

AD

ANTI-ABLEIST TAKEOVER ISSUE

**SONIA BOUÉ: POSTER
AND INTERVIEW**
DISABILITY, ART
AND ACTIVISM
ANTI-ABLEIST PEDAGOGY

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Editorial

As guest editor of this special issue of *AD*, Dr Claire Penketh has brought together key anti-ableist artists and educators. This first ever 'takeover' issue of *AD* offers perspectives, experience and expertise to advance anti-ableist art education. Thank you Claire, and every member of the AaP SIG, for making this possible!

Sophie Leach, Editor

Anti-ableism offers a direct challenge to everyday assumptions about ability. As a theory, ableism can help to develop our awareness of hidden bias, enabling us to imagine and value alternative ways of being. This idea has been introduced and developed by a number of disabled activists and scholars, including Fiona Kumari Campbell in her influential book *Contours of Ableism*. I've worked with this idea for a while now, both in my role as subject lead for Disability Studies and, more recently, alongside members of the Special Interest Group for Advancing Anti-ableist Pedagogy (AaP SIG). It is the conversations with that collective, as well as our wider discussions with artists such as Sonia Boué and Sarah Graham, that are represented here.

Reflecting on ableism should create a challenge to deficit ideas about disability, enabling us to improve vital areas of access and creating a new space for critical explorations of disability within the curriculum. Disability Studies is central to this approach, providing us with essential tools for disrupting dominant ideas about disability, including the absence of critical debate. Importantly, this issue represents the involvement of disabled and non-disabled artists, academics, teachers and pupils. It explores significant issues relating to access, as well as the creative and transformational potential of diversity, and the place

of disability arts and activism within contemporary culture. I'm proud that we have been able to bring so many examples of anti-ableist practice together in an issue that I feel is practical, useful and provocative in equal measure. I am particularly pleased that this issue includes a feature on the recent *We Are Invisible – We Are Visible (WAIWAV)*, Dada-inspired project by d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent artists. I must offer my thanks to Colin Hambrook of Disability Arts Online for his generous contributions and enthusiasm for representing this work in his interview with Tony Heaton OBE.

Thanks also to Professor David Bolt, director of the Centre for Culture and Disability Studies, for setting the tone in his opening article, and to members of the AaP SIG who have given this project so much energy throughout the year. You can read a number of their contributions here. Finally, I must thank Sophie Leach, editor of *AD*, for her inspiring editorial presence in imagining and realising this 'takeover' issue.

Dr Claire Penketh, Guest Editor of *AD*, Associate Professor of Disability Studies, Liverpool Hope University, and AaP SIG chair

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Contents



Poster
SAFE AS HOUSES series, 2020
© Sonia Boué

Cover
Marble Dreams, 2020, oil on canvas
© Sarah Graham

Regulars

Poster

SAFE AS HOUSES series, 2020
Sonia Boué

2

Sonia Boué in conversation
Dr Claire Penketh

15

Pull-out resource
Interview with Sarah Graham
Sophie Leach

32

Threshold Concepts for Art
Chris Francis

Features

7

What does art mean to me?
Armand Holland

8

Cultural disability studies in Education
Professor David Bolt

10

Art out of protest
Colin Hambrook

13

Contemporary art practice and anti-ableist pedagogy
Paul Morrow

19

Activism through art
Aisya Begum

20

Activist/Curator
Gill Crawshaw

22

Exploring inclusive drawing practices
Mel Jay

24

Contemporary art as a vehicle for anti-ableist art education
Clare Boreham

26

Irregular Art Schools
Irregular Art School team

28

Towards anti-ableist pedagogies
Dr Sandra Hiatt

30

Instructing instructions
Joanna Fursmann

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In conversation with

Sonia Boué



Sonia Boué, *Nosey*, 2022
photograph © Sonia Boué
2022

Right Sonia Boué, *Same as I ever was*, 2021, collage
© Sonia Boué 2021
Arts Council England funded
Neurophototherapy project

Multiform artist Sonia Boué is also a writer on autism and art, and a leading consultant for neurodiversity in the arts. Here, she talks to Dr Claire Penketh about her arts practice and advocacy work, as well as how the different dimensions to her work reflect her neurodivergent profile

Dr Claire Penketh: Your arts practice and advocacy work engages directly with our Advancing Anti-Ableist Pedagogy theme, but I'm aware that there are a number of different dimensions to your work.

Sonia Boué: I feel I specialise in not specialising, which reflects my neurodivergent profile. I'm eternally curious and this allows me to embrace many forms of practice. I usually identify as an autistic neurodivergent visual artist and being specific about my identity is extremely important to me. I also identify as disabled, though not all autistic people do and that's another cultural nuance worth knowing. As I answer your questions, it will become clear why this level of specificity feels so necessary. While I fully embrace the neurodiversity paradigm, my experience is that autistic people face unique social barriers which can often get lost in the wider conversation about neurodivergence. I'm also naturally analytical and precise about access issues, while acknowledging that neurodivergent profiles and identities are complex and often overlapping. There's a fundamental relational difference within autism that is not necessarily shared by other neurodivergences. I like to use the word *allistic*, which can be used to refer to all types of non-autistic people. We need to find ways of talking about this relational difference which are clear and constructively assertive. I think adopting this simple term could help to decentre normative relational bias.

I'm also a writer and a consultant for neurodiversity in the arts, and have recently delivered some co-curated anti-ableism workshops with the Wellcome Collection. Training is something I'm keen to develop further. Working with organisations in this way is powerful advocacy at an individual level. I've loved engaging with the Wellcome Collection Social Justice Curriculum and wish more organisations would pilot such strategic approaches. I feel we made a qualitative experiential difference to staff members' understanding of everyday ableism. However, primarily I'm a visual artist. My other activities are a byproduct of my exclusion and the strategies I've developed to carve out a space for myself in the arts. In many ways I maintain an outsider position. I'm attached to nothing and no-one, which enables me to maintain my integrity. I am free to challenge where needed.

I was thrilled to lecture to art foundation students during lockdowns because, despite being warned that engagement with online teaching was generally low, I found that offering neurodivergent space for students was enabling. It spawned a follow-on support group for neurodivergent students and was a dream gig.



What are you working on at the moment? Does your current practice have any particular resonance with the theme of anti-ableist practice?

This is a good question! I'm a complete plate spinner and one train of thought will quickly set off a new association. Similarly, one half-finished work can set another work in motion and I've learned to go with it. Underlying this pattern is that curiosity I mentioned earlier, which sadly wasn't valued at school.

I now suspend all judgement about my lack of linear productivity because my brain just can't go there. I feel art educators should be free to work *with* pupils' and students' diverse cognitive styles. You can be intensely productive in an unusual way and thus be disadvantaged for it, as I was. I probably needed more time to complete work and be allowed to have several ideas on the go. Excess ideas simply go in the trash and I'm happy to revise my work many times to get an optimal result. I have to feel my way intuitively because I'm unable to pick up skills sequentially, which has been a huge barrier in formal education. Following my own interests has enabled me to gain a very wide range of skills in an autodidactic fashion. Perfectionism means I hone a piece of work until it feels polished, and this trick of the mind is where skill can be acquired almost as a byproduct of intense periods of hyper-focus.

My current work is for the DASH Tate Plus Network Ampersand Award 2022, *We Are Invisible: We Are Visible (WAIWAV)*. My performance, *The Artist is Not Present*, was

'My work often turns the tables on neurotypical assumptions to express aspects of my lived experience which might otherwise be difficult to externalise'

live streamed on 22 July to the Site Gallery in Sheffield. The work critiques both the neurotypical gaze at the core of Maria Abramović's performance *The Artist is Present* and the historic exclusion of neurodivergent narratives in 'mainstream' visual arts. My intention is to comment on neurotypical behavioural norms as a form of social-biased performative practice.

WAIWAV offered important and challenging work. I love the sound of this piece and the nature of these planned interventions. Is it possible to offer some explanation/discussion for how you have developed these pieces and also their relevance to the issues raised in this AD?

I have selected works made mainly during the pandemic. Some are commissioned works like the WAIWAV artwork, but over this period I also made a conscious decision in 2021 to foreground my autistic identity with my Arts Council England (ACE)-funded R&D project Neurophototherapy. As an interesting aside, I was actually advised not to foreground my autistic identity in some quarters! That was ableism plain and simple. Working with this focus is considered by some to pigeonhole and sideline an artist.

Below Sonia Boué, *Conversation with B (2)*, 2021 © Sonia Boué 2021 Arts Council England-funded neurophototherapy project

From 2013–2019 I'd worked almost exclusively on a family history of forced migration – my father had to leave Spain in 1939 and spent his adult life in political exile from General Francisco Franco's fascist dictatorship. However, the pandemic hastened an underlying need for congruence in my practice after my autism diagnosis in 2016. I chose to ignore the well-meant ableist advice! In this sense alone these images address ableism quite directly. They also express my identity through a neurodivergent lens, enabling me to flip ableist medical model narratives which frame my core identity as an abnormality. This has been empowering and feeds into the other strands of my practice because I've overcome a disconnect. For me, centering my identity has proved transformational and the research for my neurophototherapy project has taken my knowledge base to the next level.

Essentially, I'm an autobiographical artist and my works can usually be viewed through the dual lenses of my neurodivergence and my family's political exile. Playfulness is also important to me. However, at its core my work is anti-fascist and anti-ableist, and my practice is quite consciously a site of creative resistance. This is an improvisational survivalist methodology, which felt

especially pertinent in the early moments of the first national lockdown. My work often turns the tables on neurotypical assumptions to express aspects of my lived experience which might otherwise be difficult to externalise. In addition, I seek to articulate the wordless states of being I sometimes experience as an autistic person. I loathe the dominance of non-visual language in our culture and often wonder why this occurs in visual arts. Image and performance are a radical joy to me, and employing them in certain contexts can also be seen as anti-ableist practice. I feel we shouldn't centre text-based and verbal communication so much in education because it disadvantages so many neurodivergent pupils and students.

What are your own experiences of art education? In some respects, the arts are celebrated as inclusive and participatory. However, some have fewer positive experiences and have faced barriers.

Looking back, the art room in my school was a haven for me but not a site of art education. Like home economics, it was a sanctuary from the torture of so-called 'academic' subjects. In my school the bar was generally low but the art room was for 'losers'. I've substituted the actual terminology used in my corner of Birmingham in the 1970s, which is worth mentioning because I now think pupils were being slurred because of neurological differences.

I sat the 11+ in a state of bewilderment. While my sister went to the local grammar school, I took a long bus journey to a failing, out-of-catchment comprehensive school. In addition to dyslexia, dyspraxia and dyscalculia, my binocular focus is unstable and I get visual disturbances. This made observational drawing and painting a painful and unfulfilling process. While my art teacher was warm and encouraging, the curriculum didn't allow me to flourish despite my intense love of shape, pattern and colour. Ceramics were a haptic joy, but the yoke of representational art destroyed my confidence and blocked opportunity.

Looking back, I knew that I was struggling but I didn't have the means to talk about it. I felt intense shame and internalised my difficulties. Without the necessary diagnoses or understanding, there was no support and options were thus limited. The advent of the neurodiversity paradigm was decades away.

I found my way back into creative practice when I discovered art therapy, training as a professional art therapist at Sheffield University. Suspending judgement and allowing process to lead enabled me to locate the instinctive artist I truly was. I now think the insistence on observational work as a requisite for accessing art courses in Higher Education (HE) was ableist. There are so many ways to be an artist but this was not recognised in school art education at the time.

Yes, I believe art education and arts practice have the potential to be anti-ableist in resisting taken-for-granted assumptions about so-called typical minds and bodies. I'm interested to know more about your own thoughts and experiences here.

