

DIALOGUE IN THE DARK®

AN EXHIBITION TO DISCOVER THE UNSEEN

MOVING BEYOND SIGHT





THE CONCEPT

Visitors are led by blind guides in small groups through an especially constructed and totally darkened exhibition, in which sounds, wind, temperatures and textures convey the characteristics of daily environments such as a park, a city or a bar.



In the dark, the daily routine becomes a new experience. A reversion of roles is created: sighted people are torn out of their familiar environments, losing the sense they rely on most - their sight. Blind people guide them, provide them with security and a sense of orientation - transmitting a world without pictures. The blind and partially sighted guides open the visitors' eyes in the dark to show them that their world is not poorer - just different.





THE IDEA

The social exclusion of disabled people and the unequal chances in getting the same opportunities for education, career, transportation and leisure facilities are a major challenge. 610 million people worldwide are registered as disabled - the millions unregistered not even mentioned. 2/3 of them are living in the developing countries.

Basically prejudices and determined patterns are responsible for this situation. The interaction between "abled" and "disabled" people is often hindered by stereotypes, fears, avoidance and prejudices. The levels of understanding, support and access to education, information, jobs, etc. vary from country to country, but even in developed countries like Germany, only about 15% have a job.



The prevailing opinion that disability is “less worth than normal” leads to discrimination and marginalization of blind and disabled worldwide. The interaction with blind and other marginalized people is still dominated by pity and welfare and is focused mainly on the deficits of being disabled. There is a lack of understanding of the potential that might arise out of a handicap as well as for the fact that disabled “suffer” much more from the ignorance, information deficit, unequal rights and uncertainty of the “abled” than from their disability itself.



Guest drawing, Monterrey (MEX)

In order to stop these grievances and to give equal rights to the disadvantaged, Andreas Heinecke is following the conclusion of Martin Buber: “The only way of learning is by encounter.” (I and Thou, The principle of dialogue).

Referring to the phenomenon of disabilities and their social consequences, this means that solutions have to be found for disabled and “able” to interact: a forum to facilitate the open exchange between one another in order to reduce prejudices, clichés, stereotypes and simple avoidance.



Out of this tension, *Dialogue in the Dark* was born, an exhibition which tries to take as its starting point the ideas and non-visual perceptions of blind people, in order to discover the unseen within and all around us.

Dialogue in the Dark certainly is not an ordinary exhibition. It rather is a platform for communication and a close exchange between different cultures, provoking a change in perspectives.

How paradox – learning to “see” again by not seeing



THE IMPACT

Dialogue in the Dark has been presented in over 30 countries and over 160 sites throughout Europe, Asia and America since 1988.

So far more than 6 millions visitors experienced *Dialogue in the Dark* worldwide and over 6.000 blind employees found a job and empowerment through *Dialogue in the Dark*.

Dialogue in the Dark succeeded in reaching the broad public, gained great attention by international media and created a lot of new jobs for different groups of disadvantaged people.

Through the exchange of roles – the blind guide can “see” in the dark, the visitors are “blind” – and the strong emotional impact, the visitors gain an experience that leads to reflection, social borders get reduced, ignorance gets changed into openness and interest and pity turns into respect.

By offering the broad public a self-experience they will never forget, *Dialogue in the Dark* changes mindset of a broader public regarding disability and diversity and increases their tolerance towards “otherness”.

Dialogue in the Dark is an incubator, who aims for social integration of blind and other marginalized people by offering them a platform to present their skills, potentials and personality, a chance to gain more self-confidence through a challenging job and independence through a self earned salary.



Thousands of guest-book comments reflect the impression the exhibition has on its visitors – they are moved by their experience and positively impressed by the guides.

Some of the results of a survey, asking visitors about their experience, were, after 5 years, 100% still remembered the name of the exhibition and with whom they went, 90% felt sensitised for the world of blind people, 52% asked others to visit *Dialogue in the Dark* and 34% wanted to come to *Dialogue in the Dark* for a second time.



