTIVE is to support the creativity and active citizenship of young people by organizing activities in the areas of culture, non-formal education and leisure time activities of young people, as well as through working on raising awareness of youth work and promoting volunteer work in North Macedonia.

In 2009, creACTIVE established the first open youth center in Kavadarci—one of just a few in the country to this day— which offers youth work services. In 2021, in partnership with another local organization, creACTIVE signed an agreement with the municipality of Kavadarci to operate the first public youth center in the country. The center supports the personal and social development of young people through various non-formal educational, artistic and structured leisure time activities, with the aim of helping them overcome social obstacles that prevent them from actively participating in society.

Since 2017, creACTIVE has employed film-making and the Kino Kabaret¹⁰ approach to address social issues in their everyday working lives, as well as in non-formal education activities such as camps. The organization has also hosted international training courses for youth workers on how to use film-making in youth work.

creACTIVE is one of the founders of the Union for Youth Work and is actively involved in processes for the recognition, standardization, and professionalization of youth work in North Macedonia. Over the past two years it has implemented a long-term project to establish the first vocational standard for youth work and to pilot the first youth work training in North Macedonia. Key creACTIVE staff were directly involved in preparing the first-ever Standards for Quality of Youth Work in North Macedonia, and the National Portfolio for Youth Workers.

At the international level, creACTIVE implements youth exchanges, training courses and other activities (mainly in the framework of the Erasmus+ Program) aimed at supporting young people and youth workers. It sends and hosts volunteers through the European Solidarity Corps, and has wide experience in supporting volunteers with restricted opportunities.

The youth Association creACTIVE is a founding member of the National Youth Council of Macedonia and the National Union for Youth Work.

MUSAC. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

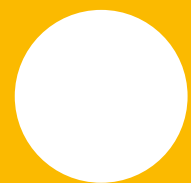
León, Spain



© MUSAC. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León – Jordi Bernadó

The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León was established with the aim of promoting public knowledge and access to contemporary art, while assuming a role of stimulating artistic creation in the region of Castilla y León. It aspires to be a fundamental tool to help people gain a critical understanding of the art, culture, and society of the world in which we live and to actively formulate new models to produce, draw attention to, and share contemporary art; models that reflect new ways of understanding society in times of radical and rapid transformation. MUSAC can be defined as an open space for thinking and dialogue between the general public. It provides analytical and critical tools as well as action strategies concerning art and its relation with society, with the aim of generating a shared network of situated and contextual knowledge. By crossing cultures and identities, the museum functions as a platform that transforms, problematizes and questions current aesthetic, poetic, political, and socioeconomic conditions.

Conceived as an active tool, MUSAC creates experiences of learning, knowledge-building, dissemination and dialogue with the arts based on relationships between artworks and the public which enhance multiple points of view. Its Department of Education and Cultural Action (DEAC) not only participates in community dynamics, it also helps to build them and make them possible. MUSAC's aim is to weave a network of relationships between the public, the actors and the artistic agents in the community to increase the social use of the museum, by introducing strategies that make autonomy, participation, and co-responsibility compatible, as well as promoting critical thinking, creative capacity and emotional development. To acquire these capacities, an education based on developing sensitivity is essential: sensitivity understood as a process by which perception and an awareness of what surrounds us gives us the capacity to reflect what we perceive, and to express our own experiences. And all this using an approach that fosters multiple intelligences¹¹.



IO 1

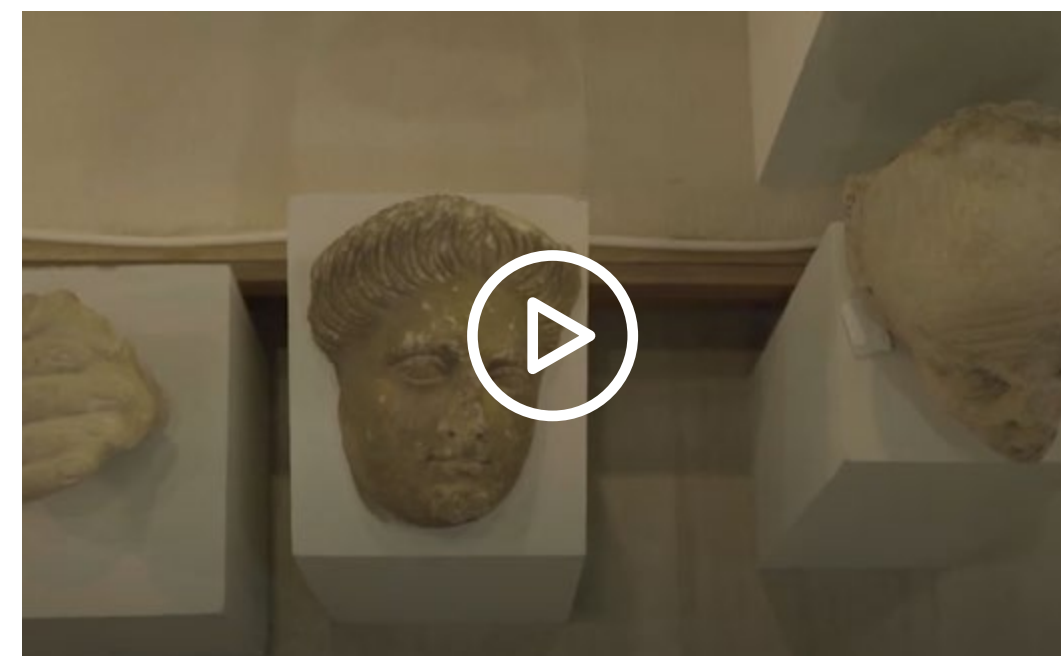
**Virtual
Museum
Tours**





- Virtual museum tours have gained importance during the COVID-19 outbreak, as they have become a source for developing new services and reinforcing the museum's relationship with visitors, users, and the general public through increased communication and interaction. Many museums have rethought their digital strategies and rearranged their organizational and technological infrastructures to reposition themselves within a community that has become more hybrid.
-
-

The different types of virtual museum tours described below are examples of tours that many museums may already be implementing. This section is a guidebook based on our common experiences with different types of visitors, and it aims to provide the technical and practical aspects that should be taken into consideration when giving virtual tours. We have divided them into five types: **pre-recorded interactive tour**, **interactive live tour**, **prerecorded insights**, **live insights** and **virtual classroom**. Each type responds to different communication and education strategies that may be adopted by museums in their digital approach to cultural content production and delivery.



Virtual Museum Tours



Pre-recorded Interactive Tour

What is it?

A pre-recorded interactive tour is one that combines pre-recorded materials with options that can be selected by visitors. Due to its pre-recorded nature, it doesn't have a live comments / questions section. Interaction comes through the choices the visitor makes: which artworks to explore, which texts to read, which videos to watch, whether to listen to audio or play games, etc.

The viewers or participants will become immersed in the exhibition by the person on the screen. They receive information, but they are also stimulated to think or form an opinion. The role of the person on screen – the guide – is to spark enthusiasm among viewers, make them feel comfortable, and stimulate their thinking processes in a different way to how a live session would work by devising good questions beforehand, giving the person time to think (or the option to press the 'pause' button) or to give hints... and to receive comments in the comment section (depending on the channel).

Where does it take place?

Pre-recorded on site or shared via various social media platforms and embedded in the museum website (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram). In some cases, it can be shared in closed circuits (such as Zoom meetings) or as a complement to virtual classes.

Who conducts it?

The guide could be an educator, a youth worker, a cultural mediator, a curator, an influencer, or a guest specialist, and should be communicative, charismatic and knowledgeable, with good articulation and speaking pace. Complicated vocabulary should not be used.

An audiovisual team is required for sound and image recording, consisting of a camera operator (does not have to be a professional), a director, a lighting assistant and an autocue handler, if necessary.



Fixed pan shot



Medium shot



Close-up shot
at eye-level



How should I organize it?

The tour could be complemented with inserts (pictures, audio, video, and animations) related to the subject and it requires a detailed script that should be reviewed and approved by an expert communication team. Choose a maximum of three works/objects to talk about. The script should include an introduction, topic development, and a summary, with a smooth transition between subjects.

How long should it last?

20–30 minutes.

What technical equipment or skills do I need?

Regarding the camera position, there are several options: a fixed pan shot, a medium shot, or a close-up shot at eye level.

If the tour is filmed in a studio:

- Green screen
- Professional camera or tablet
- Tripod
- Pin microphone
- Studio lighting
- (Digital) props
- Autocue (if necessary)
- Make-up (if required)
- Computer program to edit green screen video sequences
- The guide should avoid wearing green or purple clothing because this affects the green screen

If the tour is filmed in the museum:

- Professional camera or tablet
- Tripod
- Pin microphone
- Studio lighting
- Autocue (if necessary)
- (Digital) props
- Make-up (if required)

How can I reach my audience?

You can reach your audience via the museum webpage and other platforms such as Vimeo or YouTube. However, these platforms are sensitive to video quality and need a professional approach, requiring a larger budget for production.

Other video conferencing platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet can be used when there is a limited budget or equipment.

In addition, prior information may be provided through newsletters or press releases, or can be shared with cooperation partners, youth centers, etc. A little teaser on social media would help spark curiosity.

How can I get youngsters involved in the tour?

Viewers get involved in the creative thinking process, and they learn the important traits of creative thinking and expression. Youngsters will participate by using a computer, tablet, smartphone, or television, as long as there is a Wi-Fi/cable connection. Viewers can make comments in the comment section (depending on the channel), or they can send an email to voice their ideas or experiences. They can also offer feedback through social media.

How can I include youngsters with fewer opportunities and different capacities?

Use language or terms that are easy to understand.

When people receive a link to view the tour, make it easy for them.

Don't force them to subscribe. Do it all in one click!

When people buy an entrance ticket to the museum online, a simple Typeform (e.g. survey) to fill in can be included, to give you an idea of the needs of the public in advance.

Social obstacles can be overcome by involving people interested in setting up and promoting the tour.

Working together with public libraries to provide this tour will help reduce financial obstacles. For people with a hearing impairment, an interpreter, or subtitles may be included. For people with a visual impairment, it is advisable to offer a physical description of the work/object.

Educational difficulties can be overcome by using plain language and dealing with topics that are commonplace but interesting. It is always good to keep in mind that the shorter, the better!

With regard to cultural differences, we recommend choosing a topic that will speak to and connect with people around the world: culture, art, sports, everyday life, or music.

Make sure you include the option to allow people to take a break or start the session again. Flexibility is important!

Where can I find inspiration?



Interactive Tour *Mirror your Portrait* (only in Dutch)

Interactive Live Tour

What is it?

An interactive live visit happens in real-time via an online platform and is guided for the viewer and mediated by a guide (educators, youth workers, mediators). The visit is made interactive by including frequent switches from listening (passive) to interactive digital activities (active) that can contain games, individual listening tasks, or video clips. The visitor has a live connection with the mediator who can answer questions, moderate discussions, and give explanations.

Where does it take place?

In the museum.

Who conducts it?

The guide could be an educator, a youth worker, a cultural mediator, a curator, an influencer, or a guest specialist, and should be communicative, charismatic and knowledgeable, with good articulation and speaking pace. Complicated vocabulary should not be used. A longer interactive live visit should be executed preferably by a professional on the topic, as the audience tends to look for more in-depth insight and might have specific questions.

A program manager is required to create the content of the visit and activities.

An audiovisual team is required for sound and image recording, consisting of a camera operator, a director, a lighting assistant and an autocue handler, if necessary.

A multimedia partner may be necessary to create the interactive parts of the program (audiovisual material, games, etc.) based on the concept and input by the program manager.

The guide's clothing must be taken into consideration: block colors are preferred over patterned outfits so as not to cause optical illusions (squares, diagonals, zigzag). According to color psychology, red is irritating, while blue and green are calming.

How should I organize it?

Works/objects should be chosen according to the topic. It is always good to offer visual comparisons. For example, in a history museum: the uniforms of a German soldier, a Russian soldier, or a Finnish soldier.

For works/objects in showcases, it is a good idea to provide an overview and then zoom in to see details, but watch out for reflections from the glass!

Whenever possible, historical artifacts can be held by the mediator and pointed out using fingers. Interaction can be added by showing objects via 3D scans and visuals. While the guide is talking, a 360° view of the artifact is displayed.

Take 3-4 stops during the tour.

For a 45-minute tour, start with a brief introduction, which can be a story, a word cloud or a mind map (5 minutes), before developing the topic. Take 3-4 stops (7-10 minutes each) and in each stop, a story, game or video can be played. End with a summary and a Q&A session (5-10 minutes).

How long should it last?

30-45 minutes.

The average experience for audience engagement in guided activities is 30-40 min. For interactive activities or Q&A, the tour may be extended up to 45 min.

What technical equipment or skills do I need?

- Professional camera (for better quality) or a smartphone
- Microphone
- Tripod or stabilizer
- Computer: for the interactive sequences (to show audiovisual or other extra material)
- Lighting: either extra artificial lighting or a good location in natural light
- A good Wi-Fi connection





Lighting: either extra artificial lighting or a good location in natural light

- For more lively and engaging interaction, a balance between long-distance shots and close-ups is preferred. A static standing position can be exchanged for walking shots.
- If the exhibition has lots of showcases, reflections from the glass must be considered while choosing the camera position. If the mediator is wearing glasses: watch out for reflections from his/her glasses.

How can I reach my audience?

You can reach your audience via the museum webpage and other platforms such as Vimeo or YouTube. However, these platforms are sensitive to video quality and need a professional approach, requiring a larger budget for production.

Other video conferencing platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet can be used when there is a limited budget or equipment.

In addition, prior information may be provided through newsletters or press releases, or can be shared with cooperation partners, youth centers, etc. A little teaser on social media would help spark curiosity.

How can I get youngsters involved in the tour?

The easiest and most organic way to actively engage young people during the tour is to use digital internet environments which they are already familiar with or which they tend to use on a daily basis. Using familiar ways of expressing one's own thoughts or ideas creates a more favorable environment for young people to express themselves and does not add any pressure to acquire skills in new formats.



A tablet can also be used instead of a professional camera

The following are a few examples of apps and websites used in museums and schools which can be used to engage young people during virtual tours. They are suitable for both phone and computer.

Mentimeter, polleverywhere and sli.do: these facilitate different options such as polls, word clouds, ranking, scales, etc. Questions may be directed to and from the audience.

AnswerGarden: enables users to create a word cloud.

Jumpboard (google): facilitates note-taking.

Mindmap (google): facilitates the mapping of ideas or making structures.

Kahoot: allows different types of questions.

Talks by the mediator should alternate with multimedia and interactive clips: for example, short videos, audio clips, games, Q&As.

At the end of the visit, there is time for live feedback and questions.

How can I include youngsters with fewer opportunities and different capacities?

Use language or terms that are easy to understand. When people receive a link to view the tour, make it easy for them. Don't force them to subscribe. Do it all in one click!

When people buy an entrance ticket to the museum online, a simple Typeform (e.g. survey) to fill in can be included to give you an idea of the needs of the public in advance.

Social obstacles can be overcome by involving people interested in setting up and promoting the tour.

Working together with public libraries to provide this tour will help reduce financial obstacles. For people with a hearing impairment, an interpreter, or subtitles may be included. For people with a visual impairment, it is advisable to provide a physical description of the work/object.

Educational difficulties can be overcome by using plain language and dealing with topics that are commonplace but interesting. It is always good to keep in mind that the shorter, the better!

