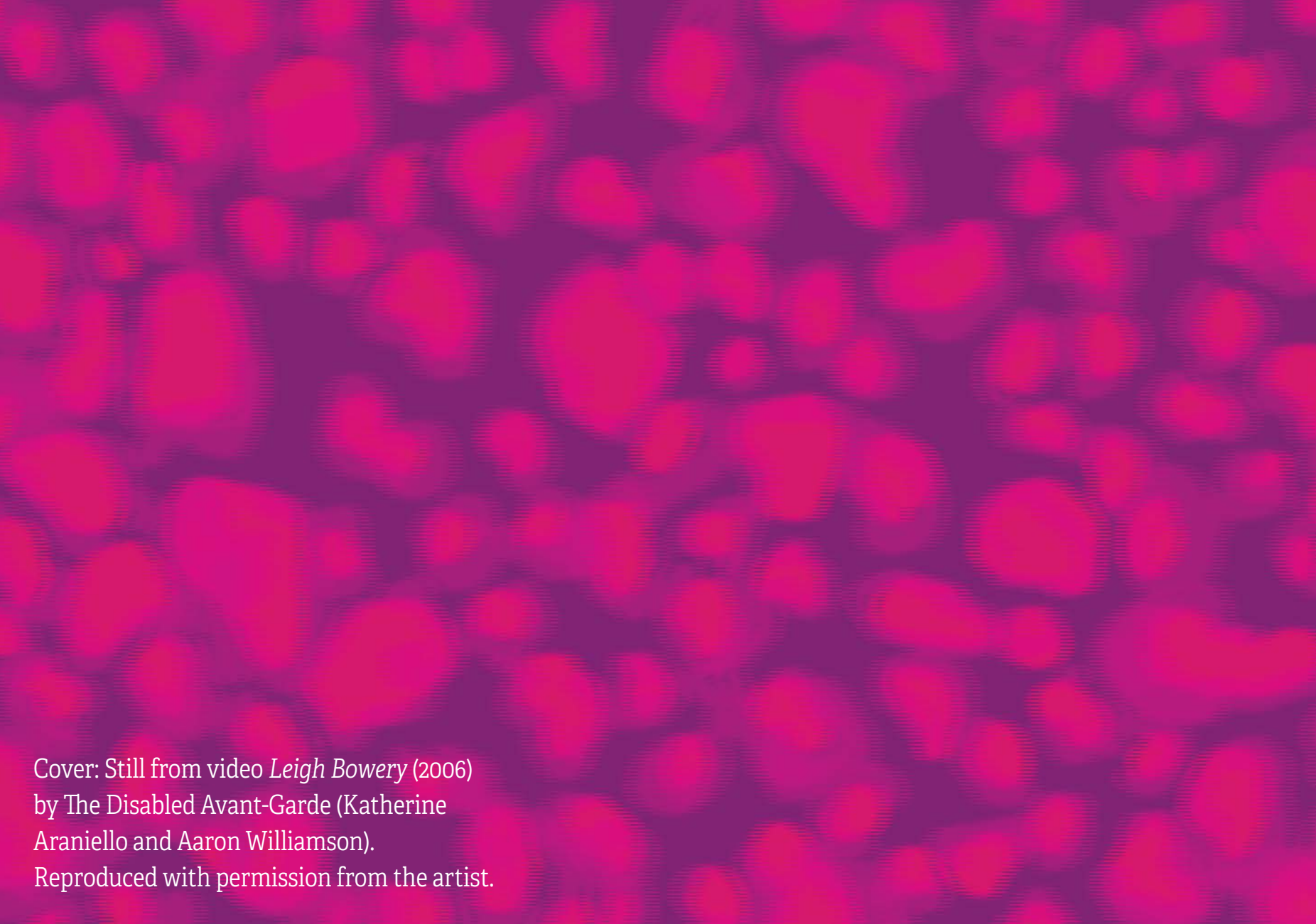
Many More Parts than M!

Reimagining disability, inclusion and access beyond compliance

By The DisOrdinary Architecture Project



Cover: Still from video *Leigh Bowery* (2006)
by The Disabled Avant-Garde (Katherine
Araniello and Aaron Williamson).
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Our work, interviews and videos from contributors, can be found at:

disordinaryarchitecture.co.uk

QR for digital and easy-read download on the website.

QR for Vimeo channel and interviews with contributors.

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Introduction

In the UK, Part M of the building regulations provides design guidance for disabled access to buildings and spaces. In *Many More Parts than M!* we are interested in going beyond the limitations of such banal 'one-size-fits-all' technical solutions, especially when these tend to be mere 'add-ons' at the end of the design process.

Instead, this prototype compendium combines provocative ideas and diverse lived experiences with innovative examples, led by the creativity of disabled artists, designers and architects. Rather than relying on either conventional disability categories (blind, wheelchair user, deaf) or standard accessibility terms (wayfinding, tactile paving, platform lifts), it is organised around an alphabet of key terms, mostly drawn from disability arts, activism and scholarship – terms that may be new to many in architecture and built environment disciplines.

Many More Parts than M! is for browsing and slow reading. By dipping in to explore sections in any order and through time, we hope you will find interesting ways to think about disability and access differently. Further reading and links are available on the associated microsite, with additional content, including videos by compendium contributors, available through the QR codes on some pages.

This publication is part of an Arts Council England (ACE)-funded initiative called *Disabled Artists Making Truly Accessible Spaces*. It builds on a competition-winning project for co-creating equity in the public realm, by additionally developing, sharing and amplifying excellent examples of truly creative accessibility.

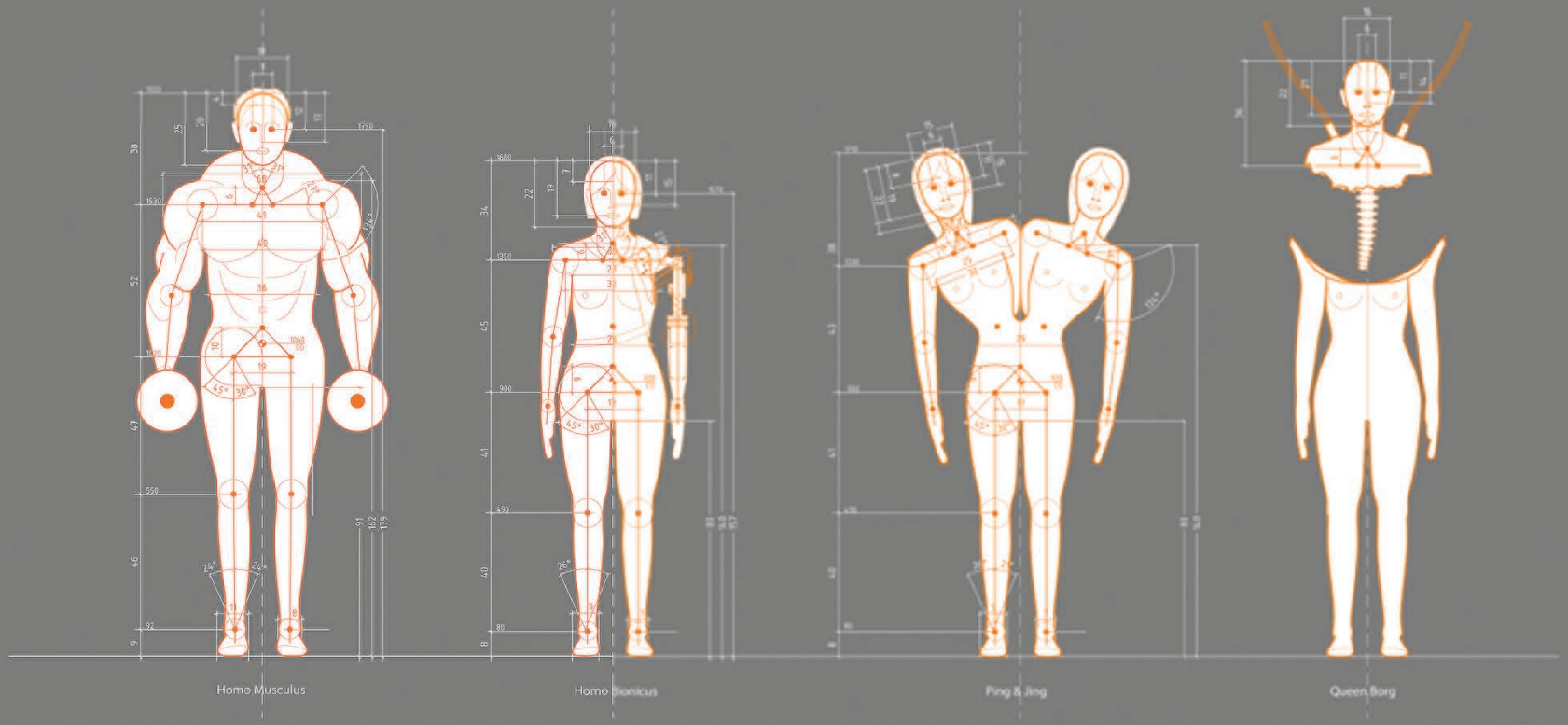
Called *Seats at the Table*, this competition-winning project was a collaboration between The DisOrdinary Architecture Project and Re-Fabricate for the London Festival of Architecture (LFA) in June 2023; funded by Foundation for Future London and the City of London Corporation.

The DisOrdinary Architecture Project

An organisation co-founded in 2008 by disabled artist Zoe Partington and non-disabled design activist Jos Boys to promote new models of practice for the built environment, led by the creativity and experiences of disabled, deaf and neurodivergent artists.

Re-Fabricate

Design and architecture collective focused on eradicating waste through promoting circular economy in the built environment and beyond.



Thomas Carpentier (2011), *Measure(s) of Man: Architects' Data Add-on.*

Access ecologies

Access: the means or opportunity to approach, enter or pass between places.

Ecologies: the system of interrelationships between organisms and their environment.

Kevin Gotkin, a US-based disabled artist, uses the concept of 'access ecologies' to express the fact that access is not just about design solutions for disabled people, but also about understanding underlying patterns of our different means and opportunities to enter spaces. We all have access needs; it is just that some of these are met by our existing built surroundings as if obvious and 'normal', whilst others are not.

"...access just *is*. i don't think there is any space that doesn't have access. but there are certainly spaces whose access ecologies severely limit possibilities for engagement. there are spaces, so many spaces, whose access ecologies are designed by ableism."
– *Kevin Gotkin*

Access ecologies invite us to critically engage with how built space supports the access of some and not others. There is a lot to learn from disability studies scholars, activists and artists who are already investigating these issues.

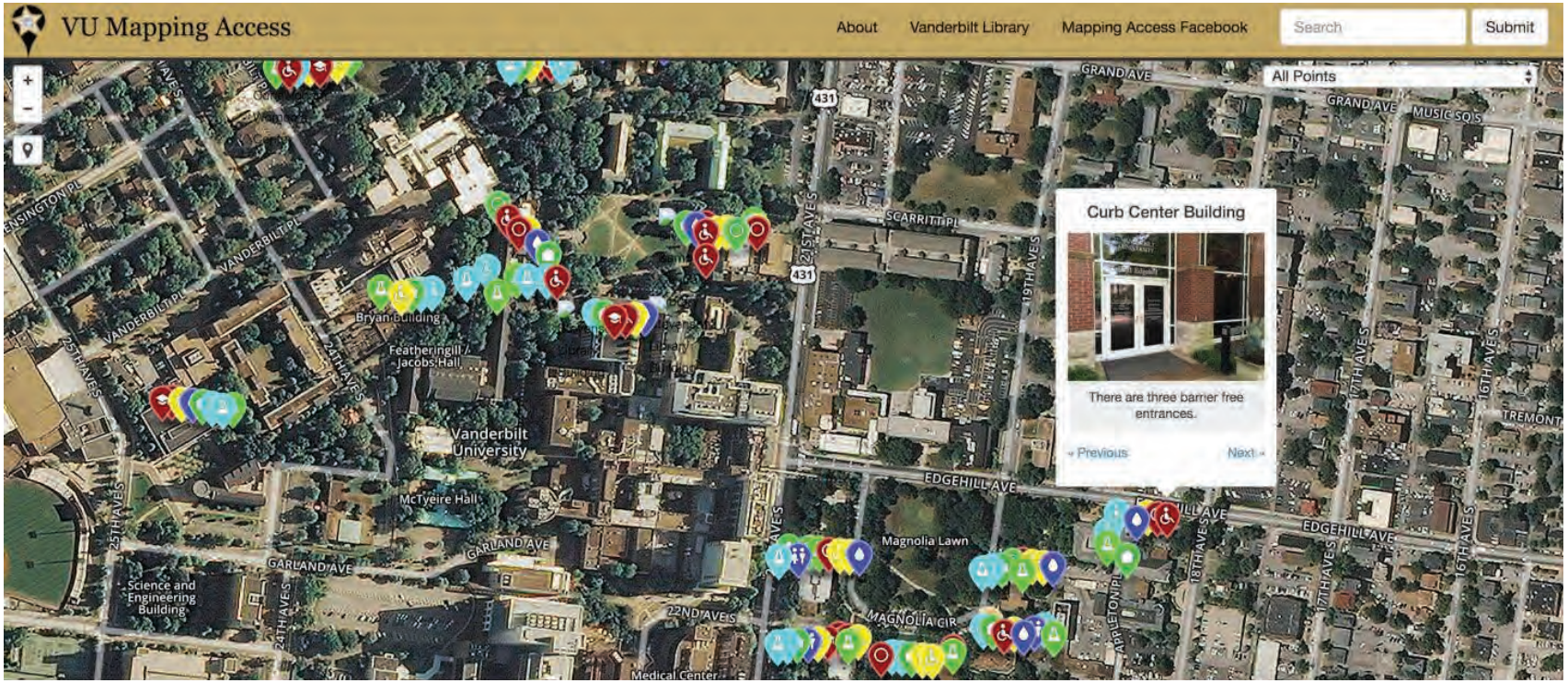
Mapping Access

Thinking about access as an ecology means finding ways to map the variety of our lived experiences and access needs as multi-layered, diverse, complex and even contradictory.

To move beyond simplistic disability categories (blind, deaf, wheelchair user) and 'one-size-fits-all' design solutions (ramp, platform lift) is not an easy task. It requires mapping methods that, as designer, researcher, and disability justice organiser Aimi Hamraie has written, "treats access as an open-ended process, a negotiation, and an intersectional and multimodal issue, rather than an easily achievable end point."

Mapping Access is a critical data collection and digital humanities mapping project begun at Vanderbilt University in 2014 by Hamraie, in response to both functional needs and conceptual debates around access. To train students, they assign 'spatial reading' projects, including building surveys, where students examine pervasive structural barriers in the everyday built environment to develop an understanding of ableism as an oppressive system.

This has led to participatory and crowdsourcing activities, to create data-rich digital accessibility maps of the campus that go beyond legal compliance.



As well as aiding navigation, accessibility mapping became, as Hamraie puts it, "a device for asking questions: what counts as access, for whom, and under what conditions?"

A *Mapping Access Toolkit* is available from the project website.

Vanderbilt University campus accessibility map, as part of *Mapping Access*, a project by the Critical Design Lab.

Beyond functional access

Reimagining access as an ecology also means understanding it as more than the ability to 'get into' buildings – although that is still important, since disabled people remain excluded from so many spaces. But access is also about pleasure, equitable social encounters and beautiful places, consideration of which can move us further toward an affirmative model in design.

For the *Seats at the Table* project (part of the London Festival of Architecture 2023), The DisOrdinary Architecture Project, in collaboration with Re-Fabricate, mapped a variety of sites for the planned installation. They sought to assess both how accessible these places already were, and their potential to open up possibilities for temporary site interventions that enhanced creative access and inclusion.

Site explorations and mapping, to select an accessible public space, as part of the *Seats at the Table* project for London Festival of Architecture 2023. Photo: Jos Boys.

Site explorations workshop as part of the *Seats at the Table* project for London Festival of Architecture 2023. Photo: Paul Daramola.

Disabled artists and architects, project team members, and key individuals from commissioning organisations were brought together for participatory mapping exercises and discussion. Groups collaboratively explored different sites and mapped barriers and opportunities onto site plans, to bring together diverse perspectives and lived experiences without aiming to make these cohere into 'solutions'.

This was then done in greater depth for the chosen site, Postman's Park, with each group concentrating on different aspects of the park. The resulting site mapping became the basis for creative access improvements co-developed by disabled artists and architects.

Disabling ecologies

Starting from the idea of ecologies also links everyday access needs with wider social and environmental processes – taking into account how people are often disabled through poverty, poor work conditions, war and climate change.

Sunaura Taylor, disabled artist and writer, uses the term 'disabled ecologies'. She argues that we are living through a period of mass ecological disablement because of the climate emergency, as well as underlying social and environmental inequalities. Taylor asks how we can learn from ill and disabled humans, animals, and ecosystems about how to live in what she calls the 'age of disability', while also working to dismantle the systems that so often cause it.

A 2022 exhibition in Ontario called *Crip Ecologies: Vulnerable Bodies in a Toxic Landscape* brought together chronically ill, disabled and immunocompromised artists from the US, Canada, and the UK. The aim was to shine a light on how both our built and natural environments shed toxic matter that disproportionately affects the lives of vulnerable disabled people. The show called for a greater degree of interdependence and reliance on one another, and a greater sense of responsibility and care towards our landscape.

Crip Ecologies: Vulnerable Bodies in a Toxic Landscape (2022), curated by Amanda Cachia with Tangled Arts + Disability at the Art Gallery of Windsor, Canada. Photography: Frank Piccolo.

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Kevin Gotkin (2022), Score for X, *Creative Time Think Tank* (online)

Sunaura Taylor (2021), Age of Disability. On living well with impaired landscapes, *Orion Magazine*

Access fails

Many disabled people will say that their biggest problem is not having an impairment, but the disabling attitudes and barriers that come from other people only seeing that impairment; and a built world that continually fails to be accessible.

