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# Cultivating Disability Arts in Ontario

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**Abstract**

Although there is a vibrant Disability Arts scene in Canada's most populated province Ontario, until recently few spaces have existed where disability-identified artists could receive professional development and exhibition opportunities. Because of this cultural gap, the multimedia storytelling workshops and theatre project central to the arts-informed research of Re•Vision attracted disability artists who seized these workshops as spaces to access equipment, training, and peers and used them as a place to create new work. Through this paper, we discuss how these workshops functioned within our research project, which had objectives quite apart from the creation of disability arts, and highlight how participants used these workshops as well as the disability art they encountered and produced within them as pivotal to their artistic development and self-identification as artists. We posit how these research workshops contributed to the development of disability art and disability aesthetics in Ontario by reflecting on the artwork produced within them.

# Cultivating Disability Arts in Ontario

Although Deaf and Disability Arts[1] has been practiced under this name since the 1970s in Canada, within the last 15 years it has begun to be recognized as its own field of arts practice and production by arts councils and cultural funding bodies (Gorman 2007). Increased funding has accelerated the production of Deaf and Disability Art and has increased attention from arts organizations and audiences alike. With this leveling-up of Deaf and Disability Arts comes the advancement of a discourse specific to this sector, one that includes conversations about how we make arts accessible and how we blend accessibility with aesthetics and curatorial practices, about the development of distinct disability, crip, Mad, Deaf aesthetics, and about the role the arts play, and have always played, within the achievement of disability rights and justice.

Throughout this article, we embrace this developing discourse and use it to recognize and discuss the art produced out of Project Re•Vision's (Re•Vision) arts-based research workshops—multimedia storytelling workshops and theatre workshops with D/deaf[2] and disabled people—and think through the role these workshops played in the development of Deaf and Disability Arts in Ontario. We begin by describing the scope of Re•Vision as a research project and connecting this project to the emergence of Deaf and Disability Arts in Canada. We then draw on reflections of d/Deaf and disability artist participants as told to us through interviews conducted after the workshops to unpack the roles these played in their artistic development. We conclude by discussing the significance of Re•Vision in cultivating Deaf and Disability Arts through facilitating artistic training and the development of key artistic connections which led to other disability arts projects and advancing disability aesthetics.

## Re•Vision

Re•Vision is an assemblage of arts-based research projects that uses arts-based research methods to dismantle stereotypical understandings of disability and mind/body difference that create barriers to healthcare. The mission of ReVision's state-of-the-art media-lab, Re•Visioning Differences Media Arts Laboratory (REDLAB) at the University of Guelph is to mobilize arts-based approaches to create nuanced understandings of disability and difference that disrupt dominant narratives and open possibilities for living. We look at the value, power, and efficacy of the arts to positively influence practitioners and decision makers in diverse sectors (health care, education, business and the arts). To date, we have generated over 300 multimedia stories (digital videos) and have held numerous multimedia storytelling workshops, many led by disability-identified artists, in which

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[1] We refer to 'Deaf and Disability Arts' to acknowledge important historical distinctions between these overlapping communities and to be consistent with how this sector is referred to by Deaf and Disability Arts organizations and arts councils in Ontario. For more on the overlaps and distinctions between these communities, see Kusters, et al (2017), Burch & Kafer (2010), and Cachia (2016).

[2] The word Deaf written with a capitalized 'D' signifies Deaf culture and people who identify as Deaf (see Snodden, 2014). We write Deaf when referring to Deaf arts and D/deaf when referring to artists and non-artist participants in acknowledgement that not everyone who is deaf, deafened, or hard of hearing identifies as Deaf or with the Deaf community.

people living with embodied difference (artists and non-artists) as well as practitioners, and decision makers create 3-5 minute videos aimed at changing how disability is understood and responded to in systems by representing themselves in ways consistent with how they have experienced mind/body difference in the social world. In addition, Re•Vision has created a nine-woman/gender-queer theatre production, *Small Acts of Saying*, co-written and co-devised by disabled actors that has been performed more than six times in Fall 2014, in healthcare and educational settings in Ontario. Whenever we present the artwork produced in Re•Vision workshops to healthcare providers (and others), some, if not all of the members of the audience are stirred by the multimedia stories and theatre production, reporting that they arrive at different understandings of disability and embodied difference.[3]