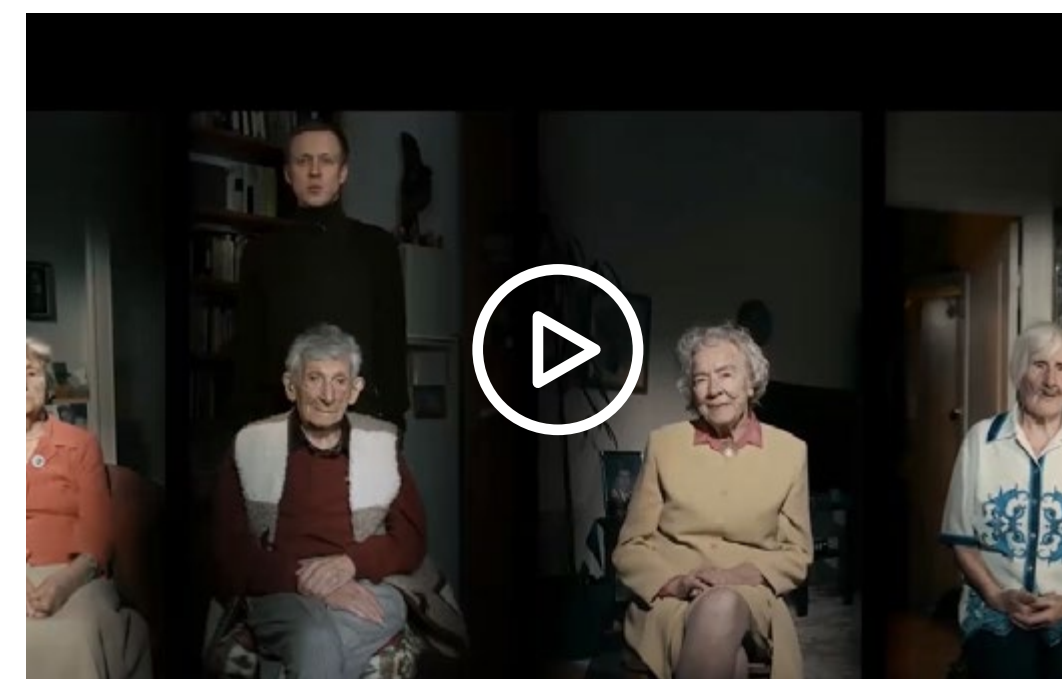
With regard to cultural differences, we recommend choosing a topic that will speak to and connect with people around the world: culture, art, sports, everyday life, or music.

Make sure you include the option to allow people to take a break or start the session again. Flexibility is important!

Where can I find inspiration?



Interactive Live Tour at the Museum of Negotino (only in Macedonian)



Interactive live tour through Vabamu's permanent exhibition (only in Estonian)

Pre-recorded Insights

What is it?

Pre-recorded Insights are short guided tours that have been pre-recorded and made available for audiences online. As the name suggests, the idea is to provide insights or fragments of an exhibition, focusing on the general topic or only on specific works. It is usually offered via various social media platforms, such as the Live feature in Instagram, Facebook or YouTube, and then uploaded onto the museum's website. In some cases, closed circuits such as Zoom meetings are also possible.

Where does it take place?

Pre-recorded Insights are usually recorded in the museum or historical site, and more specifically, near the works/objects discussed. It is very flexible regarding the space it can be filmed in.

Who conducts it?

An educator, youth worker, mediator, curator, or researcher can conduct Pre-recorded Insights as a guide, together with a camera person and video editor.

The people responsible for these videos should have professional experience with museums and possess academic knowledge about the topic to be discussed. In addition, technicians should oversee the recording and editing of the video.

How should I organize it?

Pre-recorded Insights can vary from basic short social media clips to more in-depth focus videos. The camera position depends on the platform where this tour will be offered. For Live streams on social networks, it should be vertical; for YouTube and closed-circuit platforms, horizontal.

The guide introduces him/herself and gives a brief summary of what the viewer can expect to see and hear during the tour. The script should include an introduction explaining the inspiration behind the work/object, followed by topic development about its cultural value, and then closing remarks. Optimal stops should be one every 10 minutes, with a maximum of three stops. The scenario should be educational and inclusive.

How long should it last?

The duration should be from 10 to 30 minutes, depending on the social channel where the video will be shared. The ideal length for YouTube videos is up to 30 minutes, while for Facebook and Instagram, a maximum of 10 minutes.

What technical equipment or skills do I need?

- Professional camera (for better quality) or a smartphone
- Microphone
- Tripod or stabilizer
- Lighting: either extra artificial lighting or a good location in natural light

How can I reach my audience?

You can reach your audience via the museum webpage and other platforms such as:

Instagram TV (IGTV): can accommodate up to 240 minutes of video time.

Facebook Watch: audiences on this channel have short attention spans, so videos posted on this channel must be engaging throughout.

Vimeo or YouTube: audiences on these channels specifically want to watch videos, so duration is not a problem.

In addition, prior information may be offered through newsletters or press releases, or it can be shared with cooperation partners, youth centers, etc. A little teaser on social media would help spark curiosity.



How can I get youngsters involved in the tour?

The best way of reaching young people these days is via multipliers (e.g. influencers) on social media, as they can reach the target group faster than ads. Youngsters can get involved by commenting and sharing the video.

How can I include youngsters with fewer opportunities and different capacities?

Use a language or terms that are easy to understand.

When people receive a link to view the tour, make it easy for them.

Don't force them to subscribe. Do it all in one click!

When people buy an entrance ticket to the museum online, a simple Typeform (e.g. survey) to fill in can be included to give you an idea of the needs of the public in advance.

Social obstacles can be overcome by involving people interested in setting up and promoting the tour.

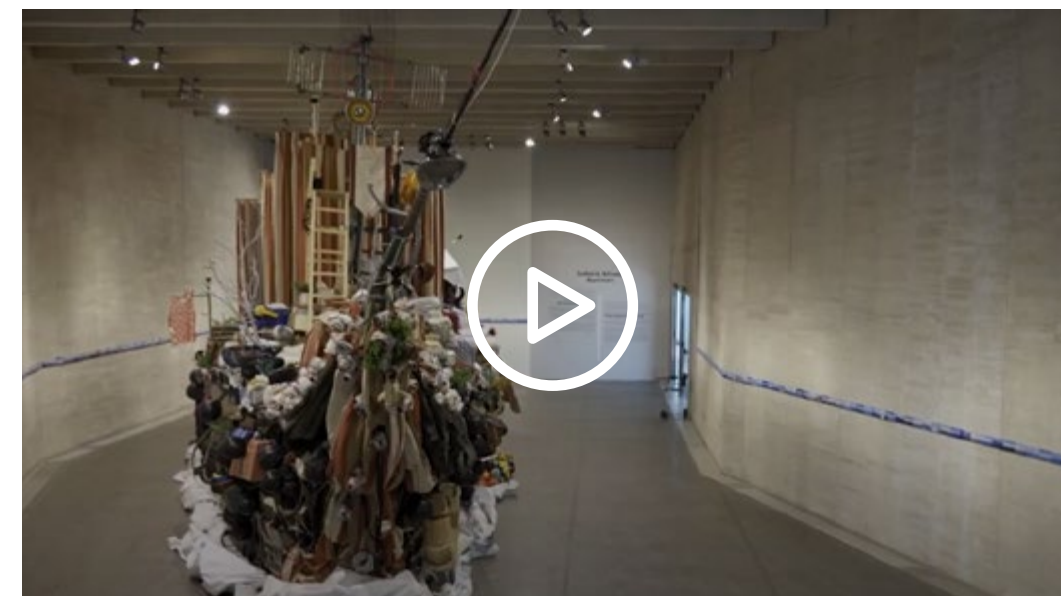
Working together with public libraries to provide this tour will help reduce financial obstacles. For people with a hearing impairment, an interpreter, or subtitles may be included. For people with a visual impairment, it is advisable to provide a physical description of the work/object.

Educational difficulties can be overcome by using plain language and dealing with topics that are commonplace but interesting. It is always good to keep in mind that the shorter, the better!

With regard to cultural differences, we recommend choosing a topic that will speak to and connect with people around the world: culture, art, sports, everyday life, or music.

Make sure you include the option to allow people take a break or start the session again. Flexibility is important!

Where can I find inspiration?



Insights on the exhibition *Project Another Country: That Space in Between* at MUSAC



The choice of...: A guest talks about his favorite artist or artwork in Mu.ZEE

Live Insights

What is it?

Live Insights are short guided tours that are streamed live and on the spot. As the name suggests, the idea is to provide insights or fragments of an exhibition, focusing on the general topic or only on specific works. It is usually offered via various social media platforms such as the Live feature in Instagram, Facebook or YouTube, and then uploaded onto the museum's website. In some cases, closed circuits such as Zoom meetings are also possible.

Where does it take place?

Live Insights are usually recorded in the museum or historical site, and more specifically, near the works/objects discussed. It can have a live audience and an online one. As a result, it can take place even when the museum is open to the public, as it is more interesting to see people visiting a show, providing the tour does not disturb them.

Who conducts it?

An educator, youth worker, mediator, curator, or researcher can conduct Live Insights as a guide, together with a camera person (does not have to be an expert). Social media staff or a member of the communication team should be available to answer questions at the end of the session.

One support staff member in case it is necessary to warn people to keep their voices down while the live tour is going on.

If the museum plans to produce a series of Live Insights, the first live session should ideally be presented by the artist or curator. Further sessions can be undertaken by an educator or a guest specialist. Personality, communication skills, and charisma must be taken into consideration.

How should I organize it?

At the start of the tour, the camera should focus on the speaker, showing at least his/her upper body. The guide introduces him/herself and gives a brief summary of what viewers can expect to see and hear during the tour. While conducting the tour, the camera may focus on specific works, zooming in on details or panning the room. The camera should be in the vertical position.

As this tour should be very brief, not many works can be shown in one live session. However, several live sessions can be held and saved to a series or playlist.

- Tips: Save the best for the beginning, because not all viewers will stay for the whole session, so it is important to capture their attention from the very start. Every second counts, so information must be concise. The decision on how many stops to make during the short clip depends on the exhibition, time, etc.
-
-

How long should it last?

Ideally, the Insight Live Tour should have a duration of 10-20 minutes maximum, as attention spans on social media are short.

What technical equipment or skills do I need?

- Smartphone
- Microphone
- Tripod or stabilizer
- Lighting: either extra artificial lighting or a good location in natural light

How can I reach my audience?

You can reach your audience via the museum webpage and other platforms such as:

- Instagram Live: audiences on this channel have short attention spans, but they are more accustomed to live sessions. However, live videos can later be uploaded to IGTV, which can accommodate up to 240 minutes of video time.
- Facebook Watch: audiences on this channel have short attention spans, so videos posted in this channel must be engaging throughout.
- Vimeo or YouTube: audiences on this channel specifically want to watch videos, so duration is not a problem.

A live session should be announced in advance on social media platforms. This can also be used as an opportunity for followers to submit ideas on what they want to see.

A countdown option is possible to remind the public about the event, build anticipation and increase attendance.

In addition, prior information may be given through newsletters or press releases, or it can be shared with cooperation partners, youth centers, etc. A little teaser on social media would help spark curiosity.

How can I get youngsters involved in the tour?

Youngsters can get involved by sharing, commenting and interacting in the comments section after the visit.

How can I include youngsters with fewer opportunities and different capacities?

Use language or terms that are easy to understand.
When people receive a link to view the tour, make it easy for them.
Don't force them to subscribe. Do it all in one click!

When people buy an entrance ticket to the museum online, a simple Typeform (e.g. survey) to fill in can be included to give you an idea of the needs of the public in advance.

Social obstacles can be overcome by involving people interested in setting up and promoting the tour.

Working together with public libraries to provide this tour will help reduce financial obstacles. For people with a hearing impairment, an interpreter, or subtitles may be included. For people with a visual impairment, it is advisable to provide a physical description of the work/object.

Educational difficulties can be overcome by using easy language and dealing with topics that are commonplace but interesting. It is always good to keep in mind that the shorter, the better!

With regard to cultural differences, we recommend choosing a topic that will speak to and connect with people around the world: culture, art, sports, everyday life, or music.

Make sure you include the option to allow people to take a break or start the session again. Flexibility is important!

Where can I find inspiration?



[Live insight on the Mu.ZEE Collection \(only in Dutch\)](#)



[Live insight on the exhibition Premature Architecture](#)

Virtual Class

What is it?

A Virtual Class is a museum educational program for school groups carried out virtually via platforms such as Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet, led by a museum educator, where everyone can interact directly with each other.

It uses active learning methods and involves students working with various tools and dynamics such as pre-recorded videos, PowerPoint presentations, practical work, and challenges to visit the museum alone and continue the work in the classroom.

To ensure better inclusion of participants and a smooth workflow, prior preparation between the teacher and the museum educator is needed so that everyone is aware of the concepts and the goals of the virtual class. Usually, topics are connected with the school curriculum, so it is important to set the focus in advance.

Where does it take place?

It is a classroom setup where the participants can either be together at school or connected online at home, while the educator is at the museum or historical site.

Who conducts it?

Two educators who are experienced in working with school groups are recommended (one to conduct the visit, and the other to help manage the group virtually) plus the teacher in the classroom. A technician should be available to offer technical support to all involved.

How should I organize it?

The Virtual Class must have:

- a moment for greeting the group, presentation of the participants and an introduction to what students will be working on
- a conversation about the works/objects (maximum of 3-4). The conversation can focus on aspects of observation and interpretation, streamlined with games, using objects or other tools that enhance and facilitate understanding of the work/object.
- practical work in relation to what has been previously discussed.
- conclusion of the activity or presentation of works with a challenge to visit the museum to complement what has taken place in the class.
- a controlled environment that is quiet and with natural light.

How long should it last?

Not more than 60 minutes.

What technical equipment or skills do I need?

- Each educator should have a computer with an internet connection, a webcam, and a microphone.
- Headphones might be helpful for noise management.
- The school must have specific equipment such as a projection whiteboard, projector, computer, internet, camera, and microphone.
- For younger classes (Elementary School) both microphones and cameras should be turned on, to facilitate spontaneity among the group. For older students (High School, University) microphones should be turned off; cameras should be turned on.
- Images should be high-resolution in case they need to be projected in class.



How can I reach my audience?

Virtual Classes can be offered to different schools through written communication and online booking. Teams, Zoom, or Google Meet are the most common platforms for Virtual Classes. The advantage of the Virtual Class is that groups that are located outside the geographical area of the museum can be reached.

How can I get youngsters involved in the tour?

- The specific characteristics of the class/group should be taken into consideration prior to booking a Virtual Class.
- There should be a meeting between the teacher and the educator before booking a Virtual Class to discuss the specifics and set up the class structure.
- Ensure that in each class, all participants know how to use the chosen software (for example, how to turn the microphone on and off, how to turn off the camera or leave the conversation).
- It may be necessary to send the school a materials kit to use in practical moments of the class.

The live format is the heart of a virtual class as it allows interaction and challenges. Pre-recorded materials or PowerPoint presentations that include virtual tours, audios, and images could be used to complement the lesson.

