

TheFeministArtProject

Art, Gender, and Disability: Aesthetics of Access

TFAP@CAA 2023 Days of Panels

In-person & Zoom | February 18 & 24, 2023

Convener

Tatiana Flores, Rutgers University

Symposium Chairs

Amanda Cachia, PhD, Otis College of Art and Design; California State University Long Beach and

Constantina Zavitsanos, New School

[CHAIR BIOS](#)

[Full Description & Schedule](#)

Presenter Abstracts and Bios- Day 1

PART 1: A LETTER TO THE TRANSLATOR | Saturday 2/18 from 9:00am – 10:30am EST

Opens with welcome remarks from Tatiana Flores, Amanda Cachia, and Constantina Zavitsanos.

Jesse Darling, Artist

The Feminist Art Project 2023 Keynote Address

Abstract and Bio

Based in London and Berlin, Jesse Darling's sculptures, drawings and objects reflect the vulnerability of the human body and express the desire to resist the constraints imposed on our lives by social and political forces.

[website](#)

PART 2: MEDIA ACCESS AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE | Saturday 2/18 from 11:00am – 12:30pm EST

This panel looks at how captions, alt-text, and audio description are part of critical access practices that aim to make visual and auditory content more accessible to people who are d/Deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, low vision, neurodivergent, and/or have certain cognitive disabilities. These practices are often approached in a dry and compliance-oriented way. How can we instead approach them creatively? How do creative approaches to access find common ground with access practices as it relates to gender? Panelists have been considering these questions through their individual artistic practices, their advocacy work in disability community, and their collaborative work.

Shannon Finnegan and Bojana Coklyat, Artists

Reflections on 4 Years of Alt Text as Poetry

Abstract

Alt text is a system of text descriptions built into websites and other online platforms to make visual content accessible to blind people, those with low vision, and those living with certain cognitive disabilities. It is often ignored altogether or understood through the lens of compliance, resulting in text that is written in a reluctant, perfunctory style. However, alt text is an essential part of web accessibility and has tremendous expressive potential; it can be written creatively and generously, centering disability culture. Bojana Coklyat and Shannon Finnegan started Alt Text as Poetry in 2019 to help create time, space, and tools for the practice, study, and discussion of alt text writing. In this talk, Coklyat and Finnegan will discuss questions and learnings that have emerged from four years of working on Alt Text as Poetry together.

Bios

Bojana Coklyat is a disabled artist, 2019-2020 J. William Fulbright alumni and previous project leader at the NYC Museum Arts and Culture Access Consortium (MAC). In 2019, she curated “Crip Imponderabilia”, the first gallery exhibit at NYU centering all disabled artists and disability culture. Around this time, she began collaborating with Finnegan Shannon on the Alt-Text as Poetry project. This has included facilitating workshops at Twitter, Google and MIT. Recently, Coklyat has taken on the position of associate producer on a film funded by the American Foundation for the Blind, featuring variety of different people in the blind community. Coklyat is also currently teaching a course on access and design at the new school.

Shannon Finnegan is an artist. They experiment with forms of access that intervene in ableist structures with humor, earnestness, and rage. Some of their recent work includes *Anti-Stairs Club Lounge*, an ongoing project that gathers people together who share an aversion to stairs; *Alt Text as Poetry*, a collaboration with Bojana Coklyat that explores the expressive potential of image description; and *Do You Want Us Here or Not*, a series of benches and cushions designed for exhibition spaces. They have done projects with the Queens Museum, the High Line, MMK Frankfurt, the MCA Denver, moCa Cleveland, and Nook Gallery. Their work has been supported by a Wynn Newhouse Award, an Eyebeam fellowship, and grants from Art Matters Foundation and Canada Council for the Arts. They live and work in Brooklyn, NY.

