



Photo by Dharmarajan Iyer

# Beyond Sight Foundation

[www.blindwithcamera.org](http://www.blindwithcamera.org)

Beyond Sight Foundation is a non-profit organization advocating the importance of art in the lives of people with visual impairment, building capacity to promote the "Blind" Art culture in India and enriching public through renewed art and sensitization workshops.

We believe that disability is a diverse human condition, people with visual impairment are "differently able" and art by them is an invaluable form of self-expression, proving that they have an interesting way to perceive and lead life.

Through our programs we celebrate the spirit of creative expressions of visually impaired people to show that art is a reminder of diversity, a source of healing and development, an instrument of change, and a social equalizer.

**Background** Early 2006, the Blind With Camera project was started by Partho Bhowmick in Mumbai after coming in touch with Evgen Bavcar, an accomplished blind photographer based in Paris followed by years of research on blindness and visual art. At the photographic workshops conducted by the Blind With Camera project, visually impaired participants learned how to use non-visual senses to take pictures. The project aims to show that photographs can be made successfully in the mind as much as by the eyes.

Over the years works from the Blind With Camera project culminated into the Beyond Sight exhibition travelling across India and overseas. The Beyond Sight is an “inclusive” exhibition, it provides a combination of raised touchable images, Braille footnotes, large prints, visual aids, and descriptive tours for the visually impaired visitors to access and enjoy the photographs.

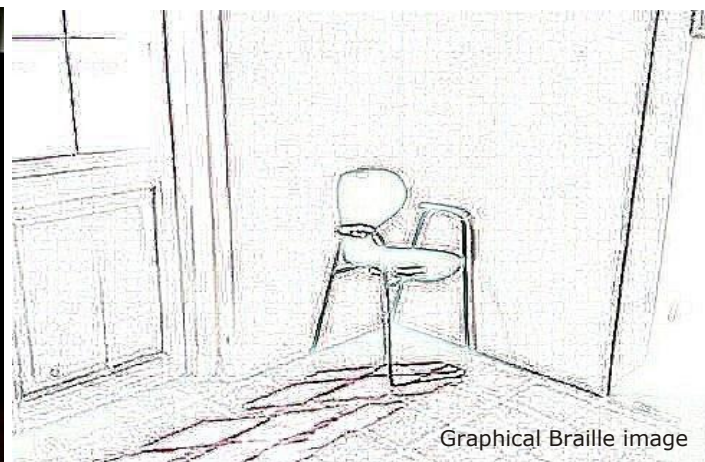
Works from the project have been exhibited at NCPA Mumbai, Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath Bangalore, India Habitat Centre New Delhi, Academy of Fine Arts Kolkata, Kala Ghoda Art Festival Mumbai and Kala Academy Panjim Goa. Making of the project have been presented at the IIT Mumbai, IIM Ahmedabad and Azim Premji Foundation Bangalore. In November 2010, works from the Blind With Camera will be exhibited at the DaDa International Disability Art Festival Liverpool, the Nehru Center London and other cities across UK.

The Blind With Camera project is the first of its kind in India. In 2009, the Beyond Sight Foundation was founded to explore beyond the Blind With Camera project, to widen and deepen the social deliverables of art education, art practices and equal access to art for the visually impaired.

**Vision** Social inclusion of people with visual impairment through art practices and equal access to art.

**Mission** To create a community where people with visual impairment can experience the life-enhancing power of art by learning, participating, enjoying the art and showcase their artworks to bring dignity and income opportunities to them, and spread awareness about the challenges and abilities of the visually impaired.





## **Our Programs** Activities & programs of the foundation are grouped under four centers -

**Knowledge Center** Support knowledge creation in the area of art by the visually impaired through research by providing research fellowships to sighted or visually impaired people or to them working together. Publish educational art materials for the visually impaired by providing publication grants for turning the researched materials into books, films and multimedia. Create Internet based virtual school or depository of training material on arts for the visually impaired, and on-line database of blind artists and organizations offering arts education for the visually impaired.

