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Blindness, art and exclusion in museums and galleries

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How can Anthony Caro's *Sculpture Two* or Canaletto's *Piazza San Marco* be made accessible to people who have never seen or who no longer see?¹ Can art be meaningful to blind people and what does gallery visiting mean to them? These are not rhetorical questions for museum and gallery educators for once the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) comes fully into force in 2004 they will be legally required to facilitate blind people's access to art.² What resources are already in place, then, and what do blind people think about them?

Researching the needs of blind people is to some extent fallacious. To state the obvious but often ignored fact, blind people are a heterogeneous group, coming from all social classes, all cultural, racial, religious and educational backgrounds. Their reasons for visiting museums and galleries almost invariably have more in common those of the non-blind than with other blind people. Blind people go to galleries because they love Impressionism, because they've always been interested in early Christian iconography, because it's somewhere to take their grand-children or meet their friends, because they like the space or the sense of quiet, because the café is good or the shop sells nice cards or because they are professionally involved in art practice. There is no one approach or subject that is appropriate because someone is blind.

At the same time the museum and gallery system positions blind people as a unitary group. However diverse individual blind people might be, as museum visitors they are primarily defined in relation to a lack of sight. The continuing lack of basic provision means that blind people can only visit in a disabled capacity; tactile flooring is still virtually non-existent, good lighting is often sacrificed for ambience and large print labelling generally comes in a distant second to the designer's overarching exhibition concept. Museums and galleries may flaunt their access credentials (especially in funding applications) but access is often tokenistic and tends to remain low on the list of institutional priorities. Blind people are constituted as a marginal group not because their

blindness makes them so, but because the ocularcentricity of museums and galleries ensures that non-visual engagement with art and artefacts remains virtually inconceivable in all but the most innovative of institutions. Thus, within this institutional context, it *is* important to research the needs of blind people precisely in order that blindness ceases to become the determining aspect of their visit.

Although the people interviewed for this research had varied interests, visiting patterns, levels of residual sight and types of blindness they tended fall into one of two polarised camps. They either thought that education provision in museums was wonderful or dreadful with very few people occupying a middle of the road position. This apparently clear-cut antithesis was created in part through the research process since we recruited respondents from education events at museums and from special interest groups and thereby interviewed people who are actively involved. Adverts for respondents in specialist papers and email lists similarly resulted in respondents who had strong opinions; after all people do not regularly attend events or groups or volunteer for interview if they are indifferent on a subject. Yet, although the recruitment process was instrumental here it is important to remember that this *is* the constituency of blind visitors to museums and galleries. Being half-hearted suggests that museum trips are something you can take or leave, a level of choice which is not as open to blind people as to the non-blind. This paper begins by outlining some of the problems with current programming that the interviewees identified and then goes on to ask why, given these gaps in provision, were so many other people happy with what is available for blind visitors. I argue that this high level of satisfaction has little to do with museum provision and ironically may be created in part by the endemically exclusive nature of museums.

The Dissenters

At present there are two types of educational resources offered in museums and galleries; organised educational events and drop-in provision which includes information boards, leaflets, audio-guides and more generalised tours. While the research did not set out to evaluate specific institutions but to establish general responses and issues, it almost immediately became clear that the individual institutional approaches were inseparable

from interviewees' responses. This is partly because there are so few galleries that have regular programmes rather than occasional events and because each institution employs different methodologies. By default then, this paper does comment on the specific approaches of several galleries, notably the National Gallery, the Victoria and Albert and Tate Liverpool. Much of what follows is critical of current provision but it should be borne in mind that whatever their faults all the programmes also have something to commend them; Tate Liverpool has built up a large and expanding audience in an area where people are not in the 'museum habit', the National Gallery has established a high standard of description while the V&A covers a remarkably wide breadth of subject matter. Moreover, the educators responsible for access programmes often work with little funding, low status and are generally badly paid and here the criticisms are not directed at them as individuals so much as at the institutions which perpetuate poor standards.