In our storytelling workshops, Re•Vision uses an arts-based methodology adapted from digital storytelling, a method developed in the mid-1990s by the Centre for Digital Storytelling in Berkeley, California (now the StoryCentre), digital adaption of the live theatre and radio genres of autobiographical monologue (Benmayor 2008, Lambert 2013). From the outset, people have found the digital storytelling method particularly germane to social change efforts—the act of making space for people to tell their own stories coupled with the translation of these stories into a widely shareable multimedia format has enabled renewed and varied engagements with systemic issues of racism, sexism, colonialism and especially in our project, the intersections of these with ableism (Rice & Mundel, under review). In this way, as Burgess describes, digital storytelling is a significant iteration of the "growing accessibility and power of digital technology [that can] be used by ordinary people for radical or democratic ends" (2006, 202).

What distinguishes Re•Vision's approach is that we hire professional d/Deaf and disability-identified filmmakers, photographers, and performance artists and writers to work with participants in giving expression to unrecognized experiences and in engaging/re-engaging with those experiences—writing story, creating images,

performing scenes, generating audio, capturing sound—to clarify and layer meanings (Rice, Chandler, Liddiard, Rinaldi, & Harrison 2016; Rice, Chandler, Rinaldi, Liddiard, Changfoot, Mykitiuk, & Mundel forthcoming). As well, in building our workshop processes with disability-identified artists and academics, Re•Vision innovates practices that inform our ongoing efforts to improve accessibility for artist-facilitators and story-creaters (Rice, Chandler, Harrison, Liddiard, & Ferrari 2015; Rice, Chandler, & Changfoot 2016). Although terms such as "digital storytelling," "ethnocinema," and "participatory filmmaking" exist for referring to storytelling from the margins using film and video, we have landed on the phrase "multimedia storytelling" as it opens to diverse media forms (visual, sound, voice, text, motion/gesture/embodiment, time-based media) and places emphasis on the constructed nature of all representation (Rinaldi, Rice, LaMarre, Pendleton Jiménez, Harrison, Friedman, McPhail, Robinson, & Tidgwell 2016). The label multimedia storytelling also captures some unique characteristics of the way we engage with participants, including how we invite heterogeneity of experience

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[3] Surveys soliciting audience feedback are distributed at the end of workshops and the presentation of the play.

into the workshop space, and actively avoid "fixing" experiences (LaMarre & Rice 2016).

In addition to multimedia storytelling, Re•Vision used the intimacy of drama-based narratives and traveled to educational and healthcare settings to present the 50 minute performance, *Small Acts of Saying*. We worked with a Mad-identified dramaturge who had a long history of collaborating with disabled actors and non-actors using a verbatim or devised theatre method. Similar to the multimedia storytelling workshops, the theatre workshops brought together disabled people with different attachments to the artistic process and outcome. Dissimilar to the multimedia storytelling workshops in which participants made singular artistic works reflective of their individual experiences, in the theatre workshops, the dramaturge and participants had to work together, with and through their differences in artistic background and investments in the umbrella research project to create a unified, presentable, theatre piece. To do this, we met almost weekly for over a year and a half, creating a tight-knit artistic community committed to working with and through artistic differences.

**Disability Arts[4] in Canada**

The power of Deaf and Disability Arts is twofold: art produced by D/deaf and disabled people about the experience of disability and deafness creates new and multiplicitous representations of embodied differences which challenge stereotypical understandings and, at the same time, the making of art by D/deaf and disabled people disrupts the cultural myth that we are passive and non-agentive. Deaf and Disability Arts and culture demonstrate that our communities are creative and powerful agents of change. As longtime disability rights activist Catherine Frazee asserts of disability artists' participation in Canadian culture, "Disabled people don't seek merely to participate in Canadian culture, we want to create it, shape, stretch it beyond its tidy edges" (Personal Communication 2009).