I think resisting assumptions is key. The hidden social curriculum is riddled with normative assumptions, for example. Art school was beyond me but I somehow completed



'Once you've understood the relational difference, you will see that direct communication, situations and opportunities that don't involve neurotypical social demands are actually an access right'

a degree in history of art at Sussex University, despite not being able to talk to my tutors. I remember it was extremely humiliating to be so incoherent and unable hold eye contact in tutorials. My tutors were kind, but utterly mysterious and intimidating. I didn't understand the social rules and missed out on networking and a possible early career in my subject.

Times have obviously changed and, as a society, we are beginning to catch up with neurodivergence. Yet, I know that HE can be as difficult now for some students as it was for me back then. The pandemic has taught us a great deal about being flexible and offering multi-modal teaching, and I think remote learning really suits some neurotypes. For others it won't work, so you need to be able to offer options. Having the ability to tailor teaching for diverse cognitive profiles is fundamental to access because we now know how and why one size won't fit all. I also think that social interactions can be made more transparent for autistic people. Once you've understood the relational difference, you will see that direct communication, situations and opportunities that don't involve neurotypical social demands are actually an access right. As a much younger person, I wasn't simply shy, I just couldn't tune in to all the coded (implicit) information which others were party to. I was forced to perform neurotypicality (mask my autism) and the effort nearly broke me. We now know that masking autism can have a deeply negative impact across a lifetime. Over time we also learn to self-exclude from opportunities, knowing we will not be able to perform as required. When it came to history of art, I got a first-class degree but then left

Above Sonia Boué, *Bird Nose*, 2020, photograph © Sonia Boué 2020





Top left Sonia Boué, *Tell me how to feel*, 2020, scanned photograph @ Sonia Boué 2022

Right Sonia Boué, *Flowers for Introverts*, 2021, Collage © Sonia Boué 2021 Arts Council England funded neurophototherapy project

the subject forever – I could do well in the subject but couldn't 'do' people, I decided. It's taken a lifetime to rid myself of such internalised, negative social conditioning. I'm now privileged to use this training in many strands of my practice, but this has been a late flowering.

Do you consider that your own practices resist ableism? And if so, in what ways?

Absolutely! It's at the core of my current practice and my future direction. After a lifetime of peddling backwards, my identity and my work are as one. I feel I can now practice anti-ableism with a new coherence in all my work, whether it be mentoring, public speaking, writing or a commission. Autism quite naturally powers my research-based practice and my mission to generate a knowledge base. At the close of a project, I open-source my results and wait for opportunities to land in my inbox. This is an autistic way

of working which obviates the usual social demands and labour of networking. Disseminating my learning is a huge part of this process, and I'm also keen to learn from others and work collaboratively. Intersectionality is also hugely important. I acknowledge my cis status, my white privilege and my privilege as a speaking autistic person who can often 'pass' as neurotypical. These are no small privileges but I retain the right to assert my needs and resist. I believe resistance can be hands-on, maker-led and conversational. It can also be about saying no. In fact, saying no is often the start of the best conversations, especially when others are willing to hear why you can't agree to something. I've learned to use every approach and each opportunity for advocacy. I think this is what allistic people call boundaries!

Exploring new ways of working is also part of my quest. Curiously, the arts are quite rigid in practice. Anti-ableism for me is about suggesting new models of practice and

'There's an immense creative power and freedom to be gained in standing firm about working with your neurology and not against it'

chipping away at embedded norms. There's an immense creative power and freedom to be gained in standing firm about working with your neurology and not against it. I think allistic and neurotypical people take this for granted and this is the crux of neuro-normative ableism.

I find it telling that warnings about stigma (aka prejudice) could have prevented me from undertaking my neurophototherapy R&D [research and development], which went on to produce compelling results for a community of late-diagnosed neurodivergent people. Pulling together a funding application for the follow-on project to continue this work will be a radical act of resistance in itself. As I inch forward, I risk prejudice but not to do so is unthinkable. This is why your questions are a joy to answer so deeply and frankly. This piece is in itself a manifestation of my hard-won congruence. Thank you! ■

Soniaboue.co.uk



Sonia creates and leads Arts Council England-funded projects which pioneer inclusive models of practice. She participates in a variety of community arts projects and carries out visual research in academic contexts

What does art mean to me?



Armand Holland is a 12-year-old artist. His bright and bold photograph was one of the winning entries in the Photography Movement's first Show and Tell competition of 2021. Here Armand explains what art means to him

The photo was taken during the pandemic in 2020 when Armand was just ten years old, and was accompanied by the word 'Dismantled'. Sophie Leach, principal editor of *AD* magazine, was privileged to be a judge and this image was her first choice. Earlier this year we invited Armand to help us define what art might mean to young people who are moving from primary to secondary school. Armand, who is dyslexic, chose to record his answer to this question. You can hear his wonderful one-minute response by scanning the QR code. ■

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?



Above *Dismantled* (2020), Armand Holland, then aged 10. Armand's winning photo can also be viewed here: thephotographymovement.com/exhibition

Top *What art means to me?* Armand's response can be heard by scanning the QR code

Cultural Disability Studies in Education

David Bolt, professor of Disability Studies and Interdisciplinarity at Liverpool Hope University, is on a mission to combine disability studies with other fields and disciplines. The aim is to enable the curriculum and to breathe non-normative life into learning by disrupting, deconstructing or else rejecting normative subject matter. Here, David explains



The Centre for Culture and Disability Studies at Liverpool Hope University has been established for more than 12 years. In that time, it has hosted numerous events, provided institutional bases for our journal and a number of book series, and created an internationally recognised research community for projects and courses, and staff and students. United in our dedication to disability studies, the centre's core members are based variously (and sometimes variably) in the social sciences, the humanities and education. Indeed, it is fair to say that interdisciplinarity is another unifying factor, for we approach disability from multiple subjects, ranging from art education to geography, from aesthetics to genre studies, from history to media studies, and so on. Given this backdrop, at a book launch in the summer of 2018, I formally proposed an interdisciplinary endeavour to disrupt the dominant education discourse that has long since reduced disabled people to needs.

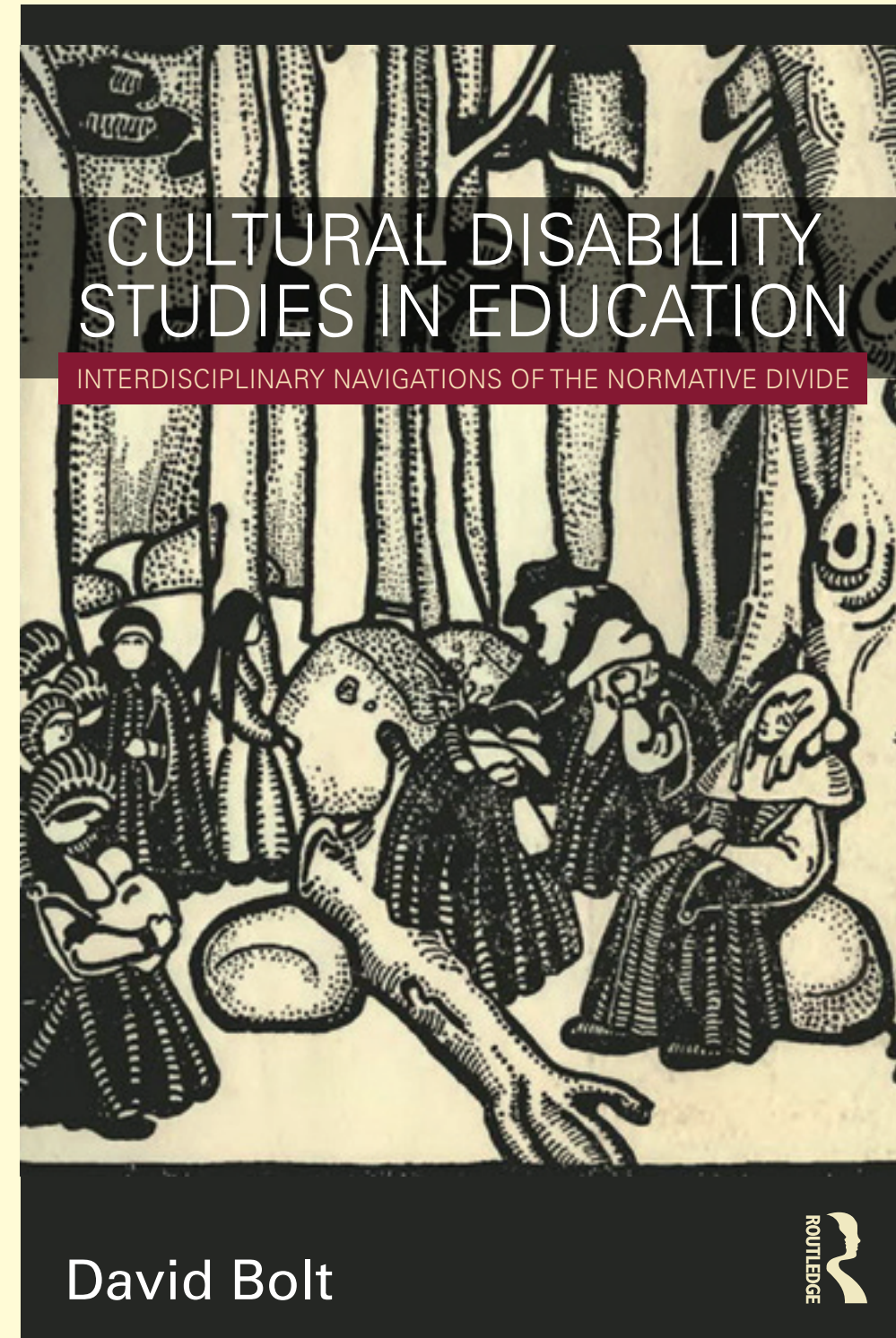
My starting point in this work is to stress that disability studies is not the same thing as the study of disability. While the latter can easily be traced back a century or more, the field of disability studies emerged specifically from social scientists' engagement with radical activism in the 1970s. So significant was this engagement that, by the 21st century, disability studies had expanded into a number of

interdisciplinary fields. One such field was cultural disability studies. Based in the humanities, this work situated disability alongside race, class and gender among critical and theoretical approaches to cultural representations. Another of the fields was Disability Studies in Education (DSE), which recognised the experience of disabled people in academia, promoted inclusion and rethought so-called Special Educational Needs with much-needed criticality.

'To enable the curriculum is to enable the classroom'

Although disability studies, cultural disability studies and DSE started respectively in the social sciences, the humanities and education, each was interdisciplinary in its own right. It is therefore my mission to draw these fields together under the name of Cultural Disability Studies in Education (CDSE). Some of the things I take from disability studies, cultural disability studies and DSE in turn are a focus on social justice, the importance of cultural representation and the value of inclusive education. This being so, it is the CDSE imperative to enable the curriculum; to disrupt, deconstruct or else reject normative subject matter.

Working to an enabled curriculum, my CDSE teaching explores cultural artefacts, of the so-called high and low varieties, from



an explicitly non-normative interdisciplinary stance. For instance, one session of our Disability Studies MA connects with the field of popular music studies. What we do at this stage of the course is analyse music videos for narrative and characterisation that represent disability, the specific focus being a couple of powerful examples from the United Kingdom and the United States – Queen's *These are the days of our lives* and Johnny Cash's *Hurt*. These two audio-visual representations accord with each other because the audience is shown a cultural icon whose exemplary image has been

dismantled by chronic illness. There is no denying that these are poignant representations that serve to mark the end of two legendary lives. However, the enabled curriculum requires that we go much further to acknowledge and appreciate that, for many people, the representations resonate with day-to-day experience. The session thereby centralises non-normativity to explore the cultural artefacts with an emphasis on what they communicate about chronic illness, an aspect of the human condition usually pushed to the margins of concern.

