Extra–visual perception of works of art in the context of the audio description of the Neoplastic Room at the Museum of Art in Łódź

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I was reading a picture, according to its own rules, treating its elements literally (signs as words?), and the picture itself I was nitpicking about "words" to see what it wants to say. I put myself in a place of "you" to whom the text was always addressed, although in this case it was "you" that was watching. I was reading a story that took place in the act of watching; yet it was still reading though. I want to talk here about reading, reading pictures, reading art.

Mieke Bal[1]

[1] **M. Bal**, *Czytanie sztuki?*, "Teksty Drugie" 2012, no. 1/2, p. 41.

[2] See **A. Chmiel, I. Mazur**, *Audiodeskrypcja*, Poznań 2014; **A. Jankowska, A. Szarkowska,** *Strategie opisu kulturemów w audiodeskrypcji*, "Między Oryginałem a Przekładem" vol. 31 (2016); **I. Künstler, U. Butkiewicz, R. Więckowski**, *Audiodeskrypcja – zasady tworzenia*, http://kulturabezbarier.org/container/Publikacja/Audiodeskrypcja%20–%20zasady%20tworzenia.pdf (access date: 21 II 2018).

[3] **A. Pawłowska, J. Sowińska–Heim**, *Audiodeskrypcja dzieł sztuki. Metody, problemy, przykłady*, Łódź 2016, p. 9.

[4] See **R. Jakobson**, *On linguistic aspects of translation*, [in:] *On Translation*, ed. **R. A. Brower**, Cambridge 1959.

[5] **J. Díaz Cintas**, *Traducción audiovisual y accesibilidad*, [in:] *Traducción y accesibilidad. Subtitulación para sordos y audiodescripción para ciegos: nuevas modalidades de traducción audiovisual*, ed. **C. Jiménez Hurtado**, Frankfurt am Main 2007.

Audio description (AD) is a verbal description of images and visual content intended for people with sight dysfunctions, i.e. blind, partially sighted and visually impaired people. It is mainly used in film, television programs, theatre, museums, artistic and sports performances and on websites[2]. AD forms a part of many disciplines, including history of art and translation studies. "Audio description of works of art is an important field of the applied museum practice, which tries to adapt the means of expression to the perception capabilities of respondents by the trial and error method"[3]. Whereas, as an inter-semiotic translation[4], i.e. one that transforms a sign from one sign system to a form obtained with the help of another system of signs[5], audio description is in the sphere of interest of audiovisual translators.

The paper aims to present the audio description project carried out in 2013–2014 in the Museum of Arts in Łódź by third year students of art history at the University of Łódź, under the scientific guidance of Aneta Pawłowska, in the frame of the course *Polish Art of the Interwar Period*. The descriptions concerned the appearance of Władysław Strzemiński's Neoplastic Room and its selected paintings from the interwar period: *Counter-Composition* by Theo van Doesburg (1925),

Unistic Composition 11 by Strzemiński (1932), *Composition by Three Parallels* by Georges Vantongerloo (1921) and *Abstract Painting II* by Stażewski (1928–1929)[6]. The project was meant to make unique avant-garde art accessible to people with visual impairments and sensitize students to the problems of adjusting museum spaces and exhibitions to the specific needs of people with disabilities. The concept of art available to a wide audience fits perfectly into the basic activity of the institution, which is why the project was met with the friendly support of the Museum of Art's personnel.

Currently, the Museum's activity focuses on examining and presenting in various contexts the works of its XX and XXI century art collection, as well as promoting progressive artistic phenomena and strengthening the role of art as an element of social life, among others through educational activities. The program in question corresponds with the avant-garde project developed at the turn of the 1920s and 1930s by Strzemiński, Katarzyna Kobro and Henryk Stażewski[7] and with the idea of "a museum as a critical instrument" formulated by Ryszard Stanisławski (the director of the Museum in 1966–1992)[8]. These concepts find their further development in the assumption that the museum has the potential to redefine and update the concepts of culture and art and to create social relations with its own participation. Through its exhibition, scientific, educational and publishing programs, the Museum seeks to implement the idea of art as a way of learning, feeling and understanding reality that was part of the avant-garde dream of a creative life accessible to everyone. The idea of making available and adapting avant-garde collections to the perception of people with sight dysfunctions seems to fit perfectly into the basic activity of the institution.