**Working Center** Conduct workshops on arts (photography, short-film, other visual arts, performance and literary) for the visually impaired. Mentor Protégé where celebrated artists would adopt talented visually impaired to learn and work with them over a period of time. Train the trainer workshops. Creation of training modules for the visually impaired. Organize photography or art competition for the visually impaired. Operate tour of the visually impaired to art galleries, museums and heritage buildings. Conduct sensitization workshops (simulation of blindness) for the sighted people giving them an expedience of the disable way of life.

**Showcase Center** Annual exhibition of the foundation. Other exhibitions and performances by visually impaired people which come out of the workshops, Mentor Protégé and competitions. Organize national festival of blind artists to showcase work of blind visual artists, blind theater group, blind poets, blind writers, blind musicians, blind film makers. Demonstrations, discussions and dialogues across campuses, corporations and public spaces on the processes that go behind the work of the blind artists. Organize festivals of films "about-with-by" the visually impaired and short film competition on blind centric theme.

**Consulting Center** Work with mainstream artists, and art and cultural centers to create accessible art. Provide consultancy to art galleries and museums to make art equally accessible for the visually impaired visitors. Implement projects on audio description of films, theater, urban landmarks for the visually impaired. Curate exhibitions and festivals on art by the visually impaired.

**Impacts** Art by the visually impaired trigger an insightful journey in them to bring out their hidden potential to express creatively, stimulates their emotions & intellect, and develops their personality, elevates their self-esteem and self-confidence. Creative process demanding focus of mind, senses, judgmental, insightfulness and intuitiveness helps in developing key social and workspace skills like problem solving, perseverance, flexibility, collaborative working, and time management, making the visually impaired socially competent and more employable. Financial gains and opportunities for the visually impaired artists. Increase participation in community art-related activities. Peer groups are inspired to take up art. Increase in access to art and culture helps in enriching the blind community.

Exhibitions, festivals, discussion forums and sensitization workshops bring sighted people and visually impaired people on equal platform and establish direct dialogue between them. Expose general public to new perspective and understanding, helps in correcting their perceptions of visual impairment and disability in general. Bridges the gap between "us" and "them" and increase tolerance in society.

**Support Us** Buy photographs and artworks created by visually impaired photographers and artists. Use photographs and artworks by visually impaired in cards, calendars, planners and corporate gifts. Showcase artworks by the visually impaired and conduct sensitization workshops at private gatherings, educational institutes and public spaces. Gift us cameras, photo equipments and art materials that you no longer need. Give us donation to fund our existing and future activities and programs. Become a "Friend of Beyond Sight Foundation" by offering us monthly donations. Work with us as volunteers, interims and project partners.

**Our Team** **Partho Bhowmick** researcher on art by the blind, initiator of Blind With Camera project and founder of the Beyond Sight Foundation. Recipient of the Karmaveer Puraskaar 2009, a National Award for Social Justice and Citizen Action given by the Indian Confederation of NGO. **Kanchan Pamnani** lawyer cum solicitor specialized in corporate affair, intellectual prosperity and disability laws. Recipient of the President's Gold medal in 2009 as blind achiever under role model category. **Dr. Simon Hayhoe** UK based international authority on art by blind, worked on several international projects to make art museums accessible to the visually impaired visitors. **Astad Deboo** India's foremost contemporary dancer and choreographer. He has been teaching dance to the street children, disabled and deaf girls for last 20 years. He has been awarded Padma Shri in 2007. **Giri Giridhar** experienced finance professional, he has long experience of working in abroad and India with MNCs and Indian corporate. An IIMA alumnus and a member of the advisory Board of the CFO Institute.

## Contact Us

Partho Bhowmick  
Beyond Sight Foundation  
B-1202, Rameshwar Tower-1  
New Golden Nest Phase XI  
Bhayander East, Thane  
Pin Code 401105, India  
Mobile: +91-9821474731  
E-mail: [partho@blindwithcamera.com](mailto:partho@blindwithcamera.com)  
[www.blindwithcamera.com](http://www.blindwithcamera.com)

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All donations in Indian rupees to the Beyond Sight Foundation are tax-exempt under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act of India.

Logo of the foundation is adapted from a painting by artist Subrata Chowdhury.

Photographs in this brochure are taken by visually impaired members of Blind With Camera project.