'Far from being reduced to needs, disability becomes appreciated as an expansive knowledge base on which all can draw'

To enable the curriculum is to enable the classroom. As such, my tutorials, seminars and lectures often involve a discursive culmination of contributions from students who have direct or indirect experience of disability, intermingled with my own anecdotes as a disabled person, and critical engagements with attitudes, theories and portrayals. In other words, CDSE classes can supplement as much as they take from the matters under discussion. All in all, a CDSE approach involves combining disability studies with other fields and disciplines to breathe non-normative life into them. Understandings meet and entwine as the normative divide is traversed by discourse. The result is that, far from being reduced to needs, disability becomes appreciated as an expansive knowledge base on which all can draw, an epistemological supplement to progressive learning, such as that increasingly demonstrated in art education. ■

Left David Bolt

Above *Cultural Disability Studies in Education* is David Bolt's book published by Routledge in 2018. The image used on the cover for his book is a sketch by the twentieth-century Russian

artist, Nicholas Roerich. This image was originally used in 1906 on the cover of the playwright, Maurice Maeterlinck's *The Blind*. It is a representation of blindness, as what David Bolt calls an empty and residual existence.

Art out of protest

Colin Hambrook, founding editor of Disability Arts Online, discusses a groundbreaking initiative that intends to rewrite disabled artists into the history of art, with a focus on the work of sculptor Tony Heaton

***We Are Invisible, We Are Visible (WAIWAV)* was a project produced by the disabled-led visual arts organisation DASH. With funding from the Ampersand Foundation, this unprecedented takeover, held on 2 July 2022, and the 102nd anniversary of the first Dada Art Fair held in Berlin, saw 31 disabled artists creating unique interventions in galleries across Britain and Northern Ireland.**

With the tacit agreement of Plus Tate members' venues, the artists were selected to disrupt 30 locations, with surreal interventions happening on the same day. The artists selected were from a wide range of disciplines; the linking thread being a recognition of a line that can be drawn from the photomontage, literature and performance invented by the Dada movement with its embodiment of the cut-up aesthetic, through to punk and, in recent decades, disability arts.

It is through the engagement with live art, performance, or interventionist art, in particular, that we see similar ideals of rule breaking, anti-normality and the art of protest arise.

Disability art is the inheritor of the ethics and ideology of Dada, both movements born out of political situations of inequality and oppression. Throughout the current decade since the invention of 'austerity' and the 'hostile environment', disabled people have taken the brunt. Throughout the pandemic, we have died in our thousands with hardly a whimper in the media. Society applauds our invisibility and exclusion. We are a threat, reminding the state, society and the family that they are not immortal and that their days as non-disabled people are numbered.

As George Grosz asked: 'Can we tolerate this state of affairs without taking a stand against it'. In terms of an expression of the agency we have within an intolerable situation, I am reminded of the words of musician and



Far left *Great Britain From A Wheelchair*, 1994, two ex-NHS wheelchair parts © Paul Kenny

Left middle *A Bigger Ripple*, 2021, Lumiere, produced by Artichoke Neon © Matthew Andrews

Left *SPLIT*, 1994, ash wood © Emerson Ultracik

Left bottom *Damaged – Five Pillars*, Portland stone, 2020

All work by Tony Heaton

'Disability art is the inheritor of the ethics and ideology of Dada, both movements born out of political situations of inequality and oppression'

songwriter Poly Styrene from her song *I Am A Poseur* who sang 'exhibition is the name/ voyeurism is the game / yes, we're very entertaining / overtones can be betraying'.

For *We Are Invisible, We Are Visible*, sculptor, activist and performance artist Tony Heaton created *Out of Order*, an intervention designed to upset and bemuse gallery-goers at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead. He filled a lift in the venue with empty wheelchairs, leaving no space for anyone to enter. His intention was to surprise, perplex and arouse curiosity, giving gallery-goers the option to either find another lift close by or take the privilege of the stairs.

In Heaton's words: 'I wanted to create this intervention because as wheelchair-users we are often without choice. We have to use the lifts. The stairs are not an option. Often, when I am waiting for a lift, the doors open and it is packed with people. No-one has ever suggested they come out to take the stairs in order to make room for me; they avoid looking at me, it is as if I am invisible. This intervention turned things on their head by making the invisible visible, just as the Dadaists did. It's also a nod to the objectification of disabled people. We are so often represented as things rather than as people.'

Ideas of access are a 'hobby horse' within Heaton's canon. As far back as 1992, the artist created an intervention *Shaken not Stirred* for a press conference heralding disabled peoples' Block Telethon protest against ITV's charity fundraiser. For the provocation, Heaton created a seven-foot-high pyramid of red charity collecting cans. The readymade sculpture sat centre-stage as the TV and broadsheet journalists walked into the room. The artist then proceeded to shock his audience, wheeling in to throw a prosthetic leg with a Dr Marten boot attached to its foot, demolishing the structure and creating a freeze-frame in time for his audience to consider societies attitudes towards disability. The charity collecting can is a reference to the people who shake these cans to raise money without stirring anyone's conscience. The pyramid also acts as a comment on 'charity' and the hierarchies that exist within the public sector.

Ableism, which sits within the foundations of our society, justifies its position on disability through an apolitical do-goodery. Charities which purport to support disabled people are for the most part run by non-disabled people with little or no lived experience of the constraints that disability

discrimination imposes. They add to those layers of discrimination by presenting messages of the disabled person as tragic but brave victims of their bodies, while emphasising the medical model notion that to be valid human beings, disabled people need to be cured of bodily and mental imperfection.

That disability is an ordinary aspect to human existence to be expected and respected on its own terms is not a message the disability charities want to embrace. Instead, they tend to focus on raising money through appealing to a fear of disability that can be traced back through the mists of time.

One of Heaton's more widely known works *Great Britain From A Wheelchair* is a visual pun that is a direct forerunner of *Out of Order*. It tells a story of the universality of disability experience. The underlying bold message behind the work is that wheelchair-users are everywhere in spite of societies' efforts to make the disabled person an invisible entity. The strength of this sculpture is in the fact that the material – the pieces assembled from NHS wheelchair parts – are as identifiable as the apparent map of Britain.

The utilitarian greyness of *Great Britain From A Wheelchair* sits in contrast to the sense of joy and satisfaction the work conveys with its overarching statement about freedom of movement. It says to the non-disabled onlooker: 'You may think you know me as a pitiable object, but you don't know me at all.'

There is something of that same sense of Dadaist subversion and contradiction in the 2012 work *Monument to the Unintended Performer* – a 2012 Channel 4 commission for the TV company's *Big 4* series at the time of the Paralympics. The statement Heaton is making with this work is twofold. As a nod to Myron's Classical Greek sculpture *Discobolus*, evoking the spirit of the Olympics, it is a statement about the invisibility of disabled people. The ideal of perfection the Greek figure represents eschews the disabled body by inference. Its title is a clever reference to the stares and

'This intervention turned things on their head by making the invisible visible, just as the Dadaists did. It's also a nod to the objectification of disabled people. We are so often represented as things rather than as people'

inappropriate comments that disabled people are too often assaulted by in public spaces. Just their presence becomes a prompt for non-disabled people's fear and approbation.

In his postscript to Hans Richter's book *Dada: Art and Anti-art*, Werner Haftmann, the art historian, proclaims that 'Dada broke the umbilical cord that bound us to history.' Within his arts practice, Heaton, like many disabled artists, has been pushing against a history of art that favours the exclusive, ableist attitudes of the gatekeepers, the curators and art directors, the art schools and the academia that persists in regurgitating the same message, over and over.

What Richter describes as an 'artistic revolt against art' – what in many respects was a movement invested in a polemic calling for freedom – has parallels with disability arts, which is a movement which has sought over the last 30 years to highlight the cages with which society continues to imprison disabled people.

Our hope in the wake of *We Are Invisible, We Are Visible* is that we will see a change in the approach of the visual arts sector and academia that supports it, in understanding the socially engaged practice of artists like Tony Heaton and the others who took part in this ground-breaking initiative. ■

disabilityarts.online
waiwav.dasharts.org
tonyheaton.co.uk

Below *OUT OF ORDER*, an intervention in lift 1, The Baltic, Gateshead, Tony Heaton & Terry Smith © Terry Smith

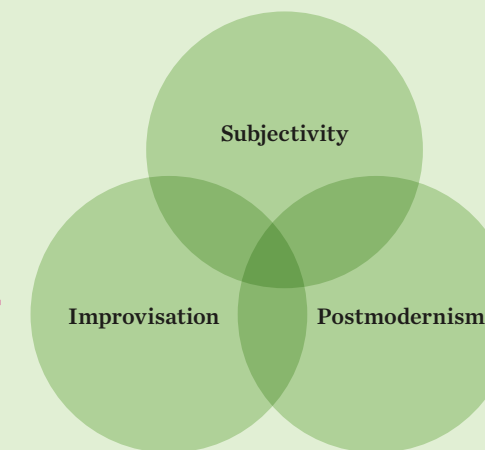


Contemporary art practice and anti-ableist pedagogy

Above Linda Bell, *Cube station*, 2018 © ActionSpace

Paul Morrow, art teacher and lead practitioner at Westminster Special Schools, explores the connections and characteristics between contemporary art practice and anti-ableist pedagogy

Some of the characteristics of contemporary art practice align with inclusive and anti-ableist arts education, and offer an alternative way to access, make and experience art. This approach moves away from the orthodoxy of typical art production in schools, sometimes described as 'school art'. Contemporary art practice offers new and legitimate entry points, and approaches, to making art.



The diagram above explores some of these characteristics, which can be located within classroom practice and offers a framework for this enquiry.

Subjectivity

Within education, practitioners and students bring their own experience, perceptions and specificity into the classroom. This is often described in two ways; as student voice and person centred/person centric. Student voice refers to the acknowledgement of the learner's voice. It directly informs and impacts on their learning so that they are active participants, helping to co-construct their learning. Within special-needs teaching, the notion of subjectivity can relate directly to the idea of person-centred learning. This is where the learning is formed around the learner in direct relation to both their specific needs and to what they engage with, and what they find motivating. Engagement is a central tenet of inclusion and inclusive practice, and refers to the context of the learning and engagement that the young person is experiencing.



‘When looking at these artists [for example Yinka Shonibare CBE, Nnena Kalu or Linda Bell] through an inclusive and anti-ableist lens, multiple entry points, starting points and points of departure offer non-hierarchal, equitable creative explorations’

This engagement can then be used as an entry point into a wider curriculum area.

Within contemporary art practice, subjectivity and the human condition are areas that are readily explored. This chimes with the postmodern notion of many narratives, multiple readings and multiple entry points. This can be seen within many different strands of contemporary art that explore issues and personal narratives, and invite the viewer to actively participate and co-construct meaning.

Improvisation

Some contemporary art practices have elements of improvisation, performance and participation. These can be experienced within the field of performance art, the fleeting nature of ‘in the moment’ actions, and the relationship that is developed between the performer and audience. There are also those immersive art experiences that are experienced within installation art. These responses can be constructed and generated by both the artist through their interpretation of spaces, and the viewer through their interpretation and response to these actions and spaces.

Within education, and more specifically Assessment for Learning (AfL), improvised teaching can occur where learning is formed around the learner, based on the feedback on where they are at a given moment. It also aligns with the Vygotskyian social constructivist notion of the more experienced other and the concept of scaffolding.

Postmodernism, modernism and the parallels of integration and inclusion

Postmodernism within art practice acknowledges that there are many narratives and multiple entry points to making, viewing and experiencing art. It challenges the notion that there is a right or preferred mode.