The disability rights movement, which emerged in the UK in the 1970s alongside other rights-based social movements such as the women's movement, the civil rights movement, and the queer liberation movement, reached North America in the 1980s. Since then, the disability arts and culture movement has been an integral part of the disability rights movement in both contexts. On the importance of disability arts to the disability rights movement, Jihan Abbas et al write, "Disability Arts and culture marks the growing political power of disabled people over their narratives, as disabled artists use it to counter cultural misrepresentation, establish disability as a valued human condition, shift control to disabled people so they may shape their narratives and bring

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[4] Following community consultations in 2014, the Ontario Arts Council (OAC) drew a necessary distinction between Deaf Arts and Disability Arts, although separations and overlaps between Deaf Arts and Disability Arts have always existed across and in these communities. Since the 2014 consultations, we refer to Deaf *and* Disability Arts as a sector in line with the Canadian Council for the Arts (CCA) and OAC's funding models. Previous to this, Deaf Arts and Disability Arts were collapsed under the umbrella term "Disability Arts" and so it is under this term that the history of Deaf and Disability Arts in Canada is written about. For historical accuracy, we follow this nomenclature when discussing writings on Deaf and Disability Art published before 2014.

this disability controlled narrative to wider audiences" (2004, 1). The disability arts and culture movement makes the representation of disabled people a political issue: it asserts that in order for disabled people to be truly liberated, we must change the way society sees us. This is the work of the artist. And in a culture that tells us in insidious and explicit ways that disabled people's access to life and to futurity is one of "no future" (Kafer 2013), how disability and disabled people are represented is hotly political.

We take heed of the main tenet of the disability rights movement that disability rights are human rights, and join this with a disability justice framework that takes an intersectional approach to foregrounding the conditions necessary to achieve justice for all people with disabilities (Mingus, 2011). Disability Arts and culture claims that "full and effective participation in society" (CRPD, 2006) requires more than barrier-free access to public space and buildings; we must also have full access and meaningful participation in arts and culture, both as producers and creators as well as audience members and participants. Following the animating slogan of the disability rights movement, 'nothing about us without us,' this movement is distinctly disability-led.

Defining Disability Arts and culture is an iterative process that is contested even among those participating in it. For Geoff McMurchy and Rose Jacobson, Disability Arts is a "vibrant and richly varied field in which artists with disabilities create work that expresses their identities as disabled people." (2010, 1) For Catherine Frazee, the parameters of disability art are as follows:

> Not all of Disability Art is explicitly about the disability experience. But all of
> it, I would suggest, springs from disability experience, and to be fully
> appreciated, must be seen and heard with all of its historic and biographical
> resonances.… in our encounters with the Art of Disability, we are called upon
> to know the heart of the matter, to hold up the mirror, hear the overtones.
> (2010, 35)

Reading McMurchy and Jacobson's description together with Frazee's articulation, we see that Disability Arts clearly has a distinguishable core, although we appreciate the need to keep this definition loose in order to continue to incorporate the diversity and evolution of the field. At its core, disability arts, produced by disabled people, disrupts thick cultural assumptions that disabled people are passive, non-agentive, and unified in our experiences. Disability arts resists these assumptions as they put forth many representations of disability, one of them being disabled people as artists.

Following the disability rights and justice movements, Re•Vision developed a workshop model that placed disability-identified artists in lead positions and engendered iterative principles and practices of accessibility within its multimedia storytelling and theatre workshops. Although originally intended as a project that would mobilize arts-informed research, Re•Vision's multimedia storytelling and theatre workshops filled a key gap in Toronto's Disability Arts and culture movement as we provided free, accessible arts training led *by* disability artists *for* disability artists. The storytelling workshops took place over three days, throughout which participants/artists learned/built upon the

fundamentals of storytelling, audio and video recording, and video-making by a disability-identified artist facilitator. The theatre workshops were longer, spanning more than a year, involving weekly rehearsal sessions that ranged from three hours to much longer, as well as performance periods. During these workshops, participants/actors worked with a disability-identified dramaturge/deviser to practice and build upon the foundations of acting and collaborative script development and eventually performed a play that the collective scripted. In these workshops, we followed the main principles of the Disability Arts and culture movement as articulated above. This, and the way that the research project, as well as the workshop facilitators and participants, recognized the multimedia stories and the play as art rather than strictly a research output or knowledge mobilization tool, provided the conditions for which disability arts community could be developed within a culture in which such spaces rarely (though increasingly) exist and disability arts aesthetics could be developed.