Within architecture, this is often because accessibility is seen as an 'add-on' consideration later in the design process. It is also affected by preferred aesthetic choices across the discipline – such as exposed raw materials, monochrome palettes, complex vistas and formal abstraction – which often work against the kinds of surroundings that properly support the diversity of our embodied experiences.

Some of the access fails mentioned here happen after a building or space has been designed; that is, when it is in use. Rather than not feeling any responsibility for this, architects need to also think about the longer-term implications of their design decisions for maintenance and caretaking.

Getting it wrong (repeatedly): pointers from disabled people

- Accessible toilet sinks that splash water into the laps of people who use wheelchairs.
- Accessible toilets that get used as storage facilities.

Accessible toilet used as storage. Photo: Jos Boys.

- Acrylic protective screens dampen sound for hearing impaired people.

- Braille or tactile signs used inconsistently throughout a building – how do you know they are there if you can't see them?

If braille is always available for example to the right of a door handle, or tactile signs are on doors at a standard height and position, then we can successfully engage with the information.

- Combined steps with a wheelchair ramp that makes a zigzag through them. If you are partially sighted, or blind, these are incredibly difficult – and dangerous – to navigate. Also problematic for anyone with a mobility issue who relies on handrails.

- Deciding to not add ramps because they "spoil the design effect."

- Handrails that finish before the steps are a real problem. To be a good access guide, handrails need to follow the line of the steps and finish when the steps finish – not before – otherwise you can fall down the last few steps!

- Hard surfaces in public spaces make for acoustic hell.

- Hellerup (or bleacher-style) stairs seem designed to represent able-bodiedness. You have to be fit enough to climb up without something to hold onto. There are no step markings to highlight edges. And then you have to be able to sit upright on an uncomfortable bench with no arm or back support.

Ramp and steps at Millennium Bridge, London. Photo: Jos Boys.

Lift sign for disabled people at an architect's office. Photo: Jos Boys.

- High standing reception desks exclude wheelchair users or persons of short stature.

- Lifts that break down and aren't repaired.

- Natural and artificial lighting creating shadow patterns on the floor that make it hard to differentiate steps from level surfaces.

- Shared urban spaces that are badly designed are a nightmare for white cane users – in fact any kind of space that brings together cyclists with people who cannot see them, hear them, or move quickly out of the way.

- Tactile flooring used inconsistently in a building for blind and partially sighted people. We can only depend on it if we know exactly what a specific tactile surface means. If the meaning changes in different parts of the building, the tactile surfaces become meaningless!

- Unnecessary level changes added to enhance the visual and spatial experiences of non-disabled people, but which restrict the movement of many.

- White or monochrome (grey) surfaces, with little colour contrast.

- Very loud, very bright, overwhelming environments.

Access information

Whilst it is not usually the architect's role to provide access information, learning from the best and the worst of strategies by cultural venues, other buildings and public spaces can inform and enlighten a design approach. This includes information provided in advance enabling disabled people to plan ahead; accessibility built into the design; and the provision of accessible events and services.

It's vital to recognise how access barriers limit everyday opportunities and pleasures for disabled people. There is the frustration at getting inaccurate information, being marginalised as a low priority, or having to fight case-by-case for improvements. In addition, access is not just about meeting functional, ergonomic and logistical needs – for example, just 'getting from A to B' – but as a way to diversify and enrich the quality of experiences of diverse disabled people (in that way, it is the same as designing for non-disabled people!).

Dis

Dis is an art/architecture research practice focused on the value of the disabled experience. For the *Seats at the Table* project for London Festival of Architecture 2023, Dis co-founders – Jordan Whitewood-Neal and James Zatka-Haas – aimed to give high-quality access information in advance and on-site to both support

many different forms of wayfinding, and to simultaneously provoke debate about whose needs the world is mainly built for.

"A lot of the work Dis does focuses on the value of the disabled experience, figuring out what it is and why it's important (...) How can wayfinding both achieve its primary purpose and get the public to begin to think about how the world is built to serve their needs, often at the cost of others?"
– Jordan Whitewood-Neal and James Zatka-Haas

Scan the QR code for a video interview with Jordan Whitewood-Neal and James Zatka-Haas.

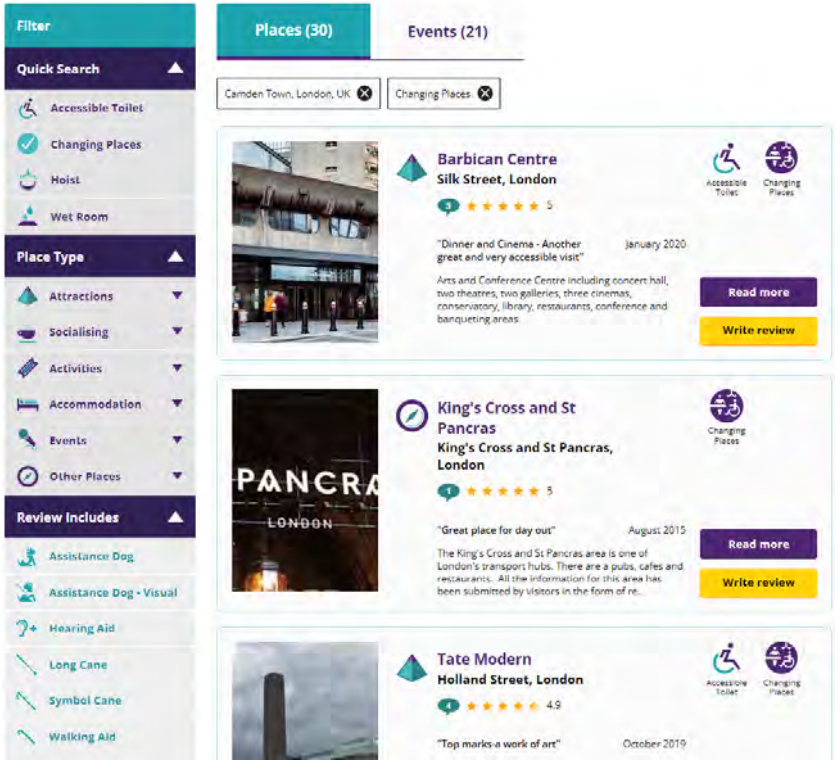
On-site sign for *Seats at the Table*, as part of a series created by Jordan Whitewood-Neal and James Zatka-Haas. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

Greenwich and Docklands International Festival (GDIF) 2023

GDIF is the first UK festival to achieve the Platinum level of Attitude is Everything's Live Events Access Charter. The 2023 festival brochure is available in BSL, audio, large print, easy read visual and relaxed event guides. It covers how to get to the events, what facilities are there, and what support is provided.

Euan's Guide

Euan's Guide is a website providing access reviews of hundreds of public buildings and locations, written by and for disabled people. Providing this information makes it possible for people to know more about if and where they will be able to enjoy an activity.



Screenshot from *Euan's Guide* website.

Social Stories

Increasingly, access information is created as a form of storytelling through photographs, pictograms, symbols, audio and text – often called 'easy read' or 'plain talk'. These social stories comprise short explanations, descriptions and/or illustrations of specific situations, events or activities, including information detailing what to expect when you go to a building. Social stories help neurodivergent people, such as autistic people, to acquire greater social understanding and enable them to stay safe.

Natasha Trotman, a neurodivergent designer, created a set of pre-visit and workshop materials for the V&A *Designing Together* project, as well as a social story for the Tate Modern in pictogram, symbol and text format; and in a photograph and text-based format. She also provided audio of the pictograms, as well as audio that demonstrates how the social story performs on an interactive tablet/smart device.

Social Stories for Tate Modern, by Natasha Trotman. With permission of the designer.

Beauty

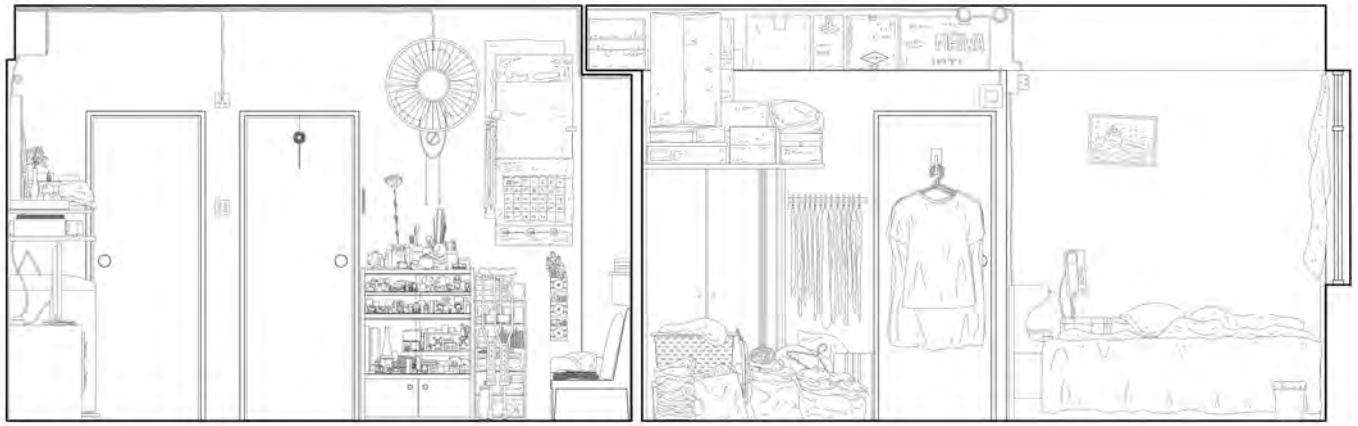
Access features are often ugly and clinical, as if disabled people don't deserve beauty. And beauty need not solely be visual.

"I am passionate about seeing inclusive design as a creative opportunity, not a restriction. I am interested in how beauty is added, keen that any artistic addition enhances the experience for all visitors. Such features should stimulate all of our senses, not just rely on vision. So when considering design, I want a building that is beautiful, that as a blind person I can experience in some rich way."
– Mandy Redvers-Rowe

Graphic design by Jen White-Johnson. Quote from Alice Wong: "Pleasure, flavor, and joy should be embedded in access."

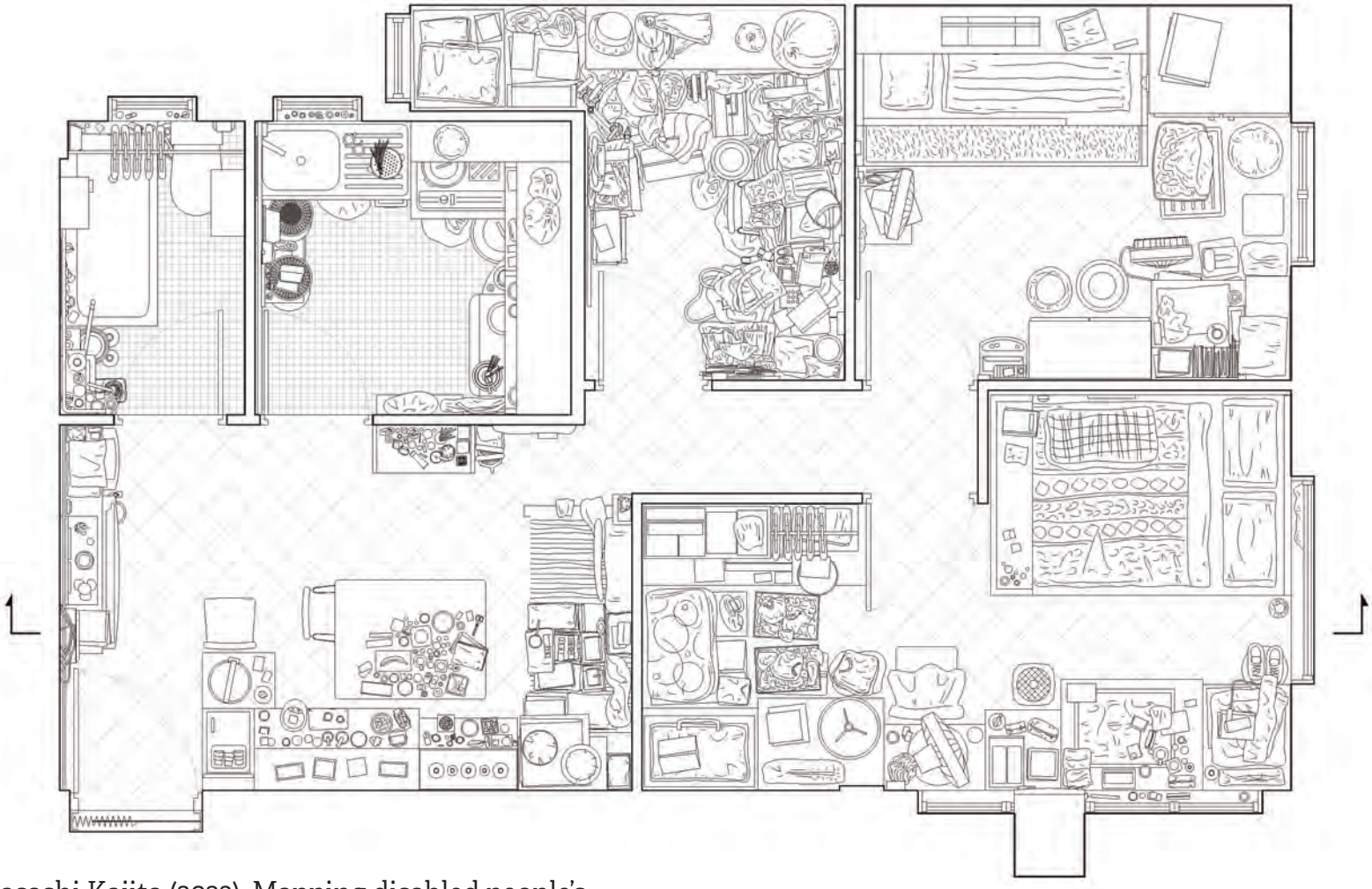
QR code for a video of Mandy Redvers-Rowe talking about beauty.

Small pleasures



Masashi Kajita, Associate Professor at the Royal Danish Academy's Institute of Architecture and Design in Copenhagen, is exploring 'small pleasures' with disabled people, by mapping and sketching their various interpretations of pleasurable and beautiful qualities of everyday living. The aim is to illuminate both functional accessibility themes, and the moments of everyday happiness.

"I think that good design can support opening up the spatiality of individuals – increasing opportunities, motivating pleasure, and bringing us closer to a world that allows us all with different bodily abilities and preferences to coexist."
– Masashi Kajita



Masashi Kajita (2023), Mapping disabled people's apartments, Hong Kong as part of *Small Pleasures* project. Courtesy of the author.

Beyond the visual

"The concept of 'gaining blindness' comes from my observation that we always talk about 'losing sight.' So blindness is always understood as a loss. But I think the lived experience of many blind people is that blindness, vision impairment, is a different way of perceiving the world, and that there are gains in that difference."
– Georgina Kleege

Architectural practice is strongly focused on valuing the visual. Our conventional orthographic and representational tools centre on what we can see, but do not capture other senses – sound, smell, touch, taste. What, then, does it mean to go beyond visually orientated design?

Blind writer and museum consultant Georgina Kleege argues that rather than 'bestowing access' on disabled people, cultural professionals need to value diverse perspectives and be willing to learn from them. She challenges ideas that assume blind people only 'need' touch and item description.

As she says: "It's not just the hands, it's also proprioception and kinaesthesia – it's the haptic experiences of moving around and near objects that I think often get ignored." This includes changes through time, and in occupation and atmosphere – inviting everyone to open up to experience buildings and spaces in this way, not just through their eyes.

To develop complex forms, Pereira uses models in clay. Copyright: Carlos Mourão Pereira. Reproduced from Ann Heylighen (2012).

In a similar way, blind architect Carlos Mourão Pereira has rethought how he undertakes design, following the loss of his sight. For a proposed sea bathing facility in Livorno, Italy, he spent many days absorbing the site and its atmosphere – a slow site survey that richly informed the final design.

Word pictures

Audio description is descriptive narration through speech of key visual elements in an image, scene or performance. Its main aim is to offer access to blind and partially sighted people, although audio description can also provide enjoyable listening for everyone. Where audio description is richly developed, it has the potential to enhance all our experiences of built space. Partially sighted artist Zoe Partington and blind writer, theatre director, and actor Mandy Redvers-Rowe both

creatively explore this in a variety of ways; for example through the writing of word pictures as part of interactive workshops:

On the Royal Academy of Arts, London, by Zoe Partington

Echoes of life hidden in architectural facets
fingers dancing on the prevailing distorted surfaces,
a shifting shaft of warmth and light.
Captivating (haunting) yet never ending,
a transient emptiness, flowing into eternity,
whilst for a fleeting moment, time takes a deep breath,
metamorphosing from a chalky, feathery, textured edged expanse,
Whirling into a lift shaft with oily depths.
The ever-changing refracting bouncing light
glistening in time, ticking with an inner peace,
blistering, a musty smell with a cocktail of chaotic corridor charm betwixt the tranquil trail of cappuccino textured walls.

Architecture practice Manalo & White won a design competition to create Nyth Youth Theatre for Welsh language theatre company Frân Wen in Bangor, Wales, using audio description rather than conventional orthographic drawings. As the architects write in their submission:

"While [audio description] is primarily prepared for people with viewing difficulties, it also invites

opportunity for a fully sighted person to see things differently and enhance their viewing experience.

[...] Numerous design details emerged from the process of writing the script with [the audio describer] such as reverberation time, tactility of stonework, smell of wood, velocity of airflow [...] Our ambition for Nyth is to offer valid choices to all users with a joy and clarity in finding their way around, assured by a sense of security and filled with excitement of encounters."
– Manalo & White Architects

Manalo & White Architects (2019), Render for Frân Wen Youth Theatre.

Sense of Place

An early project by The DisOrdinary Architecture Project in collaboration with the University of Brighton and the charity VocalEyes, *Sense of Place*, brought blind and partially sighted people interested in architecture together with interior design students to co-explore what an audio-described building tour should be like.