[website](#)

Jordan Lord, Artist

Liveness, Description, and Prophetic Memory

Abstract

Lord will present on their experience working with their grandmother Annette Carter on two companion artworks. For the video and web-based work, *Expressions*, Carter imagines the exhibition design for Lord's exhibition *Prophetic Memory*, applying her expertise and taste as an interior designer. The video features Carter's, Lord's, and their mother Deborah's audio descriptions of the nonprofit art gallery Artists Space in between exhibitions. *Expressions* sets the scene for a longer in-progress video, *Prophetic Memory*, in which Lord, their mother Deborah, and Carter sit on a sofa facing audiences, as they watch, react to, and describe an in-progress film about Carter's relationship to aging, care, disability, television, and both short- and long-term memory. In reflecting on the show in which these works were exhibited, which in some sense has both never been and has never stopped being on view, this presentation will consider how description and memory blur temporalities of liveness.

Bio

Jordan Lord is a filmmaker, writer, and artist. Their work addresses the relationships between historical and emotional debts, framing and support, access and documentary.

[website](#)

Krishna Washburn, Artist

How It Feels: Audio Description for Dance and Movement that De-Centers Sight

Abstract

When we consider audio description for dance and movement-based performance, considering the purpose of dance performance and the interests of the blind/VI audience might lead artists in different directions than the standard “best practices” for audio description currently in favor. When we reject the idea that dance is exclusively a visual art form, but is rather very much about empathetic physical sensation in the body itself, we are led to consider approaches to audio description that de-center sight, that don't prioritize what the dance “looks like.” Also, when we embrace the idea that dance is an art form that expresses emotion, and that emotional content is of higher priority than visual information, we might be driven to move past the abstract and into the explicit.

Bio

Krishna Christine Washburn is artistic director and instructor for [Dark Room Ballet](#), and co-directed the [Telephone Film](#). She has an M.Ed. from Hunter College, BA from Barnard College, and is certified by the ACSM in biomechanics. She speaks regularly on self-audio description and educating blind/visually impaired dance students.

[website](#)

PART 3: ALT-TEXT AS POETRY WRITING WORKSHOP | Saturday 2/18 from 1:15pm – 2:15pm EST

Alt text is an essential part of web accessibility. It is often disregarded or understood through the lens of compliance, as an unwelcome burden to be met with minimum effort. This workshop shows how we can instead approach alt text thoughtfully and creatively.

Finnegan Shannon and **Bojana Coklyat**, Artists

PART 4: CHOREOGRAPHING GENDER + DISABILITY | Saturday 2/18 from 2:30pm – 4:00pm EST

This panel explores the work by contemporary disabled dancers and performers who utilize the genre of “the aesthetics of access” to guide their choreography and their experimental movement explorations. Panelists will discuss the ways aesthetics of access in dance re-imagines audiences, performance, and media, and how this methodology choreographs powerful intersections between gender and disability.

Kayla Hamilton, Artist

The Ethics of Care, Black Women and Dance

Abstract

The Ethics of Care, Black Women and Dance is an exercise in embodied and political movement from a grounded breath. This lecture is a love letter to Black women, and an invitation to consider art making as a practice of holding it down for those who enable our freedom, sometimes at their own expense.

Bio

Kayla Hamilton is a Texas born, Bronx based performance maker, dancer, educator, cultural consultant, and the artistic director of K. Hamilton Projects. Kayla is a 2023-2025 Jerome Hill Artist Fellow. Her past performance work has been presented at the Whitney Museum, Gibney, Performance Space New York, New York Live Arts, Abrons Arts Center, and the Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD). Kayla has co-developed ‘Crip Movement Lab’ with fellow Disabled artist, Elisabeth Motley- a pedagogical framework centering cross-Disability accessible movement practices that are open to every-body. She has taught dance at Sarah Lawrence College, Amherst College, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Utah, and Texas Improv Festivals. As a consultant, Kayla has developed and implemented accessibility strategies for the Mellon Foundation, ArtSpeak, Dance USA, Movement Research and The Shed. As a dancer, Kayla was part of the Bessie award winning Skeleton Architecture, she has also danced for Maria Bauman, Sydnie L. Mosley and Gesel Mason. Kayla is currently in the process of creating a future organization centering the work of BIPOC Disabled creatives, while co-leading the 10th anniversary season of Angela’s Pulse/Dancing While Black, and developing a new evening length performance set to premier in NY in 2024 (TBA).