Many of the blind people we interviewed found the educational events and the drop-in provision inadequate to their needs. Firstly, classes organised specifically for blind people were thought to be lacking in range both in terms of the educational level and the subject matter. Teaching was often pitched at a fairly low level so as not to exclude anyone, but as a result kept out those people who wanted to expand their knowledge of art further, or whose understanding was already more sophisticated:

They tend to be very, I know it is a horrible term but, dulled out, when you go to things that are organized. ... where it is almost the lowest denominator ... the British Museum did one on dating. ... And yes they are reasonably complicated things and they have got some interesting things for us to touch, but you could have picked up what they had done in an hour on a ten minute radio programme. ... there was nothing there that was different and interesting enough and went into enough detail, to actually make you go into central London to the British Museum to do it, on a Saturday afternoon when you have got better things to do. (Group discussion, 'A Multi-sensory experience? Programming for visually impaired audiences in British art galleries', Arts Through Touch seminar, Wandsworth Centre, Yukon Rd., London, 20th March 2002).

This is a group of people who are largely excluded from mainstream education making museums are potentially a valuable resource for learning, but none of the group sessions were designed to enable any form of progression. As one interviewee remarked:

I occasionally go but it has got to be something I am very interested in because I know it is going to be a poor standard, but if it is something I know nothing about I am prepared to get a low version of it just to get the initial thing to find out whether it is worth me researching myself to a bigger degree or if it's not.(Ibid)

Moreover, the low level of classes was often felt to be patronising, a sense that was reinforced in some instances by staff attitudes:

Kettle's Yard, of which I am very fond, has an into-touch scheme but I never go. Because there are four or five blind people there talked at as if they're five year olds; ...“hello, you're at an art gallery now, it has pictures and sculpture” and I thought oh, fuck off, frankly you know. I mean there is a tendency to treat blind people as if they were also mentally handicapped and deaf. And I find most of those schemes I've come across are just like that.(JFS, interview, 1st May 2002)

Basic provision is absolutely necessary but in isolation it is not enough. It is also important to have educational events wherein blind visitors who are knowledgeable about the arts can participate in a way that is meaningful to them. It is inexcusable in any circumstances to conflate blindness with ignorance or with learning difficulties as interviewees reported was sometimes the case.

The obvious solution is to have integrated events where blind people can come to any of the mainstream programme and know that their needs will be accommodated. This is a reasonably straightforward procedure in technical terms; lecturers would need to incorporate description into their talks, hand-outs would have to be provided in the relevant format, preferably in advance of the day itself and if appropriate, large xerox blow-ups could be sent out beforehand thus giving participants a chance to study the images under discussion. It would, however, need a high degree of forward planning and the co-operation of staff outside the education department. Given that education staff (and particularly disability officers who are not high ranking in museum or gallery hierarchies and are often young and relatively inexperienced) rarely have the institutional

weight to force curators into compliance, it is easy to see why sessions organised specifically for the blind are more viable. Nevertheless, it is the institutional will to include blind people that is at question here and integrated resources alongside specifically designed introductory sessions should be the goal to work for.

Drop-in provision for blind people suffers from similar problems. Some galleries do have audio-guides (which I do not discuss in this article) or permanent touch tours that are either run at regular times during the week or which visitors can take by themselves. Respondents thought that these touch tours were an extremely valuable part of museum provision but again there were serious associated complaints, namely, publicity and insufficient breadth or range of levels. As significantly, many institutions ran touch tours that misunderstood how people understand and enjoy artwork through touch. For example, when the education curator responsible for adult access projects at Tate Liverpool discovered that there were only two sculptures available to touch in the Modern British Art display she developed a tour that used description and materials handling. Although visitors could not touch, among other artworks, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's *Singer*, a piece of limestone was available from a handling trolley to show people what that felt like, a practice which is not unique to Liverpool. Although this is in some ways a logical response to a situation not of that curator's creation it doesn't recognise that touch is not just about putting something into your hand, rather it involves the position of your fingers, wrists, arms and body in relation to an object. People do not just feel for 'limestone' with their fingertips, but for the work as a whole:

You don't just look at shape and form, you look at the texture of things temperature, you are sensing all of it so you know, cold for bronze work maybe if it is inlaid the different grains. ... The amount of detail you actually pick up by touching something as opposed to somebody saying that is cedar wood inlaid in whatever. That wouldn't mean nothing to me at all ... I would have to sense it first. I may then ask 'well what colour is that wood?' and 'what is the relationship between them?' But actually until I have actually touched that to see and to feel the design - do you know what I mean? (Group discussion, 'A Multi-sensory experience? Op.cit.)