"The project enabled a deeper understanding of architectural space and the development of an evocative language to express it. By imagining how blind and visually impaired people interpret material space, through touch, sound, smell, light, contrast and colour, these very qualities were vividly highlighted. In having to accurately describe what an exterior or interior is like, visual and interpretative skills were developed together with the use of architectural terminologies and analogies."
– VocalEyes

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David Gissen and Georgina Kleege (2019), More than Meets the Eye: Georgina Kleege, *Future Anterior Journal of Historic Preservation*, History, Theory, and Criticism, 16(1), pp 57-67

Care and repair

"Architecture is in need of care – dependent on maintenance, cleaning, and daily upkeep to sustain its existence [...] Architecture protects us and therefore we care for it. By understanding architecture and care in this manner, it is possible to connect it to concepts of social reproduction and its everyday labour as well as to the deficiency of reproducible resources at an environmental scale."
– *Elke Krasny*

Care is becoming an increasingly important concept in architecture. Too often, however, divisions are made between 'care-givers' and 'care-receivers'. This retains the agency with the 'givers' (architects, care workers, health professionals) and reproduces stereotypes of disabled people as passive 'receivers'.

Disabled activists such as Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha and Alice Wong instead explore care through emphasising the importance of our mutual interdependence, and a recognition of our shared vulnerabilities. With this understanding, access and inclusion are always changing and complicated, require collective interactions and responsibilities, and don't stop after a building or space has been designed.

Everyday adaptations

Starting from care means paying attention to how existing built settings can be made more socially equitable and sustainable. One of the *Seats at the Table* site intervention projects – by blind architectural assistant and activist Poppy Levison and blind theatre producer, writer and actor Mandy Redvers-Rowe – explored how light-touch additions could create a truly accessible experience. *The Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice* in Postman's Park is made up of 54 ceramic plaques, each honouring people who lost their lives trying to save others. The plaques are arranged on an outside wall, covered by a porch on a shallow raised plinth, with a bench that runs the full length.

Ceramic tiles in honour of heroic self-sacrifice, Postman's Park, London. Photo: Poppy Levison.

QR code for a video of Mandy Redvers-Rowe and Poppy Levison on care and repair.

The project added the elements of temporary wheelchair ramps, a BSL video interpreting the plaques, and commissioned an audio description and soundscape (all accessible via a QR code, with sound played live throughout the London Festival of Architecture in June 2023). This opened up enjoyment of the memorial to disabled audiences, and to others – many of whom enjoyed sitting quietly and listening to the soundtrack.

Ramps to Memorial to Heroic Self-Sacrifice, Postman's Park London. Photo: Jos Boys.

Architecture of care

Anthony Clarke's architecture practice Bloxas, based in Melbourne, Australia, specialises in designs for people with complex needs. These are co-created through a process of discussion and readings.

House for Taylor, for example, is a contained space for someone with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME).

"For me, every day is focused on surviving within my limits. It is a delicate dance of trying to read your body's signals and understand what you can and can't do from minute to minute. [This house] gives me a much less stimulated space, fresh air, open spaces, quiet, and most importantly, the chance to observe

and be amongst nature. I have a very slow-paced simple life now, and nature is what gives me the most joy and fulfilment.

Currently that involves watching the sunsets from our existing living area, or the stars at night through those same windows, the kangaroos passing through the field and vineyard on the south side, and birds both in the existing garden and in the same field on the south. These are the views and habits I would love to continue, especially on the days that I'm not well enough to get outside for very long."
– Ryan Taylor, house owner

Care, here, is about a level of detail that is centred on a particular person's access needs and desire for a meaningful life.

BLOXAS (2018), *House for Taylor,* Melbourne.

The Ed Roberts Centre, Berkeley

The Ed Roberts Campus in Berkeley (2011), designed by Leddy Maytum Stacy Architects, remains an iconic example of an accessible building, led and operated by disabled people. The scheme is named in honour of Ed Roberts (1939–1995), a pioneer of the disability rights movement. After his death, a disabled group came together to develop an inclusive campus for organisations that provide services to disabled people. More recently, however, its many and diverse users are widening and shifting ideas about inclusive design. As researcher Kim Kullman shows, a building that was designed out of a particular historical moment of disability activism has had to shift and supportively adapt to,

LMS Architects (2011), Ed Roberts Campus, Berkeley, USA. Interior ramp. Reproduced from Kim Kullman (2018). Photo: Tim Griffith.

Carlos, a caretaker cleaning at the Ed Roberts Campus. Reproduced from Kim Kullman (2018).

for example, the experiences of autistic people and of people with environmental sensitivities. He highlights the vital role of ongoing service support in managing these tensions productively, and illustrates how building maintenance and caretakers – mostly learning-disabled people in a supported employment scheme – respond to various access requirements positively and creatively.

Ongoing maintenance and repair work is often problematically framed as a 'wasted' resource in conventional building services and management – due to the time and connection to support individual adaptation of, for example, building-wide ventilation, heating and lighting systems. But, it is central to understanding access as collective care.

Careful reuse?

The Caritas Psychiatric Centre, refurbished by Architecten De Vylder Vinck Taillieu in 2018, is part of a hospital campus for psychiatric

dVVT (2018), Caritas Psychiatric Centre interior. Photo: Filip Dujardin.

patients in Melle, Belgium. The redundant hospital dormitory – one of the original asylum buildings – was turned into a public space with an open-ended brief (and ongoing review). Given that the pavilion was already open to the elements, the suggestion was to do enough work to creatively stabilise the structure to prevent further deterioration, while introducing useful spaces for loosely defined activities, clinical or not, to

take place. As part of this, standard greenhouses have been inserted to provide meeting rooms.

However, whilst this building project started from a careful survey of the existing building structure and materials, and is explained by the architects in mainly material terms, a similar initial survey of existing accessibility could have provided valuable knowledge for making sure that the design adjustments could also evidence improved conditions for disabled people using the site. It remains unclear how meaningful and accessible this building is to its vulnerable users.

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Clinical settings

Many disability studies scholars and activists use the concepts of 'medical' and 'social' models of disability. Whilst the medical model sees disabled people as having individual problems that are perceived as tragedies and need to be 'fixed' or at least made more 'normal', the social model understands disability as the product of an unaccommodating society and environment. UK activists in the 1990s, such as Mike Oliver, argued that disability is social and political, and is distinct from impairment as particular to individuals.

This built on campaigning by groups of physically disabled people in the 1970s and '80s who were still being institutionalised, for example the Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) and the Independent Living Movement.

"In our view, it is society which disabled physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society."
– UPIAS (1976)

Beyond the medical model?

Whilst there have been many developments and critiques of both medical and social models from

Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq (2021) Images for *Hospital Rooms* project at Springfield Hospital, courtesy of the artist.

disabled people, the underlying focus on how society treats disabled people remains important. How, then, can we offer improvements and alternatives to a purely medical model of institutional, clinical and community spaces of care?

The *Hospital Rooms X Springfield* (2021-2022) project with South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust, brought in a number of artists to develop artworks and activities, as part of the development of two new mental health facilities at Springfield University Hospital. Deaf artist Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq made artwork as a communication tool for deaf inpatients, to provide visual signs covering basic requirements.

"Many staff arrive with no British Sign Language (BSL) skills to ease the environmental impact [for

deaf mental health patients]. I have [for example] created BSL signs for 'bed' – referring to bedroom – so if a deaf patient signed when they want something, staff should remember and know what is being asked for: tea/coffee, gym, art, support, and so on."
– Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq

An A to X of Chronic Illness: patients' architectural histories (an incomplete guide) is an ongoing research project by architectural historian and filmmaker Anna Ulrikke Andersen, exploring the settings for people who live with chronic illnesses. Told from a personal narrative of chronic rheumatic illness, Andersen asks: how do our bodies respond to buildings?

Chronic Conditions: Body and Building, (2021). Exhibition at Palácio Sinel de Cordes, as part of the Future Architecture Platform. Curated by Anna Ulrikke Andersen, designed by L'Atelier Senzu, commissioned and organised by Lisbon Architecture Triennale. Photo: Sara Constança.

An exhibition of the work at the Lisbon Architecture Triennale 2021 brought together her own films with photos taken by chronically ill people exploring their experiences of space (both domestic and clinical), as well as a selection of drawings and photographs by architects and artists from 1822 to 1983, and films.

The exhibition design included films shown on the ceiling that could be viewed whilst lying down.

"The exhibition highlights that the blueprint we have today is incomplete and should be developed further [...] Instead, we move from A to X: A for Architecture, to X, the unknown future, showing the way chronic illness affects our experience of landscapes, buildings and infrastructures. How can we configure a new alphabet to help us with the new tomorrow?"
– *Anna Ulrikke Andersen*

Listening to disabled people

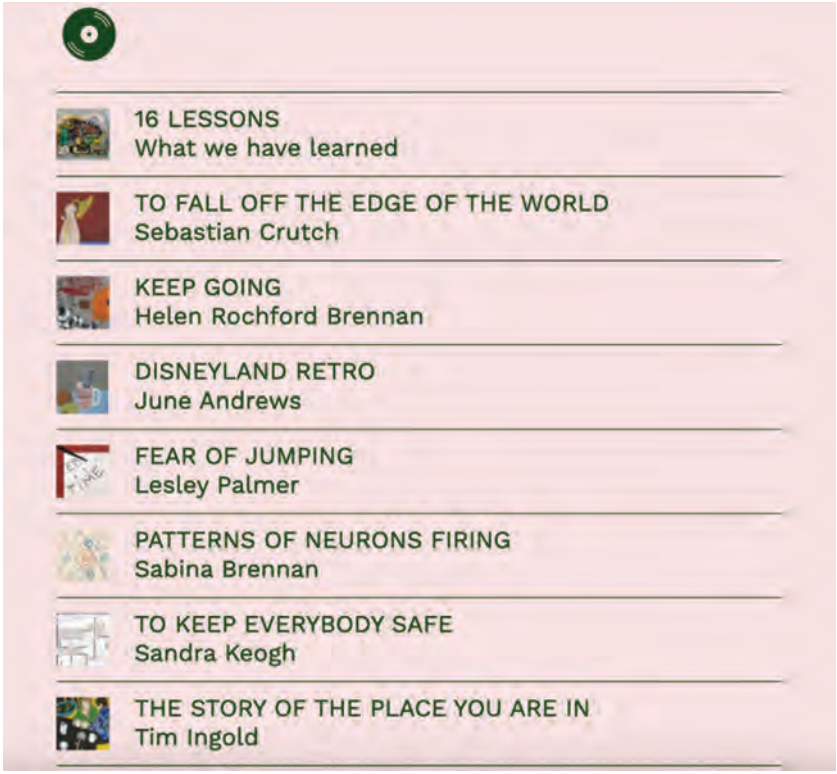
If we are to challenge purely medical models of disability, we need to pay attention to diverse disabled people's own lived experiences and expertise. Often, however, disabled people in clinical settings are framed as passive receivers of care, and/or as someone with 'non-normal' communication skills and behaviours. This can mean that their requirements and preferences are ignored or not taken seriously.

Heart n Soul (2022), Front Cover image from *Believe in Us* project summary.

Heart n Soul, a learning disability-led group, has developed an explicit process for their members to engage with – and be listened to by – health professionals. This is because healthcare services can be difficult for people to navigate, and even more confusing and overwhelming for people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

In the group's project *Believe in Us*, people with learning disabilities and autistic people collaborate with health professionals and designers in a truly equal and inclusive way, underpinned by clear protocols, and communicated using plain talk methods that don't exclude those with different communication needs. They share knowledge and make decisions together, with the aim of developing a radical new approach to redesigning services.

Losing Myself was a collaborative research and design project by Níall McLaughlin and Yeoryia Manolopoulou, in support of the development of an installation for the Irish Pavilion at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. The project captured different stories by people with dementia and their families, as well as interdisciplinary conversations with experts across a range of fields – neuroscientists, psychologists, health workers, philosophers and anthropologists. This produced what they call a "mosaic of information" – a set of varied voices and perspectives, as the basis for creating the artwork. As well as a progress diary, the online project includes sections on stories, dialogues and drawings.



Screenshot from *Losing Myself* website. Website design by Objectif.

Reimagining clinical settings

Some disabled artists have been reimagining what alternative spaces for care might be like. *Madlove: A Designer Asylum (It ain't no bad thing to need a safe place to go mad)* was started in 2014 by James Leadbitter, aka the vacuum cleaner, and exhibited as part of an exhibition entitled *Bedlam: The Asylum and Beyond* at the Wellcome Collection in London in 2016.

With *Madlove*, Leadbitter aims to rethink institutional and medical settings – often experienced as oppressive and unsafe – to be more positive spaces for those experiencing mental distress. To do this, Leadbitter brought together people with and without mental health experiences, mental health professionals and academics, artists and designers – "and everyone else on the spectrum". The aim was, Leadbitter explained, to build "the most crazy, bonkers, mental asylum we dare dream of: a desirable and playful space to 'go mad', countering the popular myth that mental illness is dangerous and scary."

"Together we are attempting to create a unique space where mutual care blossoms, stigma and discrimination are actively challenged, divisions understood, and madness can be experienced in a less painful way. This temporary structure will be a reflexive and responsive space for exploring and redesigning madness."
– the vacuum cleaner

Madlove: A Designer Asylum (2015). Created by James Leadbitter, with Hannah Hull. Design by Benjamin Koslowski and James Christian. Image courtesy of the vacuum cleaner.

Opening up society to non-normative ways of being

An older person 'hacks' street furniture to have a rest. Photo: Jos Boys.

Shannon Mattern, academic and author, reflecting on her mother's dementia, believes the deeper problem is that any increasing loss of ability to perform in normative ways becomes 'solved' through removal to a clinical setting. In a 2021 article she considered De Hogeweyk in the Netherlands – the world's first 'dementia village' – which while designed to appear as a small residential settlement with a shopping street, is in fact a secure care facility. Its aim is to create experiences of home and community that produce a sense of belonging in its inhabitants.

This is part of an approach in healthcare in which design is moved away from institutional settings, that is, where the realities of being in a locked space are hidden. In designing such environments, usage of surveillance cameras, movement

sensors, and other security measures aims to prevent wandering, and/or, as in the case of De Hogeweyk, enable limited safe wandering.

Mattern suggests that these are not merely appropriate functional solutions, but value judgments about who matters and how space and resources are allocated. These judgments are made in context of wider attitudes about what counts as being human and sits within larger frameworks of the social and political funding and management of care.

For Mattern, this context exposes assumed divisions between normative independence and competence, versus interdependence, with its assumed burden of care. The De Hogeweyk dementia village, then, is also about the containment of vulnerable bodyminds, because the world beyond its walls is hostile to the appearance or expression of madness, dementia or other non-normative neurodivergent behaviours. Instead, Mattern wishes for "an external universe [that is] less hostile to and more inclusive of different abilities."

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Crip time

Finnegan Shannon (2020), *Do you want us here or not.* Commissioned for *Lone Proponent of Wall-to-Wall Carpet* at Carleton University Art Gallery. Fabrication by Walter Zanetti, Anthony Dewar, Paul Durocher, School of Industrial Design, and Brant Lucuik, School of Architecture, Carleton University. Photo: Justin Wonnacott.

The time things take is often ignored in considerations of access and inclusion. Not only does the notion of time have many experiences and meanings to diverse disabled people, but ableist society assumes that time is neutral – and puts pressure on us all to feel guilt if we are not endlessly productive. Disabled authors, such as Alison Kafer, have critiqued normal assumptions through exploring what 'crip time' might mean, as a challenge to normative ways of being. (Here, the term crip is reclaimed as positive, as it has been by many disabled activists.)

"Rather than bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds."
– Alison Kafer

Liz Crow (2012-13), *Bedding Out*, live durational performance, various UK locations.

In her seminal 2013 essay, *Lying Down Anyhow*, Liz Crow describes her own experiences of being considered drunk or homeless when attempting to lie down in public. Many other artists and activists have explored how time and rest are deeply tied into assumptions about what counts as competency and productivity.

Sick Time, Sleepy Time, Crip Time: Against Capitalism's Temporal Bullying (2016–2020), was a series of exhibitions, public programmes and community projects curated by Taraneh Fazeli that addressed the politics of health, disability, race, and care.

Most immediately for designers, taking account of crip time means thinking about opportunities to pause, rest or escape. As part of The DisOrdinary Architecture Project's festival pavilion design for Theaterformen in Germany (2022), we converted bike racks into seats. This was both a commentary on the lack of public seating in the area, and to provoke discussion about how cycling and fast-moving bodies are prioritised over slower movement.

The DisOrdinary Architecture Project (2022), Site interventions for Theaterformen Festival, Braunschweig, Germany. Photo: Jos Boys.

Raquel Meseguer Zafe and Helen Stratford (2023), *Resting Space* site intervention, Postman's Park. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

QR code for a video of Helen Stratford and Raquel Meseguer Zafe discussing crip time.

Resting spaces

Disabled artists have also been reimagining time and space to make room for resting. Examples include Áine O'Hara's *Nap Club*, Raquel Meseguer Zafe/Unchartered Collective's *A Crash Course in Cloudspotting* and *Resting Space Network* and Finnegan Shannon's *Do You Want Us Here or Not?* project.

As part of the *Seats at the Table* installation during the London Festival of Architecture in June 2023, Raquel Meseguer Zafe together with artist-architect Helen Stratford created a resting space in Postman's Park, London. Using a simple arrangement of beanbags and shade canopies, the work hosted quotes from people living with invisible

disabilities and chronic illnesses, alongside gentle invitations for people to pause, rest and lie down.

Spoon theory

Spatial design that does not think about people's various time patterns also tends to ignore energy levels. For non-disabled people, everyday tasks can be undertaken without significant thought or planning.

