

BEYOND SEEING

Art connects blind people and sighted people

Admont Abbey – Library & Museum

25 March to 8 July 2012

Curator: Michael Braunsteiner

The curatorial emphasis on contemporary art is increasingly focusing on the artistic production of the Abbey's own MADE FOR ADMONT series. The BEYOND SEEING art works specifically designed for visually impaired and blind people, and that sighted people can experience with multiple senses, are a special feature of this ongoing collection programme. The first of this kind were commissioned in 2002. Admont Abbey Museum is presenting a retrospective show of ten years of production of the works from this unique collection of art works BEYOND SEEING for the first time in 2012.

A common feature of all of these BEYOND SEEING art works is that the focus is not on perceiving them with the eyes. They can all be experienced in different ways by blind people and blindfolded sighted people. Of course, they always have a form – they are more or less artistically shaped, designed according to their particular purpose. Hence, these objects, installations or multimedia works are equally visible. They have a very special, often astonishing aesthetic.

While galleries and museums traditionally say "Do not touch!", it's very different with these art works. Visitors to this exhibition can experience art differently – usually by means of interaction. Depending on the particular exhibits, they can be touched, heard, smelt, and possibly even tasted. They are accessible without barriers for blind people. Sighted people, in turn, can access art in unexpected, playful, very different, and completely new ways. Looking beneath the surface reveals the fundamental questions of life. Sighted people can get a "picture" of what the world of blind people "looks" like. On special request, some of these art works even offer the opportunity for blind people to convey their modes of perception to sighted people, for example in the "Invisible Garden".

The show also gives people the opportunity to overcome inhibitions and prejudices and access contemporary art without any barriers. Art is not only there to be seen, it can also be "grasped" with the hands and experienced with all one's senses, which also makes it easier to "grasp" it with the mind. By engaging with this art, the blindfolded eyes of the sighted visitor will begin to see areas to which many of us are usually blind. An exciting process of ART SHARING unfolds between blind people and sighted people that widens the horizons of both.