

1 Session at AAH (York, 9–11 Apr 25)

Association for Art History Annual Conference, York St John University, UK, Apr 9–11, 2025

Deadline: Nov 1, 2024

ArtHist.net Redaktion

Subject: Accessible Buildings, Inaccessible Artworks: Reconsidering Disability in the Museum.

Since the 1990s, museums have made significant strides ensuring that their buildings are accessible to visitors with physical disabilities. Yet despite this progress, many museums continue to display artworks within an ocularcentric setting that remains inaccessible to disabled spectators. Equally unacknowledged are the ableist ideas that have shaped the creation of artworks and, in many cases, get perpetuated through normative conceptions of bodies that underpin museum display practices.

The tendency to exhibit inaccessible art in otherwise accessible buildings is perhaps most glaring in displays of participatory artworks made from the 1950s onward. However, it is equally apparent in the display of much earlier works presented from the perspective of a "median" body—works that often were historically used and experienced by a far more diverse range of spectators.

This panel seeks to develop a more critical history of museums that offer "barrier-free" access to their buildings while displaying artworks in ways that remain inaccessible to disabled visitors. To this end, we invite papers that consider different facets of this ableist history across all types of museums. A non-exhaustive list of potential topics includes: close readings of exhibits that have featured inaccessible artworks; the museum's (inadvertent) erasure of disability experiences in history; attempts by artists or others to challenge the tendency to display inaccessible artworks; or the ostensibly "radical" solutions proposed to develop more inclusive display approaches that depart from a maker's original intention or prioritize narrative over objecthood—approaches that may overwrite contexts or marginalize intentions in an attempt to share more ethical interpretations with audiences.

Papers should be 20 minutes in length. Please send proposals of no more than 250 words along with a brief CV to the session convenors

Felix Jäger (The Courtauld Institute of Art): felix.jaeger@courtauld.ac.uk and

Michael Tymkiw (University of Essex): mtymkiw@essex.ac.uk

by 1 November 2024.

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/42735>>.