'Spoon theory' was coined by writer and blogger Christine Miserandino in 2003 to express how it felt to live with a chronic condition. Explaining the viewpoint in a diner, she gave her friend a handful of spoons and described them as units of energy to be spent performing everyday

Raquel Meseguer Zafe (2021), *A Crash Course in Cloudspotting*. Photo: Paul Samuel White.

actions, thus requiring the planning out of days and actions in advance so as to not run out.

On Slow Space

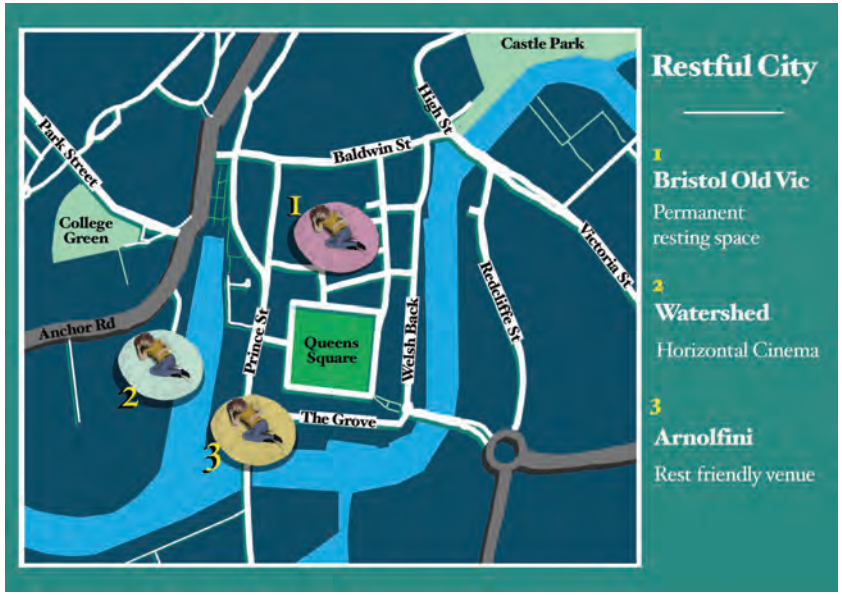
In her 2014 book *Doing Disability Differently*, Jos Boys, Co-director of The DisOrdinary Architecture Project, proposed an alternative manifesto called *Slow Space* – as a potential campaign, a provocation, and/or a different kind of practice – that built from the ideas of the Slow City and Slow Food movements across Europe.

"Starting from the notion of Slow contains a deliberate element of 'reclaiming' for disabled people. Slow can too often have negative connotations: that someone is a bit stupid, their movements restricted, laborious and therefore time-consuming, or needing 'support'. In a world which highly values mobility, speed, independence and personal autonomy, slowness is a problem; the response to taking time 'unnecessarily', to needing 'help', is often one of irritation or awkwardness. This is not to suggest that disabled people are 'slow' or even want to 'go slow'; it is to open up to view the interconnectedness of unthinking abled mobility, instant gratification, the reduction of everyday life to superficial consumed experiences, and the speed at which we are using up planetary resources."
– Jos Boys

Raquel Meseguer Zafe has been working with Coventry and Bristol to create Restful Cities that aim to:

- Recognise the needs of people with invisible disabilities and give them a warm welcome in rest-friendly spaces around the city

- Develop a Resting Spaces Network, so no one is more than 15 minutes from somewhere they are welcome to rest



Bristol Restful City map created by Jazz Thompson, as part of Raquel Meseguer Zafe's *Towards a Restful City* project, 2022-23.

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Alison Kafer (2013), *Feminist Queer Crip*, Indiana University Press

Deaf Space

Aaron Williamson (2014-17), *Demonstrating the World* public performance, various locations.

Deaf Space is a set of architectural concepts and design guidelines originally developed at Gallaudet University in the US, the only university for deaf people. Deaf Space is based on Deaf culture and on the spatial and design implications of using sign language. Using uppercase D for Deaf is to describe people who identify as part of a Deaf community, use sign as a first language and consider themselves a linguistic minority.

Deaf Gain

British deaf artist Aaron Williamson coined the term 'Deaf Gain' in the 1990s to counter assumptions built into labelling him as having 'hearing loss'. Deafness instead becomes a positive and creative way of being in the world. Williamson's own arts practice engages with disability politics, highlighting issues of access and exclusion, but in a humorous or

absurd manner; revealing, playing up to and skewing social attitudes towards disability.

Deaf Space projects for Theaterformen

In 2022 and 2023, The DisOrdinary Architecture Project designed temporary festival facilities for a German international theatre and dance festival in Braunschweig and Hanover. Led by Deaf architect Richard Dougherty, with Chris Laing as consultant and together with DisOrdinary co-directors Jos Boys and Zoe Partington, these projects explored how Deaf Space could inform the creation of accessible, enjoyable and exciting architectural and urban forms. Through a participatory initial design process bringing together the Theaterformen team with German Deaf and disabled artists, we developed *The Clearing* in 2022 and *Making Waves* in 2023.

The DisOrdinary Architecture Project (2023), *Making Waves* festival platform and accessible site interventions for Theaterformen. Photo: Jos Boys.

Scan the QR code for a video interview with Chris Laing on Deaf Architecture Front.

Deaf Architecture Front

As Deaf architect Chris Laing, founder of Deaf Architecture Front (DAF) notes, only 1% of architects currently identify as disabled, and of that 1%, only 0.2% define as deaf. For existing deaf architectural students and practitioners, progress remains difficult and often isolating, because sign interpretation is not available or is patchy. Potential deaf audiences for architectural talks or tours are also very poorly supported, which in turn prevents a younger generation of people coming into architectural education and practice. As a platform and collective, DAF hopes to change this through activism, consulting and open-source resources.

Chris Laing (2023), Deaf Architecture Front.

Signstrokes

Deaf people also face significant barriers because BSL sign vocabulary about built environment design and construction is not standardised and lacks terms to express architectural concepts uncommon in everyday language. This means that sign language interpreters often struggle to explain what a deaf architect or architectural student using professional expressions is saying. Chris Laing, together with deaf architectural assistant Adolfs Kristapsons, are developing and testing new signs that can fill these gaps through the *Signstrokes* project.

Chris Laing and Adolfs Kristapsons (ongoing) *Signstrokes.*

Disability etiquette

Many non-disabled people feel awkward around disabled people, for example by worrying that they will say or do the 'wrong' thing. From a non-disabled standpoint, learning to recognise – and accept – that you will make mistakes is vital, and not a reason to avoid engaging with disability, access and inclusion. There is plenty of advice from diverse disabled people online.

Some basic tips

1. Call the person by their name, not their disability. Disabled people too often get asked the question "What should I call you?", as if it's not obvious to use their name.
2. See the person, not the disability. If you feel discomfort as a non-disabled person, try not to let this get in the way of a normal adult conversation.
3. Don't ask people about their disability. These are intrusive questions. Let a disabled person decide when and if they want to tell you aspects of their personal history.
4. Don't make assumptions. Don't assume that people with particular disabilities have similar characteristics; that all blind people or wheelchair users have identical access requirements for example. Don't assume that when you see a visible impairment, that sums up the person's disability.

5. As many impairments are invisible, do not assume that people you work with or meet without an obvious disability are non-disabled.

6. For people who use them, wheelchairs are a valuable means of getting around. Do not use the term 'wheelchair-bound' as this perpetuates the non-disabled assumption that wheelchairs are a problem. 'Wheelchair user' is fine.

7. Where people have personal assistants, BSL interpreters, note-takers and/or audio-describers, always talk directly to the disabled or Deaf person. Access support workers like these are providing a professional service, not 'carers' (even though they may be friends).

8. Where the access support is non-human, for example a guide dog, wheelchair or white cane, do not focus on the device. Do not grab or touch someone's wheelchair or cane, unless invited to do so. Don't pet or talk to a guide dog – they are doing a job.

9. It's fine to offer help, but never give it without asking, and do not be upset if the help is not required.

10. People communicate in a multiplicity of ways, so aim to give time for interactions, have patience and be flexible. Try not to use specialist jargon. Talking clearly and precisely helps everyone. Face people when you are talking in case they use lip-reading to supplement their hearing.

Zoe Partington (2022), Neon signs of slogans from the UK disabled people's movement in 1990s.

Be okay to repeat yourself if required. You can use text on your phone, learn some BSL, explore audio-describing places and objects. Give people time to process, rather than expecting immediate responses.

11. If you are talking to a blind person, do not just leave without saying you are going. Also introduce yourself by name when you join a group after being away.

12. Be aware that some people may have limited energy or may find intense group participation overwhelming. Make space and time for breaks and/or 'escape'. Make sure these opportunities are offered throughout events such as workshops.

13. Recognise that we all have access needs, it's just that these are normalised and 'built in' for non-disabled people. Instead of asking people what 'problems' and medical conditions they have ("What's wrong with you?"), ask them what their access requirements are ("What do you need?").

A note on terminology

Language is important, and often fraught around disability. For example, disabled people versus people with disabilities. Take the lead from the disabled person. Listen to what they prefer, and be open and adaptable to change the language you use, based on their suggestions.

Not all people use the same expressions, these can vary across disability, country and culture. Overall language should be:

1. **Descriptive** (e.g. wheelchair user, blind person).

2. **Understandable** (e.g. has a hearing or speech impairment).

3. **Simple** (no unnecessary adverbs like 'severely' or 'profoundly'. They might mean very different things to different people).

4. **Free of emotion and negativity** (no 'suffering from...' or 'victim of...').

5. **Respectful** (for example, not 'feeling sorry' for the person, or assuming they are incapable).

As new forms of disability self-advocacy have arisen over the years, some disability groups have developed terms that challenge norms: Crip as a deliberate challenge to its usual derogatory use; Deaf (with a capital D) for people who use signing as their first language and consider themselves a linguistic minority; neurodivergent versus neurotypical from autistic advocates; the reclaiming of Mad; and normates to 'name' non-disabled people as the problem. Redefinitions like these are important processes of contestation, but may not be common across diverse disabled people.

Disability Justice

The Disability Justice movement, led by disabled queers and activists of colour, goes beyond access and inclusion to concerns with disability and spatial justice. This makes issues of power and exploitation central, as well as bringing together the diverse variety of bodies on which discrimination operates (across race, gender, sexuality and class as well as disability), in a variety of ways. This moves us beyond access as merely regulatory compliance towards demanding a more political stance.

Originally formulated through conversations between disabled activists Patty Berne and Mia Mingus in the US, these concerns were then expanded to include others including Leroy Moore, Stacey Milbern, Eli Clare and Sebastian Margaret. They have been published as a list of 10 principles, available on the Sins Invalid website.

"There is no neutral body from which our bodies deviate. Society has written deep into each strand of tissue of every living person on earth. (...) No body stands outside of the consequences of injustice and inequality."
– Aurora Levins Morales

Sins Invalid is a disability justice-based performance project that incubates and celebrates artists with disabilities, centralising artists of colour and LGBTQ / gender-variant artists as communities who have been historically marginalised.

10 Principles of Disability Justice – Sins Invalid

INTERSECTIONALITY

"We do not live single-issue lives" – *Audre Lorde.* Ableism, coupled with white supremacy, supported by capitalism, underscored by heteropatriarchy, has rendered the vast majority of the world 'invalid'.

LEADERSHIP OF THOSE MOST IMPACTED

"We are led by those who most know these systems" – *Aurora Levins Morales.*

ANTI-CAPITALIST POLITIC

In an economy that sees land and humans as components of profit, we are anti-capitalist by the nature of having non-conforming body/minds.

COMMITMENT TO CROSS-MOVEMENT ORGANIZING

Shifting how social justice movements understand disability and contextualize ableism, disability justice lends itself to politics of alliance.

RECOGNIZING WHOLENESS

People have inherent worth outside of commodity relations and capitalist notions of productivity. Each person is full of history and life experience.

SUSTAINABILITY

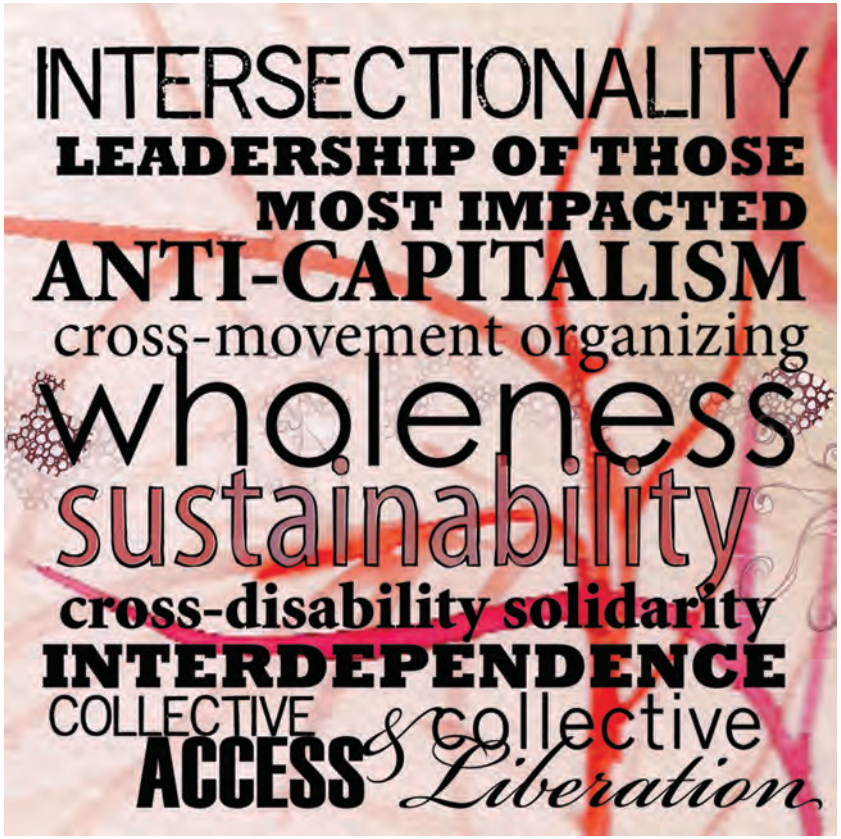
We pace ourselves, individually and collectively, to be sustained long term. Our embodied experiences guide us toward ongoing justice and liberation.

COMMITMENT TO CROSS-DISABILITY SOLIDARITY
We honor the insights and participation of all of our community members, knowing that isolation undermines collective liberation.

INTERDEPENDENCE
We meet each other's needs as we build toward liberation, knowing that state solutions inevitably extend into further control over lives.

COLLECTIVE ACCESS
As brown, black and queer-bodied disabled people we bring flexibility and creative nuance that go beyond able-bodied/minded normativity, to be in community with each other.

COLLECTIVE LIBERATION
No body or mind can be left behind – only moving together can we accomplish the revolution we require.

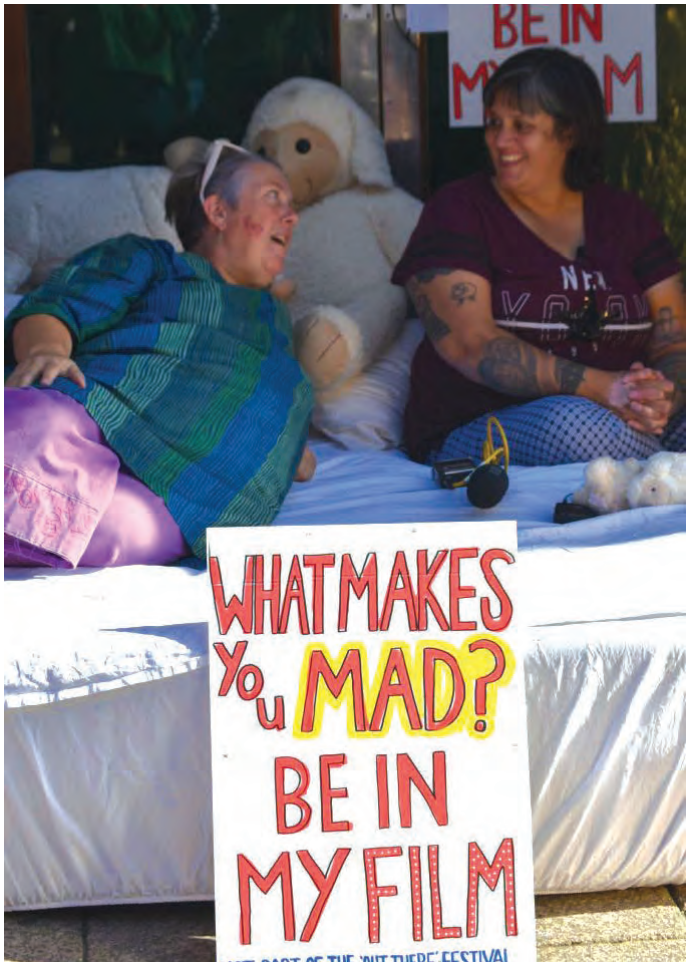


Sins Invalid (ongoing), Graphic illustrating key points of *10 Principles of Disability Justice*.

"We need to think of access with an understanding of disability justice, moving away from an equality-based model of sameness and 'we are just like you' to a model of disability that embraces difference, confronts privilege and challenges what is considered 'normal' on every front. We don't want to simply join the ranks of the privileged; we want to dismantle those ranks and the systems that maintain them."

– ***Mia Mingus***

Nomy Lamm (2020) in *We Love Like Barnacles: Crip Lives in Climate Chaos.* Photo: Geo Xeal ©, Courtesy of Sins Invalid.



Dolly Sen and Caroline Cardus (2022), *Bedlamb: getting into bed with madness*. Performance in Great Yarmouth. Photo: David Palmer.

Disability Justice in the UK

Throughout a long period of austerity politics, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, disabled people in the UK have been under increased attack – condemned as benefit scroungers, as acceptable casualties of a pandemic – and have had benefits cut and demands on paperwork and medical evidence expanded. Disabled artists and activists have been responding in a variety of creative ways to campaign against these inequalities.

Section 136 (Maybe it's the World that's Mad) by Dolly Sen with Caroline Cardus is a project made up of three parts:

- **Broken Hearts for the DWP:** A short documentary "on how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is driving disabled people to starvation and suicide and how disabled people are fighting back using art, love and rage."