Postmodernism can be seen in opposition to modernism, which was essentially a post-war vision of progress and science that permeated all of society. There were issues with its all-encompassing philosophy that was

constructed through a patriarchal, white Eurocentric lens. This led to a uniformity around principles of art and cultural production. After the Second World War, society was rebuilding and reconceptualising itself after the horrors experienced – progress and notions of a futuristic society driven by science became prominent in society. Here is where tensions exist; it placed a singular model, where a metanarrative of conformity on society with corresponding value judgement was attached, and a preferred culture and cultural production became dominant.

Modernism and normalcy

The concept of normalcy is the idea that society has been constructed with a specific vision of what constitutes as ‘normal’. Modernism supported a uniform idea, where deviations were viewed as a deficit. This can be seen in the idea of integration to a perceived notion of normality. This chimes with the medical model of disability to be ‘fixed’ and then integrated into society. I would suggest that this firmly locates integration within the wider paradigm of modernism.

Postmodernism and an equity of narratives

Postmodern theory aligns itself with non-hierarchical and democratic characteristics of inclusion and inclusive practice, recognising a range of narratives that represent the diverse bodies and minds that exist within society. The characteristics outlined above demonstrate the ways in which some of the features of contemporary art practice chime with an anti-ableist arts pedagogy. These offer fertile ground for enquiry with limitless creative opportunities.

Using contemporary artists to inform teaching and learning

The National Curriculum in England states that students should produce creative work and that they should also learn about great artists. Using contemporary artists that also identify as D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent offers further opportunities to increase visibility, and share and promote positive identities. This creates

further opportunities to be inclusive and reflective of the young disabled people that we teach.

Using the work of Yinka Shonibare CBE, Nnena Kalu or Linda Bell not only promotes positive identities and role models, but their practice creates a context and a point of departure for further creative exploration. The artist’s work is examined, their characteristics identified and concepts explored. When looking at these artists through an inclusive and anti-ableist lens, multiple entry points, starting points and points of departure offer non-hierarchical, equitable creative explorations. ■

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Above Linda Bell, *Hanging sculpture*
© ActionSpace

This article is based on a chapter of Paul’s book *Cultural Inclusion for Young People with SEND: Practical Strategies for Meaningful Inclusion in Arts and Culture*, published by Routledge.



Sarah Graham: interview



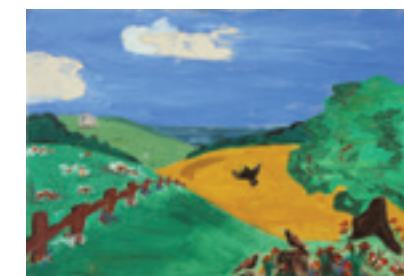
Sarah Graham is an artist and advocate for mental health and art in schools. Here, with Sophie Leach, deputy general secretary at NSEAD and principal editor of AD, she discusses her art education, the impact of her own mental health on her work and life, and the importance of self-care

Sophie Leach: Memory and nostalgia are very important in your work. What’s your first memory of making art?

Sarah Graham: Well, I was two years old and I’d just started nursery school. I can just remember painting a little house on a drawstring plimsoll bag. I remember the nursery teachers were blown away and told my parents I had a talent. I also remember painting this huge elephant – it stuck in my mind that I was very proud of it. From that young age I felt art gave me a certain status and voice. Going on to primary school I took that joy with me. I have vivid memories of making stuff all the time, and still have some of my work from back then. Art was at the forefront of my memories. In fact, I started using oil paints when I was eight. Would you like to see my very first oil painting?

It is awesome! What were you painting?

It’s a make-believe countryside scene with a really good sense of perspective! In our spare time, my sister and I were often painting, drawing and making things. My dad gave me the oils. He was a creative person – his creativity led him to amateur dramatics when he was young – and, at the same time, he was a fiercely intelligent man. He adored English, literature and history, and could easily have been a professor, but he was



Above Sarah Graham in her studio

Left *First Oil Painting, 1985*, oil on canvas



Above *Kaisers Rock!*, 2012, oil on canvas

foundation course when I applied to do a psychology degree, I knew in my stomach that I had chosen the wrong path. The principal came down to my studio and said I was making a big mistake. So, weeks before the start of university, I switched, applied to art college and I got onto a BA in Fine Art at De Montfort University through Clearing.

At the fork in the road, you took the right turn. What happened next?

My dad had also instilled in me a love of photography. At university I discovered Gerhard Richter's photo paintings and Chuck Close's hyper-realist portraits, and just loved the fact I could combine my two passions of photography and painting. I was also introduced to Audrey Flack and her super colourful photorealist still lives. But the biggest influences on me were two photorealist art students on my degree at uni. One was in the year above me and one was in the year below. They were brilliant, and gave me a lot of tips and advice on how to create blur, which has become a signature part of my paintings.

Their influence shows the value of peers and corridor conversations.

Yes! Photography has continued to be important – now, I will have an idea in my head which is a very clear image in my mind. But recreating that into a photograph can be

very much held back in life because of his bipolar disorder which halted a lot of his ambitions and dreams. That was why he really instilled creativity in us and nurtured it as best he could. He had a manual job in a factory for most of his life – prior to that, because of his illness, he found it difficult to hold down jobs. But he knew the power and importance of following your path, and taught us that. Dad passed away in 2004 from a rare cancer and I was utterly devastated. I wish he could see the success I've achieved thanks to his support in my early years.

Did you carry on oil painting in secondary school?

I recall there was more emphasis on me doing well in other subjects, so other subjects started to overshadow my art. I wasn't making and painting in my spare time as much – I was busy hanging out with friends. Although, if there was a school play, for example, I'd always be asked to paint the set. And when we were in the library, I'd be drawing portraits of my friends instead of studying.

How did you decide to go on to do a foundation course?

Well, I was really torn between psychology and art. I got an A in both subjects at A level and all my teachers told me that I must pursue psychology and keep art as a hobby. I went on to do an art foundation to buy some time and help me decide. My dad and the principal of the college both said I should continue to study art. Then, at the end of the

really challenging. It's become the most critical part because if you get the composition right at this stage, you know the painting will work. It can be a frustrating process with lots of trial and error. The painting I've just finished is called *Sweet All Stars*, and I spent the best part of a week working on the composition, endlessly reshooting it in my studio.

Is the photograph shot exactly as you paint it?

No, when I'm painting I go on to exaggerate all the elements – focus, blur, colour, light and shadow. But the dynamic between focus and blur really drives my work – it guides the eye and I really want you to enjoy moving your eyes around the canvas. Oh, and my dad always said it was a bonus to be short sighted, because he liked seeing the world out of focus.

'We can so easily become victims of our own destructive inner voices, so something I say to young people is to make sure your inner voice is your best friend'

Your father's influence on your work is so important.

How does your mental health influence your work?

It's not an exaggeration for me to say that my art has saved my life. Like my dad, I also have bipolar which has really impacted my work, somewhat negatively at times. When I've been unwell, I've not been able to paint, which makes me feel worse because I feel like I've lost it and will never paint again. I once went almost two years without painting as my health was so bad.

But, once I begin to recover from episodes, and what my art fundamentally allows, is for me to express myself in a way that I can't in any other way. It's like the antidote to depression. When I get back to my work after I've had a bad

Below left *Rainbow Popsicle*, 2021, oil on canvas

Below right *Sweet All Stars*, 2022, oil on canvas

episode, it speeds up my recovery. It's as though it's always there in the background for me to return to, to give me focus and a purpose. When I was young, I used my art to help me get through when my dad was unwell. It's been the one constant my whole life. I've been stable now for almost three years and my work is really thriving – in fact it's now a part of my self-care.

The arts teach us so much about the human condition. When I paint, I have an inner conversation which allows me to make sense of who I am. The physicality of art also helps – I stand to paint, go back and forth from the easel, and every painting takes me on a mental journey.

It's taken me 44 years to truly understand the importance of self-care – you can't pour from an empty cup. We can so easily become victims of our own destructive inner voices, so something I say to young people is to make sure your inner voice is your best friend. You wouldn't speak negatively or put your best friend down – you build them up – so do the same to yourself. This thinking has made a huge difference to my wellbeing.

Self-care is also important for teachers and students. My physical health is a huge part of my self-care toolkit too these days; I have a personal trainer, play a sport called Pickleball, run and also just go for long walks. I also love yoga. As well as movement, stillness and meditation are important too, and taking time to just breathe and relax. I practice mindfulness too, which I wish was taught in schools – learning to live in the present and to not spend all your time worrying about the future or fretting about the past.

Can you share a little bit about PoetsIN?

I was honoured when PoetsIN invited me to become a patron last year. It's a local charity that helps people who struggle with mental health and wellbeing, and they also offer creative mental health programmes and workshops in schools. The emphasis is on educating and advising so that we can all have a better understanding of mental health.





Arts education and advocacy have also become really important for you. Can you expand on that?

Yes, I really want to impress on young people that becoming an artist is a viable career. When I was at school, I only studied artists who were dead! I also encourage students to learn business skills. When I'm doing Zooms for schools or on a school visit, I always say if you can do a business qualification alongside your creative course that would be so helpful. I've been registered self-employed since 2001, a fact I'm very proud of, but I've just learnt how to run a business as I've gone along. Most of my knowledge has come from asking fellow artists. If that foundation can take place during school, that would put students in a strong position to be successful, professional creatives.

Recently, I've been made aware just how much art is being marginalised in schools and it breaks my heart. I was talking to an art teacher who runs a large art department – her budget has been cut from eight to three thousand, which is a huge reduction.

In the last year I've met so many students who have a mental health diagnosis and are struggling. The arts can play such an important role in education – helping young people to express themselves and providing a language that can never be right or wrong. I think there is a clear correlation between the arts diminishing and poor mental health increasing.

My mental health journey has taught me so much and I hope my story will encourage more people not to be scared of mental health. I also want to use the voice that my artwork has provided me with. I mean society has come far, hasn't it? We have Mental Health Week, for example, but that's not far enough. I try to reach out as often as possible, especially by visiting schools – would you believe I'm booked up until September 2023? I even did a talk for the staff at the British Library recently. I read a passage from my book which starts with my first full-blown manic



episode in 2017 (I wrote 14,000 words in a week). I read this out as part of the talk because, not only was it describing what happened to me, but it was also from the perspective of somebody in a manic state, which covered the whole umbrella of bipolar. The feedback was incredible. I'm still writing this book, quite sporadically, but when I do write it just pours out of me. I hope it will inspire and raise awareness of mental health.

You were so kind and encouraging as a judge on CBBC's Britain's Best Young Artist. Will it return?

Yes, they are running another series! I loved being a judge and the children were amazing – it was almost impossible to judge the winner of my round. It's a lovely programme which highlights the importance of art and design in education. And by meeting a range of art professionals, it shows our subject is also a viable career choice. ■

Sarahgraham.info
 @sarahgraham_art

Above right *Drink Me*, 2010, oil on canvas

Above left *Eat Me*, 2013, oil on canvas

Activism through art



Initially motivated by the #WhereIsTheInterpreter campaign, and then inspired by the expressive artwork of artist Christine Sun Kim and photographer Stephen Iliffe's Deaf Mosaic, 16-year-old GCSE art student Asiya Begum responded by making her own activist artwork

The #WhereIsTheInterpreter campaign is important to me because Deaf and hearing people do not have equal access, and we need equality. Despite BSL being recognised as a language in its own right by the UK government in 2003, there is still no BSL interpreter available when, for instance, attending a GP appointment or at an interview. How do I communicate? The communication breaks down and there are instant barriers. I won't understand them and they won't understand me.

I am interested in learning about Deaf culture, and how different Deaf role models feel about how they fit in Deaf history. When I look at the artwork *Deaf Mosaic* by photographer Stephen Iliffe, I am interested to read about Deaf people's life stories and experiences, what their ambitions are and what they want for their futures. Deaf people have to stand up and be strong to achieve their rights.