The project was initially to consist of four parts: description, soundtrack, digitalization and internationalization (by translating the descriptions and disseminating them on the Internet). The classes were held as part of a 30-hour academic course carried out at the Faculty of History of Art of the University of Łódź for students of the third year of undergraduate studies. During the first part of the project, selected paintings from the Neoplastic Room were described in an accessible way, adapted to the perception of blind people and in accordance with the audio description standards of the Fundacja Audiodeskrypcja (Audiodescription Foundation). The most important problem that students had to face was finding an adequate form of description of works of abstract art. It had to meet a number of requirements set by associations and civic organizations involved in providing visual culture to visually impaired people. Let us mention that the basic principles of making culture and art accessible to visually disabled people were developed by two leading institutions involved in the creation of audio description in Poland: the Fundacja Kultury bez Barier (The Foundation of the Culture without Barriers) from Warsaw and the Fundacja Audiodeskrypcja from Białystok.

[6] For more extensive treatment of Neoplastic Room – see: **J. Ładnowska**, *Sala Neoplastyczna – z dziejów kolekcji sztuki nowoczesnej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, [in:] *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Monografia*, Łódź 2015, ed. **A. Jach** [*et al.*], vol. 1.

[7] For more information – see: **J. Ojrzyński**, *Historia Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, [in:] *Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi. Historia i wystawy*, kons. U. Czartoryska, Łódź 1998, p. 9; **Z. Karnicka**, *Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej grupy "a.r." a Muzea Kultury Artystycznej*, "Pinakoteka" 2005, no. 20/21; **D. Jurkiewicz–Eckert**, *Międzynarodowa Kolekcja Sztuki Nowoczesnej "a.r." Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi i jej znaczenie dla dziedzictwa kulturowego Europy*, "Studia Europejskie" 2006, no. 4.

[8] **A. Szymczyk**, **A. Przywara**, *Muzeum to również ludzie*, rozmowa z R. Stanisławskim, http://archiwum–obieg.u–jazdowski.pl/rozmowy/1419 (access date: 21 II 2018).

[9] **I. Künstler, U. Butkiewicz, R. Więckowski**, *op. cit.*

[10] *Ibidem.*

[11] *Wywiad z Barbarą Szymańską, Wiceprezes Zarządu Fundacji Audiodeskrypcja*, http://www.audiodeskrypcja.org.pl/faq–definicje–pytania–i–odpowiedzi/pytania–i–odpowiedzi/103–wywiad–z–barbara–szymanska–wiceprezes–zarzadu–fundacji–audiodeskrypcja.html (access date: 14 XII 2017).

[12] **A. Szarkowska**, *Audiodeskrypcja oczami niewidomych – wywiad z Tomaszem Strzymińskim*, "Przekładaniec" no. 20 (2009), p. 128.

[13] **E. Panofsky**, *Studia z historii sztuki*, ed. J. Białostocki, Warszawa 1971.

According to the principle of creating audio description:

> In the case of works of art, architectural monuments, museum exhibitions and exhibits, nature trails, etc. – an audiodescriptor should not only carefully watch an object of a description, but also obtain substantive information (a theory, history, artistic technique, concept of an artist or a curator of an exhibition, interpretations of the work, anecdotes etc.)[9].

