

**A Digital Response
to the
Cultural Representation of Disability**

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Abstract

This thesis forms the written component of a PhD by Completed Works by artist Simon McKeown. It reviews his digital art projects, *Motion Disabled*, *Ghosts* and *Cork Ignite* and the research and practice that underpinned their making. The first aim of this contextual document is to reflect on how McKeown's impairments, educational training and industry experience (from fine art training to high-level experience in the computer games industry to his role in academia) have informed his methods. The thesis will explicate how this training equipped McKeown with the skill set to produce large-scale collaborative artworks in public. The second aim is to examine key developments in disability theory and how McKeown sites his practice in relation to these discourses. The third aim is to examine theoretical discourses surrounding participatory art practice and how these have informed McKeown's projects. He presents published works as individual case studies, giving descriptions of the project, the role of his collaborators while analysing the strategies employed in their production, the critical context and their impact and dissemination. Finally, this contextual document will propose that McKeown's complex projects make an original contribution to knowledge by his being the first person to use motion capture to create the first non-medical biomechanical art study, as well as to commemorate the disabled of WW1 for Channel Four; and by making a series of creative and technically high-end, multiplatform, interventionist and ultimately socially engaged art events that have directly affected the cultural representation and inclusion of disability in contemporary society.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I discuss how I have developed an inter-disciplinary practice across the areas of art, disability, technology and social engagement to produce complex digital artworks, ones that deliberately contest the cultural presentation of disability. My contextual document examines existing theories of disability arts, the connected field of disability studies and that of socially engaged art. I describe how informed by research I have variously created artworks which, in multiple ways, consider the experience of disability in their gestation, production and distribution.

Research Methodology

This thesis forms the written component of my PhD by Completed Works. It reviews several of my digital art projects and the research and practice that have underpinned their making. My existing works are practice-based art works that have appeared in significant public contexts with associated media coverage. This contextual document adopts a qualitative research methodology, considering multiple critical published sources in my area of expertise and relating those to my practice-based artwork. I present three significant works from my catalogue and build a narrative description seeking to position them in relation to the emerging field.

Literature Survey

In researching the academic field connected to my practice, I recognise the compelling contribution of several significant works:

Ann Millett-Gallant's *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* is an original text in this area.¹ Gallant's essential contribution is to consider the disabled person and body in an art historical context as underpinned by disability studies. She contextualises a subject area of art that has as yet been little studied, through it revealing many key insights. Her work considers the disabled and non-disabled artist and their oeuvres, developing a complex challenging and interwoven

1. Ann Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

contemporary art and disability discourse that resists simplification around the thematic area of disability in art.

Tobin Siebers' *Disability Aesthetics* (in particular through Chapter Two, *The Aesthetics of Human Disqualification*) seeks to reveal and define a disability aesthetic.² He positions disability as being commonly apparent within modern art, challenging the contention that disabled people are not themselves art subjects and thus have been excluded. In his outlook, disability in art should not be subject to discrimination; instead, it is ever present and a new form of beauty.

Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* provides an art historical and theoretical overview of participatory art.³ She engages with the political and conceptual difficulties presented by socially engaged art, while taking the reader on a journey through its modern art enactment.

Nicolas Bourriaud's work *Relational Aesthetics* analyses how human relations can be both a catalyst for the creation of art as well as the form of art.⁴ In this short text, he describes art projects that are socially constructed and in which the inter-human relations developed are paramount.

The literature that contextualises my practice includes that of disability art and disability studies, visual art, computer games, and creative technology along with writings connected with socially engaged practice. It is necessarily intersectional, mirroring my practice, which is an amalgam of different disciplinary concerns, using the creative technological processes I later outline with disabled partners and participants. I describe how I have sought to integrate elements of these areas into a singular dimension reflective of my practice.

For many artists, disability arts can be the basis for an artist's creative force. I argue the field has a creative vitality and validity in the same manner as other minority areas. I examine the nature of disability arts, in particular its decisive rejection of definitions that announce a person's impairments as the cause of their disability, in

2. Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, Mich. USA: University of Michigan Press, 2010).

3. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012).

4. Nicolas Bourriaud *et al.*, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002).

favour of models that, for instance, demand equity in society through the provision of an accessible built environment.

The primary resource in the field, Disability Arts Online, describes disability arts and culture as 'a supportive environment where experience of barriers we face as disabled people can be shared and our lives valued'.⁵ In the UK disability arts is a vibrant area of creative tension and is supported by various bodies including the British Council and the Arts Councils of the UK,⁶ as well as the Arts and Humanities Research Council,⁷ and agencies in Ireland such as Arts and Disability Ireland, all placing resources into and importance on the field. An unpublished British Council report entitled *Disability, Arts and The British Council* (2014) stated that:

As well as supporting the values of inclusion and equality that are key to the British Council, work by disabled artists and organisations has the ability to engage, provoke, and resonate with other themes and focus areas (such as within the arts and society and education portfolios), enabling influence at all levels from policy makers to grassroots activists.⁸

In this commentary, I argue that socially engaged methodology supports and enhances my practice, other names for which include relational aesthetics, collaborative art, participatory or dialogic practice and community art.⁹ In the course of my work, I have undertaken contributions to the field of socially engaged arts with leaders in the field, in particular with Create Ireland, who describe themselves as the 'National development agency for collaborative arts in social and community contexts' in Dublin, Ireland. In the UK, I have created projects with Heart of Glass (HOG), who are part of the Arts Council England's substantial Creative People and Places programme. HOG describe themselves as an 'agency for collaborative and

5. Disability Arts Online, "Disability Arts Online - Archived Site (2016 and before)," Disability Arts Online, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/>.

6. *What is the Creative Case for Diversity?* (Arts Council England.), accessed June 30, 2017, <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/diversity/creative-case-diversity>.

7. "Electric Bodies," D4D Disability and Community, accessed August 16, 2018, <http://d4d.org.uk/workstreams/electric-bodies/>.

8. "Disability, Arts and The British Council" (unpublished manuscript, British Council, London, 2014).

9. Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011).

social arts practice' and are based in St Helens, Merseyside. Create and HOG were both parts of the EU funded Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, which was an ambitious transnational cultural programme was focusing on the active area of collaborative arts.¹⁰

Where possible, I now selectively choose to operate in a participatory mode with disabled ensembles deliberately, to grapple with the praxis complexities, expectations, and understandings resulting from and engendered by this process of collaborative engagement. I am concerned with questions that serve to render problematic the definitions and activity of participatory art. Collaboration is an integral part of my artistic practice, and yet this is a contested term, often understood differently in theoretical and practical terms, including by the varying art professionals with whom I interact.

The practice and theories documented in this thesis consider the methodologies and research necessary to create new and meaningful nuanced digital artworks that exist as new claims of knowledge, in the form, I believe, of the first motion capture of alternative body forms and their movement and collaborative frameworks. These challenge the nature of the inclusive city and exclusivity of technology and affect the cultural representations of disability. In this thesis, I raise questions and analyse assumptions to discuss recurring questions: What disability arts, and how does it differ from art featuring disability? Disabled author and performance specialist Carrie Sandahl further asks:

How does the work of disabled performing artists transform the artistic genres in which they work? ... How does this work confront medical, charity, and freak-show models of disability? How do performance events contribute to disability cultures, disability identities, and communication between disabled and nondisabled people? ¹¹

I consider the nature of a disability consciousness and whether the disability artist is validated through this mechanism, contrasted against the primacy of impairment

10. "Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme," CAPP Network, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.cappnetwork.com/about-capp/about-the-project/>.

11. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (Ann Arbor (Michigan): University of Michigan Press, 2005), 2.

being viewed as a prerequisite to authentic practice. Issues of quality, level playing field and ethical working are discussed, while recommendations are made on the development of space, time and dialogical relations. Identity, ethics and the lived learning-disabled experience are also evaluated. This thesis considers the complexities of art practice from a dialogic perspective.¹² The Russian philosopher Michael Bakhtin contrasts the dialogic and the 'monologic' work of literature, a theory developed further by art historian Grant Kester. Kester uses the term 'dialogical' in his publication *Conversation Pieces* to describe works of art that may, as he suggests, be 'considered as a kind of conversation – a locus of different meanings, interpretations, and points of view'.¹³

As a process-driven artist (digital work has to be methodical), I describe why socially engaged art practice has been an appropriate *modus operandi* for me. I reveal how it has led to a deep engagement with the participants with whom I have worked, while detailing how engaging with this perspective develops and extends my work. At the same time, I consider opposing theoretical and practice-based approaches to arrive at contrasting oppositional viewpoints. Critically, I question whether form-based, documentable, individual artistic material artefacts may be replaced by inter-human relations and a democracy of practice that is both anti-authorial and antispectatorial, and formless.

I hope to explain how I have established an art practice informed by experience and activities, and a personal desire to explore a notion of 'digital disability' writ large, without fear of scale. However, this academic theory and practice are also conflated by protocols established and garnered from many years in industry. I discuss how I have evolved an established pattern and workflow, with practices directly referenced from industry and the advantages gained. Theories employed relate specifically to my practice and affect my animation production methods; they also reference dance and Duchampian notions of found motion.

Through the commentary, I have analysed and dissected my achieved artistic aims while detailing the journey thus encountered. My practice employs three combined

12. Footnote: Kester re-purposes Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the 'dialogic' and mapping it on to artworks as opposed to literary works. For a fuller understanding of Bakhtin's Dialogic theory, please see: M. M. Bakhtin and Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

13. Kester, Grant. "Conversation pieces: The role of dialogue in socially-engaged art." Page 2 in *Theory in contemporary art since* (1985): 76-100.

processes, technology, disability, and where possible collaborative working methods, which I contend to be a powerful aggregation. Combined, I demonstrate why they are a powerful toolset and able to deliver ambitious works of art. I argue that my works challenge the cultural status of disability by addressing issues of quality, exclusivity and exclusion in a mission to deliver an altered gaze and a version 2.0 of disability for which the author and disability advocate Petra Kuppers has called.¹⁴

My practice, I argue, has I believe contributed to a change in curatorial practice, across differing agencies from councils, galleries and alternative venues. It has thus created an impact in the form of audience development for artwork connected to disability. This process has relied on both the disabled and mainstream support, and analysis is made of the notion and importance of allies while questioning the broad nature of authenticity within the field. Such a study discusses the complexities involved in creating nuanced, original works, those revealing new insights into disability, art (including galleries, museums and outdoor) and social practice.

Outline the parameters of my investigation

In Chapter One, I shall look at my development through fine art training into the games industry and finally moving to academia. Chapter Two examines the relation of my practice to disability theory. In Chapter Three, I will examine theories surrounding participatory art practice and how they have informed my own working methods. Chapters Four, Five and Six present three case studies of my previously published work. Finally, in Chapter Seven offers a conclusion, making explicit the basis on which I state a claim for making an original contribution to knowledge.

14. Petra Kuppers, "Diversity: Disability," *Art Journal*, Spring 2016, 96.

Chapter 1

Background

The following commentary retraces a journey, investigating my background in order to highlight meaningful authentic and foundational experiences that have catalytically informed and directed my creative practice. It relates a circuitous route from traditional fine art training to a high-level commercial digital art practice, returning afterwards to a hybrid digital fine art practice, the key characteristics of which underpin my work and represent an amalgamation of theories from these different disciplines. In this chapter, I wish to explain how my practice became deeply immersed in the three discrete areas of digital / video art, disability, and social engagement.

I was brought up in Northern England in a post-industrial environment. During the 1980s, in my home town of Middlesbrough, I witnessed the decline of traditional industries. Significant cultural change accompanied this loss of manufacturing activity. Social bindings unravelled, leaving community linkages stretched, if not broken. Although Teesside was famed for having designed and constructed the Sydney Harbour Bridge and other iconic structures around the world, it was then, in many ways, redundant; its historic and complex social tapestry cast aside.¹

Strikes, mass unemployment, and closures negatively affected my generation. Temporary and permanent economic migration became a way of life. In this setting, social, cultural, and financial capital drained away. In response a 'Do-It-Yourself' ethic emerged, becoming a necessary political and cultural reaction to unemployment, especially amongst the younger generation. Self-directed organisations including music collectives formed. These were often promoted and supported by the locally organised, anti-authoritarian punk movement, elements of which specifically campaigned societal change (e.g. supporting national bands such as Crass, who had an anti-war stance, or Conflict, who campaigned for animal rights). In no small way, new social bindings were created as a new vision of society developed. I was involved as a participant in the music scene at this time, which formed a music collective, initially supporting artists through the provision of weekly

1. BBC, "Dorman Long: The Teesside firm that bridged the world," BBC, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tees-34389873>.

concerts. Over time and with effort, it garnered social and political support, leading to the establishment of a full recording studio and training facility in the late 1980s.

The success of socially engaged collective action became obvious to me. A group of young people – of which I was one – had come together to form a motivated network with shared interests in order democratically to organise their vision of society; effectively, to offer a renewed vision of a small aspect of society, to ‘re-see’ it from a fresh perspective, then to alter and successfully address issues affecting them. Throughout the 1980s I was involved in various community endeavours and community action. At some of the music events I would take a friend, a learning-disabled man, with me, a visitor from a local disability charity with which I was involved.

Through my voluntary work with this organisation I acquired significant experience of the broader aspects of disability, as well as further experience of networks and their potential for social action. I drove minibuses as well as undertaking one-to-one supervision and care. In particular I supported the organisation through holiday periods, supervising male children and adults, helping to create vibrant and exciting space where friendships could develop and appropriate learning and enjoyment achieved. We provided respite care, which benefited both the parents/usual carers and, I believe, the adults and children we supervised. In amongst the happy atmosphere we created I learned, as a young adult, that tolerance and patience were vital to understanding people’s personalities and backgrounds. Together, we developed our own human rights attitude, arguing along the way against any prejudice we would encounter in the many public situations we entered. We also encountered a great deal of enlightened, intelligent support. Voluntary collective activity was central to this organisation, which was socially engaged in the community and a champion of disability rights.

My own disabled family was also part of this community. Born in the 1920s, my grandfather (Figure 1) often suffered injuries from his brittle bone disease and was a wheelchair user from an early age. He endured many health difficulties in the pre-NHS environment as a result of being poor and having no form of medical insurance. My mother was similarly affected. My father was seriously injured at British Steel in the early 1960s, becoming permanently disabled; my uncles were also injured, one having a prosthetic limb and others missing fingers. As such, I understood elements of the social, economic, and political background to disability

from an early age and came to see it as common, which of course it was in the heavy industries.



Figure 1. Ian Jones, Simon McKeown's Grandfather (circa 1965)

My introduction to disability was also personal and based on my physical experience. As a young person, I had spent substantial time because of my impairment (Brittle Bones) limping, walking with difficulty, crawling, and using crutches, all of which made me feel very physically distant from people my age. I assumed there was a normality of range of movement and that I was not on that continuum. In addition to living with an impairment, I was verbally bullied, usually by children of my age (and sometimes adults) who highlighted my impairment often unpleasantly. This, along with exclusion from school because of my condition, had substantial impacts on my daily life and education. My corporeal condition, it seemed, was only part of a broader narrative, one that I struggled at the time to decode. It took the development of a disability consciousness much later in life to make sense of this personal history and, critically, to realise that there was an error in my considerations: there is no such physical state that can be described as normal.

For me, a disabled comprehensive school student, my art class became a place of refuge, a locus of sanity in an environment clearly one full of stresses. As my

impairment, brittle bones, increasingly caused motor issues, art became similarly more important to me. Whether at school or at home, I was able to undertake artistic endeavour. I took my first significant art exam while I had a broken 'drawing' arm. The wobbly left-handed still life that I completed became my first, and accidental, disabled artwork. My initial art school training focused on personal inquiry and the acquisition of craft skill, along with an understanding of art history and theory. I thrived in the environment offered by my Foundation Level Art College. New video and animation technology became available in the 1980s, including low-cost analogue time-based media production tools and highly specialised, financially exclusive, creative computing systems. Both, most fortunately, became available to me during my art education.

The Fine Art Media Department of Newcastle Polytechnic, Newcastle upon Tyne (where I studied between 1984 and 1987) introduced me to the 'new' medium of video art. I attended lectures given by British video artist John Adams,² occasionally by the animators Brother Quay,³ and also by international visiting artists; I created work in 16mm film, colour and black-and-white photography, and analogue video. My art School training introduced me to a whole range of important artists (such as: Cindy Sherman, Nam June Paik, Jenny Holzer, Paul McCarthy, Bruce Nauman and Bill Viola) and whilst their work, ideas and use of technology do not necessarily inform my own work directly, their ideas inform the way I think about art and how to make and present it.