Deaf artist Christine Sun Kim uses her own experiences in her artwork. She created her

artwork *Noise rules* as a response to hearing people having rules that expect Deaf people to know, such as quiet eating and closing doors quietly. She created another artwork *With a capital D*, visually showing her levels of rage

'When I created this artwork, I really looked within myself to put it out there about how strongly I feel about Deaf equality'

about art galleries' lack of deaf awareness around the world. My own artwork *Revenge* is my response to this.

When I was creating *Revenge*, I developed ideas that were inspired by Christine Sun Kim and the emotions I felt. I used online news and information to find out about Deaf people, Deaf issues and Deaf history. I interviewed Deaf staff at my school, and asked them about the challenges in their lives and what they had to do to overcome barriers to achieve their goals. I responded to this by creating photographic and line drawing self-portraits of signs I felt were important.

When my school decided to take part in the BSL march on 18 March 2022 (campaigning for legal status for BSL), I was asked to organise the designs of the placards. The artworks showing BSL signs on the hand placards came from the



self-portraits in my sketchbook. I chose my BSL drawings because they were perfect symbols – clear, strong and showing pride and Deaf rights.

My artwork shows the BSL signs for 'deaf', 'reflect', 'activism' and 'assertiveness'. It is so difficult to interpret these BSL signs into single English words because each of the signs I have chosen have so much emotion and meaning in my own language, BSL.

I was so excited to go to the BSL march. I had never seen so many people from different backgrounds and cultures together. To see my artwork amongst the banners and placards felt fantastic. At the demonstration, a lot of people asked about the hand creations, and I was interviewed on camera by actor and television presenter Memnos Costi for the British Deaf Association about how I came up with the idea.

My work developed further in response to my experience of being part of the march. At the march I interviewed people to ask why they were there, and their backgrounds and experiences. I used two apps; Inshot and Livecollage to edit my filming and create my second artwork BSL emotion. I did the editing at home and I had a lot to learn!

I want to show everyone how proud I am to be Deaf. Hearing people need to know about Deaf rights.

When I created this artwork, I really looked within myself to put it out there about how strongly I feel about Deaf equality. I now feel more confident about my rights and I want to keep on finding out more about the future for Deaf and the BSL communities. ■

blancheneville.org.uk
 deaf-mosaic.com/about
 christinesunkim.com

Above Artist Asiya Begum

Bottom left Blanche Nevile School at the BSL rally





Activist/ Curator

Gill Crawshaw, curator of Possible All Along (2020), Piss on Pity (2019) and Shoddy (2016) reflects on her role as activist/curator and explains why disability arts remain central to challenging barriers for disabled artists

Recently, I've been plunged back into my past. A high-profile TV drama has renewed interest in disability activism in the 1990s, not only with the public but also DAN – the disabled people's Direct Action Network. Screened on 21 March 2022 on BBC Two, Then Barbara Met Alan, is the fictionalised story of two of DAN's founder members. The story of DAN is much bigger, of course, with a network of organisers across the country; I was the organiser for West Yorkshire, where we had one of the most active DAN groups.

This activist experience is something I'm now drawing on as a disabled curator. I'm also drawing on the political energy of the disability arts movement, the creative wing of the wider disabled people's movement. My main aim is to bring issues that affect disabled people to a wider audience.

One of my recent projects, *Possible All Along*, was an online exhibition by disabled artists in Leeds. Launched towards the end of the first year

of the pandemic, it addressed disabled people's feelings and experiences at the time. On the one hand, disabled people welcomed the move to greater online access to arts and culture. On the other, disabled people felt, and continue to feel, expendable and imprisoned in their homes by health policies which have been woefully ineffective at protecting disabled lives.

Starting before the pandemic, but now exacerbated by it, the most urgent issue of recent years has been the disproportionate effect that austerity policies have had on disabled people. The cuts to welfare, social care and other public spending have hit disabled people hard. This was the context for *Shoddy*, an exhibition I organised in Leeds in 2016. While its starting point was the material of shoddy fabric made from reclaimed waste fibre, the title called out the government's shoddy treatment of disabled people – although this was an inadequate description. The play on words meant that the exhibition both rejected and embraced the various meanings of 'shoddy'.



The disabled artists who took part showed, through their artwork, that disabled people are not shoddy, second rate or lacking value. Many of the pieces referred to the strength and resilience of disabled people.

Shoddy followed my first exhibition, *The Reality of Small Differences*, which was conceived as a protest at the lack of access to an exhibition in Leeds of Grayson Perry's series of tapestries, *The Vanity of Small Differences*. Some of the tapestries were up a small staircase. Insult was added to injury by the dismissive tone of the venue's access information, which suggested disabled visitors could travel to another city to view the complete exhibition or look at it on an iPad at the venue.

As a form of protest, *The Reality of Small Differences* was effective, gaining support as well as local and national press coverage, resulting in a stair climber being installed at the Perry show. Beyond this, the exhibition was significant in its own right, showing art by disabled artists from around Yorkshire that was exciting, challenging and engaging. It also revealed an appetite amongst audiences in Leeds for disabled artists' work. However, the artists faced barriers and lacked opportunities to show their work and urged me to organise another exhibition.

Disabled artists are often excluded from the networks and artistic circles that help emerging artists to get themselves and their work known. As reported in the Arts Council England *Making a Shift Report*, 2017, this is the result of an overpowering combination of barriers, including inaccessible venues and transport, not being part of a cohort of art students or graduates, poverty and lack of support. The very nature of networking and promotion itself requires stamina, being comfortable in social situations and the ability to be opportunistic, all of which can be unattainable for disabled artists. Then there's discrimination and prejudice. Many disabled artists are wary of revealing that they are disabled because they (justifiably) fear being

'Many disabled artists are wary of revealing that they are disabled, because they (justifiably) fear being rejected, being thought of as less capable or being stereotyped'

rejected, being thought of as less capable or being stereotyped (Disability Arts Online, 2021). This discrimination explains the slow progress in increasing the numbers of disabled people working in arts organisations (Arts Council England, 2021).

I've found misconceptions about disabled artists to be a particularly pernicious barrier. Occupational therapy and art programmes in day centres and other institutions for disabled people have cast a long shadow, often negatively influencing people's expectations of disabled artists' art and practice. These programmes certainly have their value and their place, as do arts and health projects, and other creative activities carried out with community groups. In some cases, they provide a route into the arts for disabled people and others who face barriers

to art education. But the focus on participatory arts by funders and arts organisations leaves little space for those disabled artists who are dedicated to their art practice, who are ambitious and want to develop, and who deserve to be recognised as talented, professional artists. The result is that arts commissioners and other professionals, as well as art enthusiasts and audiences, continue to pigeonhole disabled artists' work as worthy but lacking artistic value.

This is why I will continue to work with disabled artists. Not only to raise their profile and status, but because their work is fresh and exciting. As a disabled person, I want to see the viewpoints and experiences of disabled artists represented in galleries and theatres. Whether these come through explicitly or more subtly, whether they celebrate disabled lives or

illustrate the struggles, disabled artists' perspectives can invigorate the arts.

All of this convinces me that the role of activist/curator is necessary and that curation can be a form of activism. Learning lessons from DAN actions of the past, I know that discrimination and ableism can be challenged most effectively when disabled people, along with non-disabled allies, come together. I am privileged to work with many amazing artists who are committed to bringing about change. ■

gill.crawshaw@gmail.com

Left *The Phoenix* by Judit Wilson, 2020, found objects and textiles, from the online exhibition *Possible all Along*

Top centre *Maskeraides* by Vivienne Mager, 2014, handknitted mixed fibre yarns, installation shot from the exhibition *The Reality of Small Differences* © Mat Dale

Above *Reductivism* by Faye Waple, 2014, cotton thread on canvas, installation shot from the exhibition *The Reality of Small Differences* © Mat Dale

Below *Shoddy* exhibition launch © Mat Dale



Arts Council England, 2021, *Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2019–20*. Available at artsandculture.gov/publication/equality-diversity-and-creative-case-data-report-2019-20

Disability Arts Online, 2021. Available at disabilityarts.online/magazine/news/new-research-indicates-health-risks-resulting-from-the-fear-to-disclose-disability

Find out more: possibleallalong.co.uk and shoddyexhibition.wordpress.com

Exploring inclusive drawing practices

Mel Jay, PGCE subject leader for Art and Design at the University of Reading, reflects on her development of inclusive drawing practices with teacher trainees

The National Curriculum for Art and Design would appear to give teachers control when designing an inclusive and creative curriculum, yet the one-page programme of study puts an emphasis on developing a mastery and proficiency of skills in drawing, painting and sculpture. The Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14) curriculum, coupled with the need for pupils to gain superior results at GCSE, appears to perpetuate the need to continue teaching the traditional constructs surrounding representational image making. Representational drawing and painting must play a part in our curriculum but, if this is a singular approach, it can limit the development of some of our learners from making progress in our subject.

Trainee teachers are expected to interpret and deliver the curriculum, alongside considering the value of the images they make or the processes they explore with children in their classroom. With this in mind, trainee art teachers need to develop their own visual vocabulary, and deliver meaningful and valuable work in school. It is also important for them to be able to practice their skills, and consider and explore a range of processes, approaches and concepts.

In order to develop trainees' approaches to drawing, I devised a series of workshops under the headings of 'What? Why?' and 'How?'. These underpin the thinking process for trainees' planning of lessons and schemes of learning, as well as supporting them as creative curriculum thinkers.

What?

- To consider how all pupils can access drawing processes
- To explore a range of approaches and experiences to take into the classroom

Why?

- To challenge perceptions of what constitutes a drawing
- To challenge existing curriculums and practices which are primarily designed to prioritise specific abilities
- To identify and change the barriers that may have been created within an art classroom

How?

- Through exploring different forms of drawing practices

Practical workshops

Trainee teachers come from a diverse range of backgrounds, offering very different skills and experiences. Workshops are therefore designed to develop confidence with approaches to drawing, as well as to challenge perceptions regarding image making in school. In the initial workshops, trainees were provided with paint and asked to make thumb prints on a piece of paper. They then drew into these prints, looking for recognisable features or images within them. The expectation was that trainees were open minded and willing to explore what they were looking at and what they were drawing. Some trainees found something this simple a challenge, but eventually all started to enjoy the freedom the activity offered. Within the session, characters were created, doodles made, cartoons embraced and imaginative scenes brought to life.



1



2



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‘Representational drawing and painting must play a part in our curriculum but, if this is a singular approach, it can limit the development of some of our learners from making progress in our subject’



4

Mark-making workshops were also explored and developed within the context of image making. Trainees were asked to respond to descriptive words such as ‘squiggles’, ‘scribbles’, ‘dots’ or ‘bouncy’. Some trainees worked in a controlled and ordered manner, whilst others created lively compositions using the marks made in response to the words. Trainees developed this exercise by creating an imaginary landscape using only the marks they had created. This afforded the group the opportunity to discuss how often we allow children in our classrooms to use their imagination, or to develop ideas that may not be based on working from primary or secondary sources. Paul Chessell, a PGCE trainee, remarked on the experience as ‘unique and joyful’ and went on to describe ‘the sound of the whole class loudly tapping dots and dashes in a communal, almost hypnotic, mark-making symphony, first and foremost, reminding me of the delight art brings and underlining the reasons why we were there’.