Furthermore, the description should only refer to what can be seen and answer the questions: who, what, how, where, when. At the same time, it should not give simple answers to the question: what for, unless an explanation is necessary to avoid ambiguity or misunderstanding. However, in justified cases, it is possible to "give up a simple description of the image in favour of a translation/approximation of a culture code, symbol, and formal procedure used in a work and expressed a visual content"[10]. A brief general description – containing everything that is most important in a given work/image etc. – should then be detailed, ranked according to the importance of the information with a linear continuity of the description. According to a consultant and the creator of the script on the rules for the creation of audio description – Barbara Szymańska: "A correctly created audio description ceases to be only audible and becomes identical with a depicted image"[11]. Tomasz Strzymiński, the founder of the Fundacja Audiodeskrypcja, emphasizes:

> It is a mistake to confuse the richness of language with an excess of words by means of which audio description is created. The audio description only describes the key visual elements necessary to understand an image[12].

The task faced by a group of students describing the Neoplastic Room and the paintings from the art collection of the group "a.r." was more difficult than that of descriptors dealing with objective art due to the abstract character of the works, because the students, while presenting a work, could not refer to a story described in it.

Various methods used by art historians during a description, formal analysis and interpretation of works of art most often refer to the iconological method of Erwin Panofsky or semiotics (especially in the interpretation of Roland Barthes). According to Panofsky's iconological method[13] an image is a set of signs with a defined meaning, therefore its content interpretation must be a semantic one. Three stages could be distinguished in this interpretation. The first stage is a pre-iconographic description (pseudo-formal analysis), which is a semantic, objective and expressive interpretation by interpreting the arrangement of presenting elements, getting to know presented objects, their systems and their expressive elements. It is done by identifying a composition of lines, colour and shaped blocks and by identifying their mutual relations as events. The subject of the

interpretation is an original or natural, objective and expressive content belonging to the world of artistic motifs. The second stage is an iconographic analysis including a secondary or contractual content belonging to the world of images, stories and allegories. It concerns a conventional meaning of objects and facts presented, it is a combination of artistic motifs and compositions with themes or concepts. The third stage is an iconological interpretation, that is, the interpretation of all symbolic elements, i.e. reading an image as a historical phenomenon, document, symptom; the object of interpretation is its internal meaning or content that belongs the world of "symbolic" values.

In interpretations based on formalism applied to works of contemporary art such as abstraction – and that is the character of the Neoplastic Room and the images and sculptures which it contains – it is necessary to refer to methods from the field of formalism, especially the methodology of Clement Greenberg who was mainly interested in Abstract Expressionism. He interpreted the form as that quality by which a painting or sculpture refers to its medium and to its own conditions of emergence. It was not about seeing what is in a work, or what it "says" – a penetrating recipient endowed with taste should see the very flatness of the work or a way in which it treats paint as a paint. Greenberg believed that the only theme of art is art itself, forms and act of creation, and that contemporary art is focused "only on its own existence"[14].

Significant changes in the way of interpreting works of art appeared in the late 1960s with the development of the so-called "new" or "radical" history of art – New Art History (NAH). Researchers operating during dynamic intellectual and social transformations and associated with NAH underlined the role of the viewer and social context in shaping a work of art, which is not only simple information conveyed to the recipient by the artist, but a complex text that can be read (or not read) in many different ways[15]. In particular, NAH supporters criticized the limited and purely descriptive analysis of works of art practised by Panofsky's followers. Timothy James Clark called them "theme chasers", and Svetlana Alpers questioned the assumption that visual symbols must necessarily possess or express a certain meaning[16]. According to Mieke Bal, a simple, enumerative description of an image "silences a work, takes its voice away"[17]. And a proper "reading" of an image is an act of receiving, assigning meaning to it.

> In the act of reading, the viewer uses a "dictionary", a set of elements considered as signs, combined in a syntactic structure in a semiotic sense: this mutual relationship between signs creates a coherent meaning, which is more than the sum of meanings of individual elements. You can learn the dictionary and the syntax. They guarantee everyone the right to read, the access to culture[18].