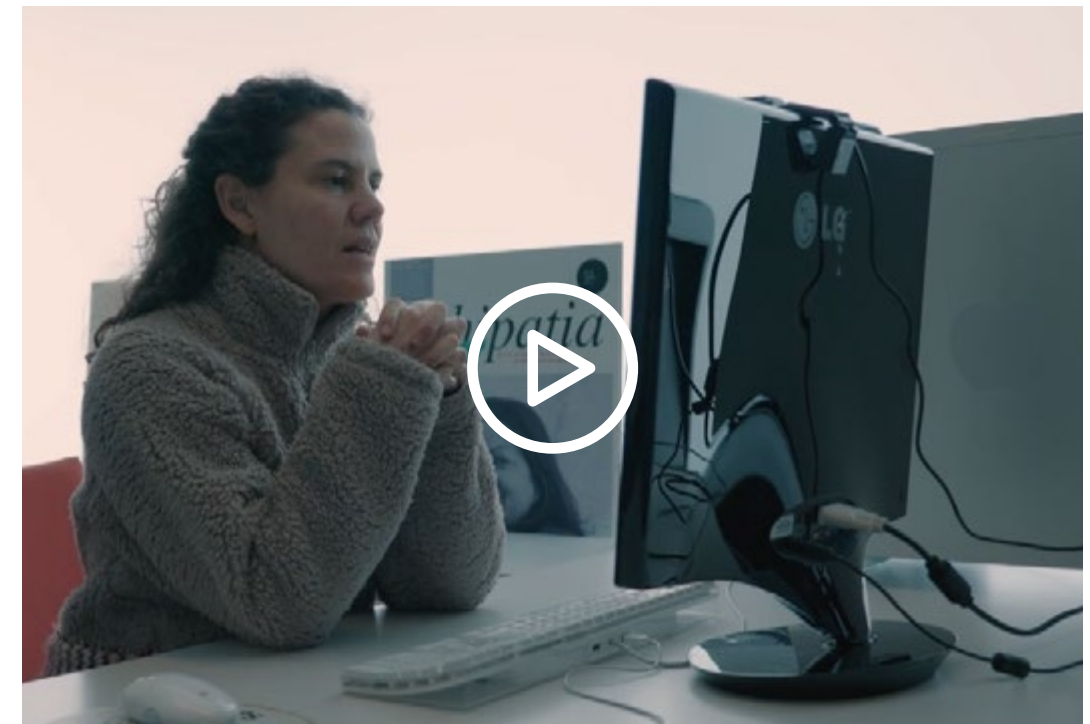
The introduction of the participants will help to create the necessary strategies to ensure active participation. Development of the activity depends a lot on the interaction of young people and this will serve as a measure of their motivation and understanding so that the educators can adapt the practice to their needs. Direct questions, starting with personal experiences, usually create a comfortable relationship between educators and youngsters who, when given the opportunity to think, argue, and create, tend to act positively.

How can I include youngsters with fewer opportunities and different capacities?

Use language or terms that are easy to understand.

Provide tools to help students understand the written or spoken word, to control and manage different energies and speeds, to attract attention and concentration so that everyone feels that they are an integral part of the activity.

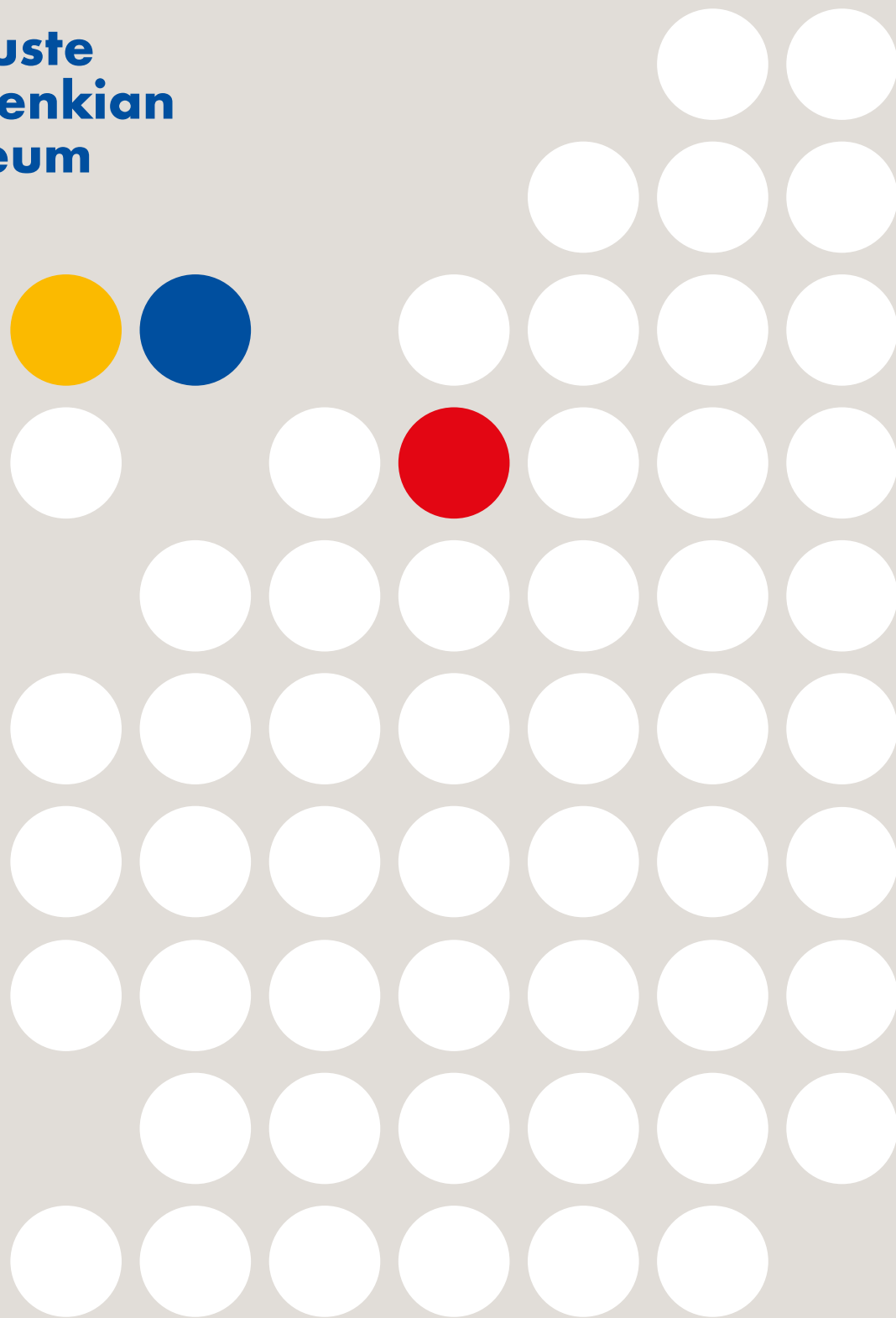
Where can I find inspiration?



Virtual Class "MUSAC Escuela"

Case Study

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum



Type of museum: Art museum

Type of tour: Virtual Class

Platform: Google Meet or Zoom

Duration: 60 min (knowledge section: 40 minutes, practical section: 10-15 minutes, margin of 5-10 min for unforeseen events)

Objectives:

- To promote knowledge about works of art.
- To promote critical thinking and active observation.
- To create connections between different works of art.
- To disseminate the collection to people who do not have the opportunity to visit the museum.
- To provide a deeper focus on each work of art, without the distraction of the surrounding environment.

Description of the tour:

This virtual class was designed for young people with disabilities that somehow have difficulty in visiting the museum due to transportation or financial reasons.

The first part of the class is dialogue-based and aims to develop critical thinking skills through the interpretation of works of art.

The second part is a creative session, in which the students are given the opportunity to act as curators.

Steps:

- Preparation meeting with teachers and sending images.
- Introduction by the participants and educators.
- Conversation about the context of the museum, asking questions such as:

"Have you already been to this museum? If so, what do you remember?"

- We briefly explain the history of the collection to new visitors.

- Discussion-based activities regarding two or three works from the museum collection, following a collective analysis and reflection model.

For example:

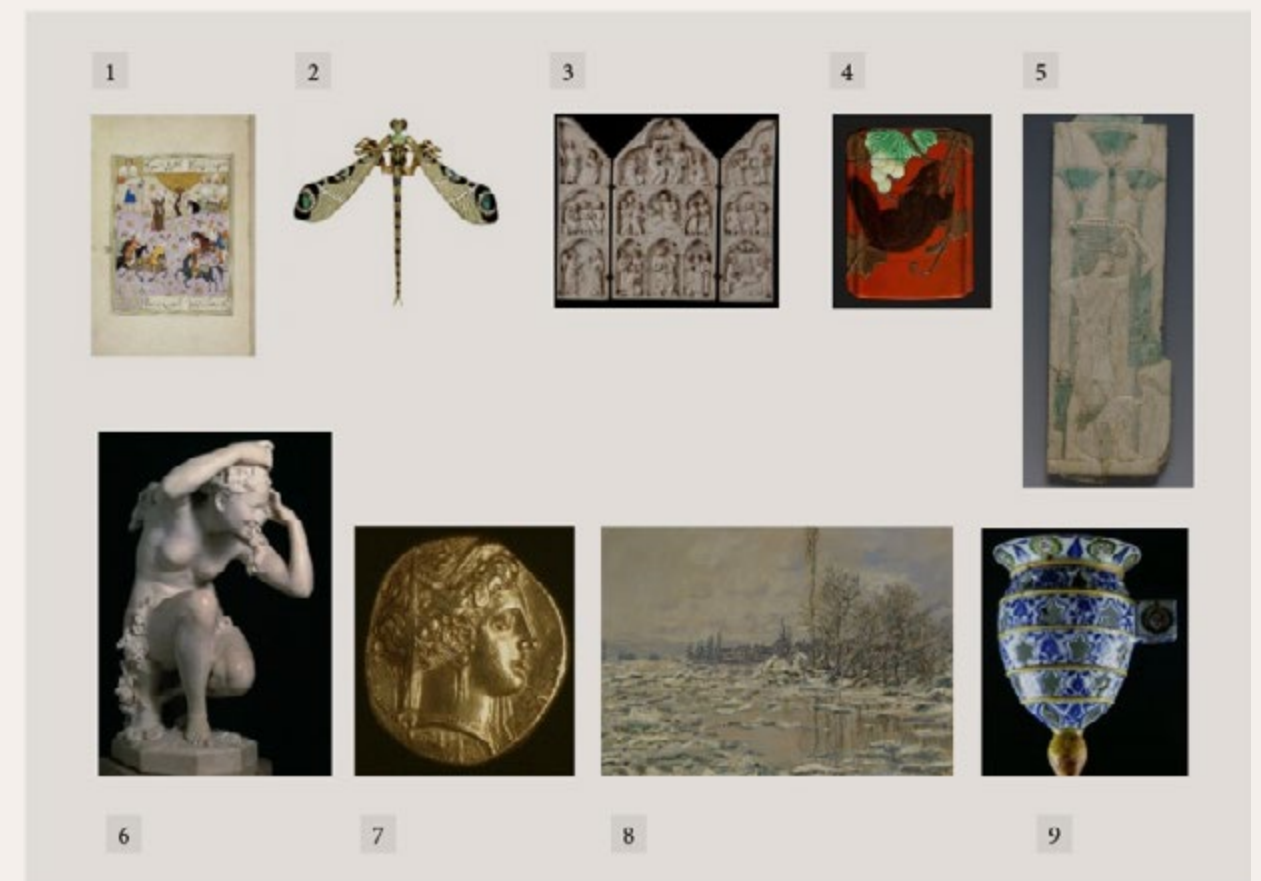


Claude Monet. *The Break-Up of the Ice*, 1880
Oil on canvas

- What do you see?
- If you had to choose a title for this painting, what would it be?
- What materials do you think the artist used?
- Look at the brushstrokes. Do you think they are spontaneous or deliberate? What do you see that makes you say that?
- What does the work make you feel?
- Using a simple, conversational approach, we explain what a curatorial practice is:
 - What is a curator?
 - What is the curator's role in a museum?

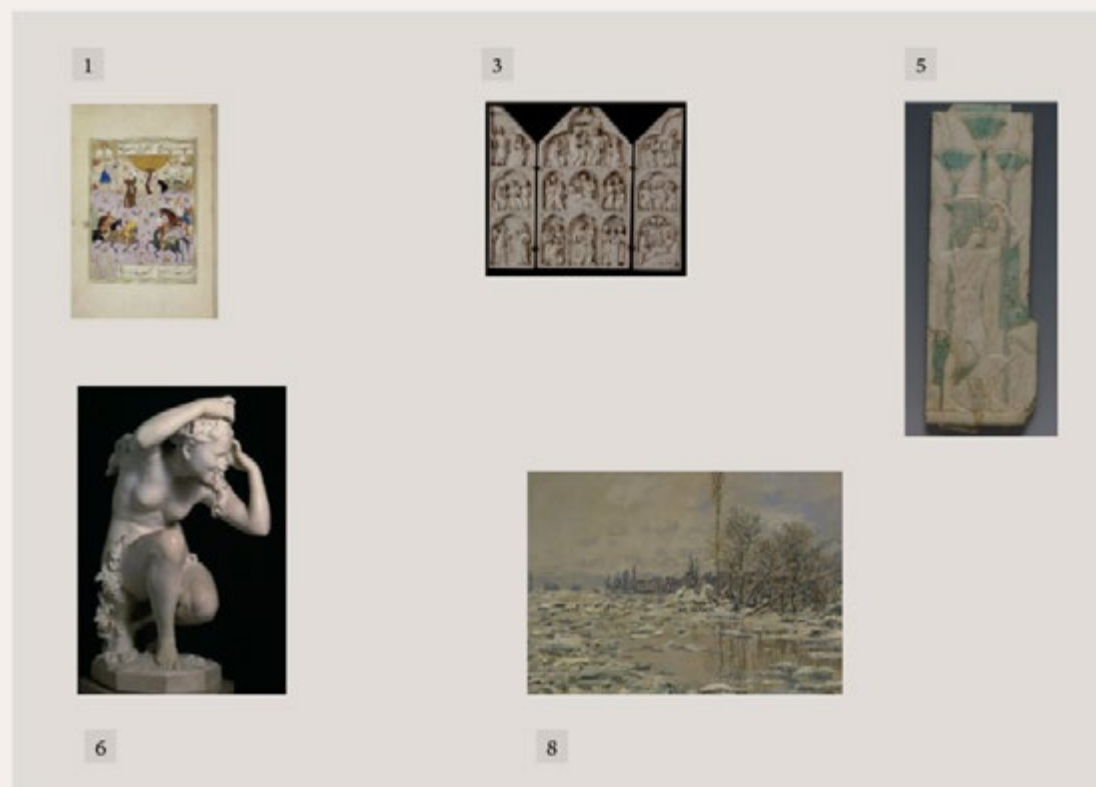
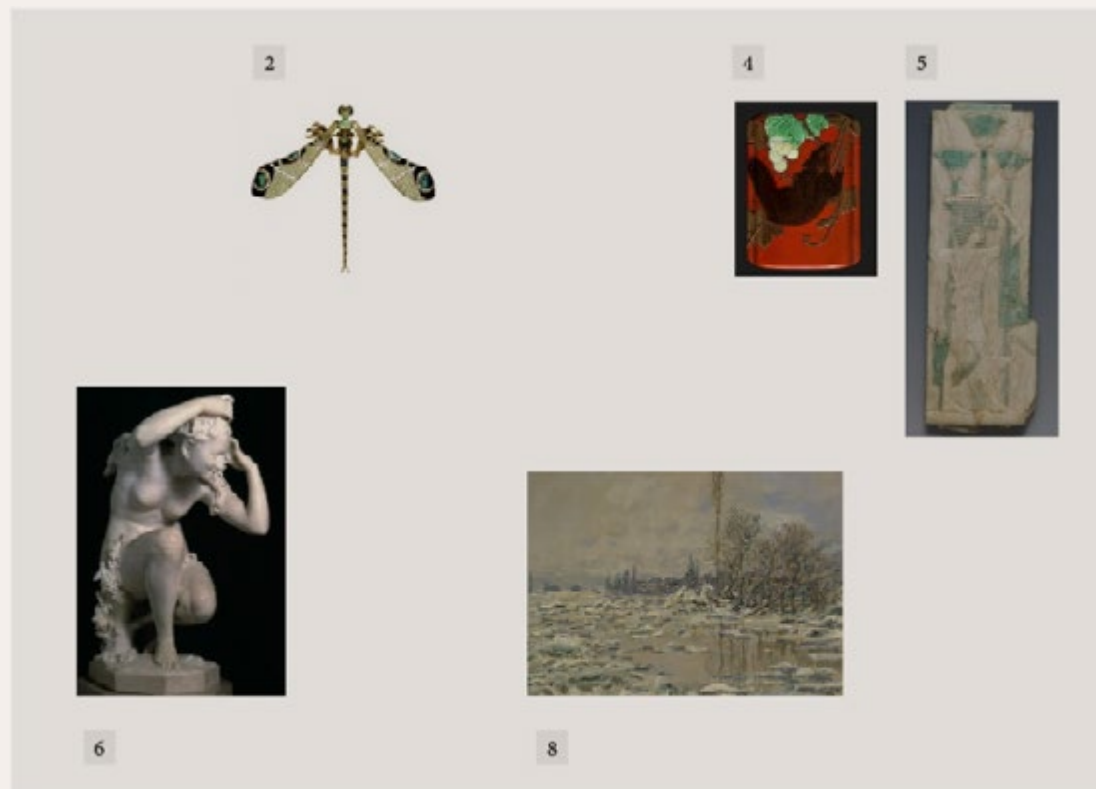
- Give simple examples with which the participants can identify, like decorating a house.
 - Divide the participants into small groups, ideally of three participants each. Each group must choose five works of art (out of nine). The chosen works should have a common factor such as their colors, materials, forms, themes, or the memories they evoke.
- Note: The practical exercise should be short and with simple connections.