Building on the success of the early drawing sessions and the newfound confidence in the trainees’ approach to the work, the workshops became more challenging. An object was placed in a sock and trainees had to draw what they thought it was, based on feeling alone. This was a drawing challenge that forced individuals into an exploration of a new territory. Both the marks and lines they created, and the outcomes, were uncertain. Observing the buzz of excitement once trainees finally looked at their object, coupled with the drawn outcomes, was a real pleasure for me. For trainees such as Lance Burke, the workshops inspired confidence: ‘The freedom offered in the approach to the drawing tasks allowed me to find a confidence I didn’t know was there. The ‘draw what’s in the sock’ task put a fun spin on drawing and relieved a lot of the pressure to produce a perfect result. I feel much

more confident in my drawing ability and will consider how to ensure every pupil can access my lessons.’

As we neared the end of our drawing exploration, the challenge for the trainees was to make a drawing machine. For inspiration we looked at video clips of automata, and artists who had made machines to draw and paint with. Trainees embraced the opportunity to experiment in an unhindered way; bottles of paint were jumped on, umbrellas were spun, planks were drilled, and cogs and wheels were attached to create various moving parts. The unpredictability of each machine led the trainees to create unexpected and often beautiful outcomes. There was no fear of the work being deemed not good enough, but instead a real excitement and joy in the making process. Trainees were becoming aware of what a drawing lesson could potentially look like if there were opportunities within their teaching for children of all abilities to actively take part in the creative experience. ‘The drawing machine workshop was inspiring and freeing, an opportunity to see drawing in a new way’, said trainee Natasha Austwick.

My aim this year has been to raise awareness in my trainees of the importance of ensuring inclusivity in the teaching of drawing to children in secondary school. I hope that our beginning teachers will be able to consider the needs of all learners and offer opportunities which support their pupils and celebrate success for all. ■

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- 1 A mark-making workshop
- 2 Using drawing machines
- 3 PGCE trainees drawing ‘what’s in the sock’
- 4 Outcome from a drawing machine



Contemporary art as a vehicle for anti-ableist art education

Clare Boreham, subject lead for art and D&T at Benton Dene School in Newcastle upon Tyne, reflects on anti-ableism as a characteristic of a recent collaboration between the school and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

I have worked at Benton Dene, a primary school for pupils with autism, and children described as having moderate learning difficulties, and social and emotional mental health needs, since 2006. In 2014, like so many art coordinators, I found myself tasked with the enormous and perplexing job of designing an art and D&T curriculum for our setting, with very little guidance

bar my personal background in fine art. As many of our pupils need a lot of support with various aspects of fine and gross motor skills, as well as sensory access, it was clear to me that we needed a curriculum that was strong, both in terms of motor skills and sensory opportunities.

We work closely with occupational therapists (OTs), so I used fine motor skill development suggestions from them, alongside loose references to ideas and stages in older versions of BSquared. This is an assessment tool which, in practice, I find too rigidly linear and detailed to work as a summative assessment, but it does provide very wide-ranging reference points and a framework of observations seen in children's artistic practice from birth upwards. Equally, I know from observing my own children and my classes, that every child's engagement in their own creative practice is unique. BSquared was

useful to refer to when first pitching 'accessible' projects across our year groups, along with advice from OTs. I found ongoing conversations with staff and my own observations were also of value; equally my best 'experts' have always been my own pupils and I've regularly included ideas they themselves have developed within revised projects.

There is undoubtedly huge value in including advice from both OTs and the many therapy approaches we use, such as TEACCH, PECS and Attention Autism. Such strategies help enable routines for focus and independence for our pupils. For example, to be able to settle and access other activities, a few pupils regularly benefit from deep pressure activities such as 'bear hug' vests or rolling a therapy ball. But I've also found 'deep pressure' or other calming sensory needs can be gained through art activities such as structured or even unstructured 'clay play' warm ups. This supports sensory regulation and proprioception (self-movement), and so enables pupils to access more 'gloopy', chaotic or complex sequential activities such as painting or junk printing.

I have also found that open-ended clay play – red clay with tools, straws and textured items such as Lego for pressing into the clay – can give me valuable information about how individual children or a cohort engage in making creatively. Many children find 3D making easier than drawing and it's fascinating to see what evolves from that. This type of formative assessment is highly valuable within art and difficult to capture in current conventional assessment formats. There has been a significant drive within primary education around tracking progression which, used alongside linear and summative assessments, can lead to valuing realistic, perfectionist or hierarchical outcomes; ultimately an ableist approach. We are asking individuals to conform to others' perceptions of what is an acceptable aesthetic. Day to day on the chalk face, what we really must measure is how much each child enjoys making, using formative observations that will help us to create more opportunities for them.

One such opportunity came in 2017 when our school joined Baltic Stars, a pilot project funded by Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (BALTIC) in Gateshead and Children In Need. The programme was designed specifically for pupils with additional needs to work with an artist through after-school clubs. Funding allowed for transport, both to the gallery and also to pupils' homes after school. We were lucky enough to be given three one-hour sessions with Sally Madge, a multidisciplinary North East artist, who sadly died in 2021.

From the outset, I was struck by how simple starting points could evolve and flow. Some

outcomes were predetermined by Sally but others emerged, facilitated carefully but with appropriate freedom. In the first session she gave our pupils strong card frames to decorate with different tapes and materials for 'selfies.' When finished, our young artists were asked to turn the frames into whatever they wanted, such as a hat or a plane. Interestingly, they all developed various swords, bows and shields and embarked on a historically inspired drama. Tables suddenly became dens for the characters, while sheets, cardboard and tape became secure warrens, and the children began to make coins to pay each other for 'goods'. These outcomes were

hanging. This was easily accessible for our pupils who enjoyed using the ink and rollers, something I've always observed to be popular within class. Zöe's approach is very 'process art' which, whilst popular with Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) settings, was also an approach championed by Victor Pasmore and Richard Hamilton in the Basic Design courses of the 1960s.

One highlight of the project was the show's opening where the collaborative print was exhibited in the children's gallery. Parents and siblings attended and for many it was the first time they'd been to the gallery. To be included

'As many of our pupils need a lot of support with various aspects of fine and gross motor skills, as well as sensory access, it was clear to me that we needed a curriculum that was strong, both in terms of motor skills and sensory opportunities'

entirely spontaneous and an exciting example of how a simple starting point could evolve.

The second session was more structured but retained its playfulness through small-world play. Sally taught our pupils how to make clay huts from thumb pots for tiny model railway figures, which they then arranged onto a wooden island. They developed the scene with clay, glitter, paint, stones, twigs and other materials, creating forests, beaches, fences and volcanoes. I later developed and extended both of Sally's projects into our curriculum, linking this session to 'Early Builders' in year 3 (ages 7–8) history. We used willow sticks for our trees, and made wattle and daub weavings, dens and a model settlement.

The sessions had key elements that I now identify with anti-ableist pedagogy, including group work, with room for individualism, playfulness, social communication, sensory fun and ideas around 'process art' where the journey is a valued outcome. Of equal importance are the shared social interactions and relationships built through exciting and novel experiences.

In 2018, we successfully applied for the full programme and were paired to work with sculptor Zöe Allen, both in school and at BALTIC. Our focus was around ideas of repetition and collaboration within the art of Yayoi Kusama, such as *Obliteration Room*, and Sir Antony Gormley's *Field for the British Isles*. We had an exciting visit to BALTIC where we responded to abstract art through collage in the gallery rooms and mono-printing in the art studio. Zöe's idea was to create sculptural blocks that could be moved and rearranged, but also used to create a huge collaborative, printed wall

in a fun and relaxed way, in such a grand space, helps to break down perceived barriers between art galleries and the public – it's something BALTIC has always done well.

Discussing and identifying concrete concepts of anti-ableist pedagogies (AaP) within our special interest group (SIG) has helped me to verbalise the importance of these with colleagues. The AaP SIG has supported how I critically scrutinise what we do and why. It's important to focus on a range of therapies, as well as structured and unstructured approaches that support young people's experiences of individual and shared art making, inspiring a life-long enjoyment of art. Baltic Stars was an opportunity that showed the value of engaging in making as a life skill, supporting our pupils to make art independently, as well as developing lifelong relationships with visiting galleries. This raises the question of how similar anti-ableist art pedagogies could impact and influence the narrative of art education across all our schools. ■

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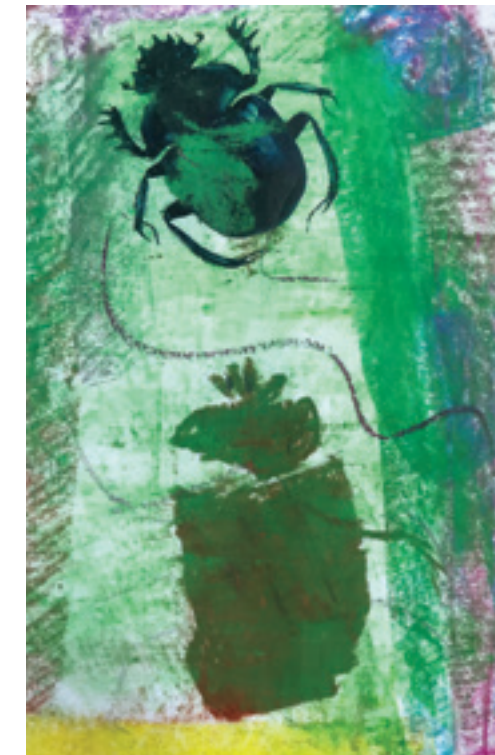
Left Prehistoric caves inspired by artist Sally Madge

Top right Sketchbook observational drawing of a beetle

Right centre Hand puppet for KS2 musical performance

Right Experimental monoprint

All images are of artworks made by pupils at Benton Dene School (ages 7–11)
© Benton Dene School





The Irregular Art Schools team are a group of artists, organisations and researchers based in the Leeds City region, who are working to research inclusive artist development. Here they share an insight into the work achieved so far

Irregular Art Schools is a group of artists and academics with and without learning disabilities, who are working together to do research on inclusive artist development in Leeds. The project came about following a discussion about how being considered a 'professional' artist can be hard for learning disabled creatives. Often, traditional routes like higher education, engaging in arts criticism through peer groups or getting involved with artist-led communities are difficult opportunities for learning disabled artists to access. Many face considerable barriers and inequalities, and frequently rely on developing complex networks of support to pursue the arts.

As artist Alfie, a member of Leeds-based inclusive arts studio Pyramid and a core partner on the research, explains: 'I do not do art as therapy. I do it because I am an artist... I didn't get to study art at school or college. I asked to do art every year and they said I could at annual review but they never let me. That's why I left and came to Pyramid.'

In February 2021, with support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council, Irregular Art Schools was launched to explore these very issues. We are experimenting with new methods and partnerships, as well as working alongside social workers to bridge the gap between art and social care. We not only want to learn how to best support learning disabled artists in Leeds, but to also ask bigger questions about how we understand inclusive learning and development in the arts.

We've been inspired by Professor Roger Slee's book *The Irregular School*. He discusses how continuing to think in terms of the 'regular' school or the 'special' school obstructs progress towards inclusive education. Rather than separating learning and development into 'inclusive' or 'mainstream', 'regular' or 'special', we want

to experiment with making arts development opportunities 'irregular'. In our Irregular Art Schools, people with different life experiences, ways of knowing and ways of being can learn together side by side.

Who's involved?

Our project would not be possible without different individuals and organisations coming together. This includes artists who are members of inclusive arts studio Pyramid (Ria, Victor, Liam and Alfie, along with staff Alice C, Alice B, Debs, Pete and James) and artist-led studios and gallery Assembly House (Flo, Alice BB, Kev, Newt, Michael, Anne-Marie, Lily and Amelia). Also involved in this project are the staff and students from the School of Fine Art, History of Art at the University of Leeds, and staff from Leeds City Council's Adult Social Care Team. Working with these partners are two researchers, Jade French from the University of Leeds, who is a lecturer in Inclusive Arts Practice, and Katie Graham from the University of York, who is a lecturer in Social Work. We believe that this blend of expertise will help us best tackle the question of inclusive artist development.