Video art in the early seventies and eighties was often physically amateur, its camera work and editing inconsistent with the then conventionally staid yet expensive production methods applied in broadcast television. Video art was textural, grainy, fast cut, irreverent, shocking, complex, sometimes funny and at other times annoying, and nevertheless placed itself in opposition and as a direct challenge to the hegemony of terrestrial broadcast television. If video art heavily influenced me, it was Northumbria's Fine Art department's highly unusual and expensive investment in creative computing (*circa* 1985-6) that drew my attention in the final year of my degree. A small classroom was filled with state-of-the-art digital,

2. LUX, "Rewind + Play: An Anthology of Early British Video Art," LUX, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://lux.org.uk/product/rewind-play-an-anthology-of-early-british-video-art>.

3. BFI, "Where to begin with the Quay brothers," BFI, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/features/where-begin-quay-brothers>.

proto-three-dimensional (3D) animation, and two-dimensional (2D) paint systems, their exclusivity defined by their cost. I understood instinctively the possibilities of 3D. Here was a virtual production device, one that would allow me to take control of 3D form, movement, and time. Such a discovery was hugely significant to me: it marked out 3D as a completely original medium, capable of creating the virtual worlds with which we are all now familiar.

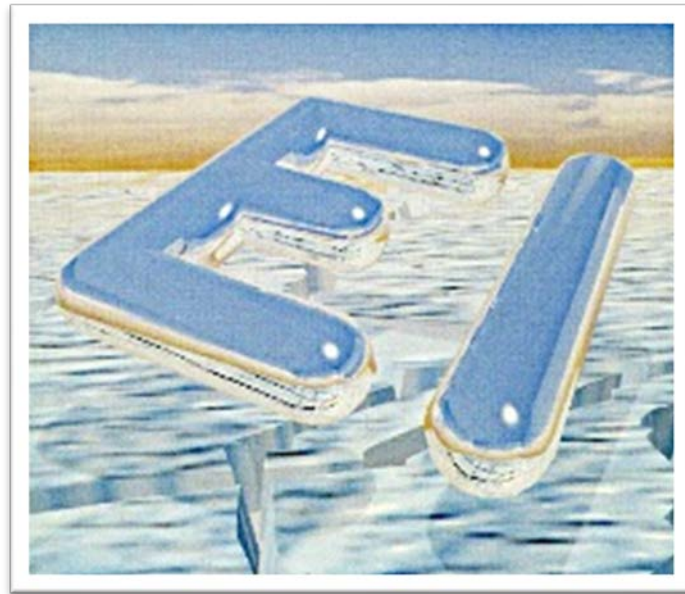


Figure 2 – *Electric Image* Logo, (1985)

3D work at university led me to employment in Soho, London. I joined one of the very few professional creative computer companies in Europe, *Electric Image*, in 1988 (Figure 2). The underpinning technology and processes used there were derived from the pioneering American Robert Abel and Associates and had been used to great effect in the film *Tron* in 1982.⁴ Whilst learning complex software I continued to develop new understandings of computer arts, from the early works of the pioneer computer visualiser John Whitney (*circa* 1975)⁵ to the psychological 3D work of Chris Landreth in the 1990s⁶. Abel's works such as *Brilliance* (Figure 3),

4. "Bob Abel Project," Future Visions, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.futurevisions.net/doa/docs/The%20Bob%20Abel%20Project.htm>.

5. John Whitney, *Arabesque*, 1975, abstract video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7h0ppnUQhE>.

6. "My Films," Chris Landreth, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.chrislandreth.com/films#my-films>.

which showcased a futuristic female robot in human-like motion, influenced me with its early use of 3D human motion.⁷

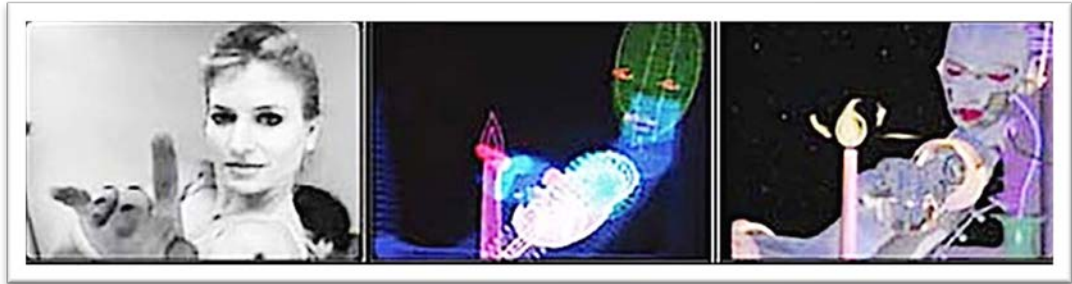


Figure 3 – Brilliance by Robert Abel (1983)

In 1998 I moved to the computer games industry as Head of 3D and Animation for Reflections, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. There, I managed a large team of artists and produced artwork for *Driver*, one of the most successful computer games in the world in 1999-2001.⁸ Creative risks were taken on a large scale; stepping into the creative and technical unknown was company policy. As a result, *Driver* was revolutionary and hugely successful. Convivial working relations across a diverse team underpinned this success. *Driver* (Figure 4) was produced collaboratively, with many departments contributing to a synchronised, singular directive. Critically, the studio operated within an open framework, where independent thought, combined with strong creative direction, prospered; it is a *modus operandi* I have carried throughout my practice.

7. "Brilliance Robert Abel, 1983," video file, 02:50, YouTube, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rei2bbZ2i4w&t=27s>.

8. "Driver: You Are the Wheelman," Fandom, accessed May 6, 2019, https://driver.fandom.com/wiki/Driver:_You_Are_the_Wheelman.

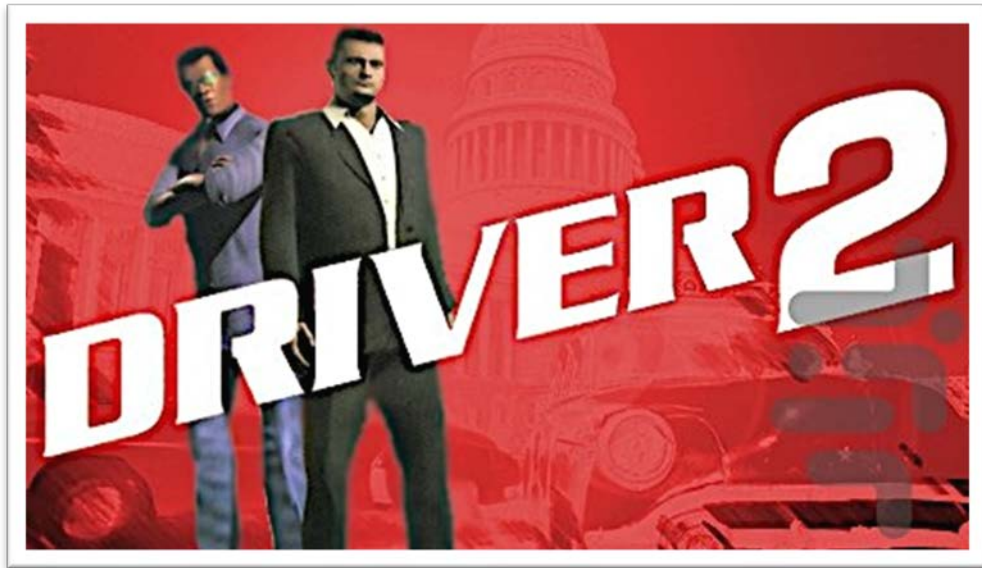


Figure 4 – Driver by Reflections (2000)

Commercial art practice in both post-production and computer games is highly structured, intense and deadline driven. As an art director and manager I undertook roles that included planning, direction, budget control, editing, translation, marketing and motion capture, all aspects of which I have utilised in my own work, including in the projects discussed in this commentary. I have been able to utilise my contacts and experience to exploit commercial practices and undertake professional art productions with companies I have worked with in the past, in particular with motion capture production.

In 2000 I was first commissioned (by West Midlands Disability Arts Forum) to create a three-dimensional animation based on a Deaf sign language story which considered the historical mistreatment of Deaf children forced to learn to speak. Entitled *School* (Figure 5) and completed in 2000 this dystopian work was punchy, political and successful; it went on to be purchased and shown by Film Four and Channel Four in support of their Deaf/disability agenda. Well received by the Deaf community, it was showcased at the London Disability Arts Forum Film Festival and on Deaf television. *School* brought Deaf ethics and the notion of a community, in my case, the Deaf society to my practice. *School* was not collaborative, yet it was engaged with a community. I had not simply wanted only to visualise an untold Deaf story. The work additionally marked for me the beginning of my objective to address formal issues as identified by the disability arts field, in this case reclaiming Deaf identity, through the medium of digital media (as exemplified in my commercial

practice) while achieving audiences of scale. Inadvertently my disability arts journey had commenced.



Figure 5 – School by Simon McKeown (2000)

Disability arts reflect a minority position comparable to the ‘early days of feminism and the black arts’.⁹ When some years following the production of *School* and while I was preparing the groundwork to undertake a new project featuring the motion of various disabled people, I became aware of a comment made by the disabled artist Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA) that the disability arts sector was ‘The last remaining avant-garde movement’.¹⁰ Shonibare was in effect suggesting that disability as a thematic area was uniquely underexplored and studied and that there existed the potential for bold new experimentation, ideas and practices in the field of disability arts. When I became aware of this quote, I questioned how it might apply to my practice and the broader field of research in which I was involved, resolving to experiment and establish a meaningful fine art career in this area.

In order to confirm why my research interest in these areas is not merely utilitarian, it is essential to comment on my life as a disabled person with multiple impairments, including brittle bones, heart disorder and deafness. Disability defines the essence of who I am, personally, culturally and politically. My understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion are formed through these experiences and now contribute to

9. Melvyn Bragg, "The last remaining avant-garde movement," *Guardian* (London, UK), December 11, 2007, accessed July 7, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2007/dec/11/disability.arts>.

10. Bragg, "The last,".

the framework of study that underpins my research and theoretical understanding. In turn, these have led me to create what I believe is a significant and innovative body of works which are recognised internationally within the field of disability arts and the mainstream.

Picture Credits

Figure 1

Ian Jones, Simon McKeown's Grandfather, standing beside a Government-issued *Tippen Delta* disability vehicle, near Stokesley, UK. Credit © McKeown with photograph by relative (*circa* 1965).

Figure 2

Electric Image Logo, early UK computer graphic image. Credit © Electric Image, London, UK (*circa* 1985).

Figure 3

Brilliance by Robert Abel and Associates. Credit © RA & Assoc USA (1983).

Figure 4

Driver 2 promotional material. Credit © Reflections Interactive, Newcastle, UK (2000).

Figure 5

School by Simon McKeown, Credit © McKeown (2000).

Chapter 2

A Disability Context

In my professional art career in computer games, before joining academia, I had undertaken the direction of many studio recordings. For these, I worked with actors to capture motion for later use in animations. A motion capture shoot is a digital recording similar to a video recording, the only difference being that it occurs in three dimensions. Actors wear tight-fitting Lycra suits, with small reflective balls or markers Velcro-ed to it at the major points of skeletal movement, such as the wrist, elbow, and shoulder (Figure 1). Forty-four markers may be used to represent a basic skeleton. As the actor moves around the capture studio wearing the suit, many digital cameras record the positions of the markers; these are then correlated against each other and thus translated into accurate three-dimensional (3D) spatial data in the form of a moving virtual skeleton.

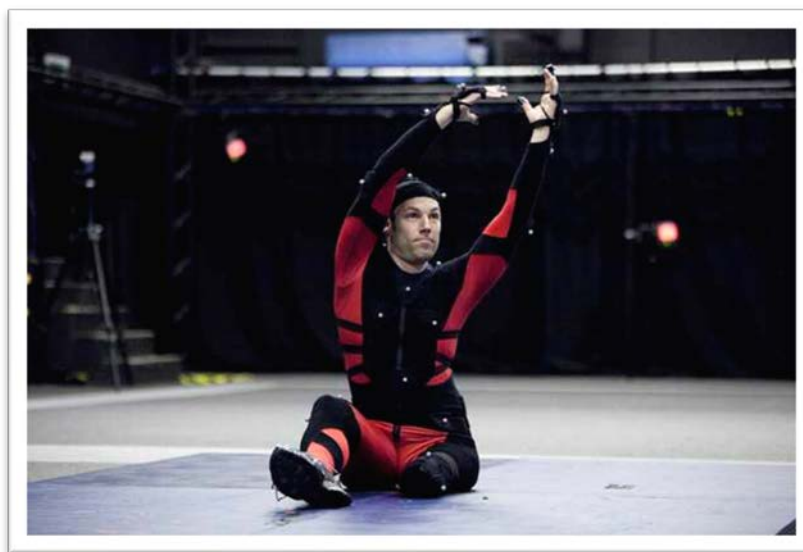


Figure 1 – Paralympian Anton Raimondo at Pinewood Studios (2012)

I have worked with stuntmen and stuntwomen, actors of all types, and extras across many computer games motion captures. To aid the selection of actors, I elected to work with the well-known acting agency, *Ugly Models*, which represents an array of

diverse talent in terms of acting skills and physical attributes.¹ As a result, I was able deliberately to imbue some of the visual works included in multi-million-unit selling games such as *Driver* with diversity.² Over nine years, I worked on five major computer games, each with a multi-million-pound production budget.

From Computer Games to Motion Disabled

I moved from the games industry to Teesside University, joining one of the most respected schools of computer animation special effects in the UK. I had come to know the university through my role as a visiting lecturer on the MSC Computer Aided Graphical Technology Applications (CAGTA) at Teesside, one of the earliest computer graphic degrees in the UK. Many industry professionals trained on this course, developed in the early 1990s. I was later invited and appointed to the post of external examiner in 1998 and after that oversaw many of the UK's most respected computer graphic degrees, which in turn led to my interest in academia. In 2003 I successfully applied for a full-time position. I was asked in my interview what research I would undertake. Straight away, I suggested movement and disability. The university, when I took up my post, was not at that time equipped with functional motion-capture equipment. Over several years I sourced the necessary support and funding then built a state-of-the-art motion capture laboratory (and later industry standard sound stage and green screen studio). The studio was based on my industrial experience and utilised the same hardware as industry motion-capture partners. I was now able to utilise the studio and as well teaching students, who now as graduates have gone on to employment in some of the best-known and prestigious games and special effects companies around the world.

My project *Motion Disabled* developed and expanded from my computer game practice. *Motion Disabled* set out to showcase the everyday happenings and movements of difference, to capture unusual bodies so that we can in the first instance ask the obvious question: Why are you different? It is an art study that captures forever, by examining the lived disabled experience, the physical signature of a disabled person in 3D. As an artist and digital specialist, I set out to define the motions of disabled people using the highest quality procedures then available to

1. Ugly Models, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.ugly.org/2016/>.

2. "Driver San Francisco," Ubisoft, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.ubisoft.com/en-us/game/driver-san-francisco/>.

me. Motions were captured in high fidelity, using state-of-the-art equipment and highly qualified personnel. By using the same tools and techniques as in my professional practice and demonstrated in *Driver*, I sought to ensure that *Motion Disabled's* production values were stringent and analogous to high-cost high-value triple-AAA games of the period.³ The captured disabled movements thus became highly accurate digital representations of actions by disabled actors, and were presented to the highest computer graphic standard possible. My aim was to impart esteem and quality *into* the final work as well as into the disabled people captured, thus validating their authentic motions. I am seeking to validate disability art and culture through an equality of recognition within the cultural sphere, an equity that I believe carries significant weight.