An example of the works of art to choose from:



- Each group must share their selection and explain their choices.
- At the same time, the educator can organize a page featuring the selection made by each group.

Example of 2 selections:



Developed mechanisms and tools for the virtual tour:

Important points to consider when choosing the works of art: different artistic expressions, different techniques, content, and details for a simple observation process. These aspects offer a significant sample of the works that are in the museum, but they also make it possible to identify different elements in each work of art.

Important points to consider when choosing the questions to ask: always discuss the materials; use simple, sequenced questions and answerable questions from direct observation. They should be aimed at specific students in order to foster a close relationship and promote engagement of every participant.

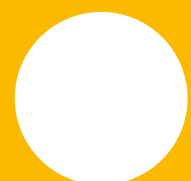
Create a PowerPoint presentation as a simple tool: use a language that is easy to understand, with appropriate font sizes. Use high-resolution images. This presentation will serve as a starting point which contains the same information for everyone.

For the group work, the works of art must be printed in color to facilitate the practical exercise and the connections between each one.

The museum team should have a **prior meeting** –ideally, using the same platform for the virtual class– with the teachers and technicians accompanying the group. At this meeting, the educators should explain the activity and the trigger points that will need the intervention of the teacher. For example: focusing the students' attention on a detail, encouraging the group participation, and making sure everyone has access to everything. Through this preparation, the teacher can create, in advance, the proper environment for the activity.

Challenges:

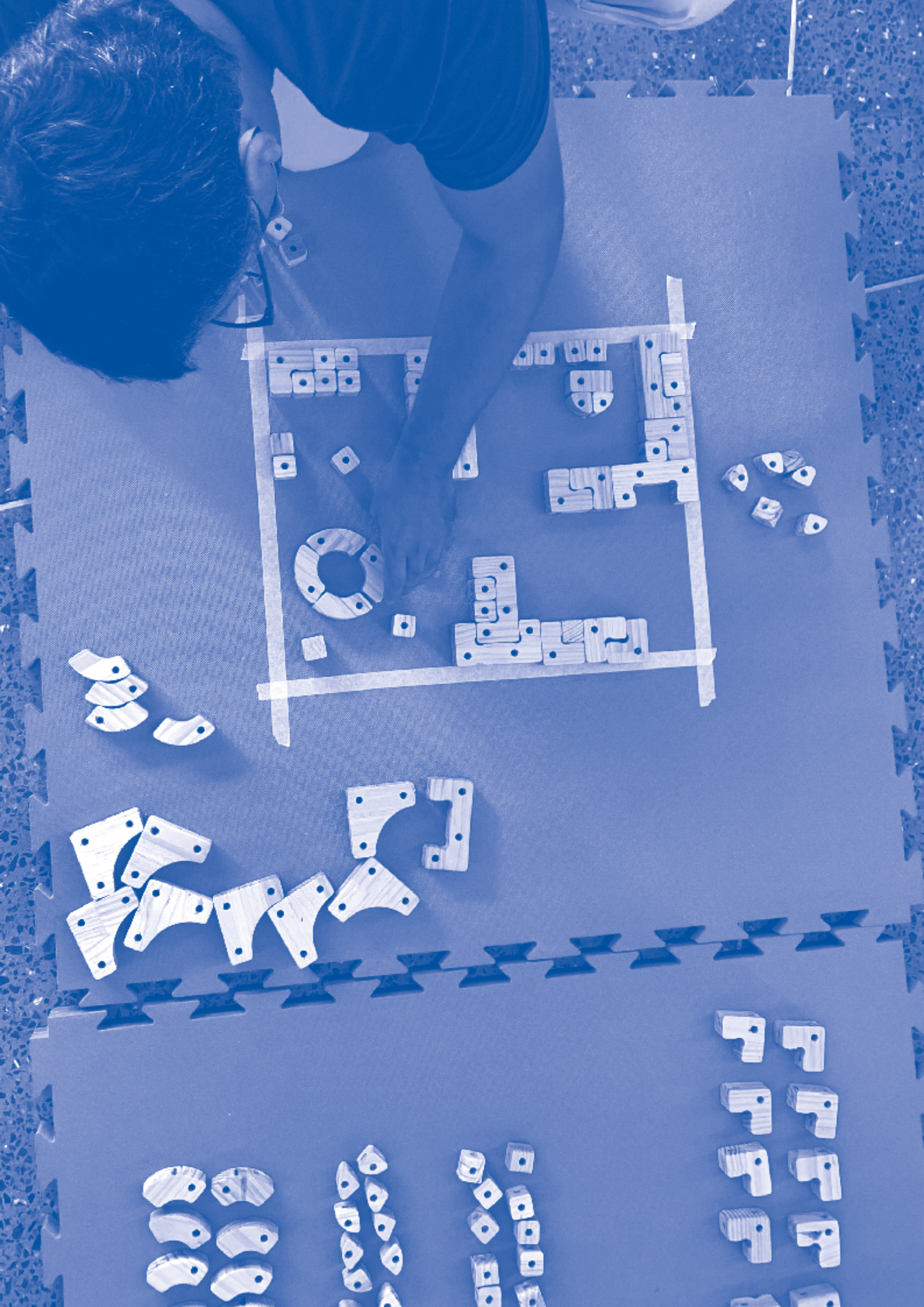
- A bad internet connection can completely spoil the dynamics of the virtual class.
- The teacher accompanying the group must have previously knowledge of the structure of the visit and be an active helper with regard to the dynamics of the virtual class; otherwise, the group could easily lose their concentration and interest in the activity.
- The success of this class can be compromised by too large a disparity between the cognitive and sensorial needs of the participants.



IO 2

**Sensory
Journey**





- A visit to a museum or a historical site is always a multilayered journey that is sensory, aesthetic, and social. Exhibitions trigger our senses in such a way that we gather impressions and receive a wealth of information. The more sensorial routes are triggered, the more we can produce an impact on our audiences' emotions and intellect.
-
-

We designed the Sensory Journey tool to help museum or historical site educators, youth workers, and mediators to develop educational activities for young people with learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities (aged 13-30 years).



Sensory Journey

What is the Sensory Journey?

The Sensory Journey is a methodical approach to enhance our experience in a museum or memorial site using different senses. Educators, youth workers, or mediators can create their own sensory tools so that young people with learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities can explore a museum or memorial site and gain access to the works, exhibited objects or topics by seeing, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. In addition, we can also tap into our “sixth sense” (also referred to as proprioception), or the awareness of our bodies position and movement. The Sensory Journey can be adapted to different kinds of museums and memorial sites.

A sensory experience is not limited to sight and sound. Multiple sensory experiences are more powerful and can be rewarded by greater levels of visitor engagement. With this approach, young people with learning disabilities not only experience but also acquire knowledge about an exhibition.

Everyday objects that may or may not be related to the exhibitions can be used. Thus, we propose creating a toolkit (e.g. a basket or a cart with multiple drawers that slide out) containing different items such as:

- Original artifacts, whenever possible, and taking into consideration their conservation.
- Reproduction of an object that is part of the exhibition, as a way to open up showcases.
- Architectural scale models that can be used as visual or tactile tools.
- Objects that suggest the themes of an exhibition to help explain rather abstract terms.
- Samples of materials that suggest how something is made, or what it is made up of.
- Photographs, clippings, or pictograms and emotion cards that suggest places, events, or emotions.
- Audio files or music.
- Video files or footage.
- Materials with strong scents.

What are the objectives of the Sensory Journey?

For museum or memorial site staff, youth workers, educators, and mediators:

- To bring works, exhibited objects or topics closer to visitors.
- To pay more attention to specific target groups and learn about their needs.
- To offer an experience-oriented focus.
- To offer new methodical approaches, especially regarding visitors who require easy-to-understand language.
- To simplify complex topics regarding history or art and to offer a “low-threshold approach”.
- To prompt a conversation about history or art.

For the target group:

- To experience a new approach to visiting a museum or memorial site in a fresh, inclusive way using attractive elements, and to acquire general knowledge in an engaging manner.
- To provide access to art and history by offering diverse approaches.
- To enable participation in cultural life and the culture of remembrance, to make the experience of being in a museum or memorial site (often for the first time) pleasant and to break down prejudices, barriers or preexisting fears regarding contact.
- To create and satisfy curiosity.
- To create a safe space and encourage the target group to appropriate the topics of an exhibition.
- To encourage youngsters to explore and share their thoughts about a work of art or a historical topic.
- To promote critical thinking and active observation.
- To gain an awareness of, and to express one’s own needs, interests, and feelings.
- To learn through fun activities.
- To stimulate the senses through different works of art and to encourage moments of artistic expression.

- To activate and start conversations about art and history and its meaning for today's society and the life of the young participants.
- To cultivate empathy in young people by making connections between the present and the past.

What steps do I need to create and implement a Sensory Journey?

The first step is to identify the potential for using a sensory approach within the museum or memorial site. Are there any sensory elements in the exhibition or methods already used in educational formats? What are the suitable objects, works of art, and topics we can access via sensory tools? What are the learning objectives?

The second step is to develop a set of sensory tools regarding the specific objects, works of art, and topics, and the conditions of our museums or memorial sites, as well as the specific needs of our target group. In this regard, it is crucial to be in contact with the target group, and to involve youngsters, teachers, or social workers working with the target group in the process of developing, testing, and adjusting the Sensory Journey.

The third step affects the educators, youth workers, or mediators who have to determine which tools from the tool set are suitable for each group during each Sensory Journey.

The last step includes a conversation with the teachers before the activity, preparing the space, tools, and briefing the people involved. Depending on the group, the educators, youth workers, or mediators should decide which and how many tools are used to avoid an information overload. The dynamics of the presentation should be varied between explanations and supporting material (e.g. audios) to help maintain the concentration of the group.

The Sensory Journey can either be inserted, as a methodical approach, into a guided tour or workshops (e.g. in a pre-existing educational format targeting youngsters with learning disabilities) or it can be carried out as a separate activity following an exhibition tour. In the first case, sensory tools are used during the guided tour to provide access to the presented objects, artworks, or topics. In the latter case, the activity can start with an ice-breaker followed by a brief visit to the exhibition, the Sensory Journey in the form of a workshop and a final reflection.

Regarding the duration of the Sensory Journey, we recommend 90 to 120 minutes. It is important to stay in touch with the needs of the group, allowing for breaks in between. If the group starts to show a lack of motivation or attention, the activity may be brought to a close.

Group size

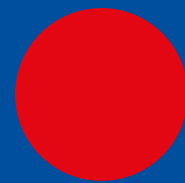
A maximum of 15 participants and two educators are recommended to ensure proper attention is provided to each participant. The group can be broken down into two smaller groups.

What are the competences required for educators, youth workers, and mediators in the creation and implementation of their own Sensory Journey?

Those who wish to develop and perform their own Sensory Journey must possess the following competences:

- Sensibility and openness to others' emotions, and proven experience of handling diverse groups of youngsters with learning disabilities.
- The ability to create a safe environment so that youngsters with learning disabilities can feel welcome and supported.
- Knowing how to apply history or art as a method for empowering youngsters and encouraging them to participate in cultural life.
- The ability to communicate and think creatively.
- Flexibility and adaptability to the needs of the participants.
- Suitable knowledge of easy-to-understand language.
- Good verbal and non-verbal communication skills, including empathy and understanding of the needs of young people with or without learning disabilities.
- The capacity to adapt their communication skills to the level of the group, taking into consideration their learning abilities.
- The ability to listen actively (avoiding stereotypes and prejudices) and to stimulate discussion, to be used as a platform and a "safe place" to allow youngsters to be heard and give their opinions.
- The ability to inspire support and mutual understanding within the group of participants.