## Enacting Disability Arts Community Through and Beyond ReVision

### Mobilizing Arts Practices through Re•Vision

Interviews with Re•Vision disability artist facilitators indicate how their experience with Re•Vision provided a space for their arts during the production process of making a video. This is captured in the words of one artist facilitator who produced audio tracks for the multimedia stories and created and edited them using professional editing software:

> Professionally it's been a huge difference because you know, I'm able to dedicate time, get experience, get a bit of money, um being the coordinator of the project and the experience has been incredible. I mean it's a ton of work; it's you know a lot more work than I anticipated it to be, probably than anyone would have anticipated because we'd never done it before. Um, but that being said, I've learned a whole lot. I've met a whole lot of people. Just, you know the training and becoming a facilitator to begin with is, like, a skill that I now have that I can market myself with. And I don't mean to sound like I'm being all me, I'm… what's the word – like… strategic.

Artist facilitators also experienced ripple effects that grew, in one instance, from initial reluctance. For instance, jes sachse was approached by Carla Rice in 2008 to create a multimedia story for *Envisioning New Meanings of Disability and Difference*, the forerunner to Re•Vision. They were reluctant to participate, in part because of concerns of tokenism and continued subjection to the ableist gaze. They eventually agreed, anticipating that the opportunity to create a multimedia story might allow them to push back against the ableist gaze and refract it back to the viewer, thus troubling ableist logics on their own terms as well as bringing the viewer into their world if even for temporary moments. sachse made a second short video with Re•Vision in 2012. They acknowledge that the audience exposure to their work, as well as their artistic and technical training as a lead facilitator led to further arts and curation opportunities for them in Ontario and the United States. In terms of artistic development, sachse has reflected that while they

started with self-portraiture in part through the creation of their stories, their practice with self-portraiture during their involvement as artist-lead in the Re•Vision workshops was important to their movement to their present practice. An example of sasche's current work, building on self-portraiture, is their large-scale sculpture, *Freedom Tube,* exhibited at "Strange Beauty," Tangled Art+ Disability in 2015 disability arts festival, *Strange Beauty*.[5]

Re•Vision research and arts-creation experiences have also informed community building among disability artists and disability community allies at the intersection of Disability Arts and culture in municipalities beyond the Toronto area. In 2015, Electric City Culture Council (EC3), the City of Peterborough's main arts organization, held its first Disability Arts incubator or discussion series, "The Art of Inclusion." Re•Vision played an indirect, yet important supportive role in shaping this accessibility and disability arts 'incubator' since the event brought together artists and community members who had been previously united through Re•Vision workshops. In one session, a Re•Vision researcher who served on the EC3 event organizing committee, and sachse screened their respective multimedia stories produced through Re•Vision. Along with representatives from Tangled Art + Disability and Mysterious Entity (a theatre company at the intersection of gender-queer and disability), they spoke to the importance of community comprising disabled-identified artists and non-artists, as well as non-disabled allies, artists and non-artists alike, both for disability artists *and* for disabled persons participating in disability culture. The arts were recognized as an important space for bringing disabled and non-disabled people together to create culture, accessibility, and self-representations against and within ableism. Crip community becomes enacted in this way, which is by no means the only way, where people desire and/or are motivated to dwell with disability (Chandler 2012).