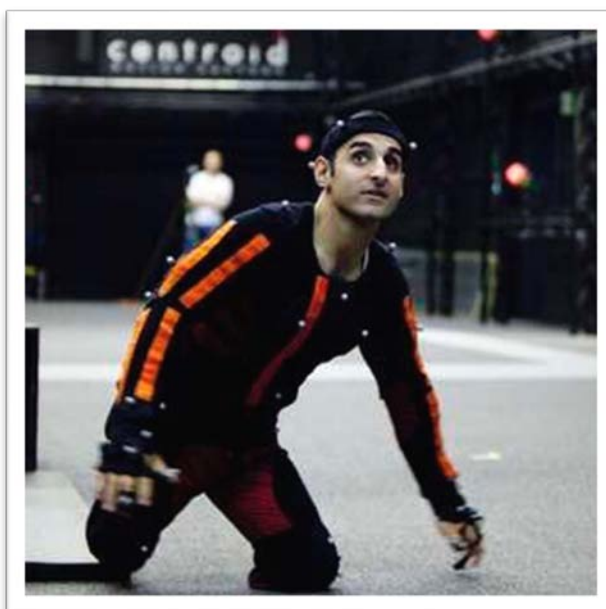


Figure 2 – Paralympian Ali Jawad at Pinewood Studios (2012)

Quality was used in this work deliberately to forestall any criticism – perhaps of unrealistic motion or low-quality presentation. The potential critic was thus deliberately positioned to reject the conceptual framework only, rather than the actual form of the work. *Motion Disabled* went on to become one of my most successful disability art projects to date, firmly establishing my artistic career and trajectory in part because of this approach.

3. "This Is What Sets 'Indie' and 'AAA' Video Games Apart." 2017. Windows Central. Brendan Lowry, November 29, 2017. <https://www.windowcentral.com/indie-vs-aaa-which-type-game-you>.

The purposes of the current chapter are both to evaluate and to explore how the intersection of art and disability, of which *Motion Disabled* is a practice-based research example, functions. I shall begin by reviewing briefly how disability⁴ may be considered as a construct, whilst exposing and clarifying my personal and political rationale as an artist for being involved in this area. I contend that there are both the capacity in the art world and a necessity in society for the development of a nuanced aesthetic based on the experience of disability, and I believe these are reflected in my practice-based work. To support this contention I shall discuss the notion of the lived experience of disability as underpinning and authenticating disability art. The chapter ends by reviewing modern art and the potential for a disability aesthetic; it concludes in support of the academic and author Garland-Thomson's statement that it is possible to formulate 'a logic that allows people to claim the identity of disabled without having to conceive of it as a diminishment of self'.⁵

Disability art as a practice provides space for the critical study, exploration, and examination of the lived disabled experience. It claims to be the cultural expression of a distinct disabled minority and that it therefore differs from art that is simply representative of disability. Art and disability, broadly speaking, occupy a continuum of expression including work made by artists such as the late disabled performance artist Katherine Araniello through to sculptural works of the disabled artist Alison Lapper and actor Mat Fraser by artist Mark Quinn. Their outputs contextually reveal a range of works classified as disability art or art. Disability art is a location often identified for my own work and in particular the works selected for inclusion in this commentary. Writing in support of one of Europe's largest exhibitions on disability, *Disabled by Normality* (Figures 3 and 4),⁶ Kateřina Kolářová and Filip Herza from the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague, suggested that disability art is created by disabled as well as by non-disabled artists and that:

4. It is worth noting that in this chapter that some disability art stems from an impairment related perspective, but through disability art it can be extended to explore disability and the social process of exclusion through impairment specificities. Secondly, the use of the word 'disability' is often used instead of the word 'impairment' (as per the Social Model of Disability) by multiple writers/commentators/allies in this chapter, especially in a USA context.

5. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability Studies," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 30, no. 2 (2005):1567.

6. "Disabled by Normality," DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://www.dox.cz/en/exhibitions/disabled-by-normality>.

Furthermore, disability art – versus simply art about disability – also facilitates critical examinations of disability within broader cultural, social and political contexts. Similarly, disability art reframes and resists the demands of cure and rehabilitation; their knowledge and experience cannot be squeezed in the categories of illness, dysfunction or unwanted defect.⁷

Kolářová and Herza delineate two contextually separated variations of expression: disability art, on the one hand, and art about disability on the other.

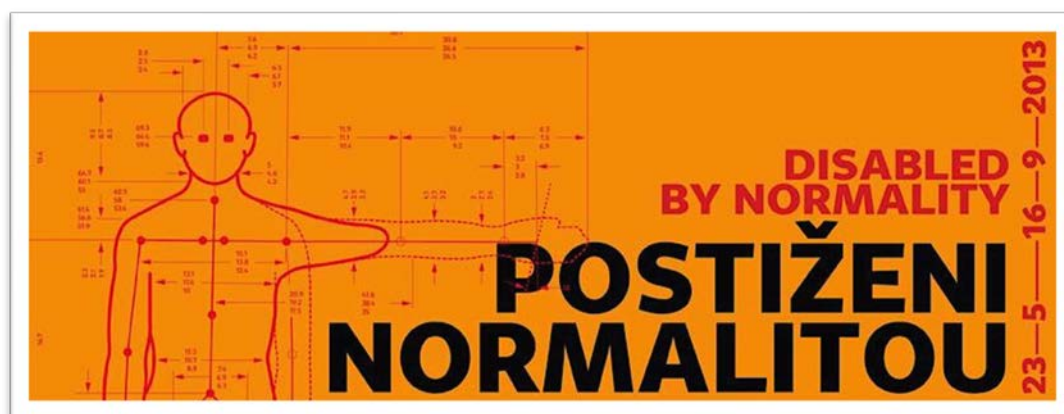


Figure 3 - Disabled by Normality at DOX (2013)



Figure 4 – Disabled by Normality installation DOX, (2013)

7. Kateřina Kolářová and Filip Herza, "Normal? Disabled? Words as simple as the A-B-C," in *Disabled by Normality*, by Jaroslav Andel (Praha, Czech Republic: DOX Prague, a.s., 2015), 34.

The following authors represent a cross-section of interdisciplinary thought on disability, from the fields of disability studies and disability art, including Lennard J. Davis, Tobin Siebers, Ann Millett-Gallant, Carrie Sandahl, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson and Petra Kuppers.

Lennard J. Davis is a disability studies author and researcher and Professor in the English Department in the School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, USA. Davis is also Professor of Disability and Human Development in the School of Applied Health Sciences of the University of Illinois at Chicago, as well as Professor of Medical Education in the College of Medicine. Davis, through one of his most important texts, *Enforcing Normalcy, Disability, Deafness and the Body* (1995) first assisted my contextualisation of the experience of intolerant, oppressive normality which I experienced in particular during my childhood.⁸ Davis establishes how the term 'normal' has proliferated through the process of industrialisation and 'progress', and that the 'implications of the hegemony of normalcy are profound and extend into the very heart of cultural production'.⁹ Davis contends that the visual arts have isolated alternative bodies and foregrounded normalcy. The way we think of the disabled body, he suggests, derives from negatively constructed concepts; the advent of the 'norm', he proposes, is counterbalanced in oppositional position of deviance. The cause of disability studies therefore, for Davis, is to institute new and 'alternative ways of thinking about the abnormal'.¹⁰

The late Tobin Siebers was Professor of English Language and Literature and Art and Design at the University of Michigan, USA. He was a disability studies scholar with a research interest in visual culture and the representation of disabled people in modern art. As a disabled researcher, he argued that disability is of fundamental concern to modern art through his seminal publication *Disability Aesthetics*, his most influential publication in this area.¹¹ Sieber's contentions render problematic disability and its relation to modern art by seeking to redefine the relationship

8. Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, repr. ed. (London: Verso, 1995).

9. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 49.

10. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 26.

11. Tobin Siebers, "Disability Aesthetics and the body beautiful: Signposts in the history of Art," *Alter, European Journal of Disability Research* 2.

between disability and aesthetics. One of Siebers' aims was '[T]o mount a historical argument that demonstrates the awareness and use of disability by modern artists'.¹² Modern art has not, he argues, overlooked disability (or indeed impairment), arguing that it is highly accessible in modern art should we take the time to study it carefully. To defend this proposition, he cites the 1937 Nazi Entartete Kunst / Degenerate Art Exhibition held in Munich in which works by artists such as Picasso, Kandinsky, Klee and Grosz were presented.¹³ In this exhibition, the Nazis, he contends, identified a correlation between modern art and impairment. Disability, he reports, was apparent in many of the works, which factor indicates the potential of a disabled aesthetic.

Senior lecturer and disability studies scholar for the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, USA, Ann Millett-Gallant is a disabled art historian with a PhD in art history. She undertakes interdisciplinary disability studies and art history research with *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art*, one of her most valuable outputs.¹⁴ In this work, she seeks to uncover and analyse the impaired body in various contexts, including painting. She highlights international disabled artists who were 'ahead of their time', citing the Mexican artist Frieda Kahlo (1907-1954), whose works 'exceed the frames of her disabled body, as well as the frame of her historical context'.¹⁵ In doing so, Millett-Gallant suggests a lineage of artists who have occupied similar development spaces to the contemporary artists I mention in this commentary. Separately, she contends that Neoclassicism is 'characteristically employed for public statues', suggesting that Marc Quinn's statue of Alison Lapper successfully subverts the neoclassical signification of beauty and cultural idealism as represented in 'able' bodies.¹⁶ Millett-Gallant analyses the cultural presentation of the impaired body bringing new understanding to the history of art, arguing that artwork can challenge 'how the viewer judges the body in art, as well as in everyday life'.¹⁷

12. Tobin Siebers, "The Art of Disability: An interview with Tobin Siebers by Mike Levin", *Disability Studies Quarterly* 30, no. 2.

13. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 29.

14. Ann Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

15. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 5.

16. *Ibid.*, 56.

17. *Ibid.*, 57.

Carrie Sandahl is an Associate Professor attached to the Program on Disability Art, Culture, and Humanities Director, Disability and Human Development, in the College of Health and Applied Sciences, The University of Illinois at Chicago.¹⁸ The course is also home to the Bodies of Work programme, which uses art 'to showcase and celebrate the disability experience'.¹⁹ Sandahl is a disabled artist and her field of research and activity is disability art, related in particular to performance and theatre. One of her major works in this area is *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*.²⁰ Sandahl's work considers the phenomenological experience of disability to be of vital importance to the discourse of disability art. Some of her understanding has developed from her own physicality. Using the example of her own body she describes how, because of her smaller and angled stature, she photographs and sees the world differently. She has a vantage point differing from what is considered the norm. She describes this somatic experience as opening "doors of perception" to space that can sometimes radically differ from the nondisableds'.²¹ In her writing she discusses concerns that reflect directly on my performed works. In 2015 she took part, both individually and as a member of the WPA Collective, in the *Disabled by Normality* exhibition, at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art,²² Prague, Czech Republic, exhibiting in tandem with my work, *Motion Disabled*.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson is a Professor of English and Bioethics at Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. She is described as a 'disability justice and culture thought leader'²³ and undertakes research in an area entitled *Feminist*

18. "Disability And Human Development," UIC.edu, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://ahs.uic.edu/disability-human-development/directory/sandahl-carrie/>.

19. UIC.edu, "Bodies of Work," College of Applied Health Sciences, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://ahs.uic.edu/disability-human-development/community-partners/bodies-of-work/>.

20. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (Ann Arbor (Michigan): University of Michigan Press, 2005), 10.

21. "Considering Disability: Disability Phenomenology's Role in Revolutionizing Theatrical Space," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Spring 2002.

22. "Disabled by Normality," DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, accessed April 29, 2018, <https://www.dox.cz/en/exhibitions/disabled-by-normality>.

23. Emory University, "Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, Professor," Emory College of Arts and Sciences, accessed June 12, 2018,

Disability Studies, which she describes as ‘academic cultural work with a sharp political edge and a vigorous critical punch’.²⁴ Her research is intersectional in nature and seeks to explore multiple forms of oppression – in particular, the experience of disability as seen from a feminist perspective. The integration, rather than the separation, of the two discourses, she argues, ‘strengthens the critique that is feminism’.²⁵ Garland-Thomson’s work contests the assignment of identity through her highlighting of the power relations that position women as being inferior to men. Synchronously, she rigorously attacks perceived notions of disability, challenging associated oppressive systems of representation which categorise people with a range of differences, be they physical or intellectual, as being deficient, arguing that defining women or the disabled as inferior is (similarly) exclusionary.

Petra Kuppers is a US-based community performance artist, poet, and disability culture activist. She is also a Professor at the University of Michigan, US, primarily teaching Performance and Disability Studies. Kuppers works internationally with a research focus on community art, activism, and disability culture and performance; her major work in this area is *Disability and Contemporary Performance – Bodies on Edge*, first published in 2003.²⁶ In 2014 Kuppers produced one of the first pedagogical books on disability arts, *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction*. As a community artist and activist Kuppers is influenced by the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, whose work ‘configures community by thinking about the way that being-together can resist and deconstruct dominant power relations’ in preference for open rather than fixed closed communities.²⁷ Kuppers seeks appropriate and equitable relationships with institutions to create culture ‘across difference’ and to ‘honour’ the contribution of disabled, including learning disabled participants.

http://english.emory.edu/home/people/faculty/faculty_pages/garland-thomson.html.

24. Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability," 1567.

25. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability, Transforming Feminist Theory," *NWSA Journal* 14, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 28.

26. Petra Kuppers, *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge* (New York, NY [u.a.]: Routledge, 2008).

27. Petra Kuppers, "Community Arts and Practices: Improvising Being-Together," Culture Machine, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://culturemachine.net/community/community-arts-and-practices/>.

Disability art emerged from the liberationist movements of the 1970s, developing later than the Black Arts or Feminist Arts movements. It is underpinned by the discourse of disability studies; which analyses what it means to be disabled. Garland-Thomson argues that 'feminist disability studies define disability as a vector of socially constructed identity'. Identities, she contends, are unnecessarily placed on groupings (often individuals with no direct connection). They can also be fictitious and subject to change, as reflected in the passage of various and historically negative identities associated with the black or gay communities.

Disability art in the UK is an active cultural area today, as is demonstrated by Disability Arts Online (www.disabilityarts.online) and Disability Arts International (www.disabilityartsinternational.org). Its history is also the subject of a major research project entitled The National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (www.the-ndaca.org), which allows access to relevant artists in the form of video interviews and to their artworks and related ephemera such as leaflets, cartoons and manifestos, from 1970 onwards.

To understand further what disability art is and why I became interested in the field, my experience of disability must be considered, along with my acquisition of a 'rhetorical identity', that of a disability artist. It occurred in a process that chose me, as much as I chose it.²⁸ Two fundamental models of disability will briefly be addressed before moving on to consider some artistic, aesthetic, and cultural considerations of disability. My interest in disability is deeply seated and I am able to draw on my lifetime's experience to support and fuel my research. I was brought up to know that disability was solely a personal issue. I was unaware that it could be anything else. Oliver and Barnes, writing in *New Politics of Disablement* (2012), describe a society in which disability is 'an individual problem, underpinned by personal tragedy theory and shaped by the process of medicalisation'.²⁹ Impaired from birth I 'learned the standards' against which I was judged and 'societies' response' to a devalued status'³⁰ My perception of myself was thus shaped by the

28. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014), xiii.

29. Michael Oliver and Colin Barnes, *The New Politics of Disablement* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 52.

30. Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics*, 110.

environment and society around me, which in general considered my impairment a misfortune.

As a teenager, I pretended and performed a version of normality, almost with a sense of amnesia, paying little attention to my own impairment. I took part in many activities that posed a risk to me. Normalisation, as Oliver and Barnes relate, 'requires individuals to adapt to the norms of society', which in my case led to injuries.³¹ Nevertheless, being 'normal' was not something to which I aspired. As Oliver and Barnes went on to question, I never assessed whether 'normality' was a worthwhile aim.³² Conceptually, I developed an understanding that the 'problem', as I identified it, rested not with me, but with those who struggled to accept difference. In my case, these were teachers, adults, and their children. As an adult, the socially constructed model of disability became visible to me through the theories of disability studies authors such as Lennard Davies who, writing in *Enforcing Normalcy* confirmed that:

[T]he object of disability studies is not the person using the wheelchair or the Deaf person but the set of social, historical, economic, and cultural processes that regulate and control the way we think about and think through the body.³³

Here, impairment was separated from disability through society's actively choosing whom to disable, for instance *via* granting independent living support. Davis analysed different modalities, the first of which considered that 'disability is conceived of as inability to do something – walk, talk, hear, see'. He countered this position by arguing that other limitations such as an inability to complete mathematical functions are not thought of in the same manner.³⁴ Davis' writing goes on, importantly, to describe the dichotomy of the normal and not normal.