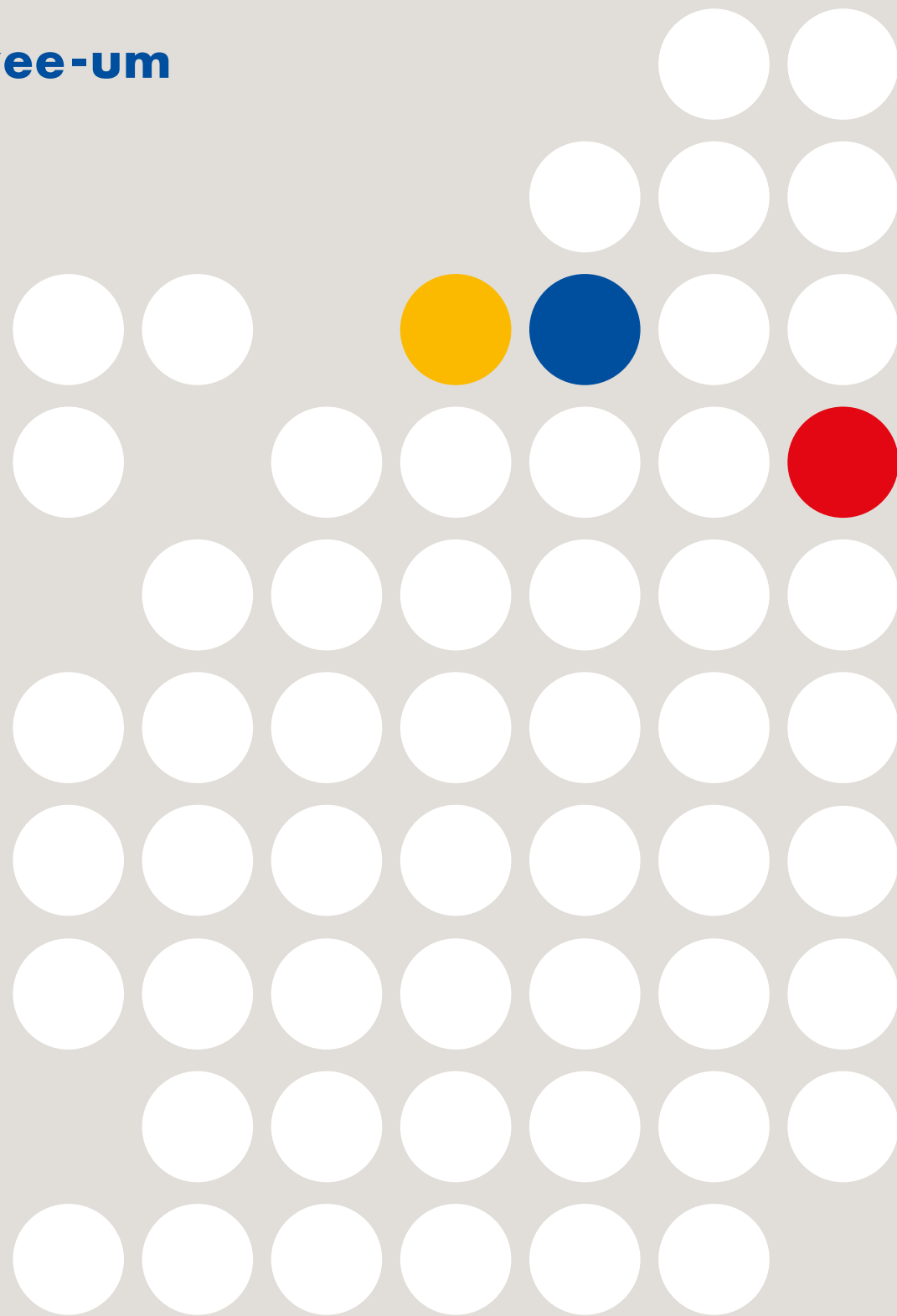


Case Studies



Case Study 1

mu-zee-um



Type of museum: art museum, history museum

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

The Sensory Journey was implemented at Mu.ZEE, a museum specializing in Belgian art from the 1830s onwards. Mu.ZEE's temporary exhibitions change regularly, and consequently, it is important to select the works of art before the activity and prepare the materials as a presentable, portable unit. It is also necessary to have prior information about the group such as: age and cognitive level, number of participants, and special needs.

For this activity, the participants were youngsters aged between 18 and 25 years old, including persons with intellectual disabilities and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). They were divided into four groups of 8-11 youngsters, and each group worked on a different exhibition. The first exhibition was *Léonard Pongo – Primordial Earth*. This was a photography/video exhibition on the work of the Congolese artist Léonard Pongo, who seeks other ways of giving form to the superhuman force of the Earth. His images of the Congolese landscape allow nature to speak, without any attempt to offer any interpretations. The second exhibition was of the Mu.ZEE collection, which spans different periods and styles, but with Belgium as its common denominator. Each group worked on approximately five artworks, and their pace and interests were taken into consideration. The structure of the activity is as follows:

At the start of the activity, everyone stands in a circle: we can hear and see everyone. We introduce ourselves. We situate ourselves in the space: where are we, how does this space feel, how does this space sound? This is also a moment to remind the group of the museum regulations.

During the activity, it is recommended that participants sit down near the work of art.

After the activity, there should be some time allowed for a short evaluation by the participants. This can be done by sitting down next to the last work viewed, and answering the following questions related to the senses and emotions.

Developed Tools

The groups worked on specific works of art that were chosen by the educators based on the possible interests of the youngsters, the adaptability of the tools to the works of art, or the theme of the activity. For example, youngsters can easily relate to multimedia works, as they come from a digital generation.

Each work was associated with a specific activity that may involve one or more senses. For example:

1 /
Léonard Pongo
Untitled, 2021
Video 8'19"

The activity consisted of viewing and listening to a video work and experimenting with shadows.

- To facilitate the participation of people who cannot cope well with loud stimuli, we turned down the audio and provided headphones.
- The participants were given white cardboard cut-outs with recognizable shapes (fish, clouds, birds), which they used to move between the canvas and the projection. We observed the shadows created by the cut-outs, and the effect it produced on the artwork: does it change the meaning of the artwork?
- Hands danced to sounds and music, in the light of the projection. Again, the shadows play with the artwork.



Viewing of Léonard Pongo's work before the activity.
© mu-zee-um vzm



Cut-out shapes cast shadows on a video projection on the floor, allowing the participants to become a part of the artwork.
© mu-zee-um vzw

2/
Léonard Pongo
Untitled, 2022
UV printing on CS sailcloth

Different activities were carried out on either side of canvases.

- We stood on opposite sides of the canvases and moved to the music; first with one person on each side, then several people.
- We mirrored each other's movements on each side of the canvas: What is the effect of the canvas on our movements? Do our movements complement the artwork?
- We discussed the pictures printed on different materials: is this art or not? What makes it art? How does the photo take on a different meaning because of the material it is printed on?

Children and youngsters with autism often have great difficulty with imitation¹². Researchers have found that they need to develop some imitation skills before they can acquire joint attention (the shared focus of two individuals on an object). As such, imitation is an important focus of intervention for children and youngsters with autism, and helps them improve their overall social abilities.

The participants move on either side of the canvases to the music that accompanies this work of art. They become a mirror of each other.

© mu-zee-um vzw



3/

Marie-Jo Lafontaine

Belle jeunesse, 1998

Color photographs on aluminum

For this artwork, we used emotion cards to illustrate the feelings of the subjects portrayed:

- What emotion does this portrait express? Can you make such a face yourself?
- How does the background color affect the portrait?



We used emotion cards to illustrate the feelings of the subjects portrayed. © mu-zee-um vzm

4/

Rik Wouters

Women at the window, 1915

Oil on canvas

We used color cards to discover different shades and followed these instructions:

- Choose the color that matches the subject's face.
- Look at each other's faces. What colors do you see? What color is in the shadow/in the light?



We used color cards to discover the colors in a portrait.
© mu-zee-um vzw

5/
Léon Spilliaert
P.C. Van Hecke en Novine, 1920

Pencil, watercolor, gouache, silverpoint and Indian ink on cardboard

Constant Permeke
Peasant family with cat, 1928
Oil on canvas

The portraits of Permeke and Ensor show rich fabrics such as lace, velvet, rough brown fabrics, feathers, jewelry, etc.

- Participants looked for clothes to match the portraits and touched the different fabrics. How did the artist try to represent the feel of that fabric with paint?
- We sorted through patches of fabric: Which ones matched Permeke's painting, and which matched Spilliaert's? Why?
- Why are they wearing these clothes? What atmosphere do those clothes create?
- If you were to pose for a painting, what would you wear? How would you sit down? Participants either posed on pedestals or sketched portraits with a tablet.



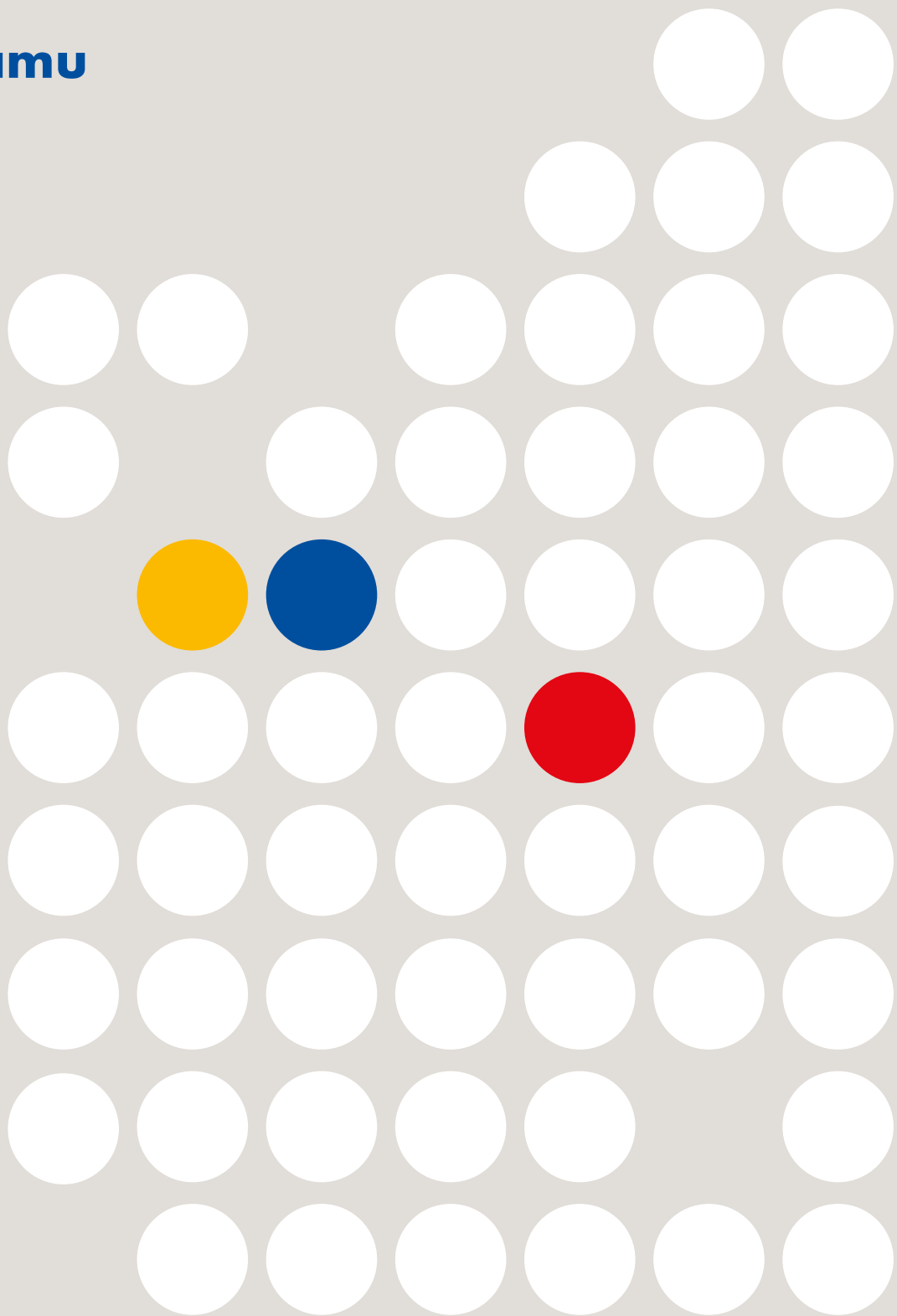
Cloths, hats, and beads help to create a *tableau vivant*, inspired by the portraits in the museum. © mu-zee-um vzw

How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

From the start of the IAM project, volunteers from mu-zee-um and people working with this target group were invited to brainstorm together. In different subgroups, tools were developed and tested with the different target groups: young people with intellectual, visual or hearing disabilities. The participants were then invited to share their experiences so that the Sensory Journey could be adjusted.

Case Study 2

Vabamu



Type of museum: History Museum

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

We devised an entirely new museum class, focusing on two stories in the museum’s permanent exhibition, to keep the lesson as specific as possible. We chose children’s stories so that the students could relate to them more – Hansu and Urve, both aged 14.

Based on the two stories we selected, we also started looking for suitable sensory solutions that would help to tell the stories. Objects and visual sources became dominant, and we also added two audio clips and an olfactory item.

We also set a maximum limit on the size of the group – 10 students + educators.

Developed Tools

Visual tools

We used a variety of visual sources. Since the focus of our lesson was Hansu and Urve’s stories, we immediately showed the students photos of them, and the photos were left visible to the students until the end of the story.

Both stories were also illustrated by the items in the showcase – Hansu’s jacket and Urve’s backpack, and the refugee boat in the exhibition room.

Since Hansu was one of the Estonians who was deported to Siberia and Urve was one of those who fled in 1944, we also used a map to illustrate their stories, and the students were able to draw the line from the starting point to the destination, to get an idea of how far they both had to travel.

Hansu’s story also included a drawing of a deportation wagon and a sketch of their room in Siberia that he made himself. The exhibition room, which is designed as a wagon, also helped students to relate better to the story.



The exhibition theme room Inhumanity, symbolized by the wagon. © Vabamu

We used emotion cards in the museum class, since the two test group students differed drastically in their learning style and expressive skills. The more talkative students (predominantly behavioral and learning difficulties) used the emotion cards at the end of Hansu and Urve's stories to show what Hansu might have felt when he was forced to leave his home and how Urve felt on her escape journey. With autistic children, most of whom did not speak or want to make contact, we used emotion cards only at the end of the lesson, when we asked them what emotions the stories and visit to the museum evoked in them.

Since the museum's rooms are quite dark, we used extra lighting to make the items and the museum educator more visible to the students, and turned off any screens that might have distracted them.

Suitcase with items of Hansu's story and emotion cards. © Vabamu





Pictures and scented sachets related to Hansu's story. © Vabamu

Audio

We used two audio clips. For Hansu's story, we used the sounds of working in a wood workshop (because Hans worked in a wood workshop while he was in Siberia). For Urve's story, we used a poem that was read in Swedish, so students could get an idea of the language environment Urve found herself in after leaving Estonia, and the language in which she had to continue her studies at school. The poem was read aloud by children living in Sweden, and is about the uniqueness and equality of each person among others. Before telling them what the main message of the poem was, we let the students guess what the poem was about.

Scent

For scents, we used a variety of small sachets and cans/jars. Hansu's story included sachets such as birch leaves, black bread, pine and spruce branches, and dried rosehip berries. The latter did not produce as good a result as we had hoped, and we used it instead as tactile and visual material. The students were able to sniff the scented bags and guess what the scent was, then they had to guess how that scent might relate to Hansu's story.

For Urve's story, we used a glass jar containing soil. Students had to explore/sniff out what it was and decide whether Urve packed it in her suitcase on her escape journey. We made a mistake in the first pilot class, where we used an old jar with other odors that led students astray, so we recommend choosing a fabric as odor-free as possible, and a new jar/package when choosing scent sachets and cans.

A selection of items that Hansu may have packed to take with him. © Vabamu



Tactile tools

We told Hansu's story in an exhibition room designed as a deportation wagon, which also gave us the opportunity to look around the wagon and measure how big it was.

From the items in front of the group, we had to choose those that Hansu might have packed at the moment he was deported. There were both old things and modern-day items, and this was to make the students think critically. Students were able to look at the objects themselves and pack them with their hands, in a sack made of bed linen. These were not the original items owned by Hansu, but similar examples: young people's novels (old books, where we glued on the covers of books that Hans packed with him), drawing paper, pencils, woolen socks, a linen towel, cotton bed linen, apples, a modern-day teddy bear, and rubles.

To tell Hansu's story even better, our goal was to find a cotton jacket identical to the one Hans wore in Siberia, so the students would have the chance to try it on. Unfortunately, we were unable to find this for the first test groups.

