

Working With Accessibility in Latvian Contemporary Art: Research, Barriers, and Implementation From a Curator's and Production Manager's Perspective

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Abstract : In 2010 Latvia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which states that the state will recognize the importance of accessibility to the physical, social, and cultural environment. Nevertheless, accessibility of art and culture in Latvia has become a focal point only since 2020. A study on the impact of cultural consumption and participation done by the Latvian Academy of Culture and the research center "SKDS" results show that art and cultural institutions lack knowledge and understanding of needs and required accessibility measures for people with disabilities to participate in cultural and art events. At the same time, even if art institutions want to create accessible events for people with diverse bodies and minds, many barriers exist, such as budget, lack of time, and lack of knowledge. Even though disability is still largely invisible in the public space, due to recent public campaigns and awareness of the need for accessibility, the media and society are starting to speak about disability as a social issue, not a medical one. Thus, this paper focuses on the first-hand experience of implementing different Western accessibility guidelines and working with communities as a production manager for the multidisciplinary exhibition project "Invisible Lives" in Riga and curator of the education program of Riga Photography Biennial's 2022 Central Event - Exhibition "Screen Age III: Still Life". Analyzing two events from the Disability studies perspective, this paper focuses on working with existing knowledge and budget to achieve accessibility.

Keywords : accessibility, contemporary art, curatorial practices, disability studies

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