Limestone in a three inch square does not convey the scale, weight, temperature, form, texture or rhythm of the work. These qualities are not irrelevant to the art object or to an understanding of what that art work is about.

Moreover, the provision of small pieces of limestone or the equivalent completely ignores people's capacity for pleasure through touch. Although the notion of aesthetic pleasure through touch is virtually unheard of within western metaphysics the interview respondents talked about touch in precisely these terms:

You are sort of more aware of the beauty, when you can touch it. (EQ, interview, 11th December 2001.)

Just as looking at a piece of limestone rather than a sculpture would be considered deeply inadequate in any imaginable context, so too is touching it. Tactile diagrams have similar problems since they are designed solely with the intention of conveying information:

Lots of people both born blind and late blind have problems with tactile images. Certainly they need commentary but even then – it's not just a question of explaining what the image comprises of but of *aesthetic pleasure*. (JFS, interview, 1st May 2002)

This particular respondent also drew attention to the discrepancy between raised images and the artworks that they were intended to explain:

One of the museums there, they tried to represent a picture. One of the curators had got lots of stuff like solid plasticine. ... And he had tried to imitate, I mean he showed it to me with great pride: "Look what I've done". I couldn't imagine what relationship it had to a print. It was a lithograph. Lithographs are basically several layers of printing ink on paper and this was being expressed very emotionally with, big, sort of, lumps of this folded fabric, all jagged. When I touched it I thought 'God, I wonder what this has got to do with Ben Nicholson'. (Ibid)

Again in these instances many education officers seem to have ignored the fact that the meaning of an artwork and the pleasure that may elicit is inseparable from its form. Although they can undoubtedly be useful in some cases, raised images do not make the

artwork accessible, rather they present something which is already radically translated and is lacking in many respects.

Precisely because touch is rarely thought out in any detailed way, the structure of touch tours and handling sessions often assumes that people knew how to touch yet many respondents, all of whom had different levels of sight, reported difficulties with touching objects in museums:

If you have never seen and get given an object you may not actually know what it is, because you have not got any of that visual information. ... if something is actually put into your hand and described this is for this, that is for that, you know, probably to them it makes perfect sense. But if you have never seen, you have never had a contact with it, and never really had a description of it, and are just given something and meant to interpret it straight off...(Group discussion, 'A Multi-sensory experience? Op.cit.)

I was just going to say that some people with partially sighted or with residual vision, I count myself among them ... if I am left to touch something I am completely bewildered - that it is too much information. You know that I cannot relate them as being the same objects. For example those pieces of [inaudible] glass and if you look at it is great, it is a completely different object if you touch it.

If you touch it, it is cold, it is heavy. It is a different language. (Ibid)

Understanding and appreciating art through touch requires a different level of concentration and focus to using touch in a daily context. Importantly, blind people need far more time to handle objects than non-blind people need to see them and at least initially there needs to be guidance on what is being touched and how to touch it. It is not enough to simply hand objects over to be felt, or worse, to pass a single object swiftly around the room.

This lack of attention to how people touch is indicative of the degree to which sight structures museum education. Rather than touch being a skill and a means of understanding and enjoying art in its own right, it is effectively used as a substitute for sight. Handling sessions are often used as an opportunity for those with partial sight to *look* more closely while the discursive elements of touch tours tends to prioritise the

absent visual experience at the expense of non-visual elements such as texture, balance, weight and temperature. This is unsurprising given that art education neither encourages discussions about art's materiality rather than its appearance, nor does it have the vocabulary to cope with the non-visual. As well as teaching people the terminology to describe what they have seen, museums and galleries need to teach people how to touch and how to articulate that experience within a wider context of arts production.

While touch potentially provides a source of firsthand learning about artefacts and art objects it obviously doesn't help make two-dimensional works accessible. In these instances description is indispensable. Much depends upon the quality of the guide but in an ideal situation the guide can respond to the abilities and interests of the blind person, circumventing the generalisation of group sessions. For many respondents the possibility of having a guide permanently or semi-permanently available in museums and galleries was the best possible solution.

Overall, the blind people we interviewed wanted better access to artwork through touch, more integrated provision, education that was wider in its scope, more sophisticated classes, audio-guides they could use easily and greater availability of personal guides. Above all, however, they did not want to have to spend vast amount of time finding these resources or arguing their case. Although some museums will provide guides to give one-on-one tours, give access to particular art objects and so on, these facilities are almost never made public. The lack of clear publicity in appropriate formats but also the lack of transparency about who to contact makes it difficult for all but the most confident and persistent of people to get the access they want. Uninformed or untrained front of house staff, education officers and curators often made this process even more arduous than it was already.