'Often, traditional routes like higher education, engaging in arts criticism through peer groups or getting involved with artist-led communities are difficult opportunities for learning disabled artists to access'



4



5

The project so far

Our project began at Pyramid. We noticed that the research team had different understandings, feelings and experiences of professional development, and we wanted to capture these differences so we could discuss them together as a group. We created our *Dictionary of Professional Development* as a way of recording and discussing the different meanings, both in words and pictures. During the project, lots of different people looked at our dictionary and added to it. The dictionary shows the diversity of experiences that artists encounter around their creative development.

We learnt that some artists view professional development as a good thing. They enjoy opportunities to stretch their thinking and try new things, recognising that, as human beings, we are all constantly learning and growing. But others felt it was a scary thing. It made them feel like they were not good enough and reduced them to being measured in very specific ways they didn't feel they had control over.

In January 2022, we began working with the project's second core partner, artist-led

community Assembly House based in Leeds. Artist-led spaces remain a vital part of the arts ecology, providing a community for many emerging artists to experiment, refine and develop their practice outside of formal education. Artist-led spaces typically comprise of studio and exhibition space, as well as development, social and networking opportunities for their membership. Crucially, however, and unlike inclusive arts studios, they are typically governed by the artists themselves through various co-operation models.

Though artist-led spaces are recognised as playing a key role due to their voluntary and grassroots nature, they are often inaccessible both in terms of their buildings and in terms of the support they can offer. Creative producer at Assembly House Alice Boulton-Breeze describes how 'This project has been transformative for the way we think about our building, artists and our future at Assembly House. Being in a heritage building, with all the access issues that presents, has often made us feel defeated, but working with the Pyramid artists has shown us what is possible and what we can do, despite some of the immovable limitations of the building; access is so much more than just whether we have stairs or not. Additionally, it has highlighted the endemic and unseen bias away from learning disabled artists working in grassroots spaces. It's easy to not see this, and this project has really revealed that this is ingrained in a lot of how these spaces operate.'

Since the project started, Pyramid artist Alfie has produced an access audit of Assembly House studios, which informed adjustments

made to the physical space. In terms of 'unseen bias', the collaborations and peer learning between the artists from these different studios has been powerfully productive for the development of individual practices and new perspectives on inclusion. Kev Devonport, an artist from Assembly House, explains, 'I think this project is groundbreaking in terms of challenging the exclusive society we live in. I'm in the process of collaborating via painting practices with artist Ria from Pyramid, inspired through similar life experiences involved with being encapsulated within different systems.'

What next?

In October 2022, we will begin our next strand of research by collaborating with the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies at the University of Leeds. We are hoping to explore, alongside staff and students, what it means to develop as artists within an art school setting. We hope to learn how our research group can access and use the university, and are really interested in understanding student's experiences of studying art at university – from crits, assessments and their studio environments to how creative communities are created and sustained. In the future, as Pyramid artist Liam explains, 'We'd love this research to make a difference to how artists at Pyramid can access a fine arts degree.' ■

Irregularartschools.org

1 Irregular Art School research workshop at Pyramid, 2022 © Jade French

2 Open studio display at Pyramid, artwork by Ria © Jade French

3 Assembly House © Assembly House

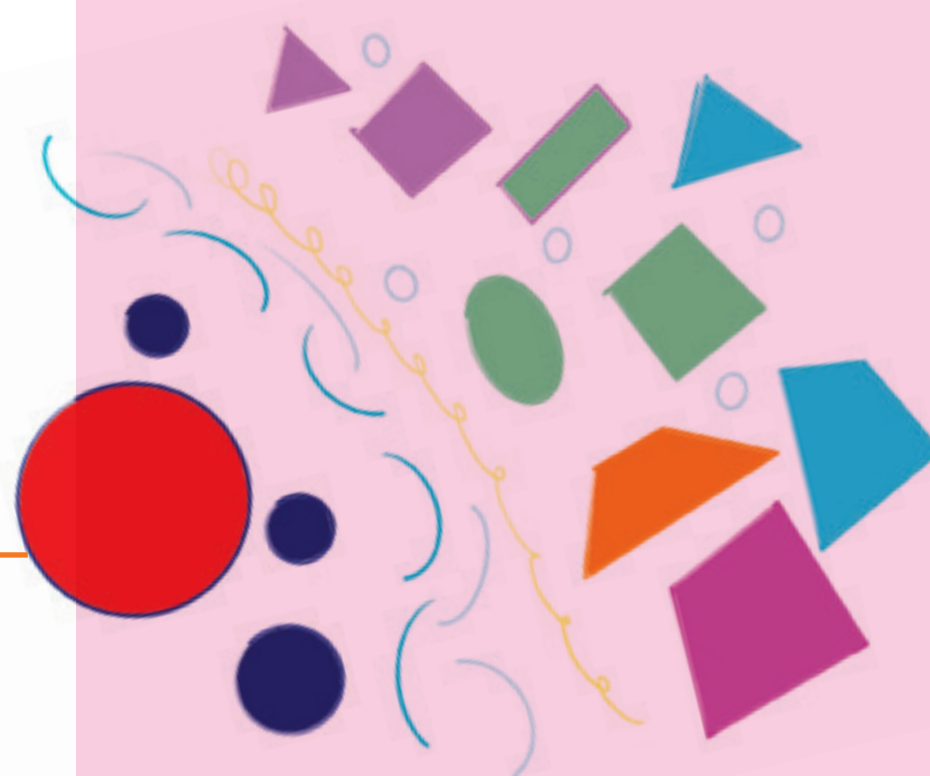
4 Poster © Irregular Art Schools, 2022

5 Path from Dictionary of Professional Development created by Irregular Art Schools research team © Jade French

Irregular Art Schools

Dr Sandra Hiatt is a senior lecturer in art education at Liverpool Hope University. Starting with the line, dot and circle task, Sandra's trainees are able to engage in disability studies perspectives, and better understand the differences between the social and medical models of disability. Her students go on to apply alternative, inclusive anti-ableist pedagogies to their own practice, which includes Universal Design for Learning

Towards anti-ableist pedagogies



The words of Bob and Roberta Smith's artwork *Art Makes Children Powerful* capture something of why I am still passionate about art education after a career spanning nearly forty years. I strive to make a similar claim for art education, but while art education should, could and does make some children powerful, I am acutely aware that there are many children that we continue to fail to reach.

I work with PGCE art trainees at Liverpool Hope University where we regularly discuss the various barriers many children face in order to fully access the art curriculum. When the focus falls on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) agenda, trainees are quick to acknowledge that they are anxious of failing their pupils with SEND. They worry about saying or doing the wrong thing, offending pupils or looking foolish, and are generally overwhelmed by the range of impairments they might need to know and understand to meet pupils' needs effectively. Getting trainee teachers to locate themselves in relation to their experience of disability is a positive place to begin. Informed by critical theory, I ask my trainees to move beyond narratives of 'othering' in considering an inclusive pedagogy and consider their own stories. I have done this in several ways but the most effective has been the line, dot and circle task.

The line, dot and circle task is a quick and simple activity that asks participants to represent their relationship to disability in a diagram using only lines, dots and circles (usually takes three minutes). The diagrams created in this short period provide a coded starting point for paired and group discussion that does not require anyone to share personal and sensitive information but reveals something of their relationship to disability. The examples illustrated here represent very different responses that literally put trainee teachers in the picture.

The narratives that are shared in the discussion are a key part of the task, and in talking about what their diagram represents brings new insight to the trainees about themselves, as well as exchanging responses with their peers. These are feedback quotes following the session and the exercise:

'This has introduced me to disabled artists, and to artists that I had prior knowledge of but never knew about their disability. It's opened my eyes to the frustration we face on a daily basis when it comes to Special Education – something that is so highly politicised and, often times, not very accessible.'

'The black dot is me and the double path line running through is my life. The big circle is disabilities, meeting people with them and learning about it. The lines running through the path is the information I know, and links with disability and the blocked lines symbolise my lack of knowledge, showing I still have a long way to go in learning to break down all of those walls.'

'In regard to the image, I have [drawn] it in black and white because disability can be seen as black and white; the main circle represents my own disability, while the wavy lines represent my feelings with disability and how frustrating and confusing it can be. The smaller circles represent disabilities I have had experience with, and ones I have not. The line through the centre represents two sides to everything.'

The first time I undertook this activity in one of the PGCE workshops, I was struck by how it facilitated conversations I had not previously had with my trainees. They found it a safe space where they could talk about their own hidden disabilities in a way that they had not been able to in previous sessions, and it represented a significant moment in building my working relationship with the group.

Introducing trainee teachers to disability studies perspectives on SEND has provided a critical lens from which

All Line, dot and circle examples for exploring relationships with disability

to interrogate the fundamental differences between the social and medical models of disability that is rarely encountered on school placement. As explained by Disability Arts Online, 'The Social Model understands disability as the lived experience of barriers. Developed by disabled people to identify and take action against discrimination, the Social Model puts equality and human rights as a central focus on our understanding of disability. This contrasts with the Medical Model, which presents disability as an individual, medical 'problem', focusing on what a person can't do because of their particular physical, sensory or neurological characteristics. The Medical Model places care, cure and welfare as a central understanding of disability, instead of accessibility, independence and inclusion.'¹

Disability studies has created opportunities to explore the value of the Universal Design for Learning (UDfL) as an alternative pedagogy that is inclusive in a way that teaching from a medical model perspective is unlikely to achieve. UDfL is an approach that is well established in disability studies, with an impressive and diverse body of research to support it, yet it has been notably absent from the professional conversations myself and trainees have with our colleagues in partnership schools. The *Standards to Teach* and the *Core Content Framework* are predicated on a medical model of disability, yet disability studies provide an arena where it is possible to think outside established orthodoxies and consider alternative pedagogies. The principles of UDfL offer an analytic framework that my trainees can apply to their planning for teaching and a starting point to reconceptualise inclusive education.