- **Sectioning the DWP:** A 2020 action at the DWP offices, applying the concept of sectioning (a mental healthcare term when you remove someone for being a danger to themselves and other people, and put them in a place of safety) to a government department which, Sen argues, has been a danger to other people.

- **Bedlamb:** An ongoing series of conversations that takes place on a bed covered with cuddly lambs in unusual locations which contrast or complement conversations about issues surrounding madness. [Its name is a play on Bedlam, the archaic term for institutions for those deemed mentally ill.]

Dolly Sen and Caroline Cardus (2020), *Sectioning the DWP.* Performance in London. Photo: David Palmer.

Figures (2015) is a mass sculptural durational performance by Liz Crow/ Roaring Girl Productions, set out to make visible the human cost of austerity and to urge action against it. Using excavated raw river mud and taking up residence on the streets and foreshore of central London, disabled artist-activist Crow sculpted 650 small human figures, each one representing an individual at the sharp end of austerity.

Though made in the same form, each figure differed in its detail, representing both common humanity and the individual, their number echoing the 650 constituencies and individual MPs throughout which the effects of austerity are felt. Once dried, the figures became part of a mobile exhibition, creating a talking point for members of the public to grapple with the questions raised by the work.

The figures were then returned to foreshore, and fired in a bonfire, while their corresponding stories of austerity were read aloud until the returning tide doused the flames. The figures, fired, burned and broken, were reclaimed, gathered and ground down to dust. Finally, the ground remains of the figures were scattered back to water, taken out to sea as a poignant reminder of the human cost of austerity and a call to the international community to take heed.

Liz Crow (2015), *Figures.* Mass sculptural performance. Photo: Claudio Ahlers.

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Imperfect

Making spaces accessible, inclusive and sustainable is always a work in progress. This is both because architectural and urban design is such a complicated process, with many different actors and agendas, and because of the diverse variety of people's access needs and preferences. The wish for universal 'one-size-fits-all' design solutions is a false hope. Even examples in this compendium are likely to be problematic for some disabled people. And many important issues, projects and groups are missing.

Starting from an imperfect world means incorporating uncertainty. So, rather than a simple binary between designing for non-disabled people as the norm and 'adding on' disabled people at the end, we need to explore ways of engaging from the start of the design process with the considerable variety in how we occupy built space – with all complications, variables and unknowables.

Disability aesthetics

Thinking about the imperfect has the potential to be a creative generator for architectural form. Disability studies scholar Tobin Siebers argues that disability is not only a fundamental to much contemporary artistic practice in its concerns with the body, but is also a valuable critical concept for rethinking assumptions about what is beautiful.

"Disability aesthetics does not embrace genius, bodily integrity, and health as standards of beauty. Nor does it support the aversion to disability required by traditional conceptions of human perfection. Rather, it broadens the inclusion of disability found throughout modern art by affirming that disability may operate both as a critical framework for questioning aesthetic presuppositions [...] and as a value."
– *Tobin Seibers*

The Disabled Avant Garde (DAG) (2006–2015) was a satirical organisation created by disabled artists Katherine Araniello and Aaron Williamson. Through contemporary art (video and performance) the intention was to "cause confusion and inspire debate through humorously distorting or subverting traditional stereotyping of disability."

Still from video *Leigh Bowery* (2006) by The Disabled Avant Garde (Katherine Araniello and Aaron Williamson). With permission of the artist.

Prototype for tree supports along the Salón de Pinos, Madrid. *Madrid RIO* by Burgos & Garrido, Porras La Casta, Rubio & Álvarez-Sala and West 8. Photo: West 8.

Similarly, David Gissen in his book *The Architecture of Disability* (2022) argues for design concepts that start from imperfect qualities.

He calls this the aesthetics of infirmity, "embracing impairment and weakness." He gives the example of West 8 Landscape Architecture's planting of crooked trees in Madrid, that need to be supported by 'crutches'. He also suggests the development of alternative metaphors for city design and development, such as 'occlusion,' that disrupt assumptions about the 'obvious' need for uninterrupted circulation and flow.

Patterns, alignments and tensions

Diverse disabilities cannot actually be simplified into stable and predictable categories (blind, deaf, wheelchair users) with related 'solutions' that are easily codified into

Interior of LLHR6 building, Gallaudet University, Washington DC, based on Deaf Space principles. Photo courtesy of Gallaudet University.

design guidance. Instead, disabled people's (and other various users') access needs become just part of the many 'normal', partial, complex and creative design variables that designers deal with all the time, such as site context or client briefing.

Moving beyond simplistic disability categories and assumed functional needs, to discussing and negotiating diverse needs across impairments – and how these align sometimes and diverge on others – then becomes integral to the design process.

Designing for different kinds of bodies and minds ceases to be about making compliance-based amendments to designs for the able-bodied alone, and centres more on explicit design priorities, about who gets valued and how resources get extracted/exploited/redistributed and to what end.

We are only at the beginning of negotiating and recognising cross-impairment alignments with diverse disabled people, as an important tool for designers. As an example of alignment, Gallaudet University for the deaf in Washington DC, offers generous corridor and ramp spaces that enhance the access of both people who use sign language and wheelchair users.

"A ramp for wheelchair users leads to a second-floor entrance, lending barrier-free access to deaf people walking while engrossed in conversation. The ramp is symbolic of the 'third person' in deaf culture – typically, when three deaf people walk together, two converse while the third acts as a guide, looking out for obstacles and charting the course."
– Todd Byrd

An example of a misalignment is the prevalence of tactile paving at road crossings. Whilst these are an important navigational tool for blind people who use canes, they are very uncomfortable for wheelchair users. Similarly, the removal of kerbs in shared space layouts can increase mobility for wheelchair

users, but also reduce the safety for blind people who no longer have an explicit edge between pedestrian and traffic space.

Framing access like this suggests that designers need to be more creative in enabling diverse access needs to align, but also to recognise tensions and contradictions, and – in these cases – provide multimodal options; that is, a variety of different kinds of spaces to suit different needs.

The DisOrdinary Architecture Project and Re-Fabricate (2023), *Seats at the Table*, Postman's Park. Photo: Scarlett Barclay

Design implications

For the *Seats at the Table* project, a collaboration between The DisOrdinary Architecture Project and Re-Fabricate for the London Festival of Architecture 2023, the complex processes involved in combining access and inclusion with circular economy and sustainability principles were exciting but also demanding and challenging to achieve. All too often, design projects are promoted as only positive.

Part of this project was to deliberately open up differences in access needs across participants, and to explore multiple design responses – recognising that this was still likely to not suit everyone.

Similarly, sourcing waste materials to reuse for *Seats at the Table* and then recycling was often not possible due to institutional frameworks and regulations. This made it important to highlight the imperfections, to better understand what is preventing inclusion and sustainability from becoming commonplace.

Scan the QR code for a video interview with The DisOrdinary Architecture Project's Jos Boys and Re-Fabricate's Rosie Scott and Guiseppe Ferrigno.

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Misfitting

"A misfit occurs when world fails flesh in the environment one encounters whether it is a flight of stairs, a boardroom full of misogynists, an illness or injury, a whites-only country club, sub-zero temperatures, or a natural disaster... An embodied engagement with world is in fact life itself."
– *Rosemarie Garland-Thomson*

One way to resist everyday binary oppositions – male/female, white/Black, able-bodied/disabled – and the associated stereotypes, is to work with alternative concepts, informed by disability studies, arts and activism.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, disability studies scholar, for example, uses the ideas of 'fitting' and 'misfitting'. She argues that the critical concept of the misfit is a valuable way of thinking through the lived identity and experience of disability (and other identities) as these are situated in place and time. It is a way of investigating how our diverse embodiments interact with the environment, across its spatial, temporal and social aspects.

Processes of fitting and misfitting are inherently dynamic, relational, interconnected and situated, in a way that binary stereotypes are not. And crucially, concepts of fitting and misfitting include everyone.

By investigating what particular interactions between bodyminds, objects, space, people and settings act to 'disable' some and 'enable' others, this framework recognises that all humans cannot fit with/in particular circumstances.

Mis/fitting becomes a method for interrogating everyday practices and spaces to highlight where these act to support some and not others. It also throws into focus whether you are someone who mostly fits 'smoothly' with the world – with few bumps or obstacles in your way – and enables the recognition of this as a site of privilege, not normality, that should demand critical reflection.

When design reinforces misfitting

Misfitting means many frustrating and exhausting inconveniences and barriers when the built environment does not fit with your way of being in the world. Although we may all misfit momentarily, the sheer force of 'ordinary' – that is, ableist – social, spatial and material practices work persistently and differentially against disabled people. It prevents some people from going out; from partaking in 'normal' activities; creates additional tiredness and discomfort; and demands endless additional emotional labour for dealing with non-disabled people's assumptions. There is considerable work involved here, both to perpetuate such practices, and to resist and transform them.

Still from *On Being and Bathing*, by Anna Ulrikke Andersen and Abi Palmer, 2021.

In her *Sanatorium* project and book, disabled artist Abi Palmer juxtaposes her experiences of a thermal water-based rehabilitation facility in Budapest, with her attempts to persuade her London housing association that her flat's standard accessible shower-based walk-in wet room is a real misfit with her actual access needs. To continue her recovery from bathing in Hungary, she has to resort to using an £80 inflatable blue bathtub. The tub becomes a metaphor for the intrusion of disability; a trip hazard in the middle of an unsuitable room, slowly deflating and in constant danger of falling apart.

Misfitting as a creative generator

Fitting smoothly into the world is not a very creative place to be, because it doesn't require you to pay attention to your surroundings, and assumptions about your place in the world. In comparison, having a non-normative bodymind can actually increase your creativity because you

are forced to continually take notice of, and negotiate, places and social encounters.

It is disabled people who are the creative experts in the design and occupation of built spaces – they have to be. There are many who argue that disabled knowledge and experience is valuable – often called the affirmation model or disability pride – and a creative generator for designers, not a legal and technical problem to be solved.

Characters

A foundational DisOrdinary Architecture Project workshop is called *Characters*. Created by Zoe Partington, it asks people to change their bodies and explore. By carrying many things, or walking very slowly, or holding arms in the air, participants learn about both barriers and pleasures in using built space differently.

The DisOrdinary Architecture Project's *Characters* workshop (2019), University of Quebec, Montreal. Photo: Jos Boys.

Disability life hacks

Disabled people have always needed to invent life hacks – that is, a trick, shortcut, skill, or novelty method – that adapts an inaccessible environment for unmet needs. This might be by simple 'tinkering', such as repurposing an existing element (an older person resting on a bike rack or bollard) or 'pimping' a wheelchair, or it might be through making additional tools or spaces. Disability historian Bess Williamson writes about such creative devices developed and shared during the 1950s polio epidemic in the USA.

'Hacking' street furniture to have a rest. Photo: Jos Boys.

Researchers Aimi Hamraie and Kelly Fritsch give many more examples in their *Crip Technoscience Manifesto* (2019). By taking notice of such life hacks, architects and others can both learn more about how existing built environments let disabled people down, and about alternative creative interventions.

Learning from disability life hacks

Alterpodium is a customised, collapsible and portable podium that can be carried in a suitcase, made for disabled curator, writer and art historian Amanda Cachia. Because of her height, podiums are often inaccessible to her when she gives lectures internationally.

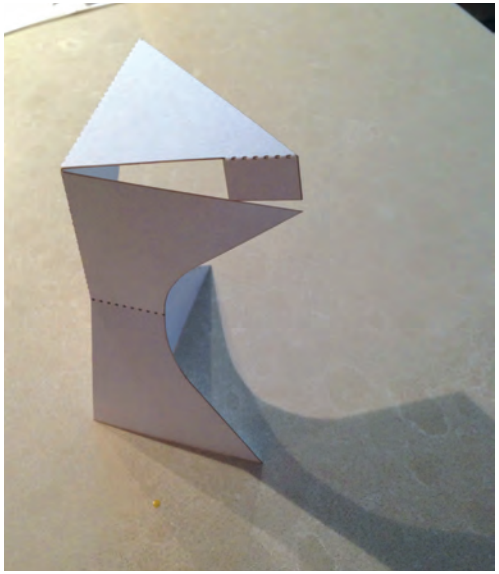
With designer Sara Hendren and students at Olin College of Engineering, Cachia created a new type of podium that could 'perform disability' during talks. Rather than the conventional lectern, which is often set at the height of an upright standing man, this was an object that emphasises the user's opportunity to create an alternate, provisional world in public.

Amanda Cachia testing out prototype *Alterpodium* at an event. Photo: Sara Hendren.

"There was something so magic about seeing this quick reversal of scale. Usually Amanda's embodiment comes to the architecture of the room. She adjusts to it. But here, the architecture suddenly came to her

– at least provisionally. It was like the scale of the built environment shifted in real time."
– Sara Hendren

Hendren, in her 2020 book *What Can a Body Do?* gives this and many other examples of customised and collaborative design products.



Student design for folding *Alterpodium.* Photo: Sara Hendren.

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Mobility

We live in a society that values particular character traits: being fit, mobile, attractive, unencumbered, energetic, productive and intellectually competent. It also treats the lack of these traits as individual failings; often blaming those who don't meet these norms for not 'trying' hard enough. Architecture and urban planning often follow this emphasis on individualised health and wellbeing, for example by focusing on stairs over lifts or ramps, and bicycles over other modes of transport.

At the same time, we still do not have basic equality of access for people with diverse mobility needs, and continue to reproduce what Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Mobilities Research and Policy at Drexel University Mimi Sheller calls "uneven mobilities".

"Uneven mobility refers, first, to a terrain for movement in which there are divergent pathways, differential access, or partial connectivity; this refers then to built environments, and the ways in which urban space and national space may be splintered in ways that connect some places while disconnecting others. Second it refers to means or modes of movement that have a greater or lesser degree of ease, comfort, flexibility, and safety, with more or less friction, noise, speed, or turbulence..."
– Mimi Sheller

In *Worship the Lift Engineer* (2022), disabled architectural researcher Jordan Whitewood-Neal shows to great effect the impact of inequitable mobility access at the personal level. He discusses a little-known history of the Architectural Association School of Architecture's (AA) Environmental Access course in the 1990s, a course that was not just designed 'for' but led by disabled people. He reflects on the legacy and experiences of the course founder Andrew Walker, who was a wheelchair user. Viewed through the allegory of the lift at the AA's home in Bedford Square in London, this becomes a narrative about, and reflection on, how failures in both institutional values and repair and maintenance made (and continue to make) most of the building inaccessible.

Resisting stairs

Disability studies scholar and activist Aimi Hamraie explores how staircases have become symbols of more sustainable and healthy approaches, reducing energy use and supporting healthy behaviours. As they note in a 2022 essay, such staircases are often "monumental, aesthetically distinctive, placed in areas of prominence, designed to be surrounded by air and light."

Hamraie calls this an intentional visual economy: places to see and be seen, that align with architecture's focus on the formal, spatial and visual qualities of circulation spaces. In fact, such staircases already display an explicit preference for able-bodiedness, by designing in

benefits for those who can use them, and excluding those who can't.

"Staircase use demands legs that perform the functions of pressing and lifting, non-asthmatic lungs, hearts that withstand elevated blood pressure, and necessary energy. Thus while the figure of the wheelchair user is most often conjured in relation to the staircase's exclusions, a more vast field of disabilities and chronic illnesses is affected by the prevalence of such structures in built environments."
– Aimi Hamraie

Disability activists have been creatively campaigning for equality of mobility over many years, from the Rolling Quads at UC Berkeley who made their own kerb cuts with sledgehammers and cement and lobbied the city council for improvements in the 1960s, to ADAPT's famous *Capitol Crawl* in Washington DC in 1990 which demanded the passage of the

Finnegan Shannon (2019), *Anti-Stairs Club Lounge* at the Vessel. Pledge reads: "As long as I live, I will not go up a single step of the Vessel." Photo: Maria Baranova.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as well as similar protests organised by the Direct Action Network (DAN) over public transport in the UK.

In 2019, the *Anti-Stairs Club Lounge*, coordinated by disabled artist Finnegan Shannon, organised an event to protest Heatherwick Studio's Vessel in New York, a piece of public art made up of 154 outdoor staircases, up to a height of 16 stories. In the same year, disabled activists in Manchester protested the inaccessibility of the Peterloo Memorial. That disabled people are still needing to campaign for equality of mobility is an indictment of current built environment policies, practices and attitudes.

Finnegan Shannon (2019), *Anti-Stairs Club Lounge* at the Vessel. Photo: Maria Baranova.

Seeing motion otherwise

In *The Architecture of Disability* (2022), disabled architect David Gissen investigates how architecture as a discipline particularly values the mobile and non-disabled body

in design preferences. One example given in the book is Paul Rudolph's multiple-levelled designs for the Yale School of Architecture (1963), which Gissen also reflected on in a 2008 essay.

"Anything that claims to have been inspired by some type of architectural heroism or any building in which someone might describe the architect as 'heroic' (as is virtually always the case with this particular work [Yale] by Rudolph) will generally impart a bumpy ride for the disabled inhabitant..."
– David Gissen

Of course, mobility access is about more than just functional ease of movement to a destination. In a 2016 essay, the architect and scholar J. Kent Fitzsimons discusses how it can also be integral to meaning-making around, and experiences of, material space. By revisiting both Peter Eisenman's *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* in Berlin (2005) and SANAA's Rolex Learning Center in Lausanne, Switzerland (2010), he argues for the value of designing architecture around perception, experience and the complexities of our different ways of being, rather than based on symbolic messages, conveyed through representation.