For Urve's story, we packed into the suitcase the things she needed for her escape. The selection had to be made from the following items: an old radio, an Estonian flag, Estonian soil, a summer dress, a hat, pearls, an MP3 player, headphones, German marks, and a copy of an identity document from the 1940s.

In addition, the children also had the opportunity to explore the refugee boat located in the exhibition room.

To illustrate Urve's story, we also used water to show how cold the Baltic Sea could be in September 1944 (about 12 degrees). The students tried to guess the right temperature by touching the water with their hands, then finally we measured the actual temperature of the water with the children. It should also be mentioned that the water temperature stored in the freezer rose rapidly in a warm room, so water prepared at the beginning of the lesson may soon not be cold enough for the demonstration exercise.



A selection of items that Urve may have packed to take with her. © Vabamu

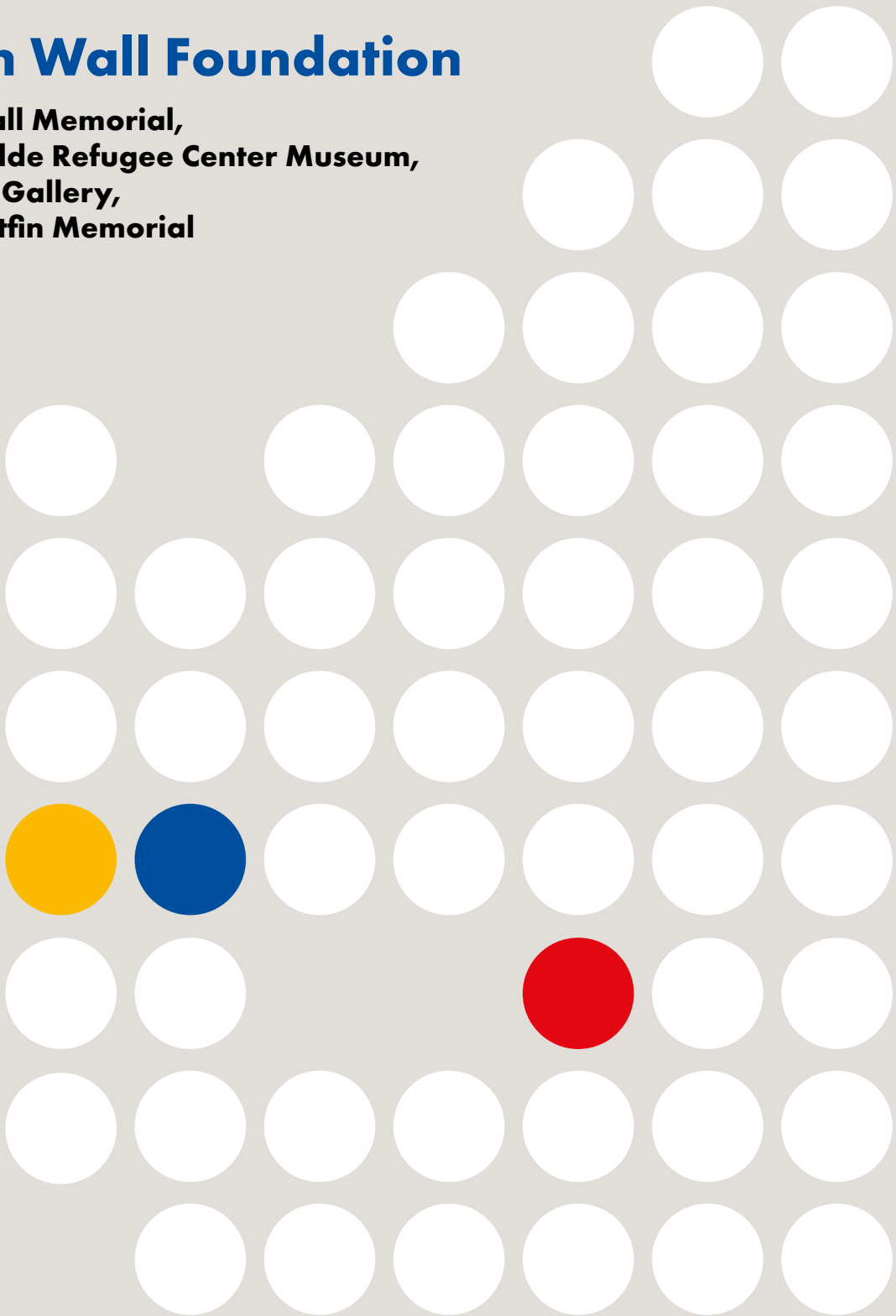
How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

We developed the sensory tour together with the museum team, based on our employees' previous experience with students with intellectual disabilities in general education schools, scientific articles/literature and the practices of other museums. We consulted an art therapist and a kindergarten teacher, who have also encountered children with intellectual disabilities in their work. We conducted two test classes, and the weaknesses that emerged with the first test group and the feedback from the teachers were all taken on board and applied in the second test class. It should be noted that when conducting a lesson, a lot depends on the students' level, and the class leader must be ready to adjust his/her activities at any moment.

Case Study 3

Berlin Wall Foundation

Berlin Wall Memorial,
Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum,
East Side Gallery,
Günter Litfin Memorial



Type of museum: memorial site with an outdoor exhibition,
history museum (indoor exhibition)

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

The developed sensory tools (using audios, tactile and visual tools, scents, and body movement/senses) were integrated into the pre-existing guided tours and workshops conducted in plain language at the Berlin Wall Foundation. The tools offer a multisensory approach to the historical sites and topics presented during the guided tour or workshop. Our pilot tests have shown that combining two or more senses to access a topic ensures a more profound experience: everybody has a different sense affinity, and the more sensory channels you address, the greater the chance that you can reach each member within the group.

To carry out the Sensory Journey at the outdoor exhibition, we built a trolley with all the tools needed. In this way, guides have a selection of tools available and can choose which and how many tools they want to use, depending on the needs and interests of the group. In the case of the indoor exhibition, it is also possible to place the tools at specific stations beforehand.

Developed Tools

We have created two categories of tools: 1. Tools that are site-independent: they support the narration of the guided tour/workshop and provide access to recurring themes of the Berlin Wall Foundation. 2. Tools that are site or exhibition-specific: they relate to a certain topic or biography. All in all, we have developed more than 30 tools ranging from different audio types (music, sound, interview), hands-on-objects, models, visual aids (telescopes, photographs, picture details) to performative acts (search tasks, instructed movements). Below, we present a selection of these tools.

Site-independent tools

Pictograms (visual tool) represent a word or an idea by illustration. They accompany the guide's explanations, and help students to understand what is being said. Historical events or processes (e.g. the Peaceful Revolution and the Fall of the Berlin Wall) as well as abstract terms or concepts related to a historical topic (e.g. freedom of speech, self-determination etc.) are visualized through the pictograms.

Emoticons (visual tool) represent an emotion. They help students to visualize how somebody felt in a certain situation in history, or help the youngsters to put themselves in somebody else's position. Through emoticons, the participants can express how they feel regarding a historical topic or the memorial site visit itself. When using emoticons, be mindful to ensure that the meaning of the symbols is clear.

We recommend working with pictograms and emoticons that are used in schools for special needs.¹³ This helps to foster moments of recognition. As visual tools, pictograms, and emoticons work across age limits, linguistic boundaries, and levels of learning, providing a means of non-verbal communication.

Topic-related tools

Divided Berlin/ Divided Germany: Historical coins from the GDR and Federal Republic are introduced as a tactile tool to exemplify the division of Germany. The coins offer a low-threshold approach to the former existence of two German states: by holding them in their hands, youngsters can compare their materiality, design, and symbols. The coins are a good way to start a dialogue. In our experience, participants who remembered these currencies (e.g. teachers) began sharing parts of their own biography with the group. The youngsters recognized the coins as not being modern-day currency. The coins relate to the youngsters' everyday life and yet convey past and present as time concepts that are fundamental for an understanding of history.

As another way to visualize the division of Germany, we developed tactile maps of divided Germany and divided Berlin. Similar to a puzzle, the youngsters are asked "to put together" pieces of a map representing the two German states and West- and East-Berlin. Additionally, the flags of the Federal Republic and GDR are assigned.



Youngsters exploring historical coins from the GDR and Federal Republic. © Berlin Wall Foundation

We used the maps in combination with the historical coins.

Escape tunnels: to discuss the former escape tunnels at Bernauer Strasse at the Berlin Wall Memorial (memorial site with an outdoor exhibition), we have combined four senses. We adopted a biographical approach, telling the story of Eveline Rudolph, who fled the GDR in 1962 as a young woman along an escape tunnel. First, the contemporary witness is introduced via a photo (visual tool) and then a short interview sequence (audible tool) describes her flight. Following the clip, we asked questions about what the youngsters have understood. Our experience shows that the audio should be no longer than 2:30 minutes and that the interviewee must speak in an intelligible manner. Before playing the clip, we recommend preparing the group for the audio so that they can focus on listening. If an audio is used in an outdoor space, make sure to find a quiet place without background noise or invite the group to come closer. In the case of loud or unpleasant sounds, it is advisable to give prior warning so that noise-sensitive people can keep their distance.

Following Eveline's description, the guide visualizes how high and wide an escape tunnel was by creating a tunnel outline using two folding rulers (body-sensory tool). The youngsters are invited to get through this "tunnel", and thus to physically experience how people had to move through an escape tunnel. Finally, a scent sample of wet earth (olfactory tool) conveys the feeling of being underground.



Tactile maps visualizing the division of Germany.
© Berlin Wall Foundation

Hartmut Richter's escape story: at the Marienfelde Refugee Center Museum (indoor exhibition) we work with the senses of sight, touch and hearing to tell the story of Hartmut. He fled the GDR in 1966 as a young man by swimming along a canal at the border. To begin with, the guide introduces Hartmut and the location of his flight using historical photos (visual tool). While telling Hartmut's story, the guide gives three hands-on objects (tactile tool) to the youngsters, so that parts of the story become tangible. A bag of cold water starts the conversation about how Hartmut felt while swimming along the canal. Hartmut only took his passport with him, stowed under a bathing cap. This part of the story is brought alive with an original GDR passport



Creating a "tunnel outline".
© Berlin Wall Foundation



Touching water from the former border canal.
© Berlin Wall Foundation

and a bathing cap that the youngsters can touch. The group can explore the materiality and function of these objects.

Beforehand or afterwards, the youngsters learn about the reasons why Hartmut fled: he was opposed to the political conditions in the GDR. As an example, an exhibited Beatles record (visual tool) is shown. It represents Hartmut's enthusiasm for Western music, which was forbidden in the GDR and whose fans were persecuted during this time. Additionally, the group listens to a Beatles song (audible tool). After hearing the song, the guide asks if the youngsters liked the song, what kind of music they prefer and how they would feel if they weren't allowed to listen to certain music.

Border soldiers at the Berlin Wall: to convey the former border situation at the East Side Gallery (outdoor exhibition), we used selective vision as a methodical approach. To get an idea of what it was like to work at the Berlin Wall, youngsters stand on the former border strip (East-Berlin) and look across the river Spree towards the opposite bank (West-Berlin). At first, the group is asked to name

Youngsters looking across the former border at the Spree.
© Berlin Wall Foundation



Joint activity: measuring the former border strip.
© Berlin Wall Foundation

things they can spot today using binoculars or "telescopes" made of cardboard rolls (visual tool). Afterwards, a historical photo of the site (visual tool) is presented. The group can compare the former situation with what they saw through the telescopes/ binoculars. These kinds of search tasks are a good way to activate the group and provide a sense of achievement when the task is fulfilled. We recommend using visual aids during search exercises because they help to break down a complex situation. In the case of the binoculars, the youngsters were able to focus on a certain part of their surroundings at a time, and could zoom in and out. The search task is also used as an opportunity to talk about the victims of the Berlin Wall, such as five-year-old Cetin Mert, who drowned in the Spree at this exact spot in 1975. The river was part of the GDR border area.

Border fortification and watchtower: at the Günter Litfin Memorial (urban space/ indoor exhibition) we combined three senses to express the layout of the Berlin Wall. Besides the former watchtower, in which the memorial is situated, no remains of the border fortification have survived at that site; a challenge we had to overcome. We selected a historical photo (visual tool) to show how the site looked in the past and asked the youngsters to name things they can still spot in today's surroundings. An original fragment of the wall (tactile tool) and a piece of barbed wire (tactile tool) function as material representations of the border fortification. The youngsters can touch these historical hands-on objects and the guide links them back to the historical photo. We chose



a performative approach based on body movement (body-sensory tool) to give the youngsters an idea of the depth of the former border strip. Working together and using a folding ruler, the youngsters measure the width of the former border strip. Conscious movement through space enhances students' understanding of the width of the border strip.

To make the watchtower and its former function accessible to all (the building is not barrier-free), we built a model of the tower (tactile tool) that allows "a look inside". The replica is equipped with furniture and soldier figurines.

How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

Beforehand, we spoke to young people with learning disabilities, teachers from a special needs school, the educational staff from a sheltered workshop for people with learning disabilities and the Berlin Wall Foundation's educational staff and guides. The goal was to gather information about expectations, challenges, requirements, and ideas regarding a sensory journey.

After developing some tool prototypes, we carried out an initial round of tests with young people with learning disabilities (school groups and youngsters from a workshop). After taking their feedback into consideration, we adjusted the tools for a second round of testing with the same groups. For the detailed feedback sessions, we developed two questionnaires, one for the participating youngsters with learning disabilities and one for the guides executing the sensory journey. For us, it was important to take both perspectives into account. It was a way to ensure the practicability of the tools, so they can bring added value to the guided tours and workshops.