The Supporters

Given these complaints it is interesting to see that a large proportion of our interviewees had nothing but good to say about museum and gallery provision. Why then, was their sense of gallery visiting so different from that of their more discontented peers? One explanation is that respondents' are anxious that any criticism will result in services being

withdrawn or, even less positively, that they are so unused to having any provision that they are grateful for what little they do receive.

Another interpretation is that the absence of criticism could be due to the participants' lack of critical perspective. All the highly satisfied respondents went to organised events and rarely visited the museum in a more informal capacity and the majority of these either went to the National Gallery 'Art Through Words' classes or to the V&A sessions. In both these institutions teaching concentrates on describing the art and situating it within an art historical context. These sessions work cumulatively rather than developmentally and despite repeated attendance participants do not move from a understanding of individual artworks to a more sophisticated view of art as a discursive entity that is inseparable from wider social, historical, political and economic contexts. It is unheard of for the tutors to raise questions such as what kinds of art practice, knowledge, experience and people museums include and exclude. The sessions do not, in short, encourage critical reflection. This, in turn, is going to have a knock-on effect on who comes. Anyone who feels less comfortable with the established values and accepted standards of these major institutions clearly does not attend the events there.

These explanations, are however problematic. The idea that these participants would only enjoy the events because they are anxious, have unquestioning investment in bourgeois art institutions or insufficient critical skills implies a kind of false consciousness. It suggests that the interview respondents are simply wrong and that if they knew more about access, rights or social art history then they would come to different conclusions. While there may be some truth in this it is, perhaps, more useful for gallery educators to understand what these events mean or represent to participants.

On the basis of our interviews people are not critical of the events because the events are less important than other aspects of the experience. For many of the respondents the classes are a *social* occasion. This could easily be understood negatively; educational events are organised primarily for people to learn about art and not to make new friends. Yet the social element of these events is more complicated than it might initially appear. At a fairly basic level these events provide an opportunity to people to meet up; one interview respondent who regularly attends events said:

We prefer mornings because then we can go and have a boozy lunch. If it's in the afternoon we have a chaste glass of wine and a fairly brisk lunch because we don't want to nod off in the middle of it. ... it's a social element but it's people I know. (MC, interview 10th February 2002)

The people she lunches with are old school friends, (this is someone who is past retirement age) so represent very established networks.³ She says

It's like going to see your gallery family.(Ibid)

Other participants bring people with them; their own social networks create and develop the audience base of the class. At the same time, almost all the respondents who place a high degree of emphasis on the social aspect of the events also stress that they are quite happy to come along when their friends can't make it:

It is an added attraction, but I wouldn't be deterred if there wasn't a social component to it, I would go for the art or whatever, the talk, the interesting things in the museum. (KB, interview 13th February 2002)

Because there is a high social component for some people doesn't mean that the art is irrelevant, they are, after all, choosing to meet at an art event and not in a café or at the theatre. Indeed, in some cases, participants' knowledge of and interest in social relationships becomes the key to understanding the artwork. Hearing an audio description of Jan Steen's work in the Rijksmuseum the respondent who enjoyed her boozy lunches says:

There were these houses where everything is very untidy... and the family were so like my family. ... I imagine actual people sitting at tables, eating off them. I don't see pictures, I can't see enough to see the pictures. I imagine real people, sitting around, pinching food off each other's plates and not washing up and things like that. (MC, interview 10th February 2002)

Here, her knowledge of how people relate to each other and her pleasure in it, which is one of the reasons why she goes to events, also becomes a key to the artwork and forms the basis of a sense of ownership. Referring to a painting of women by Canaletto she says:

You begin to know them which is possibly what a lot of people get from looking at paintings, you feel you belong to the family or they're friends. (MC, interview 10th February 2002)

The social element of these events is also important in other respects, particularly in relation to a sense of inclusion. For another interviewee going to gallery events is partly about maintaining a connection to her life before she became blind. She was briefly an art student and these sessions allow her to maintain an attachment to her previous interests. For her, it also allows for an engagement with sighted people which she feels is now missing:

It is nice to do the things we used to do and although we can't see them, still do them and be in the swing of things if you can possibly and mix with sighted people. (JW, interview, 10th February 2002.)