[14] **C. Greenberg**, *Obrona modernizmu. Wybór esejów*, transl. G. Dziamski, M. Śpik–Dziamska, ed. **G. Dziamski**, Kraków 2006, p. 48.

[15] See **J. Harris**, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction*, London 2001, pp. 6–8, 178–182; **M. Bryl**, *Suwerenność dyscypliny. Polemiczna historia historii sztuki od 1970 roku*, Poznań 2008, p. 85 and *passim*.

[16] **S. Alpers**, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*, Chicago 1983, pp. XVIII–XX.

[17] **M. Bal**, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[18] *Ibidem*, p. 49.

[19] **H. Belting**, *Antropologia obrazu. Szkice do nauki o obrazie*, transl. M. Bryl, Kraków 2007, p. 13.

[20] **M. Imdahl**, *Cézanne – Braque – Picasso. Zum Verhältnis zwischen Bildautonomie und Gegenstandssehen*, [in:] *idem*, *Reflexion – Theorie – Methode*, Hrsg., eingeleit. **G. Boehm**, Frankfurt am Main 1996, p. 328 and *passim*.

[21] See **G. Boehm**, *O obrazach i widzeniu. Antologia tekstów*, ed. **D. Kołacka**, transl. M. Łukasiewicz, A. Pieczyńska–Sulik, Kraków 2014, pp. 229–230.

Hans Belting in his composite study entitled *An Anthropology of Images* also emphasizes the lack of codified methods, according to which one should speak about images that "occupy the body" of human "exposed to images they created themselves, even when they constantly repeats attempts to control them"[19].

In the light of the above-mentioned interpretative methods in the field of visual arts, it seems that the simplified descriptions postulated by blind people's milieus, which works well during the screening of films and television programs, do not reflect the complexity of the existence of works of art. Often, a basic description, so-called pre-iconographic (postulated by audio descriptors), only touches the true content of a work of art. It is necessary to shift from the seeing that recognizes to "the seeing that sees" in order to update the multiple, silent connections between particular data presented in the image[20].

According to this concept, images always contain more potential relationships between elements than are needed to read their bare "content". The complexity of possible contexts, dominating between the various data distinguishable in the image, is somewhat infinite, i.e. it cannot be included in a concept or expressed in language in a strict sense. A viewer is faced with an image as an event, because an offer of possible eye conjunctions in the image can only be met by a vision that frees itself from the rigid function of concluding and encompassing the whole and can perceive the dynamics of the image[21].

To "see" an image means to overcome the abstracting work of the eye and the primacy of what is recognizable and definitive in order to restore the dynamics of sensual energy to rights. What in the image "speaks" to a recipient has very much to do with the anonymous, non-verbal dimension imperfectly defined by terms such as "mood", "style", "originality", etc. Therefore it would be inappropriate to contrast seeing as recognizing to seeing as an operation, e.g. similarly to reflective notions of content and form. For an eve genesis of the image with the complexity of its individual elements is in the same way related to the way of presentation as well as to the presentation itself, provided that the perception is both simultaneous and successive, which corresponds to the processual identity of the image.

It is worth to add that as part of the implementation of this particular project, a unique opportunity to confront various styles of image description creation in different environments of people dealing with this issue (e.g. Białystok, Warsaw, Katowice) has appeared. Besides the general guidelines for audio descriptors, additional indications dedicated to students of history of art in University of Łódź related to the specificity of audio description have also emerged. During the workshop for the entire group of students at the Museum of Arts in Łódź, with the participation of Katarzyna Mądrzycka-Adamczyk, an artist and pedagogue with the permission to work with the public

with communication challenges, an overarching directive of succinct formulations was formed. It recommended to create short sentence equivalents written individually in separate lines to control better the length of the text and to slow down its final reading. In addition, as a result of discussions with Mądrzycka-Adamczyk, it was established that a detailed description should not exceed 10–15 sentences. The next debate during the workshop classes for the students with an animator of projects for visually impaired people at the National Museum in Warsaw, Anna Knapek brought further elements clarifying the rules for the description of works of art, such as stating that the whole description of a work should last between one and a half and two minutes. In addition, Barbara Szymańska from the Fundacja Audiodeskrypcja provided a consultation on the adjustment of the description to the needs of visually impaired people.

