

SIGNS OF THE CITY PROJECT BERLIN

*NEIL TAYLOR & HARRIET MURRAY
CAMPBELL WORKS
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Signs of the City is a 15-month European wide youth art project, which explores signage within four cities: Barcelona, Berlin, London and Sofia. All the participants collectively creating a visual inventory of cross cultural signage systems to act as a visual communication system.

Campbell Works was invited to take part in the Berlin Cluster and commissioned artists Neil Taylor and Harriet Murray to work with students from the Wilhelm-Von-Turk-Schule, a specialist school for students with hearing impairments situated in Potsdam, on the outskirts of Berlin. The workshops were made possible with the support of Gisela Fiedler and Birgit Schneider – who worked alongside the artists and students as Signing and German translators.

Taylor and Murray's approach was to examine the very fundamentals of communication, to explore how different sections of society view their environment and what happens when their normal communication systems are altered.

The artists minimal grasp of both German and sign language, and the audible impairment of the group made for an interesting scenario. The participating students were dynamic and enthusiastic, creating photographs from scratch using basic analogue principles, constructing pinhole cameras from cardboard boxes and developing the prints in a portable dark room tent in the town centre of Potsdam. With a digital camera in one hand and their pinhole camera in the other they quickly grasped 150 years of technological advancement. Taylor and Murray's work often plays with

sensory disorientating environments and their *Signs of the City* project was the latest variation. During the workshops the students' reliance on their visual communication systems was severely hampered when they worked within the portable darkroom tent.

This loss of communication systems both verbal and visual, strangely created an atmosphere of calm, a kind of 'lost at sea' feeling for all involved. By removing the ability to communicate through conventional channels, the participants and artists were forced to learn from each other's actions and encouraged to take risks and make mistakes. Creating a feeling of freedom from

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conversational communication systems, including signing, allowed the creation of an experimental platform, within which to produce new imagery. The artwork produced will be exhibited at the House of Cultures of the World, in Berlin in November (www.hkw.de) This exhibition forms part of a larger exhibition taking place across the participating cities in institutes of contemporary culture.

Signs of the City also includes an interdisciplinary conference, at which an evaluation carried out by Goldsmiths sociological institute will also be presented.

In the meantime some of the images created will also be uploaded onto an online image database: a contemporary archive, which is freely accessible and can be playfully interacted with at www.citypix.net.