This respondent sees gallery sessions as a normalising process. In the non-blind world she is marginalised both socially and in relation to visual culture, so these events give her a sense of inclusion. These sentiments are reiterated by other respondents for whom the sessions provide a sense of continuity:

It's good to be in touch with what I used to know in the past and experience. And to be honest I've got past the time where I used to regret what I couldn't see, I just enjoy what I can see now. (MCU, interview, 25th February 2002)

In my case I have been visually impaired only for the last 6 years or so, so I have been in the habit of doing these things before. It hasn't opened up anything new for me, but I have been glad that I have been able to continue. (HB, interview, 23rd November 2001)

Likewise, a fourth interviewee respondent who has always been visually impaired stressed the importance of inclusion:

As far as I'm concerned they do an excellent job. ... From not being able to learn anything about art to suddenly being able to its just marvellous. I just can't explain to you. I mean at school I never did any art. It was considered you can't

see, you won't be able to. I think that just because you can't see properly doesn't mean you can't appreciate it.(MCR, interview, 28th January 2002.)

Whether respondents came from a generation that went to specialist schools and were told that art was not for them or whether they are people who lost their sight in later life and faced the possibility of losing lifelong interests, these events refute the assumption that art and, by implication, a wider experience of the world is not for them. One of the central reasons these organised sessions are important to some people is because they generate a sense of inclusion. This isn't a matter of people being grateful or anxious but concerns people's relation to the world and their corresponding self-identity.

This question of self-identity recurs in relation to transport. We have several interview transcripts where the artwork in these events goes almost unmentioned but we are given highly detailed descriptions of how someone got there. This reflects the degree of planning blind people encounter in travelling, but the negotiation of the city also represents an accomplishment in its own terms.

Having found our way there, it is quite a triumph that we get there even. A sense of achievement really in getting there.(JW, interview, 10th February 2002.)

Another regular participant talks about transport in acute detail and notes how daunting travelling can be before commenting that not being able to go to gallery events would mean:

The curtailing of my life ... because it would mean that I couldn't get out, because as long as I am able to, I'll go on going. ... I'd miss the pleasure of feeling a little more free shall we say, free to make choices, and that would be terrible.(KB, interview, 13th February 2002)

Again, for these participants it's not so much what happens at the event as being able to go at all.

One of the major issues at stake here is that of inclusion but it is important to note that the events inculcate this sense of inclusion partly by being exclusive. Although the organised sessions at the V&A and the National Gallery are ostensibly open to anyone who is blind, the lack of criticality and of progressive learning have the effect of excluding others,

specifically those people who do not subscribe to the institutional values promulgated in these sessions or who want something more challenging and developmental. The education officer at the V&A admits as much when she says:

I know that one the things that can be levelled at that particular programme ... is that ... we run the risk of being a bit too comfortable and close and maybe giving the impression that we would like to kick other people out – although we would all of us be pretty horrified if we thought that was so. I do recognise that we do have that problem if you have a regular group of people coming. Really and truly I think that whatever you achieve, you tend to find that there is always a down side. (V&A education officer, ‘My Right to Art’, Arts Through Touch seminar, Wandsworth Centre, Yukon Rd., London, 31st January 2001).

This sense of inclusion is precisely why the participants feel comfortable, but their pleasure is bought at some cost.

Moreover, the participants’ sense of inclusion is inextricable from their *actual* near-exclusion. As is clear from the dissenter’s opinions museums and galleries actively marginalise blind people. This exclusion is not an accidental oversight but is a structural correlate to the way in which learning and pleasure are conceived of as visual. Thus, the respondents’ feeling of inclusion hangs on the fact that they are otherwise marginalised from the collections and linked events. These events that are designed specifically for blind people are in educational terms no more than a supplement to a structure which is and which remains inequitable.