In discussing disability and exclusion Garland-Thomson makes considered use of language and descriptors. Feminist disability studies 'tend[s] to avoid impairment-

31. *Ibid.*, 91.

32. *Ibid.*

33. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*, 2.

34. *Ibid.*, 11.

specific or medical diagnostic categories' whilst recognising communities of people 'based on [their] shared disability experience'.³⁵ It also understands that there are wide differences of embodiment that constitute disability. Disability, she argues, 'is a cultural interpretation of human variation rather than an inherent inferiority, a pathology to cure, or an undesirable trait to eliminate'.³⁶ She resists what is known as the medical model of disability, demonstrating the danger of normative, medical assumptions that result in a need to 'cure' those with an 'inferior' nature. 'The medical commitment to healing,' she says, 'has increasingly shifted toward an aggressive intent to fix, regulate, or eradicate ostensibly deviant bodies'.³⁷ Yet it is erroneous to suggest society can eradicate disability. 'Life chances and quality', as Garland-Thomson confirms, are uncertain, with impairment 'contingent'³⁸ on many factors. Therefore, we should 'accommodate bodily limits and evolutions rather than trying to eliminate or deny them'.³⁹ Indeed, impairment groups have proliferated under the medical model. Garland-Thomson argues that disability 'is an identity category that anyone can enter at any time, and we will all join it if we live long enough'.⁴⁰ Whether one is congenitally disabled or has acquired such a change, 'Disability, like gender and race, is everywhere, once we know how to look for it'.⁴¹ The human form varies in shape and function, and disability is a natural state.

The medical model identifies, through diagnosis, individual impairment as constituting the cause of disability. It infers that 'solutions to disabled people's assumed inadequacies are primarily medical ones'.⁴² In contrast, disability, in the social model, is caused by an environmental design failure such as an inaccessible building. This is a systematically constructed cause that fails to take into account wheelchair users, and parents with push-chairs, and so on. In the social model impairment is disengaged from disability. Society chooses to disable, rather than to

35. Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability", 1558.

36. *Ibid.*, 1557.

37. Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability", 14.

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, 21.

40. *Ibid.*, 20.

41. *Ibid.*, 28.

42. Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics*, 21.

enable people with impairments. The disability studies scholar and artist Ann Millett-Gallant describes how artist Mary Duffy, who was born without arms and thus:

[C]onfronted the pervasive medical model for disability, which suggests that disability is a medical problem to be rehabilitated or eliminated from the population; in contrast, the social model poses disability as a multi-dimensional subjective identity, which is socially constructed as undesirable and marginalised by political and social systems in need of change.⁴³

As a trustee of the Brittle Bone Society I urged a move away from purely medical considerations of impairment. Conferences became about living a full and complex life. Relationships, practicalities of sexual activity, independent living and old age became topical. We became concerned to offer to our members methods of planning around society and its expectations, utilising the experience of an expert, disabled cohort – those who, critically, knew how to live with the condition brittle bones. In doing so we helped our members direct their lives. This was in direct opposition to allowing the medical professional to take over and determine, as suggested by Brisenden, not only the ‘form of treatment’, but also the ‘form of life’.⁴⁴

Carrie Sandahl suggests that the ‘consequences of the medical model have been devastating for disabled people throughout history, resulting in denial of public education, incarceration in nursing homes, involuntary sterilisation, and mercy killings’.⁴⁵

In contrast, the social-construction and minority models of disability accept impairments as natural, inevitable human differences that should be accommodated.⁴⁶

In 1970s Britain, the social model of disability was developed by the Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976). This organisation criticised the failure of public bodies to ‘address the various barriers central to disabled

43. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 26.

44. Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics*, 85.

45. Sandahl and Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion*, 129.

46. *Ibid.*

people's exclusion'.⁴⁷ UPIAS defined disability as 'the disadvantage or restriction of activity' that excludes disabled people from 'participation in the mainstream of social activities'.⁴⁸

It is the stairway before the wheelchair user or written text before the blind person that handicaps an individual, not the physical impairment itself.⁴⁹

Kuppers describes disability in the social model as occurring 'in the interaction between the impaired person and the social environment'.⁵⁰ Sandahl demonstrates that scholars in her field 'unearth evidence' confirming that the 'discourses of disability changes over time according to cultural, religious, political, architectural, attitudinal, and economic factors'.⁵¹ On a personal level, the social model supports the rationale that underpins my artistic endeavour. It has provided me with 'an alternative understanding of the experience and reality of disability' and given me 'basis on which to organise'.⁵²

If disability is indeed common (with 2011 census figures in the UK suggesting that 18.0% of the population claims to have a long-term health problem or disability),⁵³ then it follows that the disabled identity, a significant proportion, should have value within society. I contend that the artistic investigation of disability is as valid as that of other discourse, such as gender. Garland-Thomson supports this view, arguing that feminist disability studies involve working towards 'ending disability discrimination' whilst 'claiming the identity of disabled', without that identity being assigned a reduced status.⁵⁴ The feminist disability studies approach, according to Garland-Thomson, asks for understanding, appreciation, and the environmental

47. Oliver and Barnes, *The New Politics*, 21.

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

50. Petra Kuppers, *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction* (Houndmills, Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 27.

51. Sandahl and Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion*, 8.

52. *Ibid.*, 21.

53. "2011 Census," office for National Statistics, accessed May 21, 2019, <http://ow.ly/5A9S50ulggP>.

54. Garland-Thomson, "Feminist Disability," 1557.

accommodation of disability, as opposed to eliminating disability.⁵⁵ Her work counters damaging stereotypical disability narratives, which are cyclically learnt and repeated. Garland-Thomson analyses and highlights five key descriptions based around biomedical flaws (e.g. intersex child); sentimentality (e.g. charity appeal); overcoming (e.g. paralympian); personal catastrophe (e.g. personal fear it may happen to you), and abjection (e.g. in need of care). She claims these narrations 'ultimately undergird exclusionary environments, employment discrimination, and social marginalisation'. Further, she argues that 'disability, like femaleness, is not a natural state of corporeal inferiority' and that 'disability is a culturally fabricated narrative of the body'.⁵⁶ Disabled lives are neither personal catastrophes nor of epic paralympian proportions. Garland-Thomson's research and analysis clarify how a wide range of people of difference are envisioned as being less than 'normal', leading to their cultural, social, and capital exclusion as a result. She imagines a situation whereby normative values are contested, making use of existing and new legalisation. As disabled people are identified as 'different', the appreciation of difference, her clarion call must be given loudly.

The visual arts are my primary focus; also, I have intersectional links within my work to performance, as demonstrated by *Motion Disabled*. Sandahl argues that performance studies have no concept of disability. As a result disability is rarely described in 'generative' terms, in which context dancers with impairments and alternative, asymmetrical body forms and movement may 'upset' expectations of choreography.⁵⁷ In the UK, classically trained disabled performer Marc Brew has achieved this 'upset' over many years, working to entwine incorporate 'newly discovered movement' from disabled and non-disabled artists, to 'tell beautiful stories about being'.⁵⁸ In rejecting the mainstream disability narratives of tragedy and inspiration Brew is, instead, according to Sandahl, flaunting a disability 'cool'

55. Garland-Thomson, "Integrating Disability," 14.

56. *Ibid.*, 5.

57. Carrie Sandahl, "Considering Disability: Disability Phenomenology's Role in Revolutionizing Theatrical Space," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Spring 2002, 19.

58. "About Us," Mark Brew Company, accessed April 29, 2018, <http://www.marcbrew.com/marc-brew-company/>.

which that explodes disability stereotypes and considers bodily difference being entirely valid, for and of itself.⁵⁹

Despite Brew's and similar artists' work, Sandahl describes an actor's training process which views performers' bodies as assumed to be 'damaged' physically and emotionally by 'living' and are in need of a cure and reduction to a neutral state lacking any individuality.⁶⁰ She challenges the notion of the perfect 'empty' body and the use of simplistic medical definitions of disability, simultaneously clarifying that such acting methods were developed in physical therapy for the disabled and injured, methods now used as modes of exclusion.⁶¹ If disabled people are indeed excluded from professional performance, she makes the distinction that to be disabled is to be a daily 'performer', whether overt or hidden.⁶² Wheelchairs, crutches, and limbs all create performative responses from normative audiences. Disabled people with hidden disabilities deliberately disguise their impairments, protecting themselves from negative reactions that can affect their work and social lives. In my works, I concentrate on the full extent of the disabled body and its motions, being careful not to 'empty' out (in post-production, for instance) the individual characteristics of each actor. The world of *Motion Disabled* holds individuality and diversity of motion and body shape as being paramount.

Sandahl's contributions to disability culture include the performance *Vital Signs*, directed by Mitchell and Snyder.⁶³ In this work Sandahl reflects on the 'never-neutral gaze' faced by people with disabilities, in life, a constant issue and often one step away from condescension. One of the difficulties in understanding disability, Sandahl suggests, is that because disability can often be pejoratively considered, we lack the appropriate language to consider or describe the experience fully. The contribution of new vocabularies of motion and altered performative practice, as developed by *Motion Disabled* and also, for instance, by Candoco Dance Company

59. Sandahl, "Considering Disability," 20.

60. Sandahl and Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion*, 262.

61. *Ibid.*, 274.

62. *Ibid.*, 2.

63. Carrie Sandahl, *Vital Signs*, directed by Mitchell and Snyder, 1996.

(UK), a contemporary dance company of disabled and non-disabled dancers, seeks to redress this issue⁶⁴.

Annie Denlin, writing as part of the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) at the University of Leicester, was tasked with analysing the 'under-representation and misrepresentation of disabled people within contemporary displays'. She suggested that:

Any casual visitor to museums in Britain would assume that disabled people occupied a specific range of roles in a nation's history. The absence of disabled people as creators of arts, in images and in artefacts, and their presence in works reinforcing cultural stereotypes, conspire to present a narrow perspective of the existence of disability in history.⁶⁵

Tony Siebers contests this statement in his book, *Disability Aesthetics*, in which he argues that disability is ingrained in modern art. He contends that disability 'has a rich but hidden role in the history of art' and that disability has not been excluded, rather 'disability is rarely recognised'.⁶⁶ Similarly to Sandahl, Garland-Thomson and others, Siebers seeks to problematise the notion of the binary oppositions: disabled/abled. He argues in his chapter entitled *The Aesthetics of Human Disqualification* that disability is a signpost of difference and that:

Disability is the master trope of human disqualification, not because disability theory is superior to race, class, or sex/gender theory, but because all oppressive systems function by reducing human variation to deviancy and inferiority defined on the mental and physical plane.⁶⁷

He questions how 'ideas about appearance' create inequity, with certain individuals deemed 'inept, incompetent, inferior' and thus subject to invalidation. He argues that

64 . Candoco Dance Company, "Home," Candoco Dance Company, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.candoco.co.uk/home-b>.

65. Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd, "Activist Practice," in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group., 2010), 11.

66. Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 4.

67. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 27.

'Disqualification as a symbolic process removes individuals from the ranks of quality human beings, putting them at risk of unequal treatment, bodily harm, and death'.⁶⁸ Whilst Siebers' disability theories coalesce around those of other disability studies theorists, his theory of art is unusual.

Siebers defines aesthetics as 'the emotions that some bodies feel in the presence of other bodies', making the critical distinction that 'all bodies are not created equal when it comes to aesthetic response'.⁶⁹ His research, making use of exemplar images referring to history and art, challenges aesthetics presumptions to make the bold and perhaps illuminating claim, that disability, rather than being ignored by art, is in fact a central dominating theme. Siebers credits the origination of the centrality of disability within art to the Nazis and secondly and separately to classicism. Modern art, Siebers claims, makes constant reference to impairment. He argues this was originally highlighted in the 1937 *Nazi Entartete Kunst / Degenerate Art Exhibition*, held in Munich during which Siebers informs the reader that:

Hitler accused the modern works shown in the *Entartete Kunst* exhibit of revelling in "deformed cripples and cretins, women who inspire only disgust, men who are more like wild beasts, children who, if they were alive, would be regarded as God's curse!"⁷⁰

Siebers here demonstrates that 'The Nazis grasped this nature of this aesthetic, but they rejected it'.⁷¹ Further he argues that, modern art 'finds its greatest aesthetic resource in bodies previously considered to be broken, diseased, wounded, or disabled'.⁷² Siebers, unlike the Nazis, supported and acknowledged this notion of a disability aesthetic, claiming that 'disability enriches and complicates notions of the aesthetic'.⁷³ Further reference to the centrality of disability in art is made in Siebers work with regard to classical

68. *Ibid.*, 23.

69. Tobin Siebers, "Disability Aesthetics-Conference-Paper," *Modern Language Association (PMLA)* 120, no. 2: 542.

70. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 29.

71. *Ibid.*, 35.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*, 3.

sculpture, especially *Torso Belvedere*⁷⁴ and *Venus de Milo*⁷⁵ (Figure 5), both fragmentary sculptures from antiquity. Siebers argues they have contributed to the 'sea change affecting the history of art that increasingly provokes a preference for disabled bodies'.⁷⁶ Siebers explores their fragmentary nature, arguing a societal preference for the incomplete, unfinished, and 'disabled' sculptures.⁷⁷



Figure 5 – *Venus di Milo* sculpture, Louvre Museum, Paris, France

To defend his claims he references a wide variety of artists, including Paul McCarthy, Alison Lapper, Mark Quinn, Andy Warhol and Mary Duffy. Siebers presents alternative notions of the self, such as Quinn's 'crippled' bodies (*The Complete Marbles Series*), as modern classical marvels in pristine stone, along with Warhol's car crashes showing death and acquired disability. Disability in art is, in Siebers' eyes, broadly achieved and clearly apparent. However, his wide gaze fails to distinguish, at a deeper level, critical junctures of separation occurring between

74. Vatican, "The Belvedere Torso," Pio Clementino Museum, accessed April 22, 2018, <http://www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en/collezioni/musei/museo-pio-clementino/sala-delle-muse/torso-del-belvedere.html>.

75. Louvre, "Aphrodite, known as the 'Venus de Milo,'" [louvre.fr](http://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/aphrodite-known-venus-de-milo), accessed April 22, 2018, <https://www.louvre.fr/en/oeuvre-notices/aphrodite-known-venus-de-milo>.

76. Siebers, "Disability Aesthetics-Conference-Paper," 330.

77. Tobin Siebers, "Disability aesthetics and the body beautiful:," UK Disability History Month, accessed May 18, 2019, <https://ukdhm.org/disability-aesthetics-and-the-body-beautiful-signposts-in-the-history-of-art-tobin-siebers-2008-sculpture/>.

artists such as Hirst and disabled artist Araniello or between Quinn and the disabled artist Lapper, all of whom consider disability within their oeuvres. Both Hirst and Araniello have work with the historic imagery of the Spastics Society collection box whilst Lapper and Quinn have both worked with body casts of Lappers body. The experiential nature of an impaired body as a contributing directive is overlooked; as a result he fails to make an important distinction between acquired injury resulting in impairment (Warhol Car Crashes)⁷⁸ and congenital impairment (Lapper), ignoring also the concept of a disability culture. In his 2006 paper, also entitled *Disability Aesthetics*, Siebers uses images of the artist Paul McCarthy performing in 1977 *Hollywood Halloween* (Figure 6) in which his fake head is split open. Siebers claims that the transformation depicted in the images 'of the artist from eerie able-bodiedness to the defacement of disability is the work's essential movement'.⁷⁹ I would counter that this is a misreading of McCarthy's work, which is a reaction to the excess of consumerism. A fake prosthetic head, split open with an axe and full of minced meat, has little relation to the disabled person.



Figure 6 - Paul McCarthy performing *Hollywood Halloween* (1977)

78. Andy Warhol, *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, 1963, silk screen, MOMA, New York, USA, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/79223>.

79. Tobin Siebers, "Disability Aesthetics and the body beautiful: Signposts in the history of Art," *Alter, European Journal of Disability Research* 2:73.