"While the struggle for architectural accessibility remains justified and necessary, there is also room to claim that disabled experience is a legitimate architectural experience in its own right, because of its specificity and through its difference from supposedly normal experience. That claim, which echoes a certain tension within disability criticism, also makes it possible to question the conceptual framework of architectural discourse where the body is concerned, and to speculate on a broader agenda for corporal experience in the built environment beyond the language of access or of current disability advocacy and guidance."
– J. Kent Fitzsimons

SANAA (2005), Rolex Learning Centre, Lausanne. Photo: Jos Boys.

differently various

differently various was an exhibition at The Curve gallery in London's Barbican Centre in July–August 2023, curated by brain injury charity Headway East London. It brought together paintings, drawings, embroidered images, sculptures and short films creatively expressing the artists' diverse experiences of having a brain injury, both painful and joyous. Central to the show was its welcoming, interactive and accessible layout, including places for visitors to make artwork and to relax. For the exhibition, Pup Architects installed a generous temporary ramp for everyone to experience, to replace the limited functional accessibility and difficulties in using the existing vertical platform lift.

Headway East London (2023), *differently various*, The Curve, Barbican, London. Photo: Jos Boys.

"What would a world look like in which people dare to wish to know what it is like not to walk?"
– John Hockenberry, journalist and author

Headway East London (2023), *differently various,* The Curve, Barbican. Photo: Jos Boys.

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“I don’t want to live in bungalow land,
On the outer edges of the urban sprawl,
In a place designed for people-like-us
Kept safely separate, away from it all.

I want to live in the pulse-hot thick-of-it
Where the nights jive, where the streets hum
Amongst people and politics, struggles and upheaval,
I’m a dangerous woman, and my time has come.”

My place – *Sue Napolitano*

Nightlife

Many disabled people often face assumptions that they don't have a social or sexual life. Increasingly, disability-led activists are challenging ideas of who parties and who doesn't; for example, by organising events that put accessibility at the core – central to everyone's creativity and pleasure.

An Evening of Access Magic

An Evening of Access Magic, at the Lincoln Center in New York in July 2023 was organised through a collaboration of disability groups, and curated by disabled artist Kevin Gotkin. As the event description detailed:

"[A] Silent Disco will bring us together to share in the manifold dimensions of disability-centric nightlife with ASL [American Sign Language] song-signing, creative captioning, choreographic offerings, access doula-ing, and music. Together, we'll open a portal to an ecology where access is a coordinating principle for sharing space, contemplation, and joy."

To do this, the event included the following accessible elements:

- Advance information via an online visual access guide including directions, venue details and accommodations information
- Accessible seating, entrances and bathrooms

Kevin Gotkin (2023), Poster for *An Evening of Access Magic*, at Lincoln Center, New York. Featuring: Music: Not Impossible, Friday Anderson, Cassidy Duhon, Christopher Elassad, Jen White-Johnson, nam raum, and Jeune Frere.

- Assistive listening devices with headsets and neck loops
  Live captioning available via QR code on personal devices.
- Captioning of lyrics and description of music on screens on stage during the silent disco
- American Sign Language interpretation
- Audio description
- Chill out spaces
- Noise reducing headphones and fidgets
- Wearable tech to translate sound to skin for the silent disco

There are also variations – developed during Covid-19, but still relevant to many disabled people – of creating disability nightlife events where people can participate in social life from homes and beds.

Remote Access, developed by a collective of disabled artists and designers including Gotkin, is a series

of ongoing events that showcase how to create truly accessible participation. The planners created protocols for collective access through methodologies such as participatory audio description and live description of musical sound. This in turn enabled an online, open-access guide – *Remote Access: Crip Nightlife Participation Guide* – for remote disability culture and nightlife gatherings.

Queer access strategies

LGBTQIA2S+ event organisations including Riposte, Inferno and Pxssy Palace facilitate a welfare-oriented queer rave scene, and other events in London. They provide day and night raves, with financially accessible ticketing options for 'broke queers'. Features of their nights can include assistance getting safely home, with a slow get-out to allow time to plan routes home, quiet rooms to rest in, sober raves, pre-rave quiet meet-ups to get to know everyone, pre-arrival access information, a selection of free food, period products, and safe sex products. There is medical and welfare support throughout events.

"A majority of the team is neurodivergent…[So,] on top of having several rooms with low/no music and steady light, we try to always have one dancefloor with no strobe lights on, as well as having clear communication on our socials about what to expect, a map, clear safeguarding rules and so on."
– *Riposte*

Safe Only Ltd. offers queer-run welfare and security, providing guidance on inclusive, safe event running. They are working on training on neurodiversity in nightlife and harm reduction, aiming to create "community care within nightlife spaces."

Safe Only Ltd team at Body Movements Festival 2023.

"Safe Only started with the recognition that care felt absent from many facets of nightlife where we wanted to feel it the most – and that this stems from the industrialisation and dehumanisation of much of the nightlife workforce. So the care starts with the team, and fostering working connections that are based on everyone as a person with needs, feelings, and messiness."
– Dani and Yannis, Safe Only Ltd.

Relaxed Venues

In February 2020, Battersea Arts Centre (BAC) in London launched as the world's first Relaxed Venue, aiming to radically embed access and inclusivity across all of their

activities. A methodology was developed by Touretteshero (co-founded by theatre-maker and comedian Jess Thom), a disabled and neurodivergent-led community interest company. This is based on Touretteshero's mission to create an inclusive and socially just world for disabled and non-disabled people through cultural practice.

The Relaxed Venue methodology is based on three commitments: create no new barriers, ensure equality of experience, and reduce fuss. The principles encompass everything from clear, understandable advance information, to taking a relaxed approach to movement and noise coming from the audience.

Screenshot from Battersea Arts Centre's Relaxed Venue section on its website.

The aesthetics of access

Exterior view of Graeae, Bradbury Studios London. Designed by Artillery Architecture & Interior Design and Paragon Management. Photo: Jos Boys.

This centring of accessibility is also influencing theatre, dance and other forms of cultural production. Jenny Sealey, CEO and Artistic Director of Graeae Theatre Company, has been developing the 'aesthetics of access' since the 1990s with the aim of embedding access to shape the theatre's work in unexpected ways from the beginning, as a key component of creativity. In 2009 Graeae opened its own customised and accessible rehearsal space, Bradbury Studios, designed by Artillery Architecture and Interior Design with Paragon Management, with the intention of being a visible model of inclusive creative practice.

Thank You Very Much

Whilst many cultural venues now include seating from people who use wheelchairs, these are often problematic – not taking account of a disabled person who comes

Clare Cunningham (2023), *Thank You Very Much* cafe-style set up, Theaterformen, Hanover. Photo: Jos Boys.

with friends, or being either in a highly exposed or hidden position. At Clare Cunningham's inclusive performance *Thank You Very Much*, for Theaterformen in Hanover in June 2023, cafe-style tables were placed around the three sides of the flat floor stage in front of the stepped seating. This was prioritised for disabled people and their companions, deliberately offering them the best and most relaxed seating in the place, whilst also adding to a cabaret vibe.

Accessible route on the Elizabeth Line at Barbican Station where the lift tracks the escalator. Photo: Jos Boys.

Safety

Thinking about safety in public covers many issues for disabled people – from being stared at, to being in uncomfortable, unsafe and poorly accessible spaces, to actual physical attack. This intersects with type of impairment, race, gender and sexuality in complex ways that need paying attention to in the design of spaces for nightlife. Listening to disabled people's diverse lived experiences is vital, from the impact of crowding on even being allowed in, to being physically squashed or faced with sensory overload, to not being able to reach the bar or an accessible toilet.

Blind architectural assistant Poppy Levison wrote her undergraduate

dissertation on safety in public spaces for young disabled women.

“Disabled women are twice as likely to experience sexual assault as non-disabled women (ONS, 2021), and 83% of disabled girls have avoided activities in public due to public sexual harassment, compared to 60% of their non-disabled peers.

Whilst designing for women’s safety is not a new concept, recent incidents have brought a new focus onto the subject. However, despite the shocking statistics, disabled women are rarely involved and therefore are not considered in designing spaces. Some designs for access even go directly against how we design for safety.

For example, a separate ramped entrance, often at the back of a building, is not just bad access. It also forces disabled people to enter buildings through quiet routes away from view, often poorly lit and via spaces that attract antisocial behaviour. Other design elements, such as lifts, are also a problem for many of the same reasons. However, the new Elizabeth Line station at The Barbican shows how, by putting lifts and escalators in close proximity, safety considerations can be done well.

It’s not just how spaces physically put disabled women at risk, but also how inaccessible environments create a perception that disabled women are more vulnerable and therefore easy targets.

If non-disabled people see disabled people struggling to access the built environment because of poor accessibility, they often do not see the built environment as the problem, but instead view it as a problem with the disabled person."
– Poppy Levison

Scan the QR code for a video interview with Poppy Levison talking about disability and safety.

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Orientation/Dis

In *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Sara Ahmed suggests that spaces and situations are "orientated towards" some kinds of bodies and away from others. Rather than seeing orientation as a simple functional need – as only about getting from A to B – this approach complicates matters. It questions how it is that we come to find our way in a world that, as Ahmed writes, "acquires new shapes, depending on which way we turn", intersecting with how our diverse (classed, raced, gendered, dis/abled) bodies are seen by others, interpreted and responded to.

Of course, many non-disabled people don't even need to notice how they orientate themselves in built spaces, in relation to objects, environmental conditions or to encounters with others. As disability studies scholar Tanya Titchkosky puts it:

"Language recommends that we conceive of the able-body as something that just comes along 'naturally' as people go about their daily existence. People just jump into the shower, run to the store, see what others mean, [...] hop into bed. All of this glosses the body that comes along while, at the same time, brings it along metaphorically. Speaking of 'normal bodies' as movement and metaphor maps them as if they are a natural possession, as if they are not mapped at all."
– *Tanya Titchkosky*

Margaret Price (2016), images from *Un/Shared Space: The Dilemma of Inclusive Architecture* showing how access signage is often provided in locations that make it very hard to find or see. In the left-hand photograph, the accessible entrance sign (circled) points wheelchair users away from the main entrance staircase. Photos: Margaret Price.

Un/shared spaces

Deliberately recording journeys, navigation routes and access information through a space or building as a series of photographs, audio descriptions and/or social stories can be a powerful way to understand where there is an orientation away from disabled people (as well as other marginalised groups) and where access is failing.

Margaret Price, disability studies scholar, has shown how critically mapping existing access information and built spaces can help reveal the extent to which access provision is actually happening. In *Un/Shared Space* (2016), she explores how signage about finding the entrance of a campus building acts at the level of appearances to meet compliance but is in reality problematic and frustrating for wheelchair users.

Enriched wayfinding

Partially blind artist and activist living with a chronic condition, Zoe Partington, undertook work with architects in the 1990s around wayfinding, which explored possibilities in materiality and acoustics in urban spaces that provide a joyous experience in the public realm.

"As a cane user, using the road or footpaths to navigate can be unjoyful and alternatively soulless with no 'non-visual' qualities designed in or considered, that

is, variations in texture, sensory imagery below the waistline. This misses out on interesting, intriguing, delightful engagements, for example, by not providing materials that create sounds from your cane, which on a journey can provide clues and a sense of place. These are as intrinsic to blind people's movement, independence and connection with spaces as dropped kerbs are for wheelchair navigators to roll about the cityscape freely.

Something about walking along a residential streetscape in a mindful, slow way is a revelation, and if I approach a place/space of concern with fascination and observation it makes me feel calm as opposed to anxious. Anxiety can make me nervous and isolated; it interferes with my equilibrium. I'm suddenly reliant on others, unnecessarily in my view. The smell of coffee or the sounds of conversations make me feel part of the space in a nuanced way. I often find the scent of citrus and vanilla fills the air with heat – or summer temperatures and the evocative intensity of warmth bouncing off the tarmac and hard surfaces locate me meaningfully."
– *Zoe Partington*

Alternative signage

Architects and others use visual signage as a means to direct people around their buildings and spaces, including the standard accessibility icon of a wheelchair user in sideways outline. There remains a problem

with this limited representation of diverse disabled people, which often limits how access gets thought about. What other kinds of signs might be needed, and how might these act as creative generators?

Jeff Kasper, in their project *signs*, uses a multi-panel text intervention composed of small acrylic ADA-standard (Americans with Disabilities Act) signs with braille and accompanying audio guide to comment on the limited signs that currently exist in relation to toilet designs.

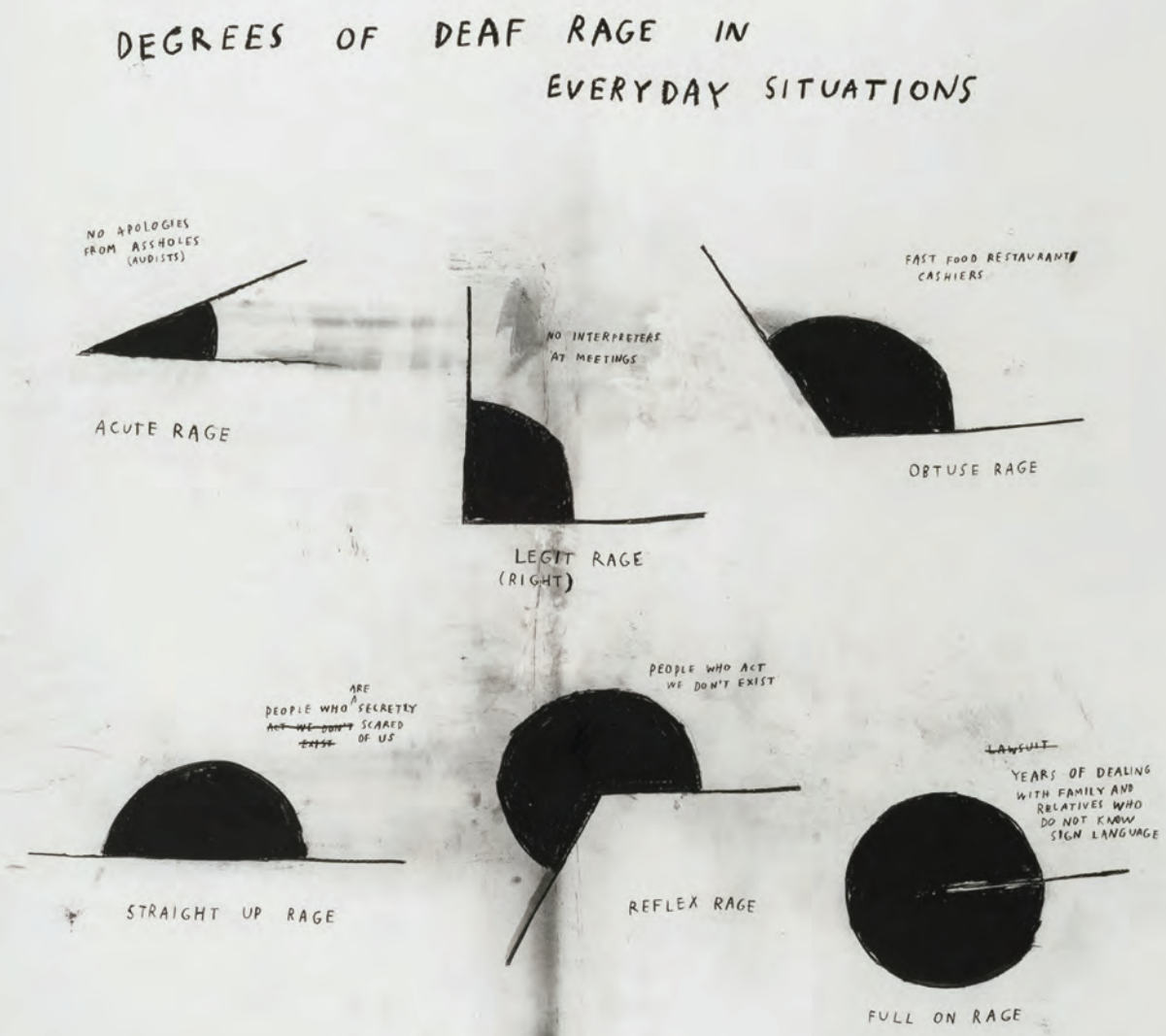
It can be exhibited in everyday institutional spaces, on the walls of the gendered bathrooms, hallways, edges of banal spaces camouflaged in approximation to common signage, such as exit signs and wayfinding. The project creates situations that highlight where the designed environment enforces normative behaviour.

Jeff Kasper (2017-ongoing), *signs.* Photo courtesy of the artist.

Similarly, disabled artist Caroline Cardus works a lot with signage, both as a form of activism and to offer up new kinds of signs that subvert current norms. Her ongoing *The Way Ahead* project started in 2004. Fifteen new signs were commissioned by the Barnsley Civic arts centre in 2021, which were made remotely during the pandemic via a zine which included templates for participants to make their own road signs. Ten new signs were also commissioned for the Greenwich and Docklands International Festival (GDIF) 2023.

"The rules of the road are a wonderful visual system. Information is easily communicated through the arrangement of simple shapes and symbols. When it comes to travel, we have found a system most people can understand easily. *The Way Ahead* was inspired by a wish that such a system could exist for disability awareness."
– Caroline Cardus

Caroline Cardus (2004-ongoing), *The Way Ahead.* Illustration: Caroline Cardus.



Christine Sun Kim (2018), *Degrees of my Deaf Rage in Everyday Situations.* Charcoal and oil pastel on paper. 126 x 126 cm. Courtesy of François Ghebaly and White Space. Photo: Yang Hao.

In *Degrees of Deaf Rage*, artist Christine Sun Kim treats sign graphics as a type of language that can be deliberately provocative. She uses drawings in charcoal that summarise her personal moments of anger – deliberately using infographic-like images to create a visual language that communicates an idea, aimed at people who do not understand sign language or Deafness as a collective cultural identification.

Sensory additions

As part of the accessible site interventions for the *Seats at the Table* project, funded by Arts Council England and part of the London Festival of Architecture 2023, Deaf artist Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq and partially sighted artist Zoe Partington, worked together to create a sensory 'wall' that combined haptic and visual qualities.

The artwork aimed to highlight a turning point in the park (since the gateway entrance and steps beyond it are inaccessible), by adding sensory delights that could create a moment of pause. The artists also wanted to explore the use of tactile and sensual qualities combined with visual interest and colour for public realm installations. Intrinsic to the process was the act of creation-through-making, and the continuation of that with others through participatory workshops on site during the festival.