Rogue visitors and ideal practice

In an ideal world museums and galleries would have large print labelling, everything would also be available in audio format and Braille, there would be guides upon request, and greater access through touch. Introductory sessions would be available for blind people but they would also be able to attend increasingly sophisticated seminars, day events and courses because the lecturers would incorporate description into the teaching and back-up resources would be forthcoming. Exhibitions would include sound, touch,

smell, taste; indeed it would be ridiculous to claim that you understood something without knowing whether it was warm to the touch, how much it weighed, its texture, how you held it, how it articulated with the user's body or what noise it made. A subtle vocabulary dealing with non-visual aesthetics would be developed and the emphasis on an art object's appearance would be considered extremely limiting and one-dimensional.

This may be ideal but it is actually what some people are beginning to work for. There are institutions such as Tate Modern where information officers are being trained to take blind people on tours of the collection so that guides will always be available. At Wolverhampton Museum a dedicated touch gallery accessible to everyone is about to be opened. In other instances, exhibitions that are built around general participation can also serve to include blind people:

The whole thing was this is your space as much as mine. It's meant to be like a front room. The place was cluttered with lots of books and there was a keyboard in there and a computer keyboard and I played and I typed a bit. ... Someone asked me if I could play 'Like a Rolling Stone' - y'know Bob Dylan - so I did and everyone clapped me. It was really nice. That was the whole idea to encourage people to live out their dreams - (the artist) didn't want it to be something where you couldn't be involved. I said she should have some Braille in here so she asked me to get some and when I brought it in she asked me to have a day, give a session on creative Braille so I did. (BW, interview, 29th January 2002.)

This kind of openness to change, innovation and, in the instance cited above, to audience participation requires the will and education of curators and management teams as much as the ambition of education staff.

Even in those museums and galleries where seeing is conceived of as the primary source of knowledge and pleasure, some respondents found ways to visit against the grain of the institution. Space and ambience figured highly in this respect:

You could feel the sense of the rooms and the bigness and the objects there and it was a wonderful experience. (LC in group discussion, 'A Multi-sensory experience? Op.cit)

What works for me is the whole grandeur of the place. They just feel so awesome and so mighty. They're not average buildings or rooms. Even though I can't see them I know that for sure. I especially like the Great Court in the British Museum. They're just so unique and rich. (BW, interview, 29th January 2002.)

Yes the museum it can sometimes ... I mean like Tate Modern is very, very huge, and I think there is atmosphere there. ... Atmosphere, like when you go into a church, you get a totally - a serenity within that sort of atmosphere. Buildings do play a part in that sort of relating to your state of mind basically. They can have a negative effect and they can have a positive effect I think, how you sort of react to the building you are in. (DR, interview, 19th April, 2002)

Other visitors took a more illicit option:

My first reaction (is to) reach out and feel what was being described to me ... (From the) scowls and frowns that were coming from the people standing around it was obvious that I wasn't able to touch, but again I did anyway. And that's kind of what line I employ, well to hell with it really. I've made all this effort and it really does feel sometimes, you know, I've made all the effort to get to the place, organise a friend to support who can read, in case the access is not going to be sufficient for me ... Then I cannot bear that extra bar to access the installation piece, I need to, I just do anyway. (M in group discussion 'My Right to Art', op.cit.)

Although museums and galleries are structured around sight, their collections and materiality can also be understood in different ways and indeed are. Until this is built into education, exhibition and gallery design, however, it will remain against the grain and the potential for people to develop their interests will remain minimal. Tokenistic drop-in provision or occasional educational events do not qualify as making museums accessible. What, as museum and gallery staff we need to do, is to recognise the ways in which multisensory experience can be supported and incorporated into daily practice. Only by making non-visual learning routine will blind people cease to be defined primarily in terms of their blindness and be able to participate in ways that are satisfying to them as diverse individuals.

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² On the use of terms here: from the mid 1970s onwards, terms such as ‘handicapped’ or ‘the blind’ were replaced by ‘people with disabilities’, ‘people with visual impairments’, thus emphasising that disability was a element of subjectivity rather than its determining factor. More recently activist groups have begun to refer to ‘disabled people’ and ‘blind people’ thereby indicating their presence as a constituency group who are highlighting their specific needs. As only a minority of people who are legally blind have no vision so the term ‘visual impairment’ is more representative of majority experience. It does, however, imply a norm of full, non-impaired sight, rather than blindness or partial sight being a different experience of the world which is valid in its own right. Given this implication and the emphasis here on how blind people are constructed by the museum I refer to ‘blind people’.

³ Noticeably this is gendered. Women come and meet their friends at the event. Men come with their wives and it’s something they do as a couple.