

CENTRE FOR SENSORY STUDIES

TALKING SENSE LECTURE SERIES



Into the Museum with Artificial Intelligence: An Autoethnographic Exploration of a Blind Visitor's Experience

Siegfried Saerberg

28 July 2026
3:00-4:30 PM Eastern
H-1120 Hall Building
Concordia University

Drawing on an autoethnographic approach, this presentation examines how AI-assisted technologies, particularly Be My Eyes, are reshaping blind visitors' experiences of museums. Combining personal experimentation with interviews and conversations with blind users, it explores how AI-generated image descriptions become integrated into everyday sensory practices and museum navigation. The presentation critically assesses both the potential and the limitations of AI as a tool for cultural accessibility. It addresses issues such as cognitive fatigue, the translation of visual information into language, AI hallucinations, and the challenges of creating meaningful aesthetic experiences through verbal mediation alone. Situating museum visits within broader practices of urban navigation, it contrasts the multisensory richness of the city with the sensory constraints of museum environments. The talk argues that AI can reduce barriers to access while simultaneously revealing the need for more inclusive, multisensory approaches to exhibition design and interpretation.

Siegfried Saerberg was Professor for Disability Studies at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences for Social Work and Diaconia (Rauhes Haus) in Hamburg from 2020 to 2025. His research centers on the ethnography of blindness, integrating sensory, social, and technological perspectives. A second major area of interest is Disability Arts. Before joining academia, he worked as an artist and curator in the field of culture and inclusion and served, among other positions, as an advisor to the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn. His artistic practice spans literature and sound art. In addition to his scholarly work, he has curated several exhibitions, including Art Blind (Cologne, 2013). He is currently a Senior Fellow in the DFG-funded Research Unit Access to Cultural Assets in Digital Transformation at the University of Münster. He is a member of the Executive Board of the German Society for Disability Studies and of the association „Blindness and the Arts“.