His broad definition of disability includes fragmentary sculptures that are 'disabled', he suggests, because of missing arms. This is misleading, because these are actually fragments of super-normative beautiful sculptures. The disabled academic Carrie Sandahl refutes the use of non-disabled actors who portray disabled characters in films, questioning their body forms in relation to the depiction of disability. Questioning Patrick Stewart's corporeal presence in the role of disabled Professor Xavier in the Xmen series, she observes that 'His (*the actor's*) body bears none of the markings that bodies in (wheel)chairs often bear, such as altered posture, atrophied muscles, and curving feet' and that 'disability becomes a fable for the abled' as a result.⁸⁰

Whilst Siebers' research and theories are exciting, it could be asked what the general public sees when viewing a cubist masterpiece by Picasso. I would dispute that they see an impairment, suggesting that they instead see an artistic style and challenges to painterly form. Siebers' research does not acknowledge the artistically aware museum and art gallery consumer, many of whom have had a basic art education at school. Similarly, I am not convinced members of the disabled community see themselves as significant signifiers in modern art. Whilst he recognises Lapper as an artist in her own right, he fails to discuss ethical dimensions inherent in her relationship with Mark Quinn, thus the risk of the potential for exploitation. Siebers fails to question the power structures at play across the whole galleried/art sector in relation to disabled artists and the disabled people represented by Quinn's artworks.

Siebers' work challenges our perception of modern art. Whilst galleries (historical and current) may be full of works by artists depicting disability (in Siebers' definition), they are not, I would argue, full of art by disabled artists representing the lived disabled experience, for the disabled and non-disabled public. Siebers goes on to argue simply that modern art can accept and present a disability aesthetic. In so doing he has helped to define critical intersectional areas of study. I have outlined my disagreement with many of Siebers' contentions. However, I believe his following statement (below) offers a great deal. While Snyder and Mitchell, contend

80. Sandahl, "Considering Disability," 19.

that 'the disabled experience is never imagined to offer its own unique and valuable perspective'⁸¹, Siebers outlines a goal:

This goal may take two forms: 1. to elaborate disability as a critical framework that questions the presuppositions underlying definitions of aesthetic production and appreciation; 2. to elaborate disability as an aesthetic value in itself worthy of future development.⁸²

We now turn back to discuss further how disability arts affect my practice. Artist and author Allan Sutherland, writing in 2005, stated that:

The generally agreed definition of disability arts, the one that we in the disability arts movement have found most accurately reflects what we are doing, is that it is 'art made by disabled people which reflects the experience of disability.'⁸³

Disability art seeks to render disability problematic, and to reveal and revel in the compelling and complex arguments and works it produces. The art *genre* is often intuitive, building on and emerging from the personal and collective experiences of disability, as reflected also in the work of dancer and performer Claire Cunningham. Cunningham often embeds her own physical experience in her work, especially her use of crutches: these have become an integral and authentic part both of her own embodiment and of her intrinsic movement and personality. They are set in contradiction to choreographer Marie Chouinard's work, in which crutches are simply fetishist props, attached to the super-fit athlete ambulating across the stage in an almost insect-like manner (Figure 7).⁸⁴ The difference between these expressions of art is not only semantic, it is physical. In acting terms, generally, having authentic justification for an action produces improved acting and physical

81. David T. Mitchell, James I. Porter, and Sharon L. Snyder, *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 20.

82. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 3.

83. "Allan Sutherland: What is Disability Arts?", Disability Arts Online (archive site) (via WayBackWhen), last modified July 1, 2005, accessed May 7, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110919020257/http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/what-is-disability-arts>.

84. "Campagnie Marie Chouinard bODY rEMIX gOLDBERG vARIATIONS," video file, 01:51, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9dyx9H5eQY>.

presence. Specifically, the connection between prop and performer solidifies with authenticity. A heavy shotgun, connected to an experienced firearms expert in a motion capture studio, will always produce more appropriate movement in comparison to that of an actor unfamiliar with weapons using a plastic pistol.

Image removed and replaced with link for copyright reasons.

Please see Chouinard's website <https://is.gd/wb8GiR>

Figure 7 - Marie Chouinard's bODY rEMIX gOLDBERG vARIATIONS (2005)

Meaningful and necessary use of items leads to authentic traits and deeper, more complex motions. In this case, the shotgun provides weight and several parts to interact with that are necessary for its use. The experienced user will carry and operate it with their style and with respect to its operation. They will have a more significant repertoire of movement than a novice, garnered from training and years of use. The difference is easily spotted by motion capture editors and by example we can look to the simplistic and almost wooden staged acting presented in the silent movies of the 1900's. In Chouinard's work crutches become a naïve and simplistic water-pistol motion capture prop, whilst in Cunningham's work (Figure 8) they become the authentic and profoundly visual and exciting shotgun. Cunningham featured in both *Motion Disabled* and my award-winning work, *All for Claire*, which has recently been acquired by the BFI archive *Disabled Britain on Film*.⁸⁵

85. Simon McKeown, *All For Claire*, 2011, 3D animation, British Film Institute, London, UK, <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-all-for-claire-2011-online>.



Figure 8 - Claire Cunningham in her production Evolution (2009)

Cunningham creates nuanced works, using her own physical structure, of which her crutches are an extension. Crutches are bipedal assists. They may be simple and with a vital function yet are absolutely basic and medical in design terms. Cunningham contorts their function as she becomes the mistress of her stage. In her hands and as they entwine her body, she confronts many of the questions raised by Sandahl. The ugly crutches that sustained my disabled grandfather become a source of expression, life, and power in Cunningham's arms. Operating within the context of disability art, Cunningham's work acts against common disability stereotypes that include, 'pitiable and pathetic, victim or object of violence' or 'sinister or evil'.⁸⁶ Differently mobile Cunningham exudes confidence, power and control. Her website further reacts against normative physical notions within dance.

Claire Cunningham's work is initially rooted in the use/misuse, study and distortion of crutches – Cunningham's metier. Through these objects she not only engages physically with the world, exploring the potentiality of her specific physicality as a disabled individual, crafting a unique vocabulary which aims to challenge conventions around virtuosity, classical aesthetic

86. Jaroslav Anděl, ed., *Disabled by Normality* (Prague, Czech Republic: DOX, 2014), 15

and dance, but are also her means to relate and connect to the world as an artist.⁸⁷

When we view work by disability artists such as Cunningham and critically accept the embodiment presented, that is to say, Cunningham plus crutches, we are invited to suspend disbelief and see past the negative classification of disordered disability. Performance theorist Sandahl suggests that:

Disability, though, can be considered differently. Disabilities are states of being that are in themselves generative and, once de-stigmatized, allow us to envision an enormous range of human variety in terms of bodily, spatial, and social configurations.⁸⁸

Ann Millett-Gallant contends that 'Contemporary art provides fertile ground for these analyses' and that 'the art of this time period [c. 1960s to present] is contemporaneous with a number of civil rights movements, theoretical and artistic explorations of identity'.⁸⁹ That is not to suggest that the field of disability arts is solely occupied with concerns of identity.

As a minority, disabled people sharing similar concerns and indeed identities have joined together to campaign against issues affecting them. In the UK, disabled people have coalesced to create a vital subculture, whose expression includes disability art. Amongst other issues, it questions the injustice and inequality faced by disabled people. Identities are, however, mutable and change over generations. This mutability has led to the criticism of artworks associated with identity politics as being simplistic and responsive only to a singular cause, which begs the question as to what happens when that cause has past. In conversation (2012) with Ine Gevers, curator of the large scale *Niet Normaal (Not Normal)* exhibition (Holland 2009-2010) partly showcased at the DaDaFest, Liverpool (2012), we discussed the nature of identity politics. It quickly became apparent how much, as a curator of an allied exhibition, she disliked work that was, as she viewed it, simplistically and notionally identity based. Good disability art does and should ask many more

⁸⁷ "About Claire Cunningham," Claire Cunningham, accessed May 10, 2018, <http://www.clairecunningham.co.uk/about/>.

⁸⁸ Sandahl, "Considering Disability," 19.

⁸⁹ Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 19.

complex questions, she argued. Further, it needs to offer a 'critical perspective that confronts safe zones of normality, ordinariness, health and inevitably human worth' as described by Kolářová and Herza.⁹⁰ Disability art should be nuanced enough to continue to be appreciated in years to come.

I would like to argue that disability arts are a valued and integrated component of contemporary art. However, I am not able to do so. Despite there being a large body of work effectively represented by the disability arts movement it has, as other minorities have discovered, found it (and as exemplified by the feminist activist art movement, *Guerrilla Girls*) difficult to draw the attention of the mainstream art world to the sector.⁹¹ Exceptional events do occur. Below, I discuss a VSA-organised exhibition in the USA supported by large-scale mainstream sponsors. Similarly, there was a large-scale event, entitled the 2009 *World Disabled Peoples Culture and Art Festival* in Seoul, South Korea (which I attended).

As an artist, I have to work with the existing gallery and museum structure, as well as independently, to exhibit my work. Over the last ten years I have gained substantial experience in this area. Artist, disability activist, and author Petra Kuppers comments on the difficulties caused by a disability-engaged agenda's intersecting with the cultural machine. Kuppers argues that civil rights for disabled people arrived 'late in the game' in comparison with other civil rights campaigns, despite the feature of disability being central to these movements.⁹² She queries the impact this must have had on curators, art historians, and activists, in particular highlighting an exhibition entitled *Create* (2011) by Lawrence Rinder and Mathew Higgs.

Held in Berkeley Art Museum (USA) it featured work made in three disability-focused community art centres. Kuppers relates how the contributing disabled artists were ignored during the development and launch of the event. Considering these curatorial decisions to be ill-advised, Kuppers questions why the contributing

90. Kateřina Kolářová and Filip Herza, "Normal? Disabled? Words as simple as the A-B-C," in *Disabled by Normality*, ed. Jaroslav Andel (Prague, Czech Republic: DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, 2015), 33.

91. "Guerrilla Girls Reinventing The 'F' Word: Feminism," *Guerrilla Girls*, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.guerrillagirls.com/#open>.

92. Petra Kuppers, "Diversity: Disability," *Art Journal*, Spring 2016, 93.

artists were not invited to speak at the accompanying panel discussions, or through the marketing material or exhibition catalogue.

The politics of this approach is out of step with social justice movements: it is hard to imagine any other group emerging from civil rights struggles to be similarly absent from a twenty-first-century exhibition.⁹³

As a counterpoint and in the same year we can consider the exhibition organised in 2010 by the VSA (Washington D.C.)⁹⁴ *Revealing Cultures* (Figure 9), to which my work *Motion Disabled* was a contributing element.⁹⁵ A major exhibition, supported by large-scale businesses and politicians (including Jean Kennedy Smith), it worked for and with disabled artists to showcase an international exhibition of disability art, only a stone's throw from the symbolic seat of political power; the White House. American and international disabled artists presented, performed, and demonstrated their work on an international stage, which included the Smithsonian International Gallery and other prestigious locations. This major exposition was built around the disabled artists' contributions to the event, working in tandem with the organisers, themselves disability advocates. Disabled artists, including those with learning difficulties and artists who classify themselves or their work as being associated with mental health, had their discourse valorised and validated through this exhibition. Organised by, for, and with disabled people, the exhibition was supported by professionals and a cadre of allies and sponsors, a topic to which we will return.

93. *Ibid.*

94. "Education," The Kennedy Center, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://education.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/>.

95. "Revealing Culture at the Smithsonian," *Huff Post*, August 28, 2010, accessed May 5, 2019, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/revealing-culture-at-the_b_661372.



Figure 9 – Revealing Cultures exhibition, Washington D.C. USA. (2010)

The VSA presented one hundred and forty-six artworks, enabling a broad review and consideration of the breadth of creativity connected to disability art.⁹⁶ Amongst

⁹⁶ "Exhibitions," The Kennedy Center, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://education.kennedy-center.org/education/vsa/programs/exhibitions.cfm>.

the artistic output exhibited in this influential event was the work of learning-disabled artist Judith Scott. In later life Scott created an internationally recognised portfolio of fibre artwork; her work is now held in important museums and collections including the Museum of Modern Art in New York (MOMA).⁹⁷ The milestone exhibition was important because it is rare for contemporary art work by disabled artists to appear in collections and settings such as MOMA or the Smithsonian. Representation, as Koppers suggests, is oddly contentious: the factor is not a given. In the *Create* exhibition, it simply failed to happen.

All disabled people, but particularly people with developmental disabilities, who made up a significant number of the artists presented in *Create*, often have to struggle to find expression and accurate representation, to escape the heavy burden of stereotypes and medical imagery that surround them. Thus, the base charge of any contemporary exhibition about disability seems to me to necessitate, in some form, honouring the artists' discourses about their work in whatever form the artists offer.

The cultural disjunction epitomised by the *Create* exhibition justifies the impetus to exclaim, 'Nothing about us without us'.⁹⁸ Koppers views this statement as the cornerstone of disability politics. In her work she seeks to challenge the exclusionary nature of the museum and the romanticised role of 'individual' artist. Koppers seeks to achieve appropriate and equitable relationships with institutions in order both to create culture 'across difference' and to 'honour' the contribution of participants. In doing so new fields and methodologies of communication will be opened.⁹⁹ She wishes to extend communication. However, she is wary that any degrees of separation may be opened up and is therefore critical of the field of so-called 'outsider art'.

Outsider art is work made by artists, including disabled and learning-disabled people, who have neither formal art training nor connection with the mainstream art

97. Judith Scott, *Untitled*, 2002, fibre art, MOMA, New York, USA, <https://www.moma.org/artists/45807>.

98. Koppers, "Diversity: Disability," 94.

99. *Ibid.*, 95.

world.¹⁰⁰ Koppers contends that such 'special' definitions are negative and serve only to perpetuate such binary dicta as rational vs. irrational. 'Savant' and 'gifted' serve to suggest an otherness whilst maintaining a separation and the convenient definition of 'Outsider'. Often applied in a learning-disabled and mental health context, these labels increase the degree of separation and 'fuel' the idea of 'Others'.¹⁰¹

In the previous chapter I have discussed how Tobin Siebers failed to consider the potentially complex ethical relations at play with regard to the work of Marc Quinn and his use of disabled models including disabled artist Alison Lapper. Disability artists, such as Koppers and I, make such ethical considerations and relations a major part of our work. Sandahl asks highly valid, difficult, and important questions in this regard:

Are these collaborations equal exchanges between mutually consenting partners, especially when the disabled artists include those with cognitive impairments or the institutionalised? ¹⁰²



Figure 10 – Motion capture with Jez Colborne from Mind the Gap (2014)

100. "About The Collection," Art Brut Gallery, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.artbrut.com.pl/en/collection>.

101. Koppers, "Diversity: Disability," 93.

102. Sandahl and Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion*, 2.

Disability art thus creates contextual knowledge and spaces in which ethical considerations affecting practice, policy, budgets, and access to disabled actors and performers can be intelligently be assessed and developed. For instance, in 2010, I worked with learning-disabled artist Jez Colborne (Figure 10), on a facial motion capture project, in a process facilitated by Mind the Gap (MTG), a learning disabled theatre company based in Bradford where Colborne is an artist in residence. MTG undertook all necessary safe guarding roles and provided advice and assistance in work with Colborne, ensuring a high standard of collaboration.

While disability art can be about providing a different lens to view and discuss alterity, sometimes this lens can reveal more. The first person to reflect 'oddly' on *Motion Disabled* was a UK gallery director. I was told this anecdotally after a launch event. Apparently, they laughed at the movement and physical structure of some of the people in the work. Nothing in *Motion Disabled* is humorous. Its presentation does not lend itself to caricature. Such a reaction serves to highlight the difficulties in working externally to the disability sector. A shared understanding cannot be assumed with fake interest, uninterest, and medical model analysis all capable of affecting potential relationships. A judgement must sometimes be made as to whether progression to a more sophisticated understanding can be achieved. Disability art can be used as a box-ticking exercise in which accommodating a quota of disabled people, necessary for the hosts yearly funding cycle is achieved. This, in turn, can lead to the marginalisation of a project. Alternatively, an enthusiastic host may rehang work, undertake 'inspirational' press activity and approach carefully crafted materials, from a position of policy or politics, different to your own. Developing allies is, however, a dialogical process. Organisations and their personnel have agendas. Working to develop an exhibition requires a great deal of personal effort. From organising deliveries, hanging pictures to navigating technology and attending launch events, it is a very hands-on and personal experience. I have been both locked in and out of galleries and accidentally trapped in vehicles and in outdoor work, left unintentionally overnight without food, toilets or weather protection. Professionally I work within the limits of the project, to control and manage these variables, supporting projects with a raft of high-quality materials. Sandahl, relating a hypothetical situation, suggests that:

Whereas the artists and those in the audience who consider themselves part of the disability community may respond positively to seeing non-normative bodies on stage, other parts of the public, including the critics, whose published

assessments of the performances often carry considerable weight, may respond less favourably because of their (perhaps unconscious) ideological commitment to normative concepts of what a body should be.¹⁰³

Working again with DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, I attended a dance event, in which a disabled father danced and performed with his disabled and gay son. The Czech dance critic in attendance dismissed the work out of hand. Disability art can cause surprising reactions. The art documentary *Nobody's Perfect* (2008/9) by Niko von Glasow showcases twelve thalidomide-affected people being photographed naked for public presentation in a public square in Cologne, Germany.¹⁰⁴ The project as a whole is the art event. Public reaction to the portraits were recorded; I remember when I first saw this film how shocked I was at some of comments made by the audience, which included utter disgust. Here was an exhibition of semi-naked men and women, tastefully photographed, yet it was apparently indecent. Some members of the public saw only, and through their eyes, the disgraceful, ugly, grotesque disabled body. As Snyder and Mitchell state, the site of 'undesirability' was made plain¹⁰⁵ although these images, as Garland-Thomson also relates, 'show disabled people as valued citizens' whilst working 'against damaging received master visual narratives about disability'.¹⁰⁶ Complex disability art work, as demonstrated in Cologne, and I hope in my work, can challenge normative viewer perception.