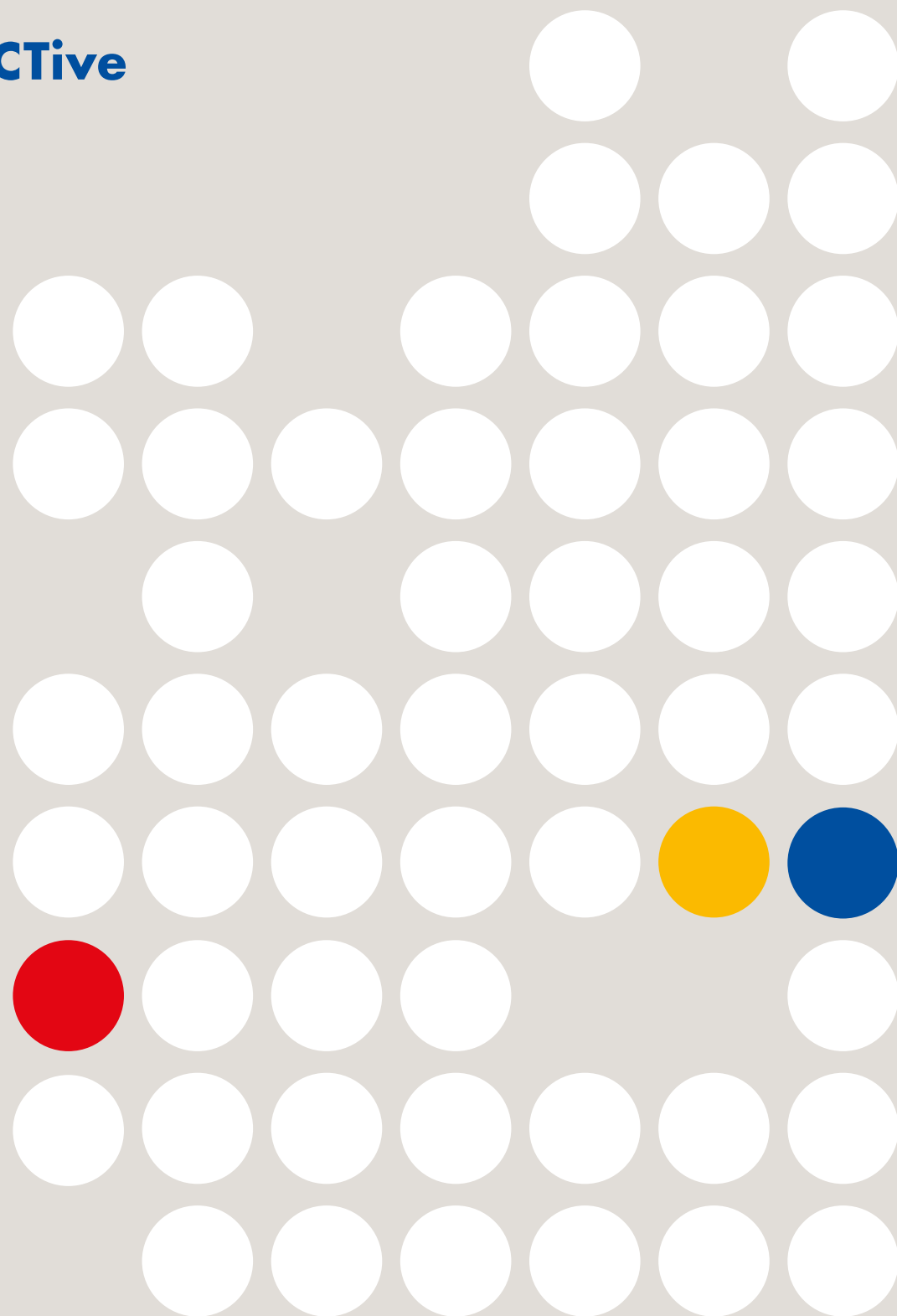
These questionnaires are available in the [Appendix](#) of this book.

Self-built model of
the watchtower.
© Berlin Wall
Foundation



Case Study 4

creACTIVE



Type of museum: Museum complex with the following sectors: archaeology, history, ethnology, visual arts

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

The Museum of Negotino is a cultural, educational and scientific institution founded in 1978, the main objective of which is to provide museum services in the Negotino municipal area. It operates by means of systematic research and by collecting, analyzing, studying, safeguarding, publishing and presenting objects of an archaeological, historical, ethnological and artistic nature. It places particular emphasis on education concerning cultural heritage, and contributes to enhancing professional scientific and research work for the promotion of culture, science and education.

As a result of its research activities, the permanent archaeological exhibition was created, which includes around 420 objects from prehistory, the archaic period, early antiquity, the Hellenic period, the Roman period, late antiquity and the middle ages. The objects are mainly made of metal (bronze and silver), ceramics, glass, and bone; they include plates, jars, tools, jewelry and coins, totaling 1,890 archaeological items.

The Sensory Journey was developed for the Museum of Negotino for a mixed group of participants: young people with sensory, mental and physical disabilities, and young people without disabilities. The process of introducing this innovative approach to the group consisted of the preparation of sensory bags by the beneficiaries of the Poraka-Negotino Center for Persons with Mental Disabilities.

We devised a program of creative and educational workshops focusing on the process of improving the museum's accessibility, increasing the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, and encouraging creative expression through art. The activity started with an ice-breaker to help participants to get to know each other, and to improve body movement. After this, the cultural staff and youth workers discussed the importance of art and culture in the process of the personal and social development of young people, especially those with fewer opportunities. Questions such as the following were used to guide the group reflection:



The process of making the Sensory Bags. © creACTIVE

- What comes to mind when you hear the word 'art'?
- Why is art meaningful to you?
- How can we use colors to express our own feelings and creativity through art?

The participants had to carefully select the materials and objects for their bags, taking their inspiration from the current art exhibition on young artists from the region, and which focused on the beauty of nature. The objects had to be environmentally friendly and easy to find in the museum's surroundings; they also had to complement or resemble the texture and shape of the objects found in the exhibition, such as sticks, leaves, flowers, sand, paper and cotton. This approach enabled the participants to experience the visual arts in a creative way, while stimulating the senses of sound, sight, and touch. To create a unique sensory experience, we used audio, as well.

After the tour, the participants had an opportunity to express their feelings and impressions through painting.

Developed tools

Audio

We used quiet sounds in the beginning to stimulate the attention of the participants, and to create a pleasant experience. Bearing in mind that the activity was carried out with a mixed group of young people without disabilities, people with hearing and speech impairments, and mental and physical disabilities, the audio complemented their visualization of the artworks. For example, while presenting an artwork containing flowers, we played calm music in order to provide a sense of relaxation and to help students imagine spending time in nature.

Tips and tricks:

- Before the activity, we coordinated accordingly with the cultural staff, youth workers or educators, and informed the participants about the planned activity and what to expect during the tour.
- We informed the participants about the purpose of the use of sounds during the tour.
- We encouraged them to pay attention to their physical reactions and their emotions during the tour.
- We asked their opinions about the artworks and encouraged respect for others' opinions and perspectives.

Visual tools and objects:

We used various visual tools, objects, and materials to better present the artwork, especially for the people with a visual impairment. These materials had to be easy to find, safe to use, and usable for other exhibitions. Special attention was given to objects and materials that had similar shapes or textures to certain works of art. For example, if a work of art featured waves, we supported our explanation by giving them a piece of material that could also produce the same texture and sound.

We encouraged the participants to visualize their experience by creating their own artworks, which would help them to reflect on their experience during the tour.



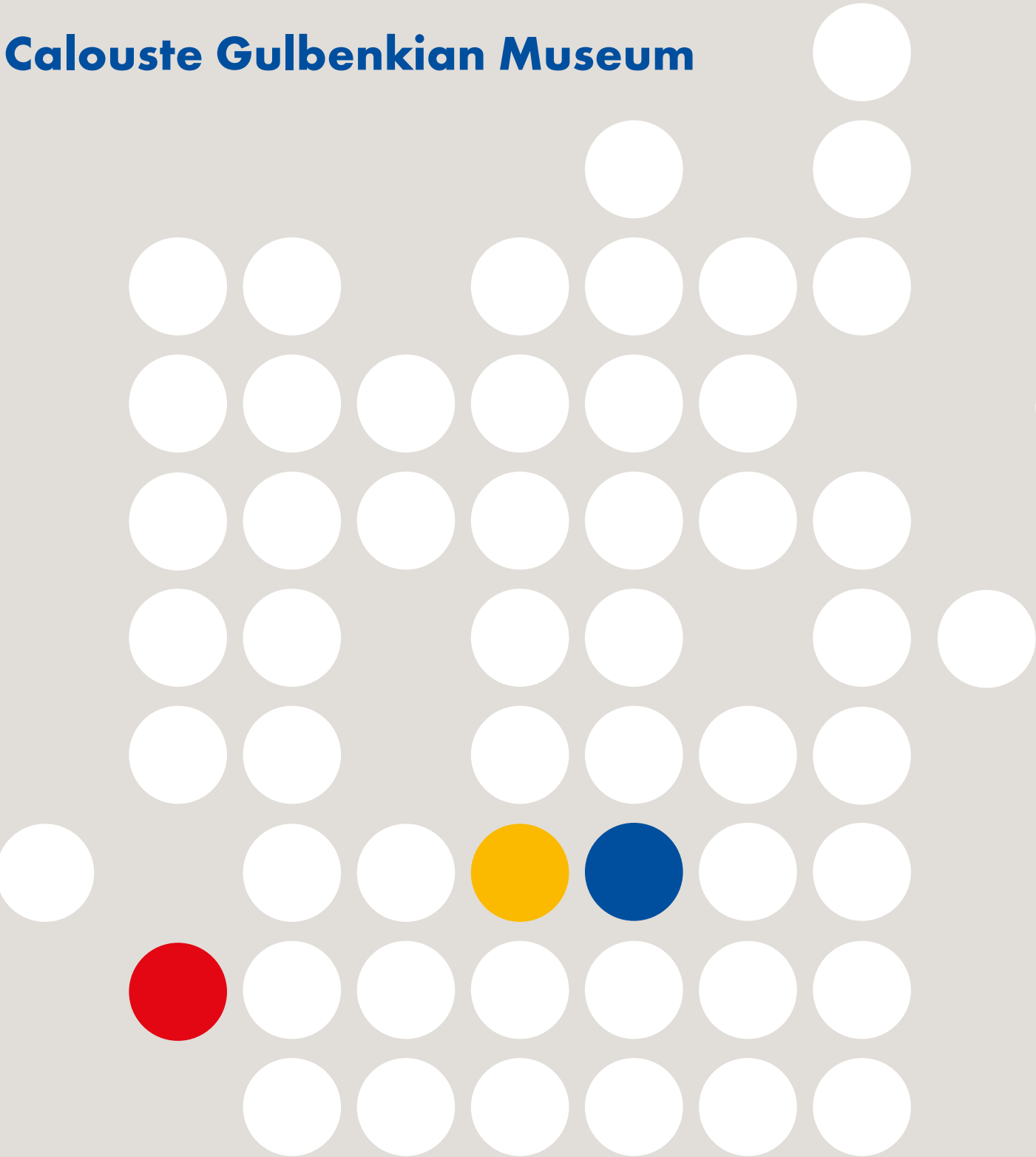
Participants and Youth workers with their Sensory Bags. © creACTive

How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

The partner organization invited the special educators and rehabilitators, and beneficiaries from the Poraka Negotino Center for Persons with Mental Disabilities, the Negotino Association of the Blind and their personal assistants, young members of the Red Cross Negotino Branch and the Youth Center in Kavadarci.

Case Study 5

Calouste Gulbenkian Museum



Type of museum: Private art collection

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

The Sensory Journey, and the art cart, was designed, in this instance for an audience that has specific difficulties in verbally expressing and connecting with their environment. With this tool, the mediator can create connections with other senses and forms of communication such as using clear language and augmentative and alternative communication, textures and materials, sound recreation and reproduction, techniques, and design exploration.

We had to consider how to approach the work of art in a simple and enjoyable manner, as well as how to explain the processes and choices of the artist, without placing the museum’s safety rules at risk.

Developed Tools

In the case of Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, we built an art cart (“carrinho das artes”) that contains dividers, drawers, and other elements to store the material required for the Sensory Journey. The cart is easy to use and access and allows participants to be more autonomous throughout the activity. It contains the tools and materials needed to stimulate all the senses: sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

This kind of approach also allows us to adapt the visit to the interests of the group. This means that if the group shows more interest in sound exploration, then the activity can be adapted to achieve this goal. It will be up to the educator to choose what is the best for the group, whether to continue with the script and offer a variety of exploration through the senses, whether to explore one single work of art in greater depth.

With each work of art, we start with some questions that stimulate dialogue and promote their interpretation to build more curiosity.





© Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Margarida Rodrigues João

Audio

We used a portable speaker, as well as materials and instruments that produce different sounds. These may also be prerecorded sounds that may be related to the work of art. By listening to them, we imitate the sound using our voices/bodies. We also discuss which sounds correspond to each part of the work of art, justifying our opinion in each.

For example:

During this activity, we used these two paintings and talked about the landscape and its elements, comparing and finding differences or similarities between them:



Jacob van Ruisdael

Church in a River Landscape, mid-1660's
Oil on canvas

Photo: Reinaldo Viegas



Jacob van Ruisdael

View from the Coast of Norway or A Stormy Sea Near the Coast, 1660s
Oil on canvas



© Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Margarida Rodrigues João

After the presentation and interpretation of the work of art, we asked the participants if the artwork had any sound. Each participant then produced an interjection/sound associated with it: raindrops were made by snapping fingers, the wind was imitated with voices, and some students were challenged to create the sound of waves by using their bodies as a sounding board.

After they created the sounds, each participant chose an element to produce. Then, everyone produced their sound together, simulating an orchestra, with the educator as the conductor.

Tactile tools

We used two new works:



Jean-François Millet

Winter, ca. 1868
Pastel



Jean-François Millet

The Rainbow, ca. 1872-73
Pastel

These two new landscapes were created using materials different from the previous ones. We discussed materials and how they feel on different surfaces.

For example: we created a texture box that contains different materials associated with the works of art, challenging the participants to discover the materials used in each artwork.



Group exploring the texture wall.

© Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Margarida Rodrigues João

The materials enabled us to understand and explore the artistic process and technique of the artist. By using the same material used by the artist, we can understand it better.

As we can see in the photo, the group is exploring the material but they are not asked to create textures or lines like the ones in the landscapes. This was the first time they had used the material, so we wanted it to be flexible and give everyone in the group a good experience.



Group exploring the use of pastels. © Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Margarida Rodrigues João

Visual tools

Photographs, printed images, or specific objects can be used to help create relationships and a better understanding of the works of art. Hence, if someone talks about something in particular and others have never seen it or can't understand the connection by just listening, we can show an image that will help to encourage visual thinking.

For example: If we want to explain that the artist made a drawing (sketch) before a painting, we can show the sketch so that everyone understands what a sketch is and how it becomes a part of the artistic process.



Édouard Manet
Boy Blowing Bubbles (1867)
Oil on canvas
Photo: Catarina Maria
Gomes Ferreira



Participants showing their work. © Calouste Gulbenkian Museum - Margarida Rodrigues João

After getting to know the image, what it represents, and a few interesting facts and details, the group was challenged to make a “blind sketch”, i.e., to draw the outline of the subject in the painting without looking at the paper, only at the artwork.

In this pilot sensory journey, we did not cover all the senses. We believe that the visit should be adapted to the characteristics and pace of each member of the group, so we opted to work with three senses, calmly and thoughtfully, rather than rushing the group to explore all five. We plan to build the remaining sensory materials as such:

Scent-based tools

Participants are encouraged to identify scents with specific details of the work of art.

To help everyone to smell, literally, the work of art or a memory that it triggers, we created some small boxes containing scented items such as spices, bits of wood, and so on.

Taste-based tools

We can use our imagination to associate a flavor to the works of art. For example: if an artwork depicts food, there is a direct link to flavor. If an artwork represents a chimney, it can appeal to everyone’s imagination as well as their memories, and remind them of any cooking they’ve done in a fireplace.

How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

To develop this Sensory Journey, we did not talk specifically with a target group.

