

Dialogue in Silence

Moving beyond Speech

THE CONCEPT

»Dialogue in Silence« Exhibitions invite visitors to a completely soundless world. In small groups, they are led through the totally soundproof exhibition venue by deaf or hearing impaired guides. The silence helps visitors to reconsider the way they communicate, because inside the exhibition, language needs to be visualized in order to be comprehensible.

Since sign language is not very widely used among hearing people, communication inside the exhibition will be non-verbal, but intelligible to all. The various installations and settings inside the venue focus on different aspects of non-verbal communication like facial expression, gestures and body language. In the last room of the exhibition, visitors will find themselves in a cafe, where the newly acquired skills can be applied at the counter and enhanced through multi-media based learning programmes.

»Dialogue in Silence« Workshops show participants how to hear and listen in silence. The focus is less on how we express ourselves but on how others perceive what we communicate to them. The workshops foster openness, empathy and power of concentration. One of the outcomes is, that participants feel empowered to ask for feedback, question assumptions and verify that the messages communicated were understood as intended. As the workshop comes to an end, participants take off their headsets and discuss how the techniques learned foster personal growth and business performance.

The »Dialogue in Silence« concept reverses roles by tearing hearing people out of their social routines and familiar reception and judgement patterns. They discover a repertoire of non-verbal expression that enables them to communicate creatively through mimic, gesture and body language. The deaf and hearing impaired guides and trainers, who by virtue of their experience and their expertise in sign language are experts in non-verbal communication, change the mindset of visitors and thus become ambassadors of a soundless world which is no way poorer – but different.

»Dialogue in Silence« is not an installation simulating deafness. On the contrary: It serves as a platform for encounters between hearing and non-hearing people advancing the overcoming of barriers between »us« and »them« and re-defining »disability« as »ability« and »otherness« as »likeness«.

THE BACKGROUND

Social exclusion, unequal educational and professional opportunities, as well as barriers posed by inadequate infrastructure and insufficient access to public transportation are major challenges differently abled people have to face in their daily lives. Worldwide, 610 million people are registered as »disabled« – the high rate of unregistered cases left unmentioned. Two thirds of the registered »disabled« live in developing countries. Basically, prejudices and predetermined patterns are responsible for this situation.

The interaction between »able-bodied« and differently able people is often hindered by stereotypes, fear, or simple avoidance. The levels of support and access to education, information, jobs, etc. vary from country to country, but are generally very low. Even in industrialized countries like Germany, only about 15% of the »disabled« population have a job.

The prevailing opinion that »disability« is »less worth than normal« leads to discrimination and marginalization of differently abled people around the globe. The interaction with differently abled and other marginalized people is still dominated by pity and welfare, and is focused mainly on the deficits that "disability" involves. Most people fail to acknowledge the hidden potential in a »handicap« as well as the fact that most differently abled people suffer much more from the ignorance, information deficit, and insecurity of the »able-bodied« than from the »disability« itself.

In order to stop these grievances and to give equal rights to the disadvantaged, Andreas Heinecke and Orna Cohen follow the conclusion of Martin Buber that: »The only way of learning is by encounter.« (I and Thou, Practicing Living Dialogue). Against the background of »disabilities« and their social consequences, this means that solutions have to be found for the »disabled« and »able-bodied« to interact. There is a great need for a forum to facilitate open exchange between in order to reduce prejudices, clear out clichés and stereotypes as well as simple avoidance. Out of this tension, »Dialogue in Silence« was born.

THE TESTIMONIALS

- > »An important moment of sharing with one another: tender, intense and joyful...«
- > »I didn't know my hands could be so talkative...«
- > »It is the discovery of the day! My eyes spoke, it's true!«
- > »What a pleasure to talk differently.«
- > »Nothing is the same any more.«
- > »This show has changed my life... It opens the doors to a completely new world!«
- > »I learned something completely new that seemed totally impossible one hour ago...«
- > »I discovered sign language at 80 years of age. I will use the winter to really learn this language.«
- > »It fosters the desire to meet deaf people and to become friends with them.«
- > »It is a challenge to succeed, to hold my tongue, not to speak, to overcome my shyness and the uncomfortable feeling while talking with body and face.«

THE FOUNDERS

»Dialogue in Silence« was created by Dr. Andreas Heinecke and Orna Cohen. Dr. Heinecke is also the mastermind behind »Dialogue in the Dark«, which he conceived more than two decades ago. He has won various social entrepreneurship awards, such as the »Stevie Wonder Vision Award« (SAP), »German Entrepreneurship Award« (Harvard Business School Entrepreneurship Club) and the »Global Award for the best Innovative and out of Comfort Zone Event« (Young Presidents' Organization).

He was selected as the first Ashoka Fellow in Western Europe in 2005, became Outstanding Global Social Entrepreneur of the Schwab Foundation in 2007 and is a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Social Entrepreneurship. Furthermore, Dr. Heinecke is the CEO and Founder of Dialogue Social Enterprise (www.dialogue-se.com).

Orna Cohen is partner and COO of Dialogue Social Enterprise. She is curator and creator of a number of well known exhibitions like the "Cité des Enfants" in the »Cité de la science et de l'industrie« in Paris. After benefiting from a broad and varied educational palette, Orna went on to exhibition design and implemented an interactive exhibition which make visitors immerse into the exhibition experience and help enhance their understanding of the world that surrounds them. In 2004, Orna was awarded Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government (www.orna-co.com).

For further information please refer to www.dialogue-in-silence.com.

DIALOGUE IN SILENCE WORLDWIDE

To date, more than 160.000 people have visited *Dialogue in Silence* exhibitions and workshops (*) in 8 countries and 9 cities.

2010

01 – 12	Israel Children's Museum, Holon	Israel
10 - 12	Museum for Communication, Frankfurt	Germany

2009

01 – 02	Papalote -Children's Museum of Mexico, Mexico City	Mexico
01 – 12	Israel Children's Museum, Holon	Israel
03 - 10	DASA, Dortmund	Germany

2008

01	World Economic Forum - Annual Meeting 2008, Davos	Switzerland
01 – 03	Heureka-The Finnish Science Centre, Vantaa	Finland
01 – 03	Môle theatre, Geneva	Switzerland
01 – 12	Provianthaus, Rendsburg	Germany
01 – 12	Israel Children's Museum, Holon	Israel
09 -12	Papalote-Children's Museum of Mexico, Mexico City	Mexico
10	Young Presidents' Organisation, London	United Kingdom
11	Hindustan Times Leadership Summit, New Delhi	India

2007

01 - 12	Provianthaus, Rendsburg	Germany
10 - 12	Môle theatre, Geneva	Switzerland
07 – 12	Israel Children's Museum, Holon	Israel
11 - 12	Heureka-The Finnish Science Centre, Vantaa	Finland

2004

01 – 04	Cité des Sciences et l'Industrie, Paris	France
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2003

12	Cité des Sciences et l'Industrie, Paris	France
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1998

10	Saalbau, Frankfurt	Germany
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2003-2009

Country	City	Visitors / Participants	Deaf Employees	Days of Exhibition/workshop
France				