[website](#)

Jerron Herman, Artist

VITRUVIAN

Abstract

VITRUVIAN underscores a conversation with symmetry and how natural phenomena live in the body. Artist Jerron Herman will talk about classical influences and contemporary trends that helped build the piece.

Bio

Jerron Herman is a disabled dancer and writer who creates works to facilitate welcoming. He has premiered pieces at Danspace Project, Performance Space New York, The Kennedy Center, and The Whitney Museum. Jerron's most recent work *VITRUVIAN* premiered at Abrons Arts Center in May 2022 with a digital release in July 2022 and is now on tour. He curated the speaking series *Access Check 2.0: Mapping Accessibility* for the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation from 2019-2020 and *Discourse: Disabled Artists at The Joyce* for The Joyce Theater in 2021. Jerron has also served on the Board of Trustees at Dance/USA since 2017, most recently as Vice Chair. His writings on arts and culture have been published in the US and internationally and his play, *3 Bodies*, was published in *Theater Magazine's* May/June 2022 issue. During the Spring 2022 semester Jerron was the Artist/Scholar in Residence at Georgetown University, facilitating student engagement with Art and Disability. As a model and advocate, Jerron has worked with Chromat, Tommy Hilfiger, Cerebral Palsy Foundation, and Nike. Other accolades include a 2021 Grants to Artists Award from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts and a 2021-2022 Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship in Dance from the Jerome Foundation. The 2021 PETRONIO Award and residency as well as a 2020 Disability Futures Fellowship by the Ford Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. [website](#)

Christopher "Unpezverde" Núñez, Princeton University; Independent Choreographer; Founder and Facilitator of the Accessibility Advisory Team at Movement Research

Audio Dance: The Regenerative Power of Sound on the Body

Abstract

Vortex, the artist's choreographic practice, centers movement in circular motion supported by diaphragmatic breathing. Vortex is a concept born from the principle that the human body is 70% water and has a 95% level of oxygen. By moving the body in circles, we imagine the water and air rotating, causing whirlwinds and internal tornadoes that renew energy. Vortex teaches principles of proprioception to Visually Impaired dancers by explaining how to move through the space using the sagittal, transverse and frontal planes safely. Music and soundscape are created with a frequency of 432 Hz, which is known as the frequency of the universe. It allows the body to re energize through the power of the creative source. Spanglish, Spanish and English poetic and bimodal Audio Description (AD) is embedded in the choreographic work.

Bio

Christopher "Unpezverde" Núñez is a Visually Impaired choreographer based in NYC. Núñez is a Dance/USA Fellow, a Princeton University Arts Fellow, and a Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art Fellow. His performances have been presented by The Joyce Theater, The Brooklyn Museum, The Kitchen, Danspace Project, and The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art. [website](#)

PART 5: FEELING BODIES, WITH BODIES | Saturday 2/18 from 4:30pm – 6:00pm EST

Movement performances by three contemporary disabled artists and performers who bring to life the concept(s) of the aesthetics of access, by decentering sight as the primary mode of enjoying a performance or a movement experience. How can we experience the feeling of bodies and "being with" bodies through multi-sensory and unconventional pathways that offer generative new information, set apart from but alongside, gender and disability?