Many disabled people are subject to a normative ocular experience. Millet-Gallant discusses how, 'due to pervasive voyeurism, women and all people with disabilities are objects of often exploitative gazes'. For disabled people these are, she argues, 'based on the medical model of disability, attempts to diagnose the disabled 'other' in order to confirm the nondisabled spectator's normality'.¹⁰⁷ *Nobody's Perfect*

103. Sandahl and Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion*, 69.

104. "NoBody's Perfect - English Trailer," video file, 02:39, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmrwcoLxjmU>.

105. Sharon L. Snyder and David T. Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 21.

106. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, "Picturing People with Disabilities," in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London, UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group., 2010), 23.

107. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 12.

elicited a strong response; however, Garland-Thomson suggests that live performance bears even greater merit. Photographs of people with disabilities, she contends, provide a medium for the viewer to stare at a photographically produced 'other', whereas live performances by disabled artists allow for progressive self-representation and return stares. Disability art and especially its performative and dance element involving artists and performers such as Welly O'Brien (Candoco Dance Company), with whom I worked with on *Prometheus Awakes* (London 2012), specifically challenge normative physical corporeality and 'enact revision of art history and sculpt new languages and representations for disability in the public eye'.¹⁰⁸

I have discussed earlier the sculptor Marc Quinn, who is one of the few contemporary artists to consider impairment in their oeuvre.¹⁰⁹ His sculpture *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (2005)¹¹⁰ is a culmination of works from the series entitled *The Complete Marbles* (1999-2015) and is one of the most famous contemporary representations of alternative body form.¹¹¹ Lapper, who has no arms and short legs, was depicted in pristine Carrara marble, naked and pregnant, and featured on the *Fourth Plinth* in Trafalgar Square (Figure 11). She was presented larger than life at over 3.5 metres high. For over two years (2005 to 2007) this work, weighing 13 tonnes, was a central feature in one of the most famous metropolitan tourist destinations in the world, in a square dominated by male military heroes including the disabled Nelson (arm and eye loss) on his high column. In sculptural terms Quinn referenced the classical and armless sculpture *Venus di Milo*.

Quinn uses the tools, techniques, and materials of antiquity to invert notions of what constitutes the beautiful and heroic. Millet-Gallant relates that some see Quinn's sculpture as a call for revisions of art history and social ideals, quoting art critic Waldemar Januszczka, who suggests that Quinn 'is disputing ... [with] every authoritarian with imagination that has ever insisted upon a standard shape for the

108. *Ibid.*, 49.

109. Marc Quinn, "Marc Quinn," Marc Quinn, accessed June 27, 2017, <http://marcquinn.com/>.

110. Marc Quinn, "Artworks - Alison Lapper Pregnant - 2005," Marc Quinn, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://marcquinn.com/artworks/single/alison-lapper-pregnant>.

111. Marc Quinn, "Artworks - The Complete Marbles 1999-2005," Marc Quinn, accessed June 27, 2017, <http://marcquinn.com/artworks/the-complete-marbles>.

human arts'.¹¹² Similarly to the thalidomide photographic work in Cologne, the Lapper statue, whilst conflicting with the male counterparts nearby, caused public upset - usefully so, I would argue, as the disabled body presented large-scale became the seat of debate. Millet-Gallant herself contends that Quinn was aiming 'to carve out new, progressive images of disability'.¹¹³ She also recognises that Lapper felt some disquiet in her arrangements with the artist Marc Quinn, not least in the similarity of her work to his own. As he sought to body-cast Lapper, she had already undertaken this process as part of her degree show. Millet-Gallant then comments that Lapper 'realised the importance of the public piece nonetheless and felt honoured to be part of it'.¹¹⁴

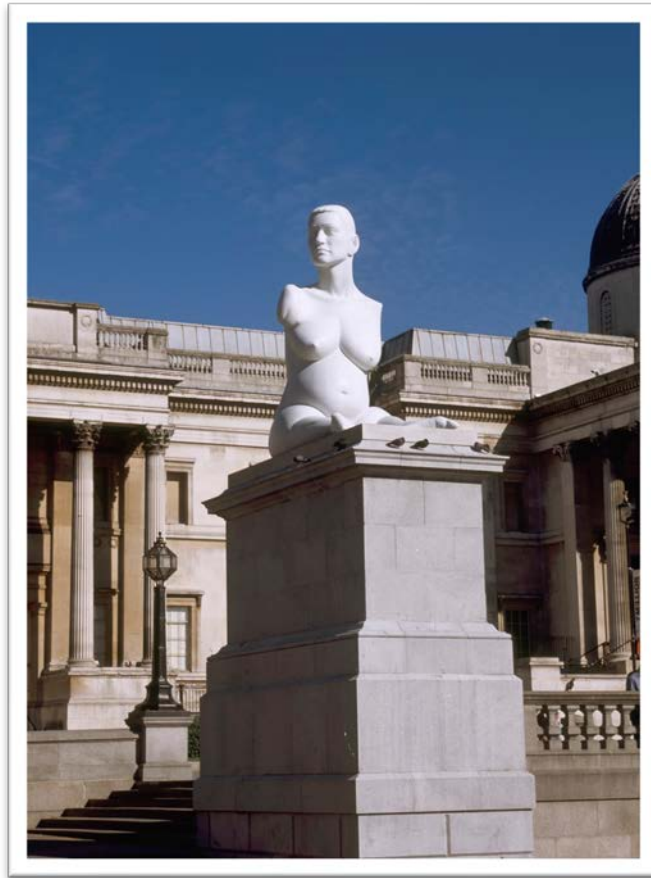


Figure 11 – Alison Lapper sculpture by Marc Quinn on the Fourth Plinth (2005)

112. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 58.

113. *Ibid.*, 60.

114. *Ibid.*, 80.

In discussing prejudices and reservations people may bring to the disabled body in art, Ann Millett-Gallant claims that 'contemporary art provides fertile ground for these analyses' and that 'the art of this time period (ca. 1960s to present) is contemporaneous with a number of civil rights movements' and 'theoretical and artistic explorations of identity'.¹¹⁵ Disability art reflects a 'minoritarian' viewpoint that seeks to establish itself more fully in the mainstream. Quinn is very much part of the mainstream and sees his work as 'celebration of a wider notion of beauty and humanity' carved out of the material of beauty and heroism' - marble.¹¹⁶ That the work is monumental, in size and in stature, challenges that element of most celebratory monuments and 'because Alison is pregnant it's a sculpture about the future possibilities of humanity'.¹¹⁷ If Trafalgar Square had its assumptions of normality inverted and turned upside-down by this work, one difficulty remains. In accepting earlier definitions of disability art (Sutherland's, for instance) we may question whether disablement is an imperative or obligatory within the creation of the work.

Ann Millett-Gallant, herself disabled, reflects that she desires to see 'more dimensions, more layers of meaning, in contemporary representations of disability'.¹¹⁸ Davis considers that 'to develop a working politics, one has to accept that the subject position one occupies is to some extent capable of being shared by others in parallel circumstances'. In the complex world of art funding and exhibiting, the notion of allies becomes paramount. *Disabled by Normality* was supported and promoted by allies at DOX. On a larger scale, the British Council in 2018 has secured a four-million-euro project funded by Creative Europe and partners, with the intention of bringing disabled artists 'into the mainstream'.¹¹⁹ Allies are necessary; however, authenticity adds layers of meaning and depth, and thus further critical understanding.

115. *Ibid.*, 19.

116. Marc Quinn and Richard Rogers, *Marc Quinn - Fourth Plinth: [sculpture Installed 15 September 2005]* (Göttingen: SteidlMack, 2006), 3.

117. Marc Quinn, "Artworks - Alison"

118. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 18.

119. "€4m pan-European project to support disabled artists," Arts Professional, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/eu4m-pan-european-project-support-disabled-artists>.



Figure 12 - Cherophobia by Noemi Lakmaier (2016)

Some of my favourite artists take disability as the point of origin of their imagination. Noemi Lakmaier¹²⁰ literally floats (Figure 12) away, whilst the late Katherine Araniello is a fake charity spastics doll and alternatively a 'sick bitch'¹²¹ (Figure 13). Experiential detail can add authenticity and depth to the creative process. These artists' works have an elemental force they use to 'disrupt social perceptions of body standards and assert their visible, tangible corporealities'.¹²² In Lapper's case, she asked people to access her work on 'hands and knees at the height of Lapper herself'.¹²³ Disability art can mean taking a different view or perspective from one's

120. Noëmi Lakmaier, "CHEROPHOBIA," Noëmi Lakmaier, accessed June 28, 2017, <http://www.noemilakmaier.co.uk/Cherophobia.htm>.

121. Katherine Araniello, "PITY," Araniello Art, accessed July 19, 2017, <http://www.araniello-art.com/PITY>.

122. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 38.

123. Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 76.

normal point of view. Carrie Sandahl discusses how her photography differs from people of an average height. She notes how her father discussed how her images were all angled upwards due to her small stature (4' 10"). 'This is how Carrie sees the world' he said.¹²⁴ Disability arts is a versatile concept. It covers the broad range of the arts across a wide range of form and practice. It is painting and sculpture, and through its success (and support from British Council, for instance) is also performance and video art. It represents multiple ways of seeing, as Koppers might suggest.



Figure 13 - PITY by Katherine Araniello (2019)

That disability art contributes to the constitution of a new collective memory is its vital feature. The National Disability Arts Collection and Archive (2018) has been created with the intention of preserving a history that will otherwise be lost. There is a void, Sandell *et al.* confirm, 'that while museum and gallery collections contained a wealth of material linked to disabled peoples' lives, representations of disabled individuals were rarely included in displays and exhibitions'.¹²⁵ Jackie Gay (quoted

124. Sandahl, "Considering Disability," 18.

125. Richard Sandell *et al.*, "Disability Reframed," in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-

by Sandell and Dodd) suggests that 'disabled peoples throughout the world are engaged with a long and complicated struggle with the way we are portrayed and the meanings attached to these portrayals'.¹²⁶ How we change these portrayals, and meaning is the subject of my work.

Thomson (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group., 2010), 95.

126. Richard Sandell and Jocelyn Dodd, "Activist Practice," in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London, UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 5.

Picture Credits

Figure 1

Paralympian Anton Raimondo at Pinewood Studios, London, UK. Credit © McKeown, with photography by Iain Jaques (2012).

Figure 2

Paralympian Ali Jawad at Pinewood Studios, London, UK. Credit © McKeown, with photography by Iain Jaques (2012).

Figure 3

Disabled by Normality at DOX centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic. Promotional material. Credit © DOX (2013).

Figure 4

Disabled by Normality installation at DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic. Credit © DOX (2013).

Figure 5

Venus di Milo sculpture, Louvre Museum, Paris, France. Credit Mattgirling, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

Figure 6

Paul McCarthy performing *Hollywood Halloween*, Video Performance. © Paul McCarthy via Sotheby's. <https://is.gd/xNbgux> (1977).

Figure 7

Marie Chouinard's *bODY rEMIX gOLDBERG vARIATIONS*, (2005). Please see the following website link - <https://is.gd/ugTvlp> (2010).

Figure 8

Claire Cunningham in her production *Evolution*. Photograph used with thanks. Credit © Claire Cunningham with photograph by Mark Morreau. <https://www.clairecunningham.co.uk/production/evolution/> (2009).

Figure 9

Revealing Cultures exhibition, Washington D.C. USA. Credit © McKeown (2010).

Figure 10

Motion capture with Jez Colborne from *Mind the Gap* at Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK. Credit © McKeown (2014).

Figure 11

Alison Lapper sculpture by Marc Quinn on the Fourth Plinth, Trafalgar Square, London, UK. Credit © Marc Quinn <http://marcquinn.com/artworks/single/alison-lapper-pregnant> (2005).

Figure 12

Cherophobia by Noemi Lakmaier, Shoreditch Church in London. Credit © Noemi Lakmaier (2016).

Figure 13

PITY by Katherine Araniello. Credit Katherine Araniello with artist Lady Helena Vortex with photograph copyright of Manuel Vason, with permitted use thanks to Manuel Vason and additionally courtesy of Tracey Jannaway – See Disability Arts Online - <https://is.gd/zyUPjm> (2019).

Chapter 3

A Social Context

In my digital animation work *Motion Disabled*, the disabled participants became 'cooperative' motion capture studio actors, tasked with reflecting on their own day-to-day corporeal bipedal, wheelchair or alternate physical daily movements such as walking, talking, and running - the necessary and ordinary movements unique to each person. Rather than have the actors react to a prepared script and direction, I deliberately opened up time and a relational space in which dialogue took place. In this case, participant involvement helped to formulate and direct the final work. In our conversations I requested that the actors contribute their own ideas and direction to the work. We thus added layers of authenticity and imagination to the overall project.

Social strategist and arts commissioner Tom Finkelppearl wonders whether there is a socio-aesthetic need for 'cooperation'. In my work there certainly is and was; together, action was openly debated, developed, then recorded virtually in three dimensions (3D). The participants became an integral part of the making of the work and additionally became my core micro-audience. As I reflected earlier, through their lived disabled experience they in turn provided affirmation to me of the project and its aims. Following the creation of *Motion Disabled* I decided to develop my experience of social engagement. I had previously taken part in ethical, insightful and impactful collective organisations and, through doing so, had gained significant experience on which to build in my journey towards bolder 'cooperative' digital works. This chapter examines my socially engaged journey.



Figure 1 – St Helens Buzz Hub collaborators with Simon McKeown (2018)

Socially engaged art in its current form (post-1990s) may be initiative-led, with artists and producers reacting to new projects as these emerge from discussions, advertised opportunities, requirement analysis and invitation. This happened in the case of my large-scale outdoor project *We Are Still Here* (St Helens 2018). It may also be reactive, i.e. in response to a societal issue affecting communities. Recent examples of socially engaged art form a continuum also known by various labels including community art, dialogical art, and relational aesthetics. It is described by key theorists in the field, including Nicolas Bourriaud, Grant Kester, Nato Thompson, Tom Finkelpearl, Claire Bishop and artist Krzysztof Wodiczko, who are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Nicolas Bourriaud is currently the curator of the 2019 Istanbul Biennial. He was the director of the prestigious *École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris* (National School of Fine Arts of Paris) and director of the *Palais de Tokyo*, one of the largest museums in France dedicated to contemporary art. Bourriaud was one of the first theorists to attempt to describe in his book *Relational Aesthetics* socially engaged art practice emerging in the 1990s. He stated that *relational aesthetics* is an artistic activity striving 'to achieve modest connections, open up (one or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another'.¹ Writing in France in 1998, Bourriaud described a new vision of collaborative art. Art

1. Nicolas Bourriaud *et al.*, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 8.

practice, in his view, was now the domain of inter-human relations. Bourriaud argues that artists can take their points of departure as ‘the whole human relations’.² He suggests that the role of artworks is ‘actually [to] be ways of living and models of action within the existing real’³ using the term ‘interstice’ to describe the alternative artistic space in which this dialogue and ‘new life possibilities appear possible’.⁴

Grant Kester is Professor of Art History in the Visual Arts Department at the University of California, San Diego, USA and founding editor of *FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*. Kester’s research reflects on the intersection of art and cultural activism, with a particular focus on the nature of collaboration as represented by his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*. Using the term ‘dialogical’ he argues that ‘the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation - a locus of different meanings, interpretations and points of view’.⁵ For Kester, ‘dialogical’ describes artist practices that entail substantial cooperation and debate with partners, audiences, and communities in all aspects of a project from its genesis through its production and culminating in its delivery. Describing art projects without form, the aesthetic experience he defines challenges conventional ‘form based’ perceptions of art practice. He is known for the divergence of his views from those of art critic Claire Bishop whose views are discussed below.

