

Speech Without Barriers

My name is Petra Stokar, I am a student of the HKB in Bern where I am currently studying for my masters degree in art education.

A museum without barriers! What does that mean for me?

Of course a building needs to be accessible but that is not the only thing. A museum should think about the public it wants to reach. If for example you want to reach mentally disabled people then your offer should adapt to that which means having an offer where mentally disabled people can relate to, which means colorful paintings and objects that they recognized out of daily life. But that is not all. To catch the attention, the person who gives the museum-tour should know about the different mental and physical abilities of the group members. With this information she can better fulfill the needs of the individual. It would be ideal that sign-language is combined with talking. It is my experience, that mentally disabled people understand sign-language better than a speech. It is also possible to use different kinds of music for helping to understand and remember. For example they can use percussion like the rainmaker or something else, to keep their interest alive.

For disabled people in general it would be beneficial to get lectures in a museum about a topic that they are interested in, for example Matisse or the use of color. It would also be useful to get the opportunity to do an internship in order to learn how a Museum is managed every day or how to set up an exhibition.

What does that mean for me as a student, as a teacher and as an artist?

As a student the Beyeler Museum has been very helpful to me, they gave me a lecture on the painting Acantas by Henri Matisse. I learnt how to use color and how to best preserve a painting, the use and development of tools that Matisse had used, opened other avenues for myself as well as acknowledging my own ideas. Here are some of the tools I have made to further my ability in abstract painting.

As a teacher i have learned to adapt my offer to my public for example... what are the dreams from people with disabilities in daily life and can they express this through a set design. How can they communicate these dreams when they can not communicate in the normal way, for example through a smile, a sound or another way of expression like dance. For me the process is more important than the result.

As an artist I found out that I needed to create my own tools and that abstract painting was the best way for myself to express what I felt. I wanted to paint on a large scale, that's why I created a tool with a grip and a bamboo stick where I fixed a brush. I also wanted to paint on a large scale because it required less detailed motor skills. For me it was important to use play as a way of painting and to use different materials to paint for example... balls, hockey sticks, feathers, stones where used. It gave me the freedom to express myself and that is something I find important to pass on, freedom through expression in whatever way possible. I found that Creaviva at the Paul Klee centre is a very good example of this because they give people the possibility to express themselves in whatever they paint and I am honored to be a part of that.