

COMMUNICATING THE MUSEUM 20

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DREAMS OF RESTING SPACES

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Raquel has an invisible condition – chronic pain – which requires her to lie down very often. This means she sees things differently to many of us, always on the look out for exquisite lie-down spots, mapping her world around them. When a guard came across Raquel horizontal in a theatre space, she was labelled a “security alert” and relocated – isolated – to a medical bay. She invites arts institutions to reimagine their spaces more fluidly to better welcome their diverse audiences.

Disabilities means you map cities differently – you need to build up the safe ways to navigate the world. How can those without disabilities learn to cater to needs they don’t necessarily know or recognise?

- Explore the different possible perspectives. What spaces can be reimaged to be more fluid, more welcoming to the people using your building? This might be as simple as a bean bag or couch.
- Make safe spaces, and extend the invitation to audiences to use them to rest, recharge and really be present. Lead by example! Show people how they can use the space.
- Designate a quiet space in your building. Decompression is important, especially in highly sensory spaces such as museums.
- Test a ‘fluid’ event or performance in your next season. Announce, make clear, that a change in etiquette is in place. Eg, “back row rules” (if a bit more naughtiness is expected, why not embrace it? A sense of playfulness is a great way to normalise behaviours) or “Time Out Tuesdays” specific time dedicated to those who want the break.
- Consider how and when you offer audiences the chance to lie down to experience art.
- Need to convince a board? Inviting people to lie down increases stay times in the museum space and allows for longer connections with the works in proximity.
- People with impairments *want* culture in their life, but they may already feel excluded. Go looking for them – communicate your inclusive offers through channels disabled people use.

Examples

- Max Richter’s *Sleep*
- Pippilotti Rist’s *gnade-donau-gnade*

Some provocations

- Try it yourself. Go home and spend ten rest minutes with an artwork – see what happens.
- Join the Resting Spaces Network to learn and share.
- Remember that inclusion is not a project for the faint hearted. You probably won’t get it right the first time – know that welcoming is an ongoing process that will require attention and development.