The students of art history, armed with the above-mentioned instructions, began, in two four-person teams, to carry out audio description during classes at the museum gallery. The element imposed by the instructor was the description of the Neoplastic Room. The remaining works were selected by the students themselves during conversations with the museum's curators and in accordance with their own preferences. Furthermore, as part of the project, the students took classes in the Łódź District of the Polish Union of the Blind (PZN), where they presented the basic assumptions of the project. Subsequently, they conducted in the PZN individual unstructured interviews on the expectations of people with limited sight in relation to the presentation of modern art, so that their descriptions would correspond to the perceptive capabilities of recipients (e.g. determining the knowledge of painting techniques among people with sight dysfunctions such as: collage, lithography, oil painting, the question of colour descriptions for people who have always been blind, etc.)[22].

A significant difficulty in the students' descriptions was the above-mentioned fact that all works in the exhibited museum collection belong to abstract art, therefore it was necessary to develop a description procedure that does not refer to the real world, because the work itself is devoid of any illustrative features, and the artist does not try to imitate nature. The elimination of interpretative elements and subjective comparisons (e.g. to the clouds or scattered yarn in the case of Strzemiński's paintings from the 1940s)[23], in accordance with the audio descriptors' instructions, made the students' descriptions saturated with mathematical references to numerical relations tedious for people with sight dysfunction[24]. Furthermore, it turned out that the work is carried out slower than in the case of the preparation of a traditional description of a work of art for a catalogue or inventory card. According to the already-mentioned Barbara Szymańska – creating a proper description requires:

[22] During the interviews and answering to the questions, it turned out that the issue of colours is of fundamental importance and they must be taken into account because even persons who are blind from birth are instructed in pre–school education about their significance. Also the concepts of oil technique, graphics were known, but without the division into specifying graphic techniques, such as lithography, woodcut. The concept of collage was known to 1 person from the 11–person group of respondents. Materials from the meeting can be found in the Archives of the Department of Art History, University of Łódź.

[23] For more information – see: **E. Grabska**, **H. Morawska**, *Artyści o sztuce. Od van Gogha do Picassa*, wyd. 3, Warszawa 1977, p. 537.

[24] Information obtained during the evaluation of descriptions by blind persons.

[25] *Wywiad z Barbarą Szymańską...*

[26] *Audiodeskrypcja Sali Neoplastycznej w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*, mps, Katedra Historii Sztuki, Łódź 2014, p. 5.

[27] *Ibidem.*

[28] *Ibidem.*

often to re-evaluate the current way of looking and seeing. As the training shows, often the same image can be described by 20 people in twenty different ways. We teach, therefore, describing the actual visual content that creates the image seen. We teach the skills of proper selection of relevant contents, the description of which is necessary to make the picture understandable and constituting one ordered whole. After the workshop, many people say that thanks to them they learned to look and notice more than they have seen so far[25].

In practice of the work carried out by the students it turned out that to create a single description took more than six hours of work of a four-person team and a further two hours of work of that team with a blind consultant.

In the finalization of the project, consisting in reading aloud the descriptions by the students in the exhibition room at the Museum of Art in Łódź, blind persons participated and commented on the descriptions. Some elements of the descriptions (despite previous consultations with professional audio descriptors) were considered by the blind persons as inaccurate, e.g. the description of the work entitled *Composition of Three Parallels* by Vantongerloo was too strongly related to purely mathematical references:

> An upper white vertical rectangle reaches half the height of the entire image.
> The green one reaches ¼ of the height of the square and the rectangle.
> In the lower right corner a white figure similar to a square.
> Separated from a violet one, identical in shape, by a green rectangle.
> Its left edge marks half of the central square.
> In the bottom left corner a white rectangle that reaches more than half of the entire painting[26].