Nato Thompson is theorist and practitioner of socially engaged art publishing in 2012 *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* and *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* in 2015. He describes socially engaged art as artistic activity that produces ‘effects and affects in the world rather than focussing on the form itself’.⁶ He argues that ‘the role of culture must be taken seriously, and that deploying it for needs of social change can produce

2. Bourriaud *et al.*, *Relational Aesthetics*, 113.

3. *Ibid.*, 13.

4. *Ibid.*, 45.

5. Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art*, updated ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 10.

6. Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011* (New York, N.Y.: Creative Time, 2012), 32.

wondrous results'.⁷ Thompson believes in the power of ambiguity, arguing strongly for art works that are open ended rather than didactic. He contends that closed artworks, those directly linked to a cause, can appear to be 'message' orientated, one-dimensional, and lacking in complexity. Audiences may be distrustful, put off by the works they perceive as being campaign driven. Fuelled by a DIY attitude and inspired by the self-organising punk and anarchist movements, he views socially engaged art practice as a powerful mechanism of potentiality, entities that lead to the construction of new meaning, learning, and living, in the drive towards achieving a more equitable society.

Tom Finkelpearl is Commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and former museum director. He has written on collaborative practice, most notably in *Dialogues in Public Art* (2011) and *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (2013) Both publications feature interviews with theorists and in the latter he engages Bishop and Kester in discussion on the nature of dialogical experience. Finkelpearl uses the term socially cooperative artwork in his discussions while proposing a non-didactic approach to cooperation. He is interested in process and highlights practical differences in approaches, thus revealing the ways in which 'scripted encounters' with a community do not share the qualities of the 'dialogical' experience.⁸ He argues that the public can become part of artworks but also that complete democracy within a project is not a prerequisite, nor guarantor of success. In his conclusion to *What We Made*, Finkelpearl argues that pragmatism (citing John Dewey)⁹ offers a useful critical platform for understanding the experiential nature of social cooperation.

Socially engaged art can thus be described as field of the arts that utilises social discourse in order to create new connections, human interaction, and conviviality; these can be catalysed to create new approaches to social or political change. It represents an array of approaches from the artist-led, workshop-driven through to fully-fledged dialogical engagement and development. It seeks to break down

7. Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing, 2015), VII.

8. Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 4.

9 Citing the philosopher John Dewey, the philosophy of pragmatism suggests that the meaning of a contention is best found through the practical consequences of testing and accepting the idea in real life, in this case socially cooperative art projects.

boundaries and produce real world affect and social good in the here and now, in an exciting, non-didactic manner. It could be also described as a 'state of encounter', perhaps over lunch in a gallery and being fed by artist Rirkrit Tiravanija.

The practice is generally conceived as consensual. However, it is important to reflect that participatory art can be differently defined. Santiago Sierra is a controversial artist who investigates globalisation. Whilst his work is participatory, it is not considered as being socially engaged even though it addresses social issues. His examining of globalisation purposefully repeats familiar aspects of capitalism. For example, instead of attracting volunteers, he has hired participants, requiring them as part of his installations to undertake low-paid, possibly demeaning tasks, including being tattooed or placed inside boxes. The class structure is replicated and therefore made visible in such blatant exploitation in order to raise such issues to cognition and critique them, by turning the methods of exploitation back on themselves. 'We as artists have to find the way we confront the state and capitalism,' he says in interview, 'deploying an active and creative opposition in order to create a new society'.¹⁰

Whilst Bourriaud makes the point that 'art has always been relational in varying degrees', it is Claire Bishop, author and critic of socially engaged practice, who provides an historic viewpoint. Bishop is an author, critic and Professor of Art History at the Graduate Center of the City of New York University, New York, USA. In her book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, she undertakes a substantial review of participatory practice, demonstrating a long and complex history.¹¹ She notes that participatory art is, historically, politically agnostic, having been practised in Russia after the 1917 Revolution and elsewhere such as in Italy with the Futurists and in Paris with the Dadaists. Notable projects include Arseny Avraamov's massive-scale *Symphony of Factory Sirens* (Baku, Azerbaijan, 1922).¹²

10. "Interview with Santiago Sierra," Art Pulse, accessed April 18, 2019, <http://artpulsemagazine.com/interview-with-santiago-sierra>.

11. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012).

12. "Arseny Avraamov's Avant-garde Symphony Of Sirens Goes Contemporary At Documenta 14 In Athens," Russian Art and Culture, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.russianartandculture.com/arseny-avraamovs-avat-garde-symphony-sirens->

I have deliberately focused part of my attention on the originally polar positions provided by Kester and Bishop because they suitably illuminate divergence in opinion. Socially engaged art projects seek to create new meaning across the panoply of human issues, including housing, women's rights, immigration, welfare, social inclusion, technology, and disability. They often make use of alternative spaces outside the gallery sector and collaborate with harder-to-reach non-stereotypical art audiences. Such projects diverge in many ways including in their traditional artistic intent, as is described below.

By way of example, artist Mark Storor's collaborative work in St Helens entitled *Baa Baa Baric: Have you Any Pull?* is a twelve-year-long project centred on collaboration with partners including St Helens YMCA and Merseyside Police. The work is commissioned by Heart of Glass, an arts agency for collaborative and social arts practice based in St Helens, Merseyside.¹³ Working with older men, a branch of the project led to the creation of staged photographs showcasing a man emerging from the earth of a garden. With a very strong visual ethic Storor's outputs, which include city centre performances, may be validated within a contemporary art context.¹⁴ Storor's project has visual presence, as well as deeply engaged relations within the city.

Grant Kester, on the other hand, showcases examples that appear to lack any sensory elements or traditional artistic intent. He contends that such projects are '*context providers* rather than *content providers*'.¹⁵ They emanate from the dialogical setting provided by the artist and the ensuing interaction with the community. Kester presents an argument for works that lack an overriding modern art aesthetic, such as *Shelter for Drug Addicted Women* by the Austrian arts collective *WochenKlausur*.¹⁶ This project created a space for dialogue among politicians, police, and other drug experts over two weeks, in the context of day trips on Lake

reconstructed-documenta-14-athens/.

13. "About Us," Heart of Glass, accessed May 20, 2018, <http://www.heartofglass.org.uk/about/>.

14. "Baa Baa Baric: Have you Any Pull?," Heart of Glass, accessed May 6, 2019, <http://www.heartofglass.org.uk/project/baa-baa-baric/>.

15. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 1.

16. "Shelter for Drug-Addicted Women," Wochenklausur, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.wochenklausur.at/projekt.php?lang=en&id=4>.

Zurich. Groups of four people were sent out on a small pleasure boat for three hours to discuss the issues surrounding the provision of a safe day shelter for homeless prostitutes. Sixty professionals took part in the trips and the project led directly to the creation of a refuge for the women. *WochenKlausur* created the context and encouraged participants, including the Mayor, to take part in this dialogical practice.

The two projects have much in common; however, it is not clear what or where the artistic enterprise lies in the second example. In response to criticism of such projects Kester contends:

When contemporary art critics confront dialogical projects, they often apply a formal, pleasure based methodology, but cannot value, or even recognise the communicative interactions that these artists find so important.¹⁷

Bishop, in response, questions why social relations are seen as the defining criteria, citing international artists and projects, which attempt to 'think of the aesthetic and the social/political together rather than subsuming both within the ethical'.¹⁸ By way of demonstration she highlights a project entitled *They Shoot Horses (2004)*¹⁹ by British artist Phil Collins. The work refers to the 1969 film *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?*, which is about a dance competition and stars Jane Fonda. Collins' project involved nine teenagers from Ramallah, Palestine, disco dancing in front of video cameras continuously for eight hours on two consecutive days. Collins designed and directed the piece. This is not a consensual, collaboratively-developed enterprise. Wearing Nike training shoes and dancing to internationally known pop music such as that of Beyoncé, Collins challenges Middle East stereotypes while raising the issue of globalisation in a work that Bishop claims is 'considerably more nuanced than most activist-orientated political art'.²⁰ In her rejection of ethical and anti-authorial practice, (i.e working collectively and equitably as described by Kester in *Conversation Pieces*), Bishop contends that:

17. Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 1.

18. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn", *Art Forum International*, February 2006., 181

19. Phil Collins, *They Shoot Horses*, 2004, video art, Tate, London, UK, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/collins-they-shoot-horses-t12030>.

20. Bishop, "The Social", 182.

Collins [*and the other artists she highlights – author's note*] do[es] not make the 'correct' ethical choice, they do not embrace the Christian ideal of self-sacrifice; instead, they act on their desire without the incapacitating restrictions of guilt. In doing so, their work joins a tradition of highly authored situations that fuse social reality with carefully considered artifice.

An improvement in aspects of human relations and engagement in creative cooperative art production are some of the primary outcomes of socially engaged art. As has been demonstrated by Kester, it may not be possible to see, hear or otherwise experience a related artwork, an artefact, if it is set within a dialogical art project. The activity may, at its most extreme, be anti-spectatorial and anti-authorial and only relational. The art of such work is not, the critics contend, found here. In the Zurich project, it could be asked whether we may justifiably bemoan the lack of emphasis on a final closed output, arguing that the lack of somatic experience is an issue, notwithstanding the overall empathetic nature of the project; or whether, without a final product, the work may be assessed artistically. In defending the field, form-obsessed 'normative' modern art criticism that may not be appropriate for dialogically developed projects could be rejected. Kester claims that the dialogical aesthetic is a conceptual break from contemporary art criticism; at the same time he reminds the reader that it is the task of the avant-garde to challenge what has gone before. He argues that projects such as *Shelter for Drug Addicted Women* break artistic boundaries, creating new perspectives that require alternative contexts in which to discuss them. Modernist critique centred on the artistic artefact, is no longer enough.

Finkelpearl views socially cooperative projects as collective experiences, in which the emphasis is on the team workings, using the term *anti-spectatorial* to describe works that *are not* created for a *passive* audience. He contends that we need the development of new analytical understanding with regard to collaborative practice (quoting Kester), so that we 'understand the work of art as a process of communicative exchange rather than a physical object'. Doing so would amount to a landmark shift in our appreciation of modern art.²¹ Bishop, arguing from a different

21. *Ibid.*, 47.

standpoint, suggests that because the *social* and *artistic* models do not easily merge, they may indeed 'demand different criteria'.²²

In critiquing the field, Bishop and others have suggested that the function of socially engaged fields is merely ameliorative, in the face of diminishing State services. Quality is derided; the artwork is poor and temporary, its social effects unspecified and not assessed. Through its aims of 'democratic' engagement with a community, it has been envisaged that the artist may ultimately cede control, thus negatively becoming a facilitator rather than originator, divested of authorial control. Critics, in particular Bishop, have accused such production of art of naïve interventionism, ultimately supportive of the *status quo* by providing affirmation of it through modest intervention, rather than going beyond the current equilibrium.

Bishop rejects the anti-authorial nature of collaborative practice; rather, she supports the position of the autonomous artists and their ability to create critical insights and new understandings through their authored work. Specifically, she objects to such artworks being assessed ethically, stating that it is based purely on the 'quality' of the collaborative enterprise and social engagement undertaken, then arguing that social interactions are not enough. She posits that, with the practice:

Consensual collaboration is valued over artistic mastery and individualism, regardless of what the project sets out to do or actually achieves.²³

Central to her criticism of participatory art is her concern over the loss of artistic definition in favour of a micro-topia of relations. Bishop at the time of writing (2012) outlined a dichotomy, describing a stand-off between participatory practice believers and non-believers. Here, art is either the remit of the individual or the collaborative entity, with no possibilities existing in the centre. Despite this, relational aesthetics suggests a radical upheaval in our appreciation of contemporary art. Bourriaud's use of *interstice* is also mentioned by Pablo Helguara, who comments that:

What art making has to offer is not accurate representation but rather the complication of readings so that we can discover new questions. It is when

22. Thompson, *Living as Form*, 38.

23. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 20.

we position ourselves in those tentative locations, and when we persist in making them into concrete experiences, that interstices become locations of meaning.²⁴

Finkelpearl describes a socially engaged project that emerged from just such persistence, entitled *Project Row Houses*, Houston, Texas.²⁵ In 1993, influenced by Joseph Beuys' use of the term *Social Sculpture*, the founders adopted twenty-two derelict properties in which 'to create new ways for people to see themselves differently and become better versions of themselves.' Now with thirty-nine structures housing a myriad of projects, *Project Row Houses* is internationally-known success (Figure 2). Finkelpearl describes visitors to the project as being part of a complete artwork. There are many on-going individual smaller art projects across the site, yet he considers the project as a whole as constituting the artwork, one providing a large-scale interstice for the local community, even far more than this in its role as a creative beacon. Armed with such knowledge, viewing a photograph of the block with its rows of houses from a distance becomes a different experience. We see the holistic wholeness of the project in which the imagination of founding artists still seems present, percolating away, reinventing and re-envisaging new ways of living within their community.



Figure 2 – Project Row Houses – Houston (2017)

24. Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 71.

25. "Project Row Houses", accessed September 1, 2018, <https://projectrowhouses.org>.

Bourriaud argues that such a project, even a *meeting*, can be a form of art. Similarly, to Kester, he does not, however, undertake detailed readings of the projects he cites to support his claims. As a result, some of the projects he discusses appear disjointed and formless. That they lack a described material presence is possibly because Bourriaud is aware of the projects not through having seen them himself, but through interpretation, i.e. conversation, reports or documentary methods – all of which are, by default, distant.

Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* launched at 303 Gallery in New York in 1992.²⁶ In this well-known work Tiravanija served a Thai curry to the gallery audience. In 2014, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York recreated this work, converting a gallery into a kitchen in a work that asked visitors to interact socially with each other and with art. Although this work was co-opted and recreated at MOMA, a great deal of socially engaged practice falls outside the art world framework. Thompson seeks to develop new modes of participation with the art world. As a pragmatist, he envisages engagement with, rather than the replacement of, the existing infrastructure, arguing that we should not abandon the existing cultural power base formed by galleries, museums, and the art world itself. Instead, he suggests that it should be leveraged for socially engaged purposes by social activists with the ability to influence such institutions, stating that 'in changing the infrastructures that circulate our idea of what is what, we can ultimately change who we are.'²⁷

Thompson argues that institutional change is possible, simply because most related institutions are not run for profit and often have mission statements proclaiming their ambition towards public well-being. Institutions, he suggests, can be stimulated (within their limits) to effect demonstrable change. Additionally, he seeks to redefine the power relationships among artists, curators, critics, commissioners, participants, and audiences, arguing for less hierarchical relationships and a more equitable distribution of cultural and social capital.

Thompson also claims that society is dominated by a hegemonic cultural industry beholden to corporate and capitalist interests. He considers the world around us, both real and imaginary, to be dominated by these complex economic forces which

26. Rirkrit Tiravanija, *untitled (free/still)*, 1992, MOMA, New York, USA, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/147206>.

27. Thompson, *Seeing Power*, 81.

seek to commodify all aspects of our lives. The development of the cultural industry has evolved almost like a contagion, he suggests, so that it now dominates our daily lives. Similarly to Bourriaud, who suggested in 1998 that technological progress is limiting inter-human relations, Thompson makes particular reference to the modern digital age. In it, he writes that 'the manipulation of meaning is big business', also that 'no Google search is too esoteric' to be left unaffected by advertisers, thus any kind of culture and practice can be commodified.²⁸ Socially engaged art practice seeks to offer an alternative and open structure through which to explore our human lives.