EC3 conceived the event inclusively and broadly, demonstrating an understanding that attendees would identify with one or more of the following intersections of disability: as disability artists who earn income from their art; as disability artists who do not yet earn income from their art but aspire to do so; as artists living with disabilities but neither exclusively nor always viewing or naming their art as disability art; and as non-disabled people and artists in allyship with disability-identified artists and non-artists. Representatives from diverse sectors and agencies attended: disabled-identified artists, an influential artist-run centre and hub, the city's publicly-funded art gallery, disability rights, aging, and immigrant advocacy organizations, and university students and faculty among others. At roundtables following the featured speakers, lively discussion and debate ensued around the meaning of disability and accessibility, and what disability-identified artists and artists living with disability wanted from EC3 for future events to drive forward the discussion on meaningful inclusion, disability arts, and accessibility. The energy in the room created by the more than anticipated 70 attendees was palpable and a list of potential incubator events that EC3 agreed to animate poured out from excited and passionate discussion.

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[5] jes sachse, speaking at "Re-Storying Disability and Difference," St. Joseph's Health Centre, Toronto, June 24, 2015.

In these interviews and events, and specifically in the excerpts we have chosen, it is clear that Re•Vision artist-participants engaged both the multimedia storytelling and play workshops to gain access to the ordinary act of narrating life, turning the personal into a political narrative (Poleti, 2011, 74-75). In so doing, the participating-artist was entering into ongoing conversations happening within disability and Mad communities, following a cultural tradition of claiming and showcasing the intimacies of identity-based experiences as deeply political.

**Cultivating the Disability Arts Sector through Re•Vision**

*Beyond Research: Artistic Advancements*

Several associations formed during Re•Vision's workshops developed, even blossomed, into continued artistic collaborations and relationships and support for further artistic inquiry. Re•Vision's multimedia and threatre workshops created vital spaces for artistic endeavors where, in some cases, new energies were created in collaborations among researchers and professional artist storytellers. In others cases, specific artistic and academic developments between Tangled Art + Disability, Project Creative Users[6], and Re•Vision facilitators developed. These meetings and movement beyond the academic sphere underscore how this project allowed for complexity and connections in ways that were not anticipated when Re•Vision was first established as a research project. While some Re•Vision products resemble traditional academic outputs (e.g. journal articles, etc.), the community-building and ongoing commitment to artistic processes have been highly valuable not only to a re-visioning of what it means to do research but to a reimagining of what it means to collaborate and to work toward shared and sometimes conflicting goals.

Some examples of new energies of artistic and research endeavor include collaboration among the multimedia storytelling workshop facilitators in arts projects beyond the research, and their movement forward as professional artists. In addition to Lindsay Fisher, a curator, visual artist, and Re•Vision storytelling workshop facilitator, and Chandler's collaborator in Project Creative Users, multi-disciplinary artists jes sachse and Chandler met through Re•Vision workshops and have collaborated beyond Re•Vision in film festivals, cabarets, and recently with Tangled Art + Disability's *Strange Beauty* in 2015. Several members of the *Small Act of Saying* ensemble formed a theatre collective, which has been funded by the OAC. Janna Brown, a multi-disciplinary artist, made a multimedia story with Re•Vision and co-created the experimental play *Small Acts of Saying* and while being a member of the acting ensemble, became artist-in-residence with Tangled Art + Disability.

Another artist and academic researcher initially started their role as artist facilitator on Re•Vision with a strong curiosity to explore disability arts:

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[6] Co-founded by Lindsay Fisher and Eliza Chandler, two Re•Vision storytelling workshop leaders, Project Creative Users is a disability arts project which artistically interrogates the creative ways that disabled and d/Deaf people navigate inaccessible urban environments (www.creativeusers.org).

I think going into it, like I said, I didn't really know what I was getting into. You know? So I think initially I just thought oh wow, this is - this is… um a way for me to get back into art and I've always been interested in disability art and what [inaudible] you know it's something I learned in class, disability arts. So what is that? Is it art that deals with disability? Is it art that's [inaudible] Like you know, what the hell is disability [inaudible] I've always been interested in it so, it yeah I guess going into it I just was interested in exploring that idea and also meeting new people.