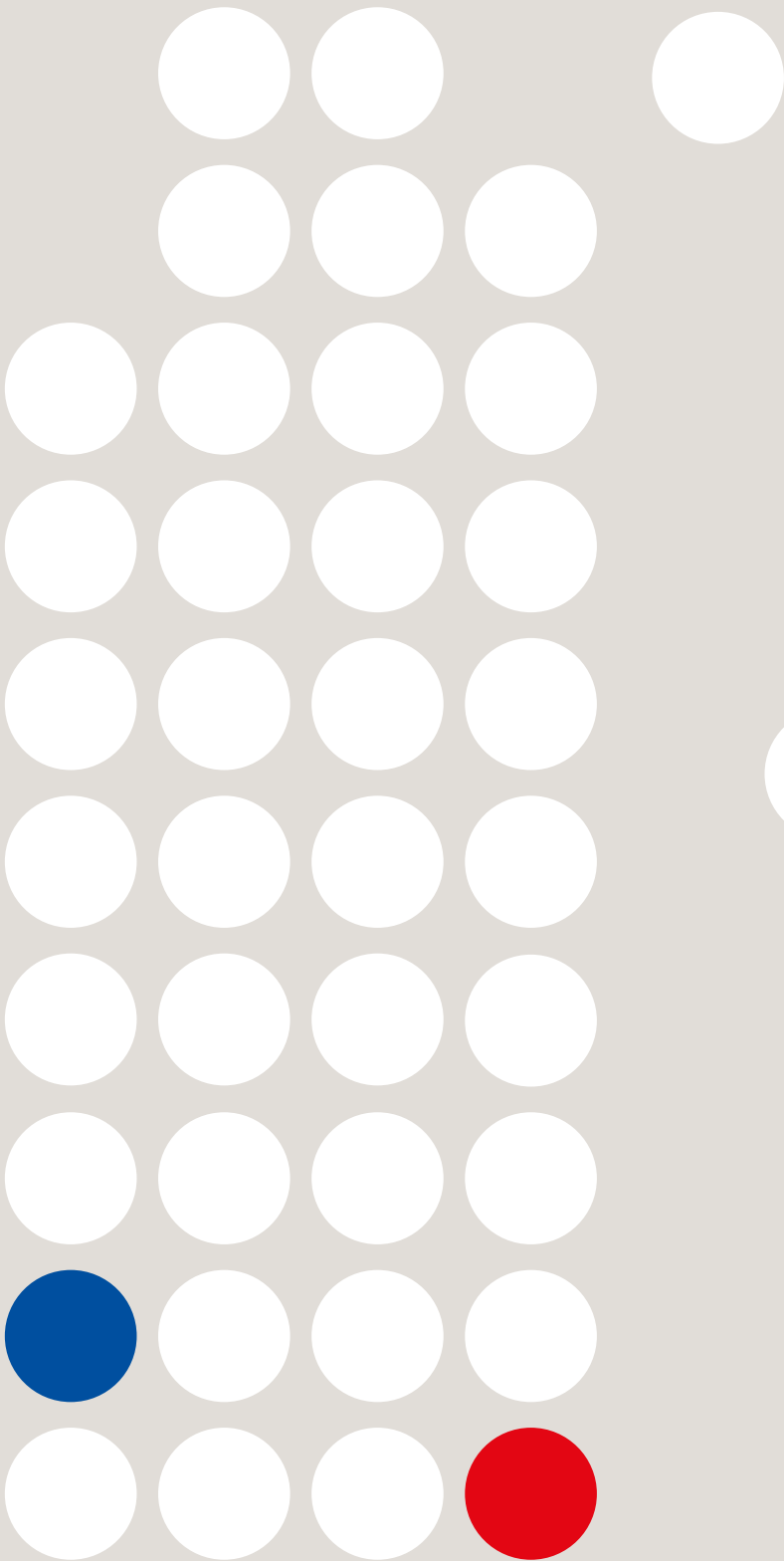
Instead, we incorporated reflections produced in other activities that work with this audience. It was by using these reflections that we were able to improve our proposals for the Sensory Journey. It should be noted that sensory activities stimulate this target group in a more active way, producing a greater understanding of the works of art, and a more enriching and happier personal experience than through any other pedagogical tool.

Together with the museum staff, we came up with a set of creative and artistic proposals that stimulate all the senses. We know that the sense of touch can be used more easily in this type of activity, but all other senses must be approached in the same way. The results are surprising’s. Our concern is to use the five senses by giving them the same degree of importance and to that, we need to propose interesting activities that will stimulate- for example, sound, - in the same way as an activity that uses the hands for painting.

To achieve that, and for other matters, we need to carry out short evaluations after activities and, in this case, we spoke with a teacher, who gave us her feedback.

Case Study 6

MUSAC. Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León



Type of museum: Contemporary Art Museum

How did we implement the Sensory Journey?

The starting point of our Sensory Journey is to offer a didactic activity that is tailored to the characteristics, motivations and learning possibilities of our participants, in terms of their contributions, as well as that of our educators.

For our Sensory Journey, we worked on the exhibition *Project Another Country: That Space in Between*, an exhibition by the Filipino artists Isabel & Alfredo Aquilizan. Their work focuses on the phenomenon of migration, the concept of memory and the meaning of family as a result of their personal experiences as immigrants in Australia. The exhibition consisted of one big boat made up of everyday objects. It seems to sail under the heavy load of various belongings, a load that also alludes to memory, nostalgia, and dreams, but could also refer to the Manila Galleon, which transported goods and people and was an early example of consumption and globalization. Around the boat, and along the walls of the room, were images of seascapes linked by their lines of horizon.

We started with an introduction to the exhibition, followed by a short explanation of the dynamics of the activity. We devised a Sensory Journey that combines focusing on the senses and multiple intelligences. The use of multiple intelligences is part of the working methodology of our Education Department, as it allows us to explore a topic from many points of view and taps each individual's creative capacity. It is especially beneficial for people with intellectual disabilities because it helps them express themselves, resulting in a more positive state of emotional well-being.

For our pilot activity, we worked with a group of 10 participants, including people with intellectual disabilities¹⁴.





Exhibition view of
*Project Another Country:
That Space in Between.*
© MUSAC.

Developed Tools

Suitcase

Since the exhibition was about traveling and leaving home, we used a suitcase that contains everyday objects such as shells, stones, fabrics, toys, sand, colored water, paint, etc. The suitcase is a recurring element in the installation. We gave each participant a drawing of an empty suitcase, on which they drew its contents. We had contact with the different materials through sight, touch, smell and hearing. We felt their weight, temperature, and size. We looked at their shapes, colors, and materials and we tried to listen to the sounds they made.

Next, we prepared several adjoining boxes with another set of objects that have different textures: they might be rough, smooth, or spiked, but they can also be heavy, light, big, or small. The participants—blindfolded—have to put their hands in each of the boxes and try to guess what objects are inside.

Flashlight

A flashlight stimulates our sight and helps us appreciate certain details in an object. It also teaches us different concepts such as light and dark, it orients us in the darkness, helps to lead us to the light source, and allows us to play with shadows and colors. We see the shadows cast by objects and how they get larger or smaller as we bring the flashlight closer.

Sounds

There are sounds that are easily recognizable and are part of our daily life. However, if we take them out of context, it is difficult to identify them. We compiled different sounds in relation to the objects inside the suitcase. There are sounds from nature, from homes, the street, animals, and cars. We asked the participants to try to identify what each of the sounds corresponds to when they heard them.

Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

Intelligence is not confined to a narrow set of standards, it can be found in many areas. The Theory of Multiple Intelligences suggests that people do not just have an intellectual capacity, they also have a range of abilities and intelligences, including linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, naturalistic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Our aim was to tap into these intelligences by means of the following activities:

Verbal-linguistic intelligence

We played a language game that featured the key concepts of the exhibition. We defined words such as home, family, separation, displacement, migration, etc. and accompanied these words with images and pictograms.

We told stories in relation to these themes, to try to understand the reality of migrant people. For example, *Eloisa y los bichos* [*Eloísa and the bugs*] by Jairo Buitrago and *The Trip* [*El viaje*] by Francesca Sanna.

We talked about what we carry in our pockets or what we would take on a long trip, etc.

We wrote a letter as a message to put in a bottle and throw into the sea.

Logical-mathematical intelligence

We counted objects, created a series and then placed or classified them according to different criteria: color, size, use, importance, etc.

Musical intelligence

We played music to relax and to focus our attention.

We listened to sounds of the sea, boats, an airplane landing... and tried to identify them.

We chose a song related to the topic of the exhibition.



Everyday objects are used to create small boats like the installation. © MUSAC

Visual-spatial intelligence

We placed the objects in a space using criteria decided upon by the group.

We looked at the composition as a whole and then broke it down to create another. We explored our body movement in space while placing objects (in groups or individually).

We created an installation related to the boat using all the objects that we worked on.

Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence

We moved around the room as if we were swimming, or like waves, fish, wind, or like other boats.

Naturalistic intelligence

We discussed which objects came from nature and which were created by humans.

We discussed environmental awareness, sustainability, recycling, consumption, and pollution of the seas.

Intrapersonal intelligence

We interacted with others to agree on possible compositions. We exchanged objects and created objects on demand in relation to the needs of the group.

We focused on the senses. We used our sense of touch (feeling different textures, weights, temperature, etc.); smell, sight (measuring, using a pattern, observing their characteristics and details, etc.), and hearing (how the different materials sound when touched, scratched, struck, etc.)

Emotional intelligence

We exercised empathy toward migrant people and refugees.

We carried out a role-play.

Existential Intelligence

We shared the emotions we experienced in the activity with a round of words (saying the first word that comes to mind), by using emoticons, or by writing our feelings on a post-it note, etc.

How did we include young people with learning disabilities, people working with our target group and museum or memorial site staff in the process of developing the Sensory Journey?

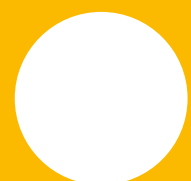
We hold regular conversations within our Education Staff and with the representatives of associations that we work with. We have a long-standing relationship with many associations, and we applied the learnings we gleaned from past activities to the Sensory Journey.

Each association (Asprona, ASPACE, etc.) deals with groups with different kinds of learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities, so the activities must be adaptable to each of their needs. It is not necessary to do activities involving all the senses or intelligences. The educator is the one who programs the activities for each case, according to the needs of each collective, and he/she must be flexible enough to direct the course and pace of the activity.

This is also applicable to all our educational activities, as using the senses and multiple intelligences is part of our working process. We accommodate all the sensitivities and needs of our users so that they are not forced to go to the museum only through their respective associations. This is how we promote inclusion, with all the richness that it implies, at all levels, for everyone.



MUSAC's Sensory Journey



Appendix



Evaluation questionnaire for the Sensory Journey

Questionnaire for museum staff/educators/youth workers

Was it challenging to implement the sensory tools in your guided tour?
If so, in which regard, and which tools in particular?

Which tools were most/least successful and why?

What measures are necessary for using the tools in your day-to-day work as guide? (Regarding storage of tools, information about the group, extra time for preparation before the tour starts/after it ends)

What comments do you have regarding the practical handling of the tools? (transportation and packaging of tools, technical equipment, etc.). Do you have any suggestions on how to improve the practical handling of the tools?

Was the handout providing information about the use of the tools sufficient?

Do the tools support you in conveying the topics of your guided tour or do you feel that they are just an add-on?

What was the most inspiring moment during the tour?

Questionnaire for participants (youngsters with learning difficulties and intellectual disabilities)

Did you feel safe during the tour?

Did you receive sufficient spatial orientation during the tour?

Which sense did you like best? Why?

How did you cope with the tools? Were the guide's explanations comprehensible?

Tool 1: good [] medium [] poor []

Tool 2: good [] medium [] poor []

Tool 3: good [] medium [] poor []

Was the approach to the content appropriate?

What kind of emotions did you experience during the tour?

Could you understand the audios? Was it difficult for you to concentrate on the content? Were the audios too long or short?

Was it sometimes too much content or tools for you?

Was the duration of the tour (90min) too long? Should we have spent less time on each station/tool? Did you need a break during the tour?

Did you miss anything?

Did you learn something new? Did you get a better understanding of something connected to art/history or how your senses work?



Endnotes

- 1 SCHALOCK, R. L., BORTHWICK-DUFFY, S. A., BRADLEY, V. J., BUNTINX, W. H., COULTER, D. L., CRAIG, E. M., et al. (2010). Intellectual Disability: Definition, Classification, and Systems of Supports. American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Intellectual Disability (ID) is characterized by considerable deficits in cognitive, functional and adaptive life skills. People with ID generally tend to have difficulty expressing their thoughts and emotions verbally.
- 2 UNITED NATIONS (2006). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Retrieved December 1, 2022, from <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities>
- 3 UNIA. (n.d.) What are reasonable accommodations? Retrieved December 1, 2022, from <https://www.unia.be/en/areas-of-action/education-1/what-are-reasonable-accommodations>
- 4 GOODLEY, D. (2020). Disability and Other Human Questions. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- 5 AGIRDAG, O. (2010). Exploring bilingualism in a monolingual school system: Insights from Turkish and native students from Belgian schools. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 31 (3), 307- 321. It is fascinating to see how lavishly this deficit thinking is used to keep certain groups in the "under position".
- 6 We know from history what thinking in us/side terms can have as consequences.
- 7 VANDENBUSSCHE, H. & DE SCHAUWER, E. (2018). The pursuit of belonging in inclusive education – insider perspectives on the meshwork of participation. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, vol. 22, Issue 9, 27.
- 8 GOODLEY, D. & RUNSWICK-COLE, K. (2016). Becoming dishuman: Thinking about the human through dis/ability. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 37(1), 1-15.
- 9 DAVIES, B. (2021). Entanglement in the world's becoming and doing of new materialist Inquiry. Routledge.
- 10 Kino Kabaret is a worldwide network of filmmakers, actors, actresses, camera operators, editors, musicians, producers and all other film enthusiasts. Its aim is to gather international talents and enable them to make short films at cinema workshops under extreme time pressure with available resources in a collaborative spirit.
- 11 Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences proposes differentiating human intelligence into specific modalities of intelligence, rather than defining it as one single, general ability.
- 12 INGERSOLL, B. (2008). The Social Role of Imitation in Autism: Implications for the Treatment of Imitation Deficits. *Infants & Young Children*, 21(2), 107–119.
- 13 We are working with METACOM. Symbols for Augmentative and Alternative Communication by Annette Kitzinger (https://www.metacom-symbole.de/metacom_en.html).
- 14 Within the intellectual disabilities, we also include co-occurring conditions such as Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.



Contacts

mu-zee-um vzw

Edith Cavellstraat 10b
8400 Oostende
Belgium
mu-zee-um.be
info@mu-zee-um.be

Vabamu.

Museum of Occupations and Freedom

Toompea 8
10142 Tallinn (Harjumaa)
Estonia
vabamu.ee
info@vabamu.ee

Berlin Wall Foundation

Bernauer Straße 111
13355 Berlin
Germany
stiftung-berliner-mauer.de
info@stiftung-berliner-mauer.de

Youth Association creACTive

8mi Septemvri br.3 -3/58
1000 Skopje
Republic of North Macedonia
kreaktiv.mk
kontakt@kreaktiv.mk

Museu Calouste Gulbenkian

Av. De Berna 45A
Lisbon 1067-001
Portugal
gulbenkian.pt
museu@gulbenkian.pt

MUSAC.

Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

Avda. Reyes Leoneses, 24
24008 León
Spain
musac.es
musac@musac.es



Acknowledgements

Mu.ZEE

JINT vzw

Reinhard De Jonghe

SBSO Ter Zee

Gustav-Meyer-Schule Berlin

Stephanus-Schule

Schule am Bienwaldring

Kunstwerkstatt der Lebenshilfe

nbw - Nordberliner Werkgemeinschaft gGmbH

Students and teachers from Agostinho da Silva School,
Marquesa de Alorna High School and CREACIL

APigmenta

Alfaem Salud Mental León

Asfas - Asociación de Familiares y Amigos del Sordo de León

Asociación Aspace León

Asociación de Inmigrantes ACCEM

Asociación de Mujeres Valponasca

Asprona - Fundación Personas

Autismo León

Fundación Juan Soñador

