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Blind Insight
Claudia Pfeil
2010
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Date: 02/08/10
This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my aunt Uti-Ruth Hampel (1932-1988).

Special thanks to Mara Kelland (a blind student at Auckland University) who became a friend during the project and who inspired me to achieve this. Markus (my guide at Dialogue in the Dark) and David Piper (former staff member at NZRF) for sharing their knowledge and for their encouragement. Thanks to the BSVS (Blinden- und-Sehbehinderten-Verband Sachsen e.V., Germany), staff members of Dialogue in the Dark (Frankfurt/Main) and the RNZFB (The Royal New Zealand Foundation of the Blind).

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Abstract

The loss of sight is usually associated with the loss of the visual outer world. Traditionally, total blindness has been defined by sighted people in a negative way. The stereotypical belief is that the totally blind inhabit a dark world in which mental images of the outer world no longer exist. However, gaining insight into an experience of blindness may help the sighted to understand more accurately what Michael Monbeck (1973) terms 'the true meaning of blindness'. (Monbeck, 1973, p. 157)

*Blind Insight* provides an insight into what is named ‘imagined blind seeing’ by exploring the systematic processes of sensing, selecting and perceiving.

Through tracing and mapping two auditory experiences photographically, the resulting work, *Blind Insight*, seeks to give a visual voice to moments of perception and imagined images as described by the blind author and scholar John Hull who describes sound as equating with light: “This is my way of turning on the light. Sound is the equation to light. Rain has turned the light on.” (Hull, 2001, p. 10)

Abstract black and white photography has been employed to convey a sensory experience and photo collage to make visible the dimensional complexity of imagined blind seeing.

The design work argues for a fresh insight into the sensory and imagined world of the blind. By fostering a dialogue between the blind and the sighted, the research project aims at celebrating the many rich and diverse ways the senses, and in particular the sense of sound, are used in experiencing the phenomena of the physical world.
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