They described the development of their capacity in coordinating digital/multimedia storytelling workshops and how it filled multiple voids:

[I was told that]…I did a good job, I haven't heard that in a long time and you know, not that I that I only need external you know, compliments or anything but you know, it's a tricky business that business of being a professional academic and I…yeah, I think it just gave me a tremendous amount of confidence to know that I could do something so - sort of, it it's a pretty big job and I feel like I did well, again you know. …it's filled a lot of voids… …emotionally, socially and professionally.

These are some key examples of associations that occurred during the period 2012-2015. Associations continue to form outward and forward in the creation of accessibility to the arts, as we describe later in this article. We anticipate tracking them by carrying out an impact evaluation of Re•Vision of the continued dimensions disability arts and culture created especially by disability identified artists involved in the project.

**Disability Aesthetics: Art and Community**

Since the mid-2000s, what constitutes disability aesthetics from and within disability arts and culture has been and continues to be considered from different perspectives. Garland Thomson notes that disability aesthetics resists ablest assumptions that disability is an inappropriate aesthetic site (2005, 34). According to Seibers "disability aesthetics prizes physical and mental difference as a significant value in itself. It does not embrace an aesthetic taste that defines harmony, bodily integrity, and health as standards of beauty" (2008, 228). An important part of a disability aesthetic that we see emerging throughout different stories produced in Re•Vision workshops comes from the way that disability artists have storied disability on their own terms and through their own aesthetic decisions. These re-orienting renderings reclaim the stolen body (Clare 1999) in such a way that disrupts ableist stares which have historically consumed the disabled body, stealing away disabled autonomy. This has been particularly true of the looking dynamic that fells disabled people in examining rooms and in medical theaters as doctors, nurses, and clinicians stare at the disabled body as a disconnected pedagogical tool used to teach and to learn about curing, caring for, and rehabilitating intolerably different bodies. Re•Vision videos and theatre vignettes, made with the purpose of enacting knowledge exchanges between disabled women and trans people and clinicians who may or may not be disabled, processed a distinct character of unashamedly and directly talking back to

this way of visually consuming bodies of difference. For example, when artist Sheyfali Saujani answers the question, 'If there were a cure for your blindness, would you take it?' with the question, 'If you could remove barriers to access, would you?'

We could, as researchers, regard this feature as a common part of research stories. However, we could also situate this as a feature of disability art, a feature common amongst disability artists—artists such as Carrie Sandahl in her 1999 performance, *The Reciprocal Gaze*, which she performed publically wearing a white lab coat and pants covered in red hand-written answers to questions typically asked of her, answers like, "Yes, I can have sex and bear children" written across her pelvis (Eisenhauer 2007, 20) and recognize this as a distinct disability aesthetic. Both are possible interpretations of this work, but both are only possible when the videos and vignettes that were produced in an arts-based research project are recognized as disability art.

A digital story aesthetic is typically informed by the temporal boundaries of these 3-4 minute videos and, because the process is open to everyone—artists/filmmakers and non-artists/filmmakers alike, their aesthetics tend to be "balanced between the amateur." (Burgess, 2006, 206). While we did see evidenced of these more typical digital story aesthetics, we also saw a strong disability aesthetics emerge, one that was strongly aligned with the aesthetics of other disability artists. A disability aesthetic embraces an affective quality in work that defies language and creates visceral sensations arising from the specific lived experience of disability or difference. We find an example of such an aesthetic within multimedia artist Janna Brown's digital story, *Untitled*, for the way that it elicits affect. Affect can be understood as sense perception that is pre-conscious, pre-conceptual (Brennan 2004) and experienced co-constitutively or together with non-human life, such as dogs and horses, and technology (Haraway 2008). This sense perception defies immediate language or cognition, indicating the emergence of new representations of experience, for example, in art and artful creation. In Janna's film, she poetically narrates being brought into an Emergency room at a hospital. Her story is 'shrunk' and re-told such that the translation for hospital staff will "avoid lingering interpretations." In so doing, the hospital makes Janna's experience fit into documents whose checkboxes stand-in for a human being while simultaneously violating her humanity. This process creates indignations for both the hospital staff implicated in the 'shrinking' and herself. Viewers are brought not into the details of Janna's arrival to Emergency, but into a coldly institutional, instrumentalizing, undignifying experience of human interaction for the purposes of hospital administration and administrative movement of human bodies. Throughout Janna's film, images flow in soft focus and blurriness. The shape of a woman's face becomes discernible, however, never in sharp detail. The pairing of words with the images create a highly sensory scape and sensations more than clearly defined emotions, effecting a lingering uncertainty and wondering. Janna's film elicits sensations that neither immediately nor clearly map onto neatly, definable emotions. These sensations bring the viewer into proximity of the embodied experience she recounts and the sensory scape her film creates. Because these sensations are both unfamiliar and shocking, they create spaces where meaning is yet to be put into words.

