CripTech Creativity (Florence/online, 21 Mar 25)

Online / Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut, via Giusti 49, Florence, Italy, Mar 21, 2025

Natalie Arrowsmith

CripTech Creativity: Rethinking Access through Art and Technology.
Organized by Virginia Marano and the Lise Meitner Group "Coded Objects"

Normative ways of seeing and moving through spaces have long dominated the discourse in art and architecture history despite their fictitious and exclusionary nature. And in architecture practice, accessibility is often treated as a construction checklist or a compliance measure. But what if access were instead a creative, disruptive, and transformative force? How would places, spaces, and the value of interpersonal relationships change with the embrace of the entire spectrum of experiences and perceptions taking place?

Histories of radical disability movements highlight the tension between institutional frameworks and community-driven practices rooted in autonomy and collective worldmaking. At the same time, material innovations—such as haptic technologies, sensory mapping, and multisensory environments—redefine interactions between bodies and built spaces. By examining these intersections in a context of architecture and art history—disciplines that have long been dedicated to the knowledge residing in perception but also perpetuated their visual and normative primacy—the workshop opens up new ways of thinking about access, agency, and the politics of space, all under the premise that accessibility is not simply a question of inclusion but a generative process for reimagining the material-discursive world.

Alternative approaches to design emphasize adaptation and fluidity over rigid norms and normativity. Crip technologists expose biases within digital aesthetics while generating new ways to engage with technology. DeafSpace reframes architecture—not as an act of accommodation, but as an approach that centers Deaf experiences from the start. Similarly, blind and low-vision designers rethink spatial navigation through tactile, haptic, and auditory interfaces, challenging ocular-centric norms and expanding how space can be perceived and constructed. Neurodivergent-led design resists standardized environments that impose cognitive strain, advocating for flexible, responsive spaces that support sensory and perceptual diversity.
This workshop brings together different thinkers and practitioners who challenge conventional narratives of accessibility, and instead explore how disabled subjectivities generate new forms of embodied knowledge. Extending access generates friction and renegotiates spaces; it disrupts norms and resists assimilation.

Program
09:30am – 10:00am (CET)

Welcome and Introduction
Anna-Maria Meister and Virginia Marano, KHI

10:00am – 12:15pm
Crip Technoscience and Accessible Futures
Chair: Mimi Cheng, KHI

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Emory University
Extraordinary Worlds

Lindsey D. Felt, Stanford University
Incubating Criptech Arts Futures

Friederike Eyssel, Universität Bielefeld (online)
Accessible Technologies? A Perspective from the Field of Human-Robot Interaction

Break

11:45am – 12:15pm
Discussion

Lunch Break

01:30pm – 03:00pm
Crip Politics and Institutional Critique
Chair: Rebecca Carrai, KHI

David Gissen, Yale University
From Independence to Anti-Eugenics: Designing Global Disability Politics, 1962-1977

Natalie Kane, Victoria and Albert Museum
Cripping Institutions

02:30pm – 03:00pm
Discussion

Coffee Break

03:15pm – 04:45pm
Crip Architectures and Emergent Bodies
Chair: Anna Luise Schubert, KHI

Sudeep Dasgupta, University of Amsterdam
Ex-static AntiBodies: Coding and Co-emergence

Alexa Vaughn, University of California Los Angeles
DeafSpace / DeafScape as Methodology: A Case Study in Cripping the Design Process

04:15pm – 04:45pm
Discussion

Coffee Break

05:00pm – 06:00pm
Crip AI and Cyborg Worlds
Chair: Rafael Brundo Uriarte, KHI

Louise Hickman, University of Cambridge and Rose Powell, Newcastle University (online)
Ugly AI

Laura Forlano, Northeastern University (online)
A Manifesto for Critical, Crip & Cyborg Futures

Break

06:15pm – 07:00pm
Collective Discussion
Moderator: Virginia Marano, KHI

Location and Access
This event will be hybrid and take place in person at Casa Zuccari (via Giusti 49)

The location can be accessed with a wheelchair from Via Giusti through the garden which contains some gravel. Comfortable seating options will be provided. During the presentations, automated captioning through Zoom will be available, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation will be provided. Additional sign language interpretation services or verbal descriptions can be arranged upon request by March 10, 2025, at info@khi.fi.it. We will make every effort to accommodate for requests made outside of this window of time. Moreover, please let us know in advance of any access needs.

This workshop is organized by Virginia Marano (MASI Lugano/KHI) and the Lise Meitner Group "Coded Objects" (led by Anna-Maria Meister) at the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut. "Coded Objects" as method of refraction examines how processes form values through objects—and how objects inform processes in societies.

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