Likewise, the description of the interior of the Neoplastic Room did not find their recognition. To reflect the mutual colour relations of its painted walls, the students measured it in steps:

> Take two steps and turn left. Before you there is an entrance to the Smaller Neoplastic Room. After taking 5 steps you will find yourself in the interior of the Small Neoplastic Chamber[27].

In this case, the so-called "typical steps", measured several times, turned out to be different for each visually impaired person and an assistance of a sighted person was necessary for a given visually impaired person to be at the right point in the room.

Also the general description of Strzemiński's painting *Unistic Composition 11* turned out to be not clear: "A rectangular composition with the texture resembling a wickerwork"[28]. In the case of the description of this particular work, even though the students applied

the technique of semantic analysis called "figuration of abstraction" and referred to the objective world[29], the comparison turned out to be inappropriate, because it directed the blind people to imagine a three-dimensional spatial object. Similarly, the term "diagonal lines", often used in history of art in describing a composition of images, turned out to be not clear enough when applied to describe van Doesburg's *Counter-Composition XV*. It was found to be too hermetic and associated with the so-called professional jargon.

One of the objectives of the project was also publishing the descriptions created by the students (and approved by the blind recipients) through posting them on the websites of the Museum of Art in Łódź, the Faculty of Art History of the University of Łódź and the Polish Union of the Blind – District of Łódź, thus equalizing the chances of people with sight disabilities in the access to visual arts (painting and sculpture), and their full social integration in the field of culture, which is in line with the guidelines of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately, the phase of wider publication of the descriptions by placing their recorded sound files was not realized, because the management of the Museum of Art decided that it itself would carry out an audio descriptive project independently. Similarly, the students did not make spatial replicas of the described works so that people with visual impairments could get acquainted with the selected works with touch, which was assumed in the in the initial stage of the project implementation. In the future, such models could undoubtedly be a valuable complement to the project.

AD is implemented to plastic arts primarily in the form of sound files that are attached to audio guides. They can also be accessed directly in a given art centre or posted in a digital version on the website of a given institution: museum, gallery, the blind's centre, etc. Modern technological possibilities allow for relatively cheap implementation of descriptions of works of art. Therefore, we believe that the creation of a smartphone download application as part of the project by scanning a bar code placed in the museum room would allow, due to the *Augmented Reality* technology, to present both an image and a voice of a lecturer reading an audio descriptive text. It is worth adding that such projects are already partially implemented, for example, through the OpenArt project "Contemporary Art for Everyone" or a smartphone application called Be My Eyes, thanks to which a sighted volunteer describes a picture that is in a gallery to a blind person. This latter system is used in the Łaźnia Gallery in Gdańsk through the ArtSeeŁaźnia application[30]. Some of the works could be more extensively described by the Gallery's curator himself. For example, two visiting paths would be possible: a shorter TOP10 route and a longer one – for connoisseurs. The knowledge gained during the wandering could be checked in a quiz accompanying the application. In addition, it would be possible to choose a language of the application, for example English, Spanish, German or French. The

[29] **A. Matuchniak-Krasuska**, *Gust i kompetencja. Społeczne zróżnicowanie recepcji malarstwa*, Łódź 1988, pp. 119–131.

[30] *Łaźnia 2 Aplikacja ArtSeeŁaźnia*, http://www.laznia.pl/mainart,438,aplikacja_artseelaznia.html (access date: 15 I 2018).

[31] See **G. Szafraniec**, *Kultura a integracja – sztuka wobec niepełnosprawności*, Katowice 2004; **E. Jutrzyna**, *Refleksje nad istotą wychowania estetycznego niepełnosprawnych*, [in:] *Sztuka i wychowanie. Współczesne problemy edukacji estetycznej*, ed. **K. Pankowska**, Warszawa 2010.