Zoe Partington and Rubbena Aurangzeb-Tariq (2023), *Seats at the Table* workshop. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

"A public workshop, in English and British Sign Language (BSL), around a table: crafting, taking coffee and eating together, with discussions about sensory gain in streetscapes. Understanding how human beings function in the world and how the smallest change can have a huge impact on a space, making it familiar and easier to navigate and enjoy; providing more interest in our environment for everyone but especially including people who are often excluded. This has a value that sometimes textbooks can't provide."
– Zoe Partington

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Practising differently

Existing UK Part M building regulations guide architects in accessible design matters, and are the current 'common sense' of this country's built environment sector. Because they give technical and legal information that appears neutral, the data is hardly ever challenged.

Yet Part M is deeply problematic because it reinforces stereotypes of disability as easily defined (and inferior) categories; oversimplifies by reference to ergonomic averages and norms; limits engagement with impairment to the barest functional and clinical requirements; and can actually prevent good inclusive design, since disability is separated from design creativity.

"Ableism looks like calling people 'inspiring' for navigating a system that is designed for exclusion, while doing nothing to hold the system accountable."
– Carson Tueller

In the US, disability studies scholar Aimi Hamraie has shown how building codes around disability have been politically and socially constructed as partial and problematic responses to disability campaigning around improving built environments.

QR code for a video of Rosie Scott talking about practising difference.

Theaterformen

Theaterformen festival pavilion *The Clearing* Braunschweig (2022). Designed by Deaf architect Richard Docherty with Chris Laing as consultant, Jos Boys and Zoe Partington. Photo: Jos Boys.

For the design development of a festival pavilion for Theaterformen in 2022, The DisOrdinary Architecture Project undertook site exploration with the client team, and disabled artists from across Germany. The project centred diverse disabled experiences and creativity, with the aim of making a truly accessible public space and event.

Architecture Beyond Sight

Architecture Beyond Sight (ABS) is an ongoing project to bring blind and partially sighted people into architecture and related disciplines. It builds creative disabled people's confidence and expertise, while challenging conventional design's prioritisation of the visual.

The foundation-level, one-week residential intensive study programme – delivered by The DisOrdinary Architecture Project – was originally commissioned in 2018 by the then Dean of The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment UCL, Alan Penn. Programme creation and implementation has been disability-led throughout, starting with a one-year development process, and with all lead tutors on the course being blind and partially sighted architects, makers and artists.

Like conventional foundation courses, studies in ABS are centred on conceptual thinking, design making, spatial and atmospheric mapping, and interpretation and design communication. But tutors

Clarke Reynolds at *Architecture Beyond Sight* (2018). Photo: Jos Boys.

and students also co-develop ways of designing beyond the visual, including audio description, large-scale sketching, model-making in the workshop and tactile and performative communications. These are methods that are potentially interesting and innovative for all architectural students and practitioners.

Radical Softness

A third-year undergraduate student design project at Central Saint Martins (UAL) by blind architectural assistant Poppy Levison, starts with a *Radical Softness* manifesto, based on the principle that designing for the marginalised, in this case older people, creates a more caring and welcoming architecture. The scheme provides a living room for the community, connecting it to a 'Story Garden' and offering a space for intergenerational knowledge exchange.

Poppy Levison (2022), *Radical Softness.* Photo: Harriet Morris.

More disabled people into architectural practice

Disabled people make up just 1% of architects registered with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA). This is a tiny percentage when data suggests that 16 million people, or 24% of the UK population, is disabled. Professional registration disclosure does not include those who would rather not declare an impairment (because of its potential adverse effects on their employment or studies) or who don't identify as disabled. Many disabled people may work as designers and not qualify as architects because of the obstacles and the length and inflexibility of architectural education. Many architecture offices remain inaccessible.

Over the years many disabled architectural students and practitioners have told The DisOrdinary Architecture Project about their impairments, as it offers a 'safe' space to do so in a way that conventional education and practice does not. Most of these people are 'passing' as non-disabled, working extra hard to appear 'normal'.

Where a disability is visible, such as using a wheelchair or being Deaf, people struggle to get an architectural education or work – as well as having to deal daily with the many inaccessible university spaces and design offices, and with a lack of support.

Blind architect Chris Downey as guest tutor for *Architecture Beyond Sight* course (2018) at the Bartlett School of Architecture UCL, with blind and partially sighted students. Photo: Jos Boys.

Yet Chris Downey, an architect who lost his sight, has said that it was one of the best things that happened to him; that his experiences using a white cane mean his creative awareness of the built environment has increased compared to when he was just using his eyes. Creative disabled people offer a broadening of architecture as a practice, and challenge some of its common sense assumptions about the world. Surely that can only be a good thing?

Including a Care Clause

Crip time and rest cannot be separated from valuing care for ourselves and each other. At the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdowns, Toronto-based arts organisation Tangled Art + Disability began to include a Care Clause in their staffing contracts. This is a statement that the

organisation values the health of the people working there more than the things they do or create.

"The Care Clause is an official declaration of values. However, it only expresses intention. Without implementation and follow-through, it is meaningless."
– Cyn Rozeboom, Executive Director, Tangled Art + Disability

Jet Coghlan at work in the Tangled Art + Disability office. Self-care is encouraged as part of a healthy work environment. Photo: Rob Colgate.

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Seats at the Table

"Everyone comes to the table in their own unique way, whether it is for conversation, nutrition or working. Yet the table and chairs we all know are not inclusive or considered beyond the 'average' able-bodied user."
– Part of project submission by Re-Fabricate and The DisOrdinary Architecture Project

Seats at the Table, Postman's Park. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

The *Seats at the Table* project for the London Festival of Architecture 2023 started with the belief that tables and chairs were a tangible scale and concept for all age groups to challenge and redesign for people who need to approach the table in unique ways.

By co-creating chairs that express embodied differences, the aim was to capture both diverse and shared access needs.

Furthermore, having a 'seat at the table' is an often-used expression to suggest what needs to happen to increase diversity and equality –

enabling more people to participate in a situation or decision. But having a seat at the table is not enough if your views are not valued or your voice not heard. How, then, can architecture open up its debates and practices to diverse and marginalised groups in ways that are equitable and sustainable?

Seats at the Table was a competition-winning, six-month programme by Re-Fabricate, a collective focused on revaluing waste, together with The DisOrdinary Architecture Project. The competition was called *Co-designing Equity in the Public Realm*, and looked at activating public space in the City of London's Smithfield area. The programme was co-funded by the Foundation for Future London and the City of London Corporation.

Launch event for *Seats at the Table* (2023), LFA, Postman's Park. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

Seats at the Table (2023), LFA, Postman's Park. Photo: Scarlett Barclay.

The programme consisted of six workstreams aimed at challenging conventional public realm design, and integrating inclusive and sustainable principles to create accessible public spaces:

Seats co-design: A series of workshops with both mainstream and SEND students to design 'seats at the table'. The workshops took an explorative design approach to creating playful chair designs, focused on embracing and highlighting different access needs.

Co-exploration: Collaborations with disabled artists and built environment professionals to choose the most accessible site from three locations near the Smithfield area in the City of London, in order to install the 'seats at the table' alongside inclusive provocations to engage the public to experience places of rest, audio descriptions, and sensory interventions.

The build: Alongside University College London's B-made workshop, the student designs were collated into six bespoke chairs. The Remakery, a co-operative workshop, designed and built the central table. We aimed to use as much waste, recycled or reclaimed materials as possible, including reclaimed timber from London Reclamation & Salvage, timber from fallen trees from Fallen and Felled, and recycled plastic from Smile Plastics.

Installation: The seats at the table, and an exhibition explaining the programme, was installed in Postman's Park alongside a series of accessible site interventions by disabled artists.

Events programme: The installations played host to a series of workshops on sustainability and accessible inclusion throughout the London Festival of Architecture 2023.

Disassembly and reuse: Each participating school homed their corresponding chair either permanently or temporarily, and remaining materials found second homes with local community and school groups within London.

Accessibility was a thread running throughout the programme to ensure an inclusive environment both digitally and physically, and to provide open and safe opportunities to discuss how different and diverse accessible needs could be met creatively.

Dis and David Gissen workshop (2023), *Seats at the Table*, Postman's Park. Photo: Jos Boys.

Toilets

Accessible public toilets are central to the quality of life and everyday experiences of disabled people. Whilst the building regulations do set basic requirements, many disabled people argue that these are neither properly implemented nor adequate for a diverse range of needs. In her 2008 essay, *To Pee or Not To Pee*, disability studies scholar Tanya Titchkosky argues that built environment professionals and others have a number of "justificatory narratives" – such as "not many disabled people" and "they can go somewhere else."

There are so many different kinds of uses of toilets, that no one format fits everyone. Whilst the focus for accessible toilets has always been on wheelchair users, many built designs are not even suitable for the variety of people who use wheelchairs, scooters or other mobility devices.

For a blind or partially sighted person, the accessible toilet should be easily navigable; this is often not the case. And people who need quick and convenient access across a whole range of disabilities and illnesses (prostate cancer, Crohn's disease, colitis, IBS, to change a colostomy bag etc) tend not to be considered at all in toilet design, whilst also facing a severe lack of public toilet provision that limits their ability to have a social life.

Beyond 'one size fits all'

The House of Disabled People's Organisations near Copenhagen has a variety of types of accessible toilets, recognising that one size doesn't fit all.

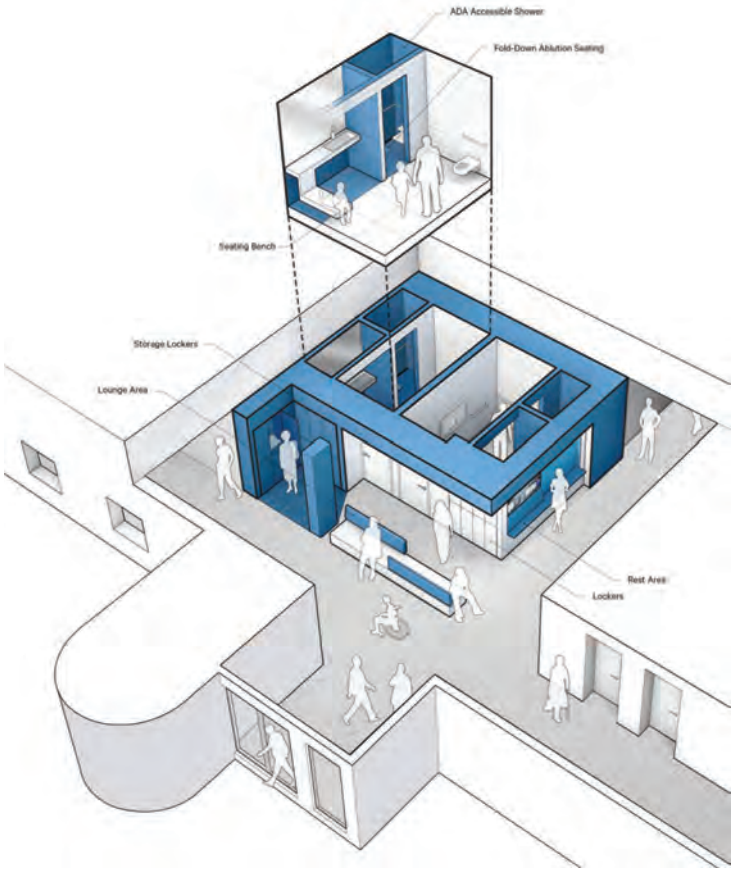
"One common layout of all toilets does not create equality. Different user needs have thus resulted in no less than seven different types of toilets distributed around the house, so that everyone can find one that they can use. Pictograms on the doors show how the toilets are equipped and designed."
– Danske Handicaporganisationer (Disabled People's Organisations Denmark)

House of Disabled People's Organisations, Taastrup, Denmark, promoted as 'the most accessible building in the world.' Architects: Cubo and Force4. Photo: Martin Schubert.

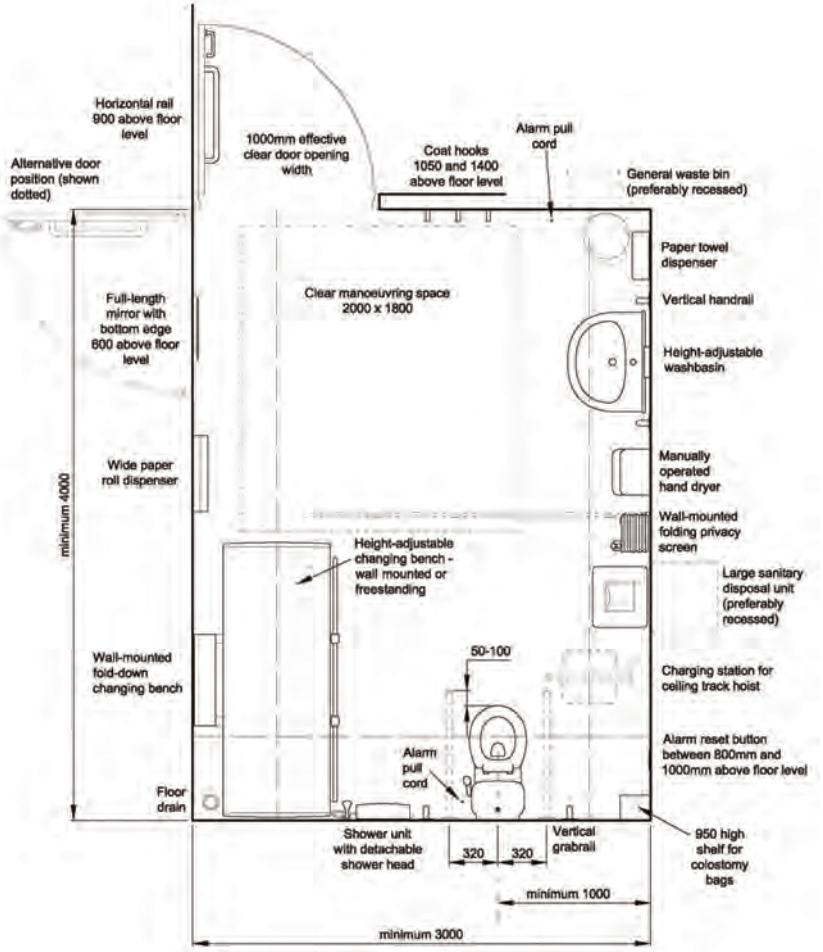
Stalled!

The *Stalled!* project centres on the need to create safe, sustainable and inclusive public toilets for everyone regardless of age, gender, race, religion and disability – and provides open-access guidelines to design them. Founded by architect Joel Sanders, the work has been a response to divisive American debates around discrimination against trans people through sex-segregated public bathrooms.

Stalled! reimagines public toilets by revisiting the social history of how we have current patterns of provision; by integrating issues around sexuality with other identities; and by developing examples of best practice that are



Axonometric of toilet block for Field House, Gallaudet University, Washington DC, based on *Stalled!* principles, by Joel Sanders and MixDesign.



Example plan from *Changing Places: The Practical Guide* (2021), CPT Funding (England only). Changing Places Consortium.

viable commercially. Along with other disability studies scholars, such as David Serlin, this work is important for rethinking toilet design not just in the current moment, but as part of a long history of a contested public space.

Changing Places

Changing Places is a UK-based campaign to provide accessible public toilets for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities or with physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis who often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use toilets safely and comfortably.

Example interior from *Changing Places: The Practical Guide* (2021), CPT Funding (England only). Changing Places Consortium.

The organisation provides design guidance and promotes increasing facilities in as many public places as possible, so that everyone, regardless of their access needs or disability or reliance on the assistance of carers or specialist equipment, can use a toilet facility hygienically and with dignity. This opens up social and public activities for many disabled people who would otherwise be isolated at home.

Toilets at the Wellcome Collection

The Wellcome Collection is a free museum in London which specialises in health and health-related sciences. As well as a fine example of an accessible permanent exhibition – *Being Human* – the building has a good example of gender-neutral accessible toilets on the main entry floor. Cubicles are placed around a generous, well-lit and wide entry foyer space. Toilets are labelled with the type of toilet as a pictogram, rather than gender-

based images. There are two fully accessible toilets as well as a changing places facility. Basins are available both within cubicles and at different heights in the shared space, offering choice to users.

Gender-neutral and accessible toilets at the Wellcome Collection, London. Photo: Jos Boys.

Places of delight

In her 2019 book *Pleasure Activism*, adrienne maree brown considers pleasure to be possible in all aspects of life, and believes this starts with our relationship to our own bodies, as a process of self-care and acceptance. Her essays are interwoven with conversations and insights from other feminist thinkers, including disability activist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

"[Thinking of] my friend whose multi-decade-old disability care collective helps her get on the toilet, shower, and dress every day, and people laugh, gossip, hang out, and have a great time – it's the place to be! When I show a video that she made about her collective to the

care webs workshop I teach, there's usually awed silence. Afterward, someone always says, 'I've never seen someone be so joyful and unashamed while getting help getting on the toilet.'"
– Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha

Gender-neutral toilet signs at the Wellcome Collection, London. Photo: Jos Boys.

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Waste(d)

Re-Fabricate and The DisOrdinary Architecture Project's collaboration for *Seats at the Table* as part of the London Festival of Architecture 2023 was centrally interested in ideas of waste – not just of resources but also of bodies.

In their 2022 book *Discard Studies*, Max Liboiron and Josh Lepawsky argue that social, political, and economic systems maintain power by 'discarding' certain people and places. Rather than focusing on waste and trash, *Discard Studies* looks at how power and inequality interact with both human and non-human resources. Moving towards a circular economy is then not only about using less stuff, but also about access and inclusion; and about better understanding how systems of power define who and what is of value to society.

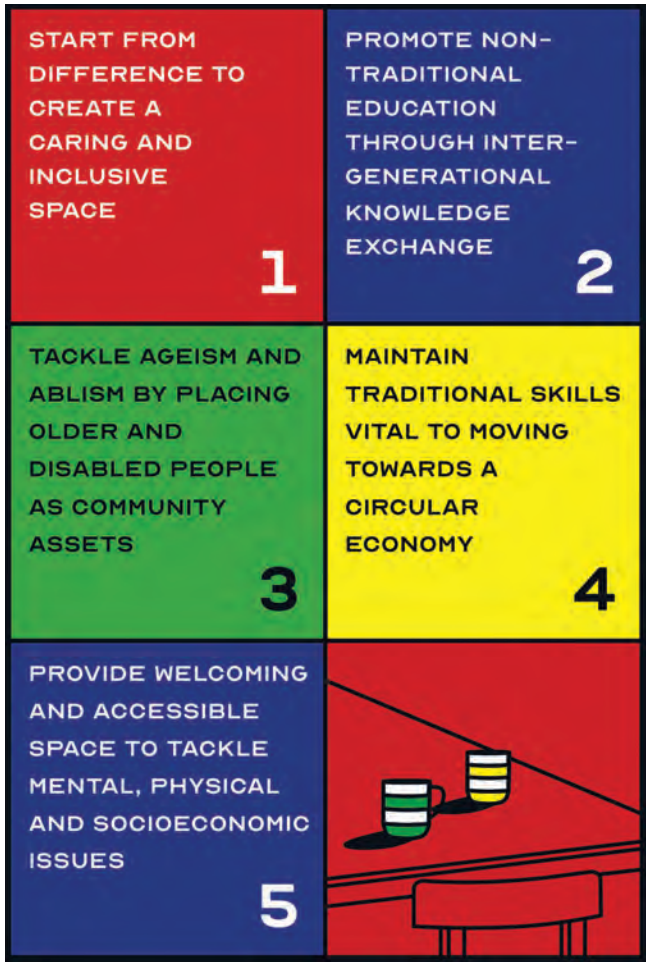
"We want to redefine what counts as waste: whether through the over-extraction and misuse of resources, or in the assumptions that certain kinds of bodies and minds are less valuable to the economy and society. We ask how different materials, practices, places and people are valued and devalued, unravelling what becomes admired and what is disposable."
– Max Liboiron and Josh Lepawsky

Retrofitting

There are increasing campaigns in the UK to prioritise retrofitting existing buildings over demolishing and building new. With the construction industry producing around 35-40% of the country's total carbon emissions, this is a vital issue in responding to the climate emergency. Through activities such as Part Z and Architects Declare, architects and others have been joining together to support change in building design practices.

Within disability studies scholarship and activism, however, the concept of retrofitting is treated with caution. This is not because it is 'bad', but because access has so often been itself a retrofit – an 'afterthought' to building design. As disability studies scholar Jay Dolmage writes in a 2016 essay, to retrofit is to "add a component or accessory to something that has been already manufactured or built. This retrofit does not necessarily make the product function better, does not necessarily fix a faulty product, but it acts as a sort of correction."

UK Architects Declare is a network of architectural practices dedicated to addressing the climate emergency. Whilst its original 11-point manifesto now has an additional principle included at the end, to "support those who are working for climate justice and strive to ensure equity and an improved quality of life for all" – with this covered as a separate theme in the associated practice guide –



Poppy Levison (2023), *Radical Softness Manifesto*, interconnecting social and material sustainability and equality.

how this intimately interlocks with other energy reduction and biodiversity goals is unclear. It, too, feels like an 'add-on'. So, we also need to ask how we can truly integrate equality and accessibility with sustainability and adaptive reuse.

Adaptation as multimodality

One way forward is to intertwine adaptive reuse with multiple forms of accessibility from the beginning of a design. Crucially this is not about 'adding on' a less satisfactory access mode for disabled people (business as usual) to a retrofitted building. It is about taking the opportunity to create more equitable ways of occupying built space, by offering multiple and various spaces and

services to support diverse access needs. Disability studies scholar Stephanie Kerschbaum makes this point in a 2018 essay, arguing that designing in multimodality from the beginning is important for increasing accessibility, but also that variations need to be of equivalent standards and quality of experience, build in potential for user adaptation, and "incorporate redundancy" as a means to support more flexible and diverse uses.

INTRA (depend on me bby)

Artist-architect Martha Summers' 2023 exhibition in London, *INTRA (depend on me bby)*, was designed to fundraise for low-income tickets to trans arts and camping festival, Camp Trans. The two-day show included artworks, history exhibition, clothes swap, book and zine shop, film screening, panel talk, performances and readings.

Produced cheaply, it reimagined the design and space as if for accessible camping, with all items designed to be used again and again. The project makes small-scale, playful temporary interventions, which present alternatives to more normative versions of ways of working together.

"In these temporary structures, and the space in between them, intimate spaces are created with very little. Tents are arranged in circles for safety – we look towards and protect each other in collective camp making. Structures rely

on tensions and slackness – the relationships between different things – to turn thin, soft materials, into protective shells. Ropes driven into the earth, and tied around trees. Camp structures rely on each other."
– Martha Summers

Martha Summers (2023), *INTRA (depend on me bby)*, Ugly Duck, London. Photo: Martha Rawlinson AKA Martha Summers.

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Ways of being

Rethinking access is about going beyond functional requirements of getting from A to B, to try to enhance all our lived experiences. It is about valuing the richness of bio- and neuro-diversity and starting from our different ways of being in the world. It reimagines disability as expansive rather than limiting design potential (as a creative generator, not a problem to be solved), and broadens our assumptions about what it is to be alive or what counts as a good life.

QR code for a video of Helen Stratford and Raquel Meseguer Zafe talking about ways of being.

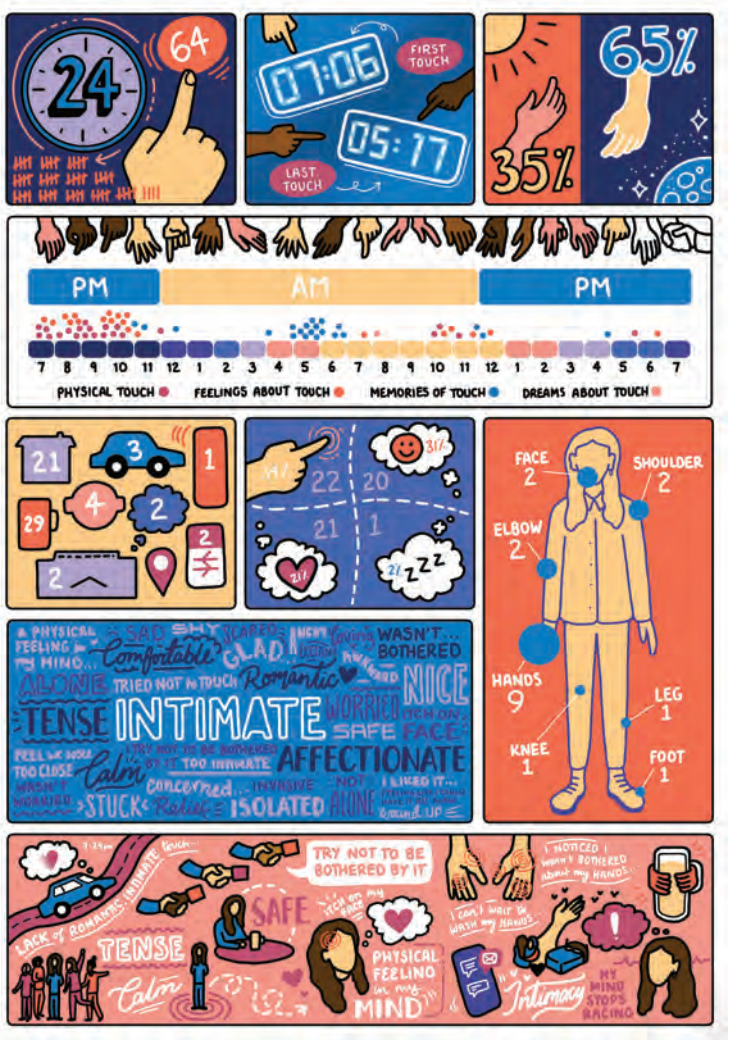

Illustration by Amber Anderson.

"It is a surprise that in our society it is not more disabling to live your whole life unaware that folding the symbolic kissing cherry blossoms together just so creates a regular pentagonal dodecahedron. But I am glad people can live fulfilling lives that way, because does anybody wish ill to people who are without that inner visual ability to properly spin things?"
– Elizabeth J. (Ibby) Grace, quoted in Authoring Autism

Passing

The term 'passing' (neurodivergent people often use 'masking') refers to the way people conceal social markers of impairment to avoid the stigma of disability and pass as 'normal'. Many disabled people without a visible or obvious impairment often have to make choices of whether or not to hide their disability, or draw attention to it – decisions which are predominantly shaped by how they are perceived by non-disabled people. Passing is exhausting, whether for a partially deaf person concentrating very hard to lip-read, a partially sighted person constantly negotiating only vaguely visible spatial clues, someone with chronic illness trying to appear full of energy when with others, or a neurodivergent person pretending to see the world in normative ways.

Meanwhile, passing is entirely for the benefit of non-disabled people – it makes their lives easier because they don't need to make any adjustments.

Seeing things differently

Natasha Trotman (2023), *(Non) Normative Imaginaries and (Im)Materialities (NNIM)*, Somerset House Studios.

(Non) Normative Imaginaries and (Im)Materialities (NNIM) is a 2023 film by neurodivergent artist Natasha Trotman, commissioned for Somerset House Studios that seeks to subvert our understanding of standard, socio-normative perceptions. Instead, it offers up other ways of being that Trotman intends as a "spark and space to consider how might we transcend our current realities and forge new paths and possibilities."

Having fun

If diverse disabilities are just different ways of being, neither better nor worse than non-disabled life, then we can begin to enjoy these differences creatively and critically. Through embodied and experimental workshops, The DisOrdinary Architecture Project centres the diversity of our bodies and minds

Performance as part of The DisOrdinary Architecture Project workshop (2008), *How many ways can you get from A to B?*, Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, London
Photo: Jos Boys.

as something pleasurable and fun to explore. Rather than calling wheelchair users 'wheelchair-bound' (as an assumed 'restriction') we can value the mobility and the potential enjoyment (for some) in taking risks, in going fast or in becoming an impromptu family carrier. We can find satisfying and unexpected uses in our built surroundings – railings that make music when struck with a cane, door handles that are sensuous to touch, places that enable moments of pause, or leaning or lying down.

Disability-led creative provocations

Many disabled artists explore diverse ways of being in their creative practice, often building inventively on a whole (complicated) history of freak shows, burlesque and crip humour. These offer an experiential liveliness that architects and designers could be learning from.

Many examples have already been given in this compendium, and there are many more not included. We end this compendium with just a few.

Mobility Device (2013-ongoing), Grand Central Art Center collaborative performance. Photo: John Spiak. Courtesy of the artist.

Carmen Papalia

Mobility Device (2013) is a performance by blind artist Carmen Papalia where he replaces his detection cane with an alternative system to enable mobility when exploring unfamiliar terrains. During the first iteration of the performance, Papalia replaced his cane with the

Great Centurion Marching Band from Century High School. Band members indicated obstacles with musical cues as Papalia freely explored downtown Santa Ana and found his way into shops, restaurants, underground parking structures, and busy sidewalks and streets.

Abi Palmer

Crip Casino is an ongoing project by disabled artist Abi Palmer, based on an interactive gambling arcade that parodies the wellness industry. Since 2020 it has been exhibited at Tate Modern, Wellcome Collection and Somerset House in London. Using interactive games and DIY-hacked fruit machines, the installation examines the relationship between chance and ritual, winning and losing.

"Participants, both dis+abled, are invited to play a series of games which lead them to reconsider their position in life."
– *Abi Palmer*

Abi Palmer (2020), *Crip Casino.* Image by the artist.

Beyond the Empire of Normality

As neurodivergent people are increasingly self-advocating, and as their diverse perspectives are increasingly being recognised, they join others across disability arts and activism in finding ways to go beyond merely gaining functional access to the built environment and to services.

Instead by starting from disability and difference, alternative ways of thinking and imagining offer both new creative possibilities, and a critique of 'what is normal'. Ultimately this means unravelling how extractive and exploitative systems rely on certain types of productive bodies, and devalue others as a 'burden'.

In *Empire of Normality*, neurodivergent philosopher Robert Chapman suggests that it takes all kinds of minds for society to function. They show how, instead of accepting a place as inferior, neurodivergent people are claiming space as "neurominorities", with some campaigning for changes in the very "conditions that gave rise to pervasive neuronormative domination across the modern world."

Similarly neurodivergent scholars and activists Nick Walker, Athena Lynn Michaels-Dillon and M. Remi Yergeau have been exploring the concept of neuroqueer to describe a way of being in which normative assumptions about disabled people are being disrupted and reshaped.

"When I say that a future society that's been transformed by the neurodiversity paradigm would be a neuroqueer society, what I mean is that in such a society there would be no such thing as neurotypicality, no such thing as a 'normal mind.' It would be commonplace for people to regard their own minds and embodiments as fluid and customizable, as canvases for ongoing creative experimentation."
– Nick Walker

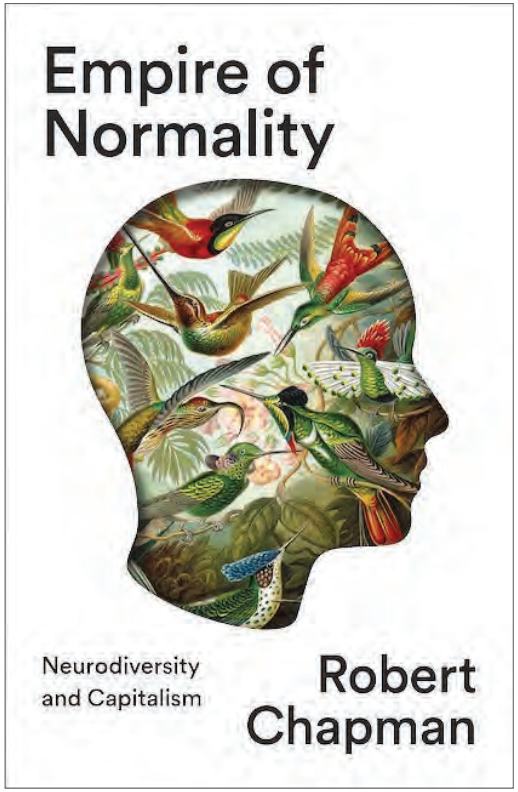

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Photo opposite: Luke Donovan.
Photo above: Scarlett Barclay.

able·ism/ noun

"A system of assigning value to people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, productivity, desirability, intelligence, excellence, and fitness. These constructed ideas are deeply rooted in eugenics, anti-Blackness, misogyny, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. This systemic oppression that leads to people and society determining people's value based on their culture, age, language, appearance, religion, birth or living place, 'health/wellness', and/or their ability to satisfactorily re/produce, 'excel' and 'behave'. You do not have to be disabled to experience ableism."

working definition by @TalilaLewis, updated January 2022, developed in community with disabled Black/negatively racialised people, especially @NotThreeFifths

Many More Parts than M! is an alternative catalogue of ideas, stories and projects that helps architects and others reimagine what truly accessible, enjoyable and beautiful spaces can be. Led by disabled creativity and rooted in lived experience, it aims to subvert the 'one-size-fits-all' accessibility guidance from 'Part M' of the UK's building regulations. In this debut compendium, accessibility becomes not a technical problem for architects to solve, but a creative generator.

The DIS/ORDINARY Architecture Project

REFabricate

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

RIBA North West

LFA LONDON FESTIVAL OF ARCHITECTURE

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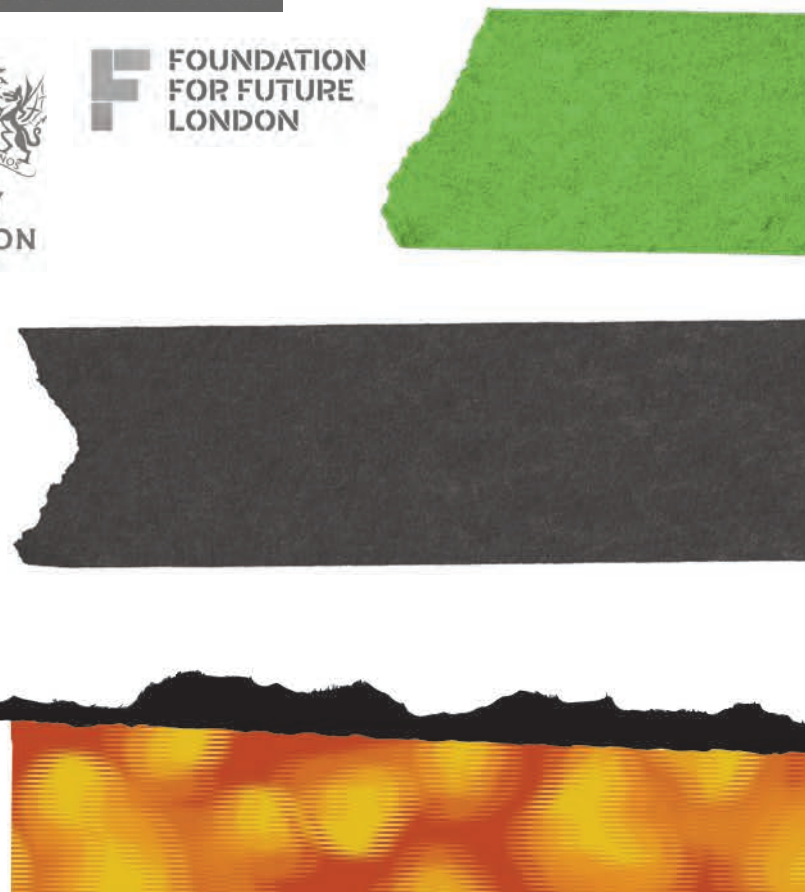

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