Siebers writes, "aesthetics tracks the emotion that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies." (2005, 542) He also writes that "all bodies are not created equal when it comes to aesthetic response. Taste and disgust are volatile reactions that reveal the ease or disease with which one body incorporates another." (2005, 542) Disability aesthetics, then, "seeks to emphasize the presence of different bodies and minds in the tradition of aesthetic representation—that tradition concerned most precisely with the appearance of the beautiful." (2005, 542-543) In Eliza Chandler's story, *Shift*, we hear the artist narrate how before embracing her own disability as an identity and being introduced to other disability artists, her video art practice used to be concerned with the "normal, beautiful, perfect body." (2011) Since opening up to disability art practices, her digital story tells us, she has found it possible to make art that centres what she describes as her, "messy, spastic, never-still body." (2011) This narration and the disability art featured in her video evidences that she is now creating art that is less concerned with the "appearance of the beautiful" and "seeks to emphasize the presence of different bodies and minds."

Another aspect of disability aesthetics we discerned involved heightened attention to the accessibility of the space of the multimedia storytelling workshops and the creation of the experimental play. For Jacobson and McMurchy, such aesthetics of access is an "integral part of creative content and the artistic process from inception to presentation." (2010, 8). That the process of art-making and performing was made accessible influenced the aesthetic of the artistic creations, demonstrating that, for disability art, accessibility and aesthetics are intertwined. We observed a beautiful example of this in *Small Acts of Saying* when each performer carried their scripted story with them to the table where they were delivering their accounts. This performative feature, initially established to provide access for the performers, became integral to the aesthetics of the play, delightfully disturbing traditional, could-be ableist, theatrical conventions which holds that scripts must be memorized, a practice that is not accessible for all. Instead of disallowing the actors to read from their scripts, or allowing this so long as the scripts went relatively unnoticed, the scripts were amplified by the boxes they were being carried in and, in this way, contributed to the aesthetics of the play in a way that was both "part of the artistic process from inception to presentation" opening up the possibility that the audience "priz[e] physical and mental difference as a significant value in itself." (Seibers, 2002, p. 228)

**Conclusion**

While Re•Vision is located within the academy, it is also in solidarity with d/Deaf and disability artists and d/Deaf and disability advocacy and change. Through Re•Vision researchers and artists could enter a collaboratively created space in which they had opportunities to witness and reflect on the transfigurations of ideas and art. It is particularly important to explore the implications of moving beyond a solely "research" focus, as we have done here, because of the ways that artistic and "social scientific" research agendas often come up against one another. Although artistic and academic production overlap insofar as both involve bringing something new into the world, we

found that they each offer radically different tools/channels for such invention/generation and invite radically different ways of making sense of the world.

Re•Vision's production of multimedia stories and the experimental play *Small Acts of Saying* were important for creating improvisational spaces at a time when accessible creative space was highly limited for disability artist training, and for disability aesthetic development on the part of d/Deaf and disability-identified artists. Re•Vision brought together researchers, disability and non-disability identified, and disability artists to develop accessible methods for storytelling through digital and performance mediums. The cultural and political importance of creating accessible incubator spaces for Deaf and Disability Arts cannot be overstated, as the Re•Vision example shows. Deaf and Disability Arts movements have much to celebrate even as we recognise how the struggle for justice is far from completed.

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