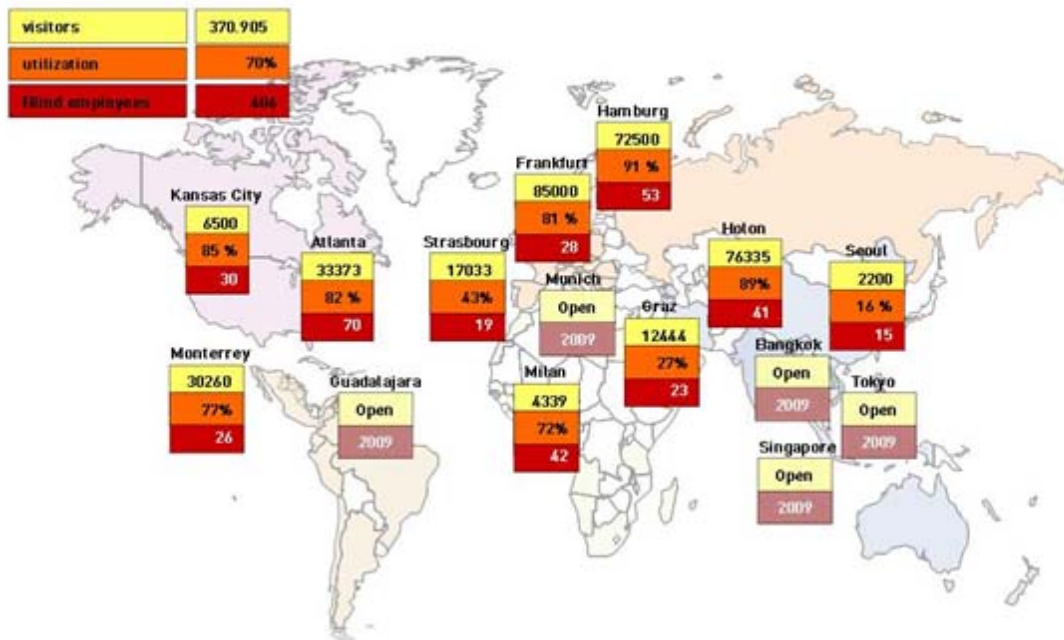
THE FOUNDER



Andreas Heinecke, PhD, (*1955) grew up in Baden-Baden, Germany. He graduated in German literature and history in 1982 and started his working career as a journalist. In 1988 he became Vice-director of the "Stiftung Blindenanstalt" (Foundation for the blind), 1996 the company Consens Dr. Andreas Heinecke was founded, followed by the Consens Ausstellungen GmbH in 1999. In 2000 the "Association for the promotion of social creativity" was launched by him, in 2003 the Telesign GmbH, in 2005 the Dialogmuseum GmbH, the permanent "DiD" exhibition in Frankfurt, Germany, the Italian office of "DiD", "Consens stabile organizzazione", and the "Dialogo en la Oscuridad Association" in Mexico. In 2006 he founded the "Schattensprache GmbH". In 2008 Andreas and his partners founded the Dialogue Social Enterprise GmbH.

Andreas Heinecke received several awards over the last years: After having won the "Stevie Wonder Vision Award" in New York (1998) he received the price for "Best Practice in Universal Design" in Japan (2004). 2005 he was selected to be the first Ashoka fellow in Western Europe and "Social Entrepreneur of Germany 2005 - Finalist" (Schwab Foundation). The following year he won the "Deutscher Unternehmer Preis" by the Harvard Business School's Entrepreneurship Club (2006), 2007 Andreas was named "Outstanding Global Social Entrepreneur" by the Schwab Foundation, and in 2008 he was nominated as a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Social Entrepreneurship.





Dialogue in the Dark
 Exhibitions & Workshops
 2009

01	Hong Kong*	China	Dynasty Business Club
01 - 02	Graz	Austria	Frida&Fred
01 - 03	Strasbourg	France	Le Vaisseau
01 - 03	Kansas City	USA	Union Station
01 - 12	Hamburg	Germany	Speicherstadt
01 - 12	Frankfurt	Germany	Dialogmuseum
01 - 12	Milan	Italy	Istituto dei Ciechi di Milano
01 - 12	Holon	Israel	Children's Museum
01 - 12	Atlanta	USA	Atlantic Station
03	Istanbul*	Turkey	YPO Bosphorus Chapter
03 - 12	Tokyo	Japan	Re-samu Building
03 - 12	Munich	Germany	Allianz Global Investors AG
04 - 05	Mannheim	Germany	Maimarkt
06	Dublin*	Ireland	Ballsbridge Court Hotel
06	Hong Kong*	China	Dynasty Business Club
06	Shenzhen*	China	Design Center
07 - 12	Guadalajara	Mexico	Museo Trompo Mágico
09	Geneva*	Switzerland	YPO Alpine Chapter
09 - 12	Vienna	Austria	Schottenstift
10 - 12	Singapore	Singapore	Ngee Ann Polytechnic
11 - 12	Seoul	Korea	Dong Soong Art Center
12	Hong Kong	China	Mai Foo

*workshop

In 2009 new long-term exhibitions open in Munich, Singapore, and Mexico.



**DIALOG
MUSEUM**



**IN
DIALOGUE
IN THE DARK**



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