Words for Disability Art History, edited volume

Deadline: Oct 1, 2024

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We invite submissions for a peer-reviewed, English-language edited volume on disability and art history.

Art history and disability studies share foundational terms, concepts, and interests, but rarely explicitly exchange methodological reflection. This edited volume asks both fields to invest in their shared potential and productive tensions, creating experimental dialogs between art historical case studies and key concepts from disability studies such as crip time, complex embodiment, and interdependency. Likewise, terms from art writing including figuration, gesture, scale, and the gaze can be read anew.

We consider disability as a set of methodological invitations rather than a subfield of the humanities only relevant to researchers explicitly studying a representation of a disabled person or a disabled artist's archive, for example. Committed to exploring how art matters to disability and disability to art, disabled and temporarily abled authors are invited to articulate how disability concerns us all. Contributions will center intersectionality, considering disability in relation to gender, sexuality, race, and class. Learning from queer, trans inclusive feminist, and anti-racist discourse, we will reflect on how critical theory challenges normative and conventional ways of researching art, visual, and material culture. Working with disability studies opens new, embodied possibilities for knowledge production that are specifically relevant to art historical work and the continued privileging of the visual.

We understand disability studies as encompassing a multiplicity of experiences and identities including neurodiversity, chronic illness and pain, Crip, functional disability, d/Deaf, Blind, Sick and m/Mad. While bodies and embodied experiences are a constant subject of artistic discourse, ableist modes of describing, researching, and exhibiting figures, bodies, and people remain present across the humanities. Art deeply informs power relations between those who represent and those who are represented, entangling, obscuring, and amplifying different disabled positionalities. A medium of communication, art can also be the site of critique, working to actualize anti-ableist futures.

Participating authors will contribute essays about art, visual, and material culture engaging the provocations of disability studies to articulate methodologies relevant to both fields. These essays will range in length from 6,000–10,000 words, creating the space for both distilled experimental reflections and longer contextualized contributions.

Authors are encouraged to invest in unpacking unconventional perspectives, working to raise open methodological questions rather than produce fixed answers. Essays will combine research

into a singular case study (artwork, object, performance, visual, material archive) and reflection on a specific word (term, phrase, concept, or methodological invitation) drawn from disability studies. (See below for an initial list of terms for inspiration: this list is open and fluid rather than proscriptive.)

We seek to support provocative and unexpected pairings of art case studies and disability concepts or issues. Authors are encouraged to experiment, openly reflect on the processes and structures of research, amplify intersectionality, work with attention to their own positionality, and explore case studies perhaps not suited for more standard publication projects.

We are committed to publishing an open source and fully accessible publication (audio, design choices, image descriptions). All contributions will be peer-reviewed and copy-edited. We will also provide funds to cover all image rights fees and, pending approval, a modest honorarium for contributing authors.

To submit a proposal, please prepare a provisional title, an abstract of 200–300 words (indicating which case study and term/s you intend to explore) and a short bio of 150–200 words. You can upload your proposal using the following form: https://forms.office.com/e/8zWkkFSaVh by October 1, 2024. If accepted, first drafts of chapters (6,000–10,000 words including notes and bibliography) will be due by May 1, 2025. For any questions, please write to disability@khist.uzh.ch.

The volume is edited by four early career art historians interested in the intersections of our field with disability studies and committed to anti-ableist approaches within art research: Jess Bailey (she/her, medieval art, University of Edinburgh), Virginia Marano (she/her, contemporary art, Museo d'arte della Svizzera italiana, Lugano), Charlotte Matter (she/her, contemporary art, University of Zurich), and Laura Valterio (she/her, early modern art, University of Zurich). This project emerges from collaborative work on the research project "Rethinking Art History through Disability" (https://www.disability-arthist.net).

An open and fluid list of terms at the intersection of art history and disability: Ableism, Anti-ableist Art History, Access, Aging, Ageism, Belonging, Blind Gain, Non-Visual Learning, Care Webs, Collective Care, Self-Care, Crip Ecology, Crip Kinship, Crip Time, Cripping, Cripistemology, d/Deafness, Deaf Gain, Disability Justice, Disabled Joy, Embodiment, Complex Embodiment, Fatness, Getting Fat, Fatphobia, Figure, Figuration, Fitting and Misfitting, Gaze, Redirecting the Gaze, Gesture, Posture, Inclusivity, Exclusivity, Horizontality, Interdependency, m/Madness, Medicalization, Neurodiversity, Neurodivergence, Normativity, the Normate, Pain, Politics of Pain, Contingency of Pain, Prosthesis, QueerCrip, Radical Visibility, Representation, Self-representation, Sick, Sickness, Size, Sizing, Scale, Slowness, Rest, Anti-Productivity, Staring, the Senses, Sensory Approaches.

Reference:

CFP: Words for Disability Art History, edited volume. In: ArtHist.net, Jul 25, 2024 (accessed Nov 20, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/42424>.