Kayla Hamilton, Artist

Holding the Space with Words

Jerron Herman, Artist

VITRUVIAN

Christopher “Unpezverde” Núñez, Princeton University; Independent Choreographer; Founder and Facilitator of the Accessibility Advisory Team at Movement Research

The Circle or Prophetic Dream

Presenter Abstracts and Bios- Day 2

PART 6: PROSTHESES & CYBORGS | Friday 2/24 from 12:00pm – 2:00pm EST

Opening with remarks from Amanda Cachia and Constantina Zavitsanos, this panel considers how constructs of the prostheses and cyborgs work to offer new animations of the disabled and gendered subject in contemporary art practice rather than deploying traditional binaries of oppression, such as masculine/feminine or able-bodied/disabled. By drawing on theoretical feminist applications of the cyborg within posthumanism, illustrated in the work of Donna Haraway, Octavia Butler, and Sami Schalk, artists will demonstrate how gender and disability intersect, but also how these identity categories can productively be dissolved.

Panteha Abareshi, Artist

Disability Fetishism

Abstract

*unavailable

Bio

Panteha Abareshi is a Canadian-born American multidisciplinary artist and curator, primarily working within installation art, video art, and performance art. They are of Jamaican and Iranian descent, and their work is about chronic illness and disability. Abareshi is based in Los Angeles, California.

[website](#)

Jillian Crochet, Artist

The Haptic Body: Touching Formless Futures

Abstract

Crochet will present her work in sculpture, video, and performance through the lens of the cyborg. Using elements found in ‘nature’ mixed with medicalized objects, her practice questions the medical model, desires for control, and the complex ethics of genetics and experimentation. An oscillation of the subject/object relationship reflects and unsettles our understanding of nature. What is natural/unnatural?

Bio

Jillian Crochet is a Bay Area artist. She was an Emerging Artist Fellow at the California Arts Council, Artist in Residence at Art Beyond Sight, and a Graduate Fellow at Headlands Center for the Arts. She has shown work at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, the Contemporary Jewish Museum, and SOMArts. She earned her MFA in Fine Arts at California College of the Arts.

[website](#)

Berenice Olmedo, Artist

Anthroposthetic

Abstract

This talk is about disability as a human condition, issues surrounding normality, disability as a political subject and about orthotics and prosthetics in Mexico.

Bio

Berenice Olmedo lives and works in Mexico City. Solo exhibitions include *Hic et Nunc*, Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (2022); *Eccéite*. Simian. Copenhagen, Denmark (2021); *CsO, haecceidad*, Jan Kaps, Cologne (2020); *Toraco-Lumbo [SKOLIÓPHYSIS]*, Lodos, Mexico City (2019); *Anthroprosthetic*, Jan Kaps, Cologne (2018).

Recent group exhibitions include *Vessels*, David Zwirner (2022); *Bunker Berlin #4*, Boros Collection, Berlin (2022); *CRIP TIME*, Museum für Moderne Kunst MMK, and *suddenly it all blossoms*, RIBOCA2, Riga (2020); *How to survive*, Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2020); She receives an honorary mention in the Hybrid Art category from *Ars Electronica* in Linz, Austria (2017). Her work has been published in Artforum, Mousse Magazine, Cura Magazine, Flash Art Magazine, Art in America.

[website](#)

PART 7: CARING COLLABORATIVES | Friday 2/24 from 2:30pm – 4:00pm EST

This panel honors and grows the autonomy and wisdom of trans, queer, & women artists, activists, care-, & cultural- workers — who are disabled, chronically ill, and immunocompromised. It notes how people do, and can, intentionally gather together to support one another, mentally, physically, and culturally, as a form of dialogic creative access. Dialogic creative access is a dialog of and on access, towards embodying and deepening principles of justice. Creative access is the art, showing and deepening struggle as an inherent part of care building for disability collectives and community. Each of the participating collectives have formed in recent years and are intersectional in their approach, focusing on feminist, trans, and crip revisions to healthcare.