[32] On the basis of the Declaration of Ministers adopted by the Second European Conference of Ministers responsible for integration policies for people with disabilities, held in Malaga, Spain, on 7–8 V 2003. See more – *Plan działań Rady Europy w celu promocji praw i pełnego uczestnictwa osób niepełnosprawnych w społeczeństwie: podnoszenie jakości życia osób niepełnosprawnych w Europie, 2006–2015*, http://rownosc.info/media/uploads/2006_promocja_praw.pdf (access date: 14 XII 2017).

[33] See **Z. Woźniak**, *Niepełnosprawność i niepełnosprawni w polityce społecznej. Społeczny kontekst medycznego problemu*, Warszawa 2008; **S. Rudnicki**, *Niepełnosprawność i złożoność*, "Studia Socjologiczne" 2014, no. 2.

[34] *Polska droga do Konwencji o prawach osób niepełnosprawnych ONZ*, ed. **A. M. Waszkielewicz**, Kraków 2008, p. 31, http://www.firr.org.pl/uploads/PUB/Czarna_ksiega_www.pdf (access date: 14 XII 2017).

verbal descriptions emitted by smartphones could be complemented by 3D, Braille or enlarged prints. Furthermore, the images presented should be specially processed into contour outlines and in this form transferred to a special thermal paper in order to obtain typographic prints (after passing through printing plates the print becomes convex). In addition, visually impaired people could watch reproductions prepared for them closely or through a magnifying glass.

Another aspect would be to develop, for example, a kind of "bank with audio descriptions of works of art" and disseminate it on the Internet – which is already undertaken to some extent by the Fundacja Audiodeskrypcja or the Fundacja Siódmy Zmysł (The Seventh Sense Foundation) implementing the Open Art project – these activities would ensure broadening and deepening knowledge of culture and raising the level of personal skill both in the field of art and social functioning[31]. It is worth to add that according to the Council of Europe disability action plan, it is necessary to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe through the promotion of civil rights and full participation of disabled people in society[32]. Numerous studies confirm that people with disabilities have problems in proper functioning in society and in communication[33]. Those problems are reinforced by the "so-called **ghetto effect**, that is, isolation within their own social group and deepening the social exclusion"[34]. That is why it is so important to support the participation of blind, visually impaired and elderly people in the artistic culture of Łódź by creating conditions for their access to the collections gathered at the Muzeum Sztuki (Museum of Art) in Łódź.

The methods of audio description used so far often do not cause the expected aesthetic impressions in people with visual impairments, especially when in contact with works of art in museum collections and galleries. Perhaps because of the dry mathematical description. It should however be mentioned that you can use language in different way to create an audio description that emphasize its creative and colourful character. In the further stage of the research, it is also worth to consider to create audio description with the help of haptic, kinaesthetic or olfactory stimuli that compensate for sight dysfunctions.

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Summary
ANETA PAWLOWSKA (University of Lodz), ANNA WENDORFF (University of Lodz) / Extra-visual perception of works of art in the context of the audio description of the Neoplastic Room at the Museum of Art in Lodz

Audio description (AD) is a verbal description of the visual content presented aurally to the blind and visually impaired persons. AD enables people with visual impairments to perceive visual art, such as paintings and sculptures or audiovisual art, such as installations, environment, performance, theatrical art, stage performance or small and big screen pictures. Audio description, as a technique employed to present visual art to visually impaired people, is an object of audiovisual translation research and it belongs to the inter-semiotic translation because it transforms a sign from one system of signs to a content developed with the use of a different system of signs. The paper focuses on the role of audio description in providing the blind and visually impaired people with access to museum collections. The core object of research included the audio descriptions developed in art history classes at the University of Lodz for the Museum of Art in Lodz.