Collaboration with a community relies on enthusiasm, openness, and trust for it to achieve shared aims. Interlocutors must feel at ease, and the *interstices* discussed earlier must be designed and available. As such, ethical considerations are built into fabric of socially engaged work. If it is perceived that an artist (or agency) has a tokenistic approach, the success of the overall project is compromised. There is much to concern the socially engaged artist, producer, and funder: authorship, copyright, health and safety issues, appearance in the work and in the documentation of the work are just some of the items that need to be assessed.

If the project is deliberately disruptive, this will become more problematic to manage. The artist Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Public Projection for Derry Londonderry* (2013, Northern Ireland) was a provocative work. The work shocked elements of the city through a project in which 'fearless speech' was presented by project members to the community. Their public testimony, concerning the history of the *Troubles*, formed 'an assault on the silence about matters that are vital to the city and to its people'.²⁹ In this situation, the artist and his team negotiated against threats of attack on the project by paramilitaries who objected to the event and its contextual presentation in the form of a projected video work in the centre of Derry Londonderry. The decision here to be 'fearless' may have been politically and humanly correct, but it was a decision fraught with, among other types of concern, ethical problems of health and safety, given the substantial risks participants could face. The strength of Wodiczko's social engagement is such that his participants

28. *Ibid.*, 14.

29. Krzysztof Wodiczko, "The Inner Public", *Field - The Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism*, no. 1 (2015): accessed September 1, 2018, <http://field-journal.com/issue-1/wodiczko>.

negotiated local complexities independently. Wodiczko's provision of space created as he describes it as an 'inner public' who defended the project, a concept which relates to my practice.

For an artist, remaining ethical can be difficult. Often you are not in charge of the project decisions, in my case planning permissions requiring multi-party solutions involving mayors, councils, and the police. Managing public risk is vital. You may not be in charge of the public presentation of the project, its budget or its selection of partners. A relational project still needs managing. Deadlines and budgetary constraints all lead to compromise. The accommodation of viewpoints is one of the most important and difficult areas of production. It multiplies in difficulty according to the number of participants, volunteers, and extras attracted to the project. Managed well, such an increase in those involved results in an exponential increase in the cultural power of the project as it is received empathically within the community. Empathetic relations, as demonstrated in the Zurich project, are at the core of dialogical practice. Whilst Kester promotes compassionate dialogue, he also raises the ethical concern that 'empathy can also be used to deny that there are very real social differences that exist between artists and their collaborators'.

Projects beset with problematic relations may quickly decline in quality as their related workshops, meetings, and other planned activities disintegrate. I contend that other issues of quality obfuscate relational art due in part due to the use of 'normative' assessment criteria. Bishop has argued that relational art has become exempt from artistic criticism and is judged simply by a framework that accepts consensual development as triumphing over artistic autonomy. She criticises what she describes as an 'emphasis on 'process over product' and bemoaning quality,³⁰ arguing that, to use her phrase, the social turn in contemporary art has led to the foregrounding of the analysis of collaborative methods over any consideration of artistic merit.³¹ In bringing her modern art criticism to participatory practice, she seeks to level the artistic playing field, claiming that there should be no exemption from critique; she specifically states 'that it is also crucial to discuss, analyse and compare such works critically *as art*'.³²

30. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 19.

31. *Ibid.*, 180.

32. Bishop, "The Social", 180.

I agree with Bishop that socially engaged projects could not and therefore should not be exempted from assessment. However, this analysis needs to take into account the material differences of each individual project. It is obvious that projects are not identical; each operates under differing budgetary constraints, schedule, and protocols that underpin the 'aims' of a project. Additionally, any social engaged project understands and reacts to the skillset and abilities of its constituent partners and participants. These significant variables have their varying kinds of impact. In analysing my outdoor works, which may take several years to gestate and complete, I deal with these variables constantly. The resulting necessary compromises form an on-going risk to what I would argue are simplistic normative notions of project 'quality'. In its focusing on what it considers to be quality, art criticism often fails to consider the necessary practicalities that brought a project to fruition. I would argue that artistic merit and social engagement can exist in tandem, and that art can be more widely and deeply understood only when these issues are considered.

Understanding its artwork as it is intended requires proximity to a project. Bourriaud, Kester and Bishop apparently write about artists and their projects from a distance, acquainted presumably *via* documentation. In doing so they miss the *reality* of the works, including the human interaction developed in a project. I contend that this interaction is critical to the appreciation of socially engaged art. These authors are *abstracted* from the work, elements of which appear to them abstract or indeed lacking. They therefore have difficulty in appraising critical elements of the work, because they have not experienced them. Their remoteness, I claim, affects critics such as Bishop. I have criticised Bourriaud and Kester for their lack of descriptive acuity in dissecting artworks. Nevertheless, when applying the theoretical interstice model, in particular to the project's development phase, I can identify a critical space, left open for multiple connections and collaborations to evolve. Unless Bourriaud were present through the key stages of the project, he would fail to appreciate key particulars.

The value of experiencing critical staging posts, such as *Cork Ignite* workshops cannot, I believe, be underestimated. I have included at the beginning of Chapter 6 a project timeline to demonstrate how complex an undertaking *Cork Ignite* was and to showcase the quantity and quality of interpersonal relations developed. To enable projects to come to fruition, I must often convince key decision makers of their worth. In *Cork*, in the short time available to me, I was able to impress the

value system of the project upon them, utilising the same space, equipment, and location as was to be used with the disabled participants. I opened up a creative, experiential space of learning. The visitors, unaware of my methods, became involved in controlled work that required their participation; they animated with me and made it work. I deliberately brought them as close as I could to the project; in return they became defenders and promoters of it and part of its 'inner audience', as the artist Wodiczko would say.

To discuss further what socially engagement means to my practice, I return to the artist Wodiczko. I share practical, creative and theoretic concerns with this artist. Originally from Poland, he lived under the Communist regime and now resides and works in the USA. Wodiczko has completed ninety outdoor projection events in diverse countries across the world, with both small-scale and large-scale works in well-known public locations. I have been interested in his work for some time because there is a limited number of artists undertaking projection work, at scale, in the outdoor environment, in a socially engaged manner. Projects of this nature are difficult to imagine and conclude because logistics, cost, permissions, and the development of appropriate partnerships combine to make the gestation protracted and risky. His work therefore provides a counterpoint to my own; it was also mentioned in the evaluation of *Cork Ignite* by Sheelagh Broderick for *Create* in 2015.

Wodiczko through his work offers a voice to the disenfranchised in society, such as those affected by domestic abuse, homelessness and war. That such people should be offered a voice is, he says, so that the 'democratic process and society improve'.³³ He argues that such voices and conversations expose an underbelly of violence vocally and publicly; he argues that doing this can in turn lead to peace. He suggests the kind of peace thus generated is the opposite of an enforced, oppressive Communist peace with which he grew up.³⁴ Upon moving to New York in the Reagan era, a period of marked decline in civic services and support, Wodiczko designed a homeless vehicle (with homeless people) not for practical purposes, but rather to function as an example of 'something that should not exist in

33. "The Engineer of Art - Krzysztof Wodiczko", video file, 09:36, YouTube, accessed May 18, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdgRV99FiGY>.

34. "Krzysztof Wodiczko: Peace | Art21", video file, 03:24, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UloVkbPEyuo>.

a civilised world.³⁵ In doing so he was seeking to stimulate from his audience a scandalised reaction to the large number of homeless in New York at the time.

Similarly to my work, Wodiczko's events provide a voice to a class of people usually excluded from and on the margins of society. We both work with organisations and individuals such as producers, social workers and – in my case – personal assistants to facilitate engagement. Our practices do, however, differ in content and approach. Social injustice is not the main presenting feature of my work, as it is articulated in Wodiczko's practice. I am not creating a campaign for change, but I am providing a vehicle that allows change, an important distinction. Whilst we share the same desire to offer a mediated public voice, in my case disability art provides the conceptual framework around the socially engaged practice I am undertaking. Wodiczko may voice his participants, literally, yet in the city of Cork my participants became performers and contributed to an overall aesthetic that they had helped design and construct. They were demonstrable, proactive and imaginative rather than simply reactive. In my work I contend that there is inherent value in the disabled experience that can indeed be exploited for creative purposes. The creative work I undertook with the disabled artists in Cork was, I argue, paramount and of both intrinsic and symbolic value: values that are usually neglected.

Wodiczko's projections deliberately seek to democratise and politicise public space. For example, instead of viewing the bronze monument of Abraham Lincoln (Figure 3), evening visitors to Union Square Park in New York, USA (2012) watched the statue animate with the faces and stories of fourteen war veterans.³⁶ Wodiczko, using projectors juxtaposed the veterans' performance and stories onto the statue, as if changing its form to that of the soldier talking, thus creating a new, temporary, and changing public agent. The reconfiguration of public space, in this case a public monument, is a feature of both Wodiczko's work and my own. Millet-Gallant explains that monuments 'often refer specifically to acts that have enforced that power, such as wars, conquest, conversion, colonialism, and violence, and

35. "Big Ideas in Art and Culture: Krzysztof Wodiczko". video file, 1:14:55, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otzpjL7c7qQ>.

36. "Krzysztof Wodiczko - Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection Union Square NYC", video file, 02:55, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxyWkfluSJo&t=4s>.

therefore monuments legitimize power and its enforcement visually.³⁷ Thus to reconfigure the trauma of war, as authentically told by veterans, within a major city-centre location and to a large audience, is a subversive and powerful act.



Figure 3 - Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection Union Square NYC (2012)

He situates the fourteen war veterans mentioned above as non-vainglorious monuments to a difficult recent past.³⁸ Wodiczko's work 'demands the decolonisation of public spaces'; however, such demands are ethically fraught.³⁹ The power of light is at its most powerful in such circumstance. Wodiczko, in London in 1985, was able to improvise and repurpose a projector being used on an artwork featuring Nelson's Column. Through this, he was able to project a Nazi swastika onto the South African Apartheid regime's South Africa House – their embassy – thus causing a diplomatic incident.⁴⁰ Without claiming parity in any way,

37. Ann Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled Body in Contemporary Art* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 54. OR SHORT Millett-Gallant, *The Disabled*, 54.

38. "Abraham Lincoln: War Veteran Projection, 2012", video file, 04:14, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81nxZhbqv-Y>.

39. *Ibid.*, 55.

40. Krzysztof Wodiczko, *South Africa House*, 1985, video projection, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.krzysztofwodiczko.com/public-projections#/south-africa-house-projection/>.

my 30-metre-tall projection in which alternative body forms occupied the centre of Leeds (*Light Night Leeds*) was also a bold visual disability statement.

It is possible to contend that Wodiczko occupies the position of the artist-consultant, his task simply to enable disparate and different voices in a 'dependent situation, in which the artist's job is only to solve a problem, akin to a professional technician'. Helguera suggests that such an artist has abandoned 'responsibility for creating critical dialogue' and has created a paternalistic situation.⁴¹ Whilst Wodiczko appears remote from the content and voices of his participants, he is still very much director and curator of the work. He is an author interested in an open exchange. However, by carefully selecting and interviewing participants in advance and throughout his projects' gestation, he maintains a continuity of thematic concern that is apparent in his oeuvre. His concerns of homelessness, war, and domestic abuse are international concerns reflected in civic society, politics, business, and education. They can also be presented and reflected in binary oppositions, e.g. home/homeless and war/anti-war. Setting up antagonisms is a conceptual risk.



Figure 4 - Diarmuid O'Leary talking with Simon McKeown (2014)

I am likewise not a technician for my team. I share with Wodiczko a collectivised approach (in *Cork Ignite* and later projects) to work, which I believe creates

41. Helguera, *Education for Socially*, 49.

beneficial situations in the development of an artwork. Dialogical methods vary within art practice. Kester is a proponent of a model of artist practice that preferences egalitarian conversational development of work, over and above what he describes as the stereotypical approach of an elitist artist singularly preparing a work for, rather than with, a community. Bishop identifies what she sees as the anti-spectatorial nature of participatory arts, a situation of all creators and no spectators. She argues this suggests an unattainable aim 'because it is impossible for everyone to participate in every project'.⁴² Whilst projects may flout their internal democratic credentials, Bishop claims this is an unnecessary practice and that the extrapolation of these ideals onto society is incorrect 'because models of democracy in art do not have an intrinsic relationship to models of democracy in society'.⁴³ Wodiczko's work is engineered and visual. It is designed with experience, often based around video interviews. It is not without artistic endeavour. In my work, I have maintained and enhanced the visual and audio experience, making use of animation, special effects, and live action. I have not highlighted the dialogical experience at the expense of the event experience nor, of course, of the creative development process. I believe the development of both can co-exist. However, I recognise that having a high standard of visual output is only part of a wide range of the meritable artistic conclusions to a socially engaged project. Bishop, I believe, misses a strategic point in her discussion on democracy, and perhaps this is because she is not a practitioner. In creating layers of engagement, works with a dialogical component may become more nuanced. I consider my work benefits and develops from the collaboration that occurs.

42. Thompson, *Living as Form*, 36

43. *Ibid.*, 41.



Figure 5 – Cork Ignite Workshop, Floor canvas (2014)

Wodiczko's work in Northern Ireland, *Public Projection Derry-Londonderry*, resists being assessed in purely binary terms. The Troubles in Northern Ireland affected the whole population. The project's viewing public were an educated, as opposed to distanced or naive, audience able to consider the deeply complex cultural, political, and personal commentary his project revealed. In this work public testimony from participants was projected in the form of readable text and the amplified sound of personal dialogue. The stories were personal, nuanced, and lacked a binary nature. Other works, such as the Veterans work, are situated in a binary landscape that exposes an audience as being separated into those occupying the domestic home front and those who are the experienced battlefield audience of veterans. My works featured in this commentary try to avoid such simplistic consideration, delving deeper into the creative stories and opportunities available to deliver interwoven narratives that speak differently of the disabled experience, without reverting only to the didactic or reaction to discrimination. I need to be able to develop works which have greater complexity and exist beyond presenting only an oppositional view to injustice.

Within *Public Projection Derry-Londonderry* Wodiczko facilitated a project which, whilst technically simple, carried significant risk. The project was seen as a threat by paramilitary groups to the extent that Sinn Fein declared they were unable to protect the project. Ethically, I am not clear how Wodiczko managed this risk. He suggests in the journal *Field* (Spring 2015) that the local participants and their wider contacts

navigated and mitigated the hazard. Wodiczko, in this situation, is a risk-taker, relying on the success of his projects and on the participants to ensure a safe conclusion for his project. My point here is not to criticise Wodiczko, not least because I only know his work and project third-hand through documentation, but rather to describe the difficult situations public projects create and must be navigated. Wodiczko encourages socially-engaged art to take risks.

In completing his projections Wodiczko encourages participants to discuss trauma and abuse. The *Tijuana Projection* (Mexico 2001) featured six women presenting and performing, being projected onto a dominant and large-scale city centre building. Working for a year, Wodiczko secured personal testimonies customarily hidden. He captured the women's faces and performances live, presenting their narratives of abuse onto the main building in Tijuana. His participants were, in many regards, fearless and risk-taking.

Large-scale outdoor projects with multiple participants and groups are difficult to manage. Physical risks must be taken, especially in a Northern European context where bad weather can otherwise disturb performances. *Prometheus Awakes* (of which I was an artistic director) in Greenwich, London (Figure 6) was severely affected by gales and rain in this way. Ultimately, the production manager had to make a last-minute choice to go ahead with or abandon the use of a heavy-duty crane and other wind-susceptible activity. My 2018 outdoor work in St Helens was similarly affected by weather and safety issues, occurring as it did in the wintery month of December. *We Are Still Here* was created within a learning-disabled context. Working with *Buzz Hub*, a cohort of ten learning-disabled adults created work with me over five weeks in a situation of implied trust.⁴⁴ Project cooperation and social engagement were undertaken in the context of vulnerable adult legislation and protection. Layers of risk are situated within all outdoor projects; fully aware of this, I aim to manage my projects correctly, with due regard to health and safety law, practice, and ethics. The stress and risk of bringing ten thousand people to a city-centre location, i.e. Cork, is significant in itself. I want them all to leave safely, too.

44. "Buzz Hub" [St Helens Coalition of Disabled People], accessed May 5, 2019, <https://sthelenscdp.co.uk>.



Figure 6 – Prometheus Awakes, Greenwich, London (2012)

Wodiczko is a voice-giver, he presents difficult and emotional, almost woundingly difficult material. He does this with a participant group through which his work acquires agency and authenticity, but also encounters additional layers of complexity