Julia Bonn, Huong Nam Nguyen Thi, and Inga Zimprich, Feminist Health Care Research Group

Feminist Health Care Research Group: Vulnerable Spaces

Abstract

The project group, *The New Health Movement*, talks with self-organized political initiatives and individuals about their needs for an accessible and fair healthcare system. This project draws its inspiration from the historic Health Movement (Gesundheitsbewegung), which was vital in West-Germany during the late 1970s and 1980s. The Health Movement channeled dissatisfaction with the healthcare system and it proposed new models for how healthcare could be done differently. They believe that we need a New Health Movement which challenges the current healthcare system. In this project, they aim to encourage each other to practice making demands, to reach out and connect to other groups and their struggles, to inform ourselves about their needs and perspectives and to form alliances for making all of our intersecting demands heard. They insist that the perspectives of users of the healthcare system are essential, and should be decisive in how the healthcare system needs to change.

Bios

Feminist Healthcare Research Group (FHRG: Julia Bonn/Inga Zimprich) has been developing empowering perspectives on healthcare in exhibitions, workshops and zines since 2015. It aims to create spaces in which we can share vulnerability with each other, center (access) needs and break through the competitive mode of working in the arts. In the project, *The New Health Movement*, FHRG together with Huong Nam Nguyen Thi, Kim Wichera, Alina Buchberger, and Pasquale Virginie Rotter collects demands for changes in healthcare.

[website](#)

Christina Zück, Agnieszka Habraschka, and Júlia Ayerbe, Sickness Affinity Group

Rituals of Support

Abstract

In this presentation, three members of Sickness Affinity Group (SAG) will share the rituals, protocols, and methodologies SAG has been developing to support their community in navigating ableism, creating spaces of joy, healing, art, and activism. Through the practices of the Support Group, Reading Group, and the Oracle, they are creating protocols and methodologies as rituals of accessibility. Júlia, Christina, and Agnieszka will share some of the work in progress.

Bios

Christina Zück is an artist and independent researcher living in Berlin. Agnieszka Habraschka is a

musician/artist and cultural worker living in Berlin. Júlia Ayerbe is an editor, curator, researcher, and currently an Art history PhD candidate at Complutense Universidad de Madrid and La Caixa Foundation fellow.

[website](#)

Anonymous, Power Makes Us Sick

An Abolitionist's Approach to Autonomous Mental, Physical and Social Health within Communities

Abstract

PMS will present content from their newest zine, *An Abolitionist's Guide to Autonomous Emotional Support*, which focuses on concrete tools to support the emotional wellbeing of their communities on their own terms. They will also discuss a useful guide they have developed over time called, *The Accountability Model*. This tool can be used to shift responsibility for one another's health back into our own hands. They believe in doing so, they can weaken our dependence on the care that derives from the state, capitalist markets, and the medical industrial complex at large, and strengthen our mutual accountability & interdependence. Invoking "accountability" as an always already present sense of answerability to one another, in this model they seek to shift "accountability" beyond the notion of what follows harm, towards something that honors our interdependence as organisms within an ecosystem that is unwell. They believe that validating and supporting this community-based, autonomous health care is the crux of our future-in-common; it is through these therapeutic and supportive ties that they discover the motivation to place our time and energy into one another, ourselves, and our ecologies, instead of in the state's many regimes of authority and control over our bodies and minds.

Bios

Power Makes us Sick (PMS) is a creative research project based in direct action, focusing on autonomous health care practices and networks from a feminist perspective. PMS interrogates how our mental, physical, and social health is impacted by imbalances in and abuses of power. PMS is motivated to develop free tools of solidarity, resistance, and sabotage that are informed by a deep concern for planetary well-being.

[website](#)

PART 8: REMOTE ACCESS PARTY BY CRITICAL DESIGN LAB | Friday 2/24 from 7:00pm EST

DJ Who Girl (Kevin Gotkin) and other members of CDL

Abstract

Remote Access is a crip nightlife project that considers parties as designed spaces, with opportunities for playful and participatory ways of producing access as a collective cultural practice.

[website](#)