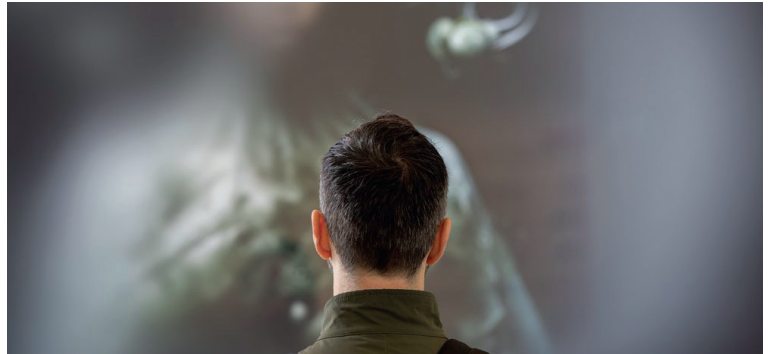
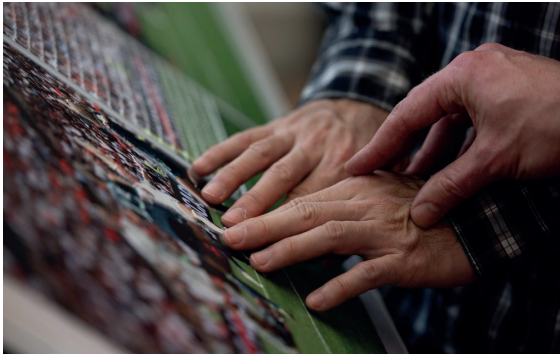


The world of the unseen

BY RAHILA BASHIR



We are witnessing an incredible era of miraculous and marvellous discoveries. The globe has seen breakthroughs in science, medicine, creative arts, technology, digital media, and much more.

In warm, sunny April, Emerald Network celebrated its 20th year of Eid events, with CreatEid in collaboration with VML, at their creative headquarters in the heart of London. One of the guest speakers showcasing his work that evening was the fully integrated creative director at VML, San Sharma. It was a privilege to be in conversation on the evening with San about working on the magnificently creative idea that has formed into an exhibition for the visually impaired, a gift for the blind – the work evolved into miracles for those with no sight.

Speaking to San, he said, “We wanted to do two things with the exhibition: change the way blind and partially sighted people experience photography, but also the way that sighted people understand the visual impairment experience. I think many believe that being blind means seeing nothing at all. But *World Unseen* shows people what different eye conditions can feel like, whilst augmenting the experience for everybody, through sight, sound, and touch.”

Eye disorders affect vision in many ways, resulting in a variety of experiences in visual impairment and total blindness. For example, people with low vision use large text, colour contrast and brighter lighting, whilst those with total blindness perceive visual stimuli differently: relying on the humble experiences of touch and sound which push the imagination.

Developed with creative agency VML UK and in partnership with Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), Canon's *World Unseen* used revolutionary Canon technology to create a unique new immersive experience with photography. Held at Somerset House, over 1500 visitors enjoyed the sold-out tickets over three days; whilst it was experienced by 519 million people online! Lifelike, elevated tactile prints, braille, audio descriptions and immersive soundscapes were created to team around the centred series of emotive images taken by world-renowned photographers.

People with sight appreciated an understanding of what partially sighted people live with as each picture was obscured by screens simulating a range of sight conditions from diabetic retinopathy to glaucoma, raising awareness of accessibility in arts and cultural spaces.

World Unseen enabled people with sight loss to engage with the visual world whilst challenging those with sight to see through their imaginary lens. For years, Canon has contributed to making art more accessible for the blind and partially sighted people by globally supporting museums and art galleries with tactile prints and braille signage, bringing arts to life through elevated print. Most recently, Canon's experimental photo exhibitions were held in the Netherlands and Vienna.



All images courtesy of VML Creative Director San Sharma.

View the Canon *World Unseen* film series here:



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