'Becoming more familiar with the disability arts movement, the political nature of disability artists' work and their commitment to a social justice agenda has been influential in the curriculum development initiatives that trainees have brought to their teaching'

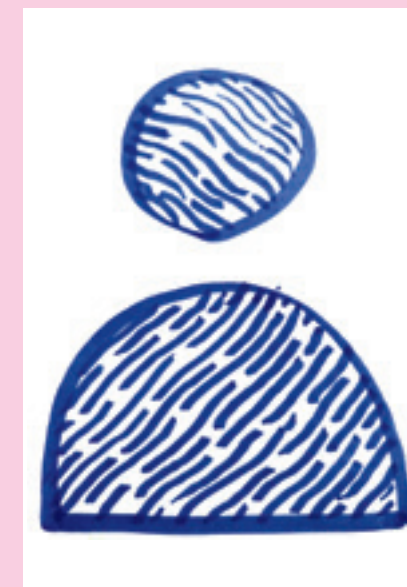
The seven principles of UDfL are:

- Equitable use: Provides the same means of use for all users with diverse abilities, and design which appeals to everyone
- Flexibility in use: Design to accommodate a wider range of preferences and abilities
- Simple and intuitive: Easy to understand and use regardless of the user's experiences, knowledge, language skills or current concentration level
- Perceptible information: Communicates necessary information effectively, regardless of surrounding conditions or sensory abilities
- Tolerance for error: Minimises hazards and adverse consequences of unintended actions
- Low physical effort: Efficient and comfortable while minimising chance of fatigue
- Size and space for approach and use: Design provides appropriate size and space, regardless of the user's body size, posture or mobility

Having become more informed about an anti-ableist art pedagogy, my trainees are more able to differentiate arts that reinforce limiting stereotypes and those arts that challenge. Artists such as Faith Bebbington, Adam Reynolds, Rebecca Horn and Tony Heaton (and many other disabled artists) have provided positive role models and rich critical studies references to generate discussion and a focus for enquiry. ■

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¹ disabilityarts.online/collections/social-model-of-disability

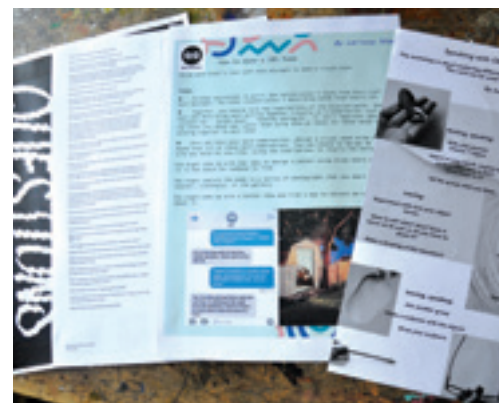


Instructing instructions

Sets of didactic cards or instructions have, from as early as the 13th century when they were created for apprentices, challenged or instigated new ways of enquiry, experience and learning. In this article, artist educator **Joanna Fursmann** explores what effect these kinds of approaches had on young people and their teachers when they visited Mark Essen's School of the Underkraft

Artists Alan Kaprow and Sister Mary Corita Kent used rules as the significant approach to their practice. Kaprow developed *Six Ordinary Happenings* (1968) through his attention to pedagogic playfulness, while Corita Kent's *10 Rules* (1968) move the dynamic between the student and educator into new configurations. More recently, artists Mirjam Bayerdörfer and Rosalie Schweiker's *Teaching for people who prefer not to teach* (2017); educators Nina Paim, Corinne Gisel and Emilia Bergmark's *Taking a Line for a Walk: Assignments in Design Education* (2016); Kate Thackara's *Recipes*; and Jenny Guy's *Artist's Exercises* have in common the creation of art manuals and approaches to pedagogy that can be shared and developed according to who uses them and the contexts they are used in.

Linking Kaprow's work to American philosopher, psychologist and educator John Dewey, art historian Dr Chay Allen in his article *Alan Kaprow's Radical Pedagogy*



(2016) described *Six Ordinary Happenings* as 'connecting to the knowledge value of experience'. The instructions demonstrate how art making is expanded by pedagogic complexities found in art education through manipulating materials, skills and environments, developing ideas, and making new images and experiences.

The School of the Underkraft project was produced by artists Mark Essen and Sahjan Kooner for *British Art Show 9*. Essen described the interactive exhibition space within the setting of the Wolverhampton School of Art as a 'pilot programme for an art school of otherness,' with 'a curriculum centred around social-practice learning', and 'people learning from one another, and continually attempting to improve'.

British Art Show 9 was curated around three main themes; healing, care and reparative history; tactics for togetherness; and imagining new futures. The School of the Underkraft gently questions the complexity of pedagogical spaces and, in this context, made room for the exhibition themes to be explored through pedagogic experiments. Importantly, the space for Underkraft could be reconfigured in different ways depending on the access and needs of visitors and the educators directing it. The School of the Underkraft also contained a lectern, stools, tables, shelves and storage boxes that were specially designed by product design students from Thomas Telford University Technical College. The shelves were decorated with artwork made by students from Colton Hills Community School in Wolverhampton and Thorns Collegiate Academy in Dudley, while plants (some over 20 years old) absorbed the



warmth and light that came through windows offering a birds'-eye-view of the West Midlands.

The School of the Underkraft was used by school groups and their educators for writing workshops, lectures and student crits. Activities were also directed by instruction cards that I co-produced with artist-educators Larissa Shaw, Thomas Eke, Sophie Huckfield and Mark Riley. The cards invited teachers, lecturers, schools, colleges, university groups and exhibition visitors to explore questions and actions that offered a way to interact with, learn and manipulate the Underkraft space. The instruction cards demonstrated a complex interaction of pedagogies and integrated actions that could be explored through the freedom of the space and its contents. In the book *Taking a Line for a Walk: Assignments in Design Education* (2016), Paim, Gisel and Bergmark state the assignments could, 'Give instructions, present a problem, set out rules, describe an exercise, initiate an activity, propose a game, stimulate a process, or simply throw out questions'.

The instruction cards occupy two different pedagogical dynamics at the same time – they demand, require, ask, guide, and instruct how and what can happen from within the pedagogic process set up in them. In *The Evolution of Art and Design Pedagogies in England* (2013), art educator Nicos Souleles describes how the first kinds of didactic instructions appeared in 13th and 14th-century England through pedagogical transmissions between guild masters and their apprentices. But, engaging with the rules of The School of the Underkraft, an educator, student or visitor was able to use the instructions as a

grounding to apply their own experience and knowledge, thus adapting and/or reconfiguring them depending on the groups or persons using them.

Directing the School of the Underkraft for a day, I noticed the more didactic the instructions, the more experiments happened. The instructions behaved like a tight line that moved in different directions depending on the needs of those using them. The activities became determined by who followed them exactly and who used what teacher educator Dr Peter Burridge (2014) in his article *Understanding teachers' pedagogical choice* described as the 'gut instinct', and how the understanding of rules and personal motivation 'expands the boundary of knowledgeability'. For example, a teacher decided to adapt activities designed for 15–19-year-olds with their primary school group. A busy two-year-old covers the tables and chairs with chalk and sticky tape, while the group of young people from the Ikon Gallery Youth Programme decide to use the instructions as a space to think, study and draw.

This also demonstrates how the School of the Underkraft allows spaces for what Dr Claire Penketh in *iJADE* (2014) described as 'dynamic difference of what it is to be human'. The contrast between the freedom of the Underkraft and the restriction of the rules on the activity cards highlight the art and design pedagogies that shift between choice and didactics, and what these kinds of approaches produce for learners and educators. This is reflected in anti-ableist approaches again from what Penketh in *Towards a vital pedagogy. Learning from Anti-Ableist practice in Art Education* (2020) calls 'vital



'The instruction cards occupy two different pedagogical dynamics at the same time – they demand, require, ask, guide, and instruct how and what can happen from within the pedagogic process set up in them'

pedagogy' and the 'energy emanating from playing, imagining and valuing the non-normative capacities for making art'.

The School of the Underkraft and instruction cards functioned as a different space and artwork, productively interrupting *British Art Show 9* and the Wolverhampton School of Art. It moved through different functions and purposes as an exhibition, an art room, workshop space and place for discussion, and made space for new pedagogical interactions and configurations. In the spirit of *Six Ordinary Happenings* and *10 Rules*, the instruction cards can be used to interpret an exhibition experience, objects, interactions, taken home or to school, downloaded, shared, tried out, added to and adapted. This has helped me to enrich new pedagogies for art making and the instructions are now fixed onto my art room wall. ■

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Top left Mask making

Above Rosie Abbey, Ikon Youth Programme coordinator holding Thomas Eke's card

Left Three activity cards

The *British Art Show 9* is a Hayward Gallery touring exhibition supported by Arts Council England and the Southbank Centre. It was exhibited at Wolverhampton Art Gallery and Wolverhampton School of Art from January–April 2022.

School of the Underkraft was coordinated by Becky Thompson at Arts Connect, Wolverhampton School of Art and Wolverhampton Society of Artists.

For more information visit: markessen.org and britishartshow9.co.uk

Art makes people powerful, for good and bad



©Chris Francis

In the final Threshold Concept for Art series, Chris Francis considers the temptation to continually present art as a good thing, even when the cracks in our art histories are becoming increasingly revealing

I've just digested the Netflix show *Is it Cake?* I hate myself. I feel like I've eaten a tub of Jeff Koons. If you haven't indulged, it's a sickly affair; an over-baked meme of cakes masquerading as everyday items. The challenge for contestants is – yep, you've guessed it – to identify a hyper-realistic cake which may or may not be a leather trainer, a glossy handbag or an overflowing bag of cash. 'Everyday' items for some, then. The big reveal, when the host decisively sets a knife to the cake (or not), makes for compulsive viewing. Or repulsive, I'd imagine, if viewed from the hardest-worn seats in the current cost-of-living crisis. For once dissected, the cake – an artwork of sorts – is spent. It's rarely shared or eaten, but quickly disregarded. Bewitchment, I jot in my notebook, can diminish under scrutiny.

Which reminds me; I wonder if Tate Britain's Rex Whistler Restaurant is available? I'm not watching game shows for fun, you know. Whistler's mural, *The Expedition in Pursuit of Rare Meats* (1927), could be just the backdrop required for my own TV show in-development – with appropriate appropriation, obviously. That said, at the time of writing, this may finally be in hand. It's been over a year since Tate's own

ethics committee declared the mural's racist imagery as 'unequivocally ... offensive'. I guess, for now, I'll add it to the notebook under *Potential Set Designs: 'Critical Dialogues'*. It's good to keep all options open.

So, here's the elevator pitch, although, admittedly, the title's a work in progress – *Is It Shit?* may work for the Piero Manzoni episode but, beyond that, I'm not so sure. Curate or Berate perhaps? Regardless, the premise is straightforward; each episode will reveal well-known but dubious artworks or artists, conjured up from popular art history and installed on plinths for contestants to prod and poke at. Or lick, if they wish, for taste will inevitably come into play. But – and here's the twist – alongside the questioning and surface judgements, the artwork itself – or artist *himself* (inevitably) – will have one minute to justify its canonised history and impact, for good or bad, whilst wired to a polygraph test.

I know – just imagine! Aside from the added tension (and drawing element), think of the merchandise spin-offs – polygraphic art-truths as prints, mugs and tea towels... endless possibilities! And if that's not enough excitement, to conclude the show dramatically, the artwork or artist will be publicly dissected

to reveal its authentic substance. The truth will out, and the contestants and audience will vote. *Curate or Berate?* – you decide!

Fortunately – for content only, that is – the art world has not left us wanting. The proposed episodes for Series 1 – *Misogyny, Racism, Plagiarism, Exploitation* – could run for hours. Maybe Series 2, in the interests of wider context and potential blame-sharing, (for artists have got to pay the bills too) might then broaden out to include questionable patrons, institutions and influential others, such as oligarchs, elitist gallerists, royals, religions and dictatorships – you get the idea.

But it's tempting, isn't it, to continually present art as a *good thing*. Especially if you are an art educator. However, the cracks in our over-baked art histories have become increasingly revealing and shouldn't be iced over in the art rooms – far better to slice open the issues, tuck in and digest.

Now, where's my notebook? I've a potential tagline: *Curate or Berate?* – because art makes people powerful, for good and bad. ■

artpedagogy.com



Firstly, if you've been a regular reader here, this is the last of my nine ramblings. Thank you – your patience is commendable. But before I sign off, I've an admission and an apology, of sorts. Three years ago in autumn term 2019, I was asked to write to *AD* about our *Threshold Concepts for Art*, which were nine illustrated statements concocted with Jon Nicholls (Director of Arts, Thomas Tallis School). However, to my mind, explaining our nine deliberately pithy statements to fellow art teachers is never as helpful or empowering as encouraging them to devise their own. Which is not to claim ownership of the 'big ideas' circling ours. The nine provocations flag-up many universal issues and experiences.

But if you are an art teacher, you really should give it a go. Identifying what you constitute as 'powerful knowledge' for your students, and then wrestling this into words, contexts, pictures, planning and pedagogy is, I'm convinced, the best self-directed professional development there is. And if you can do it collaboratively, then even better.

So, sorry, sort of. I was presented with the opportunity to write something helpful (which, in our defence, does already exist on *artpedagogy.com*) but instead opted for a series of nonsensical imaginings. It's been fun, and I hope if you've made it this far, some related thoughts have been stirred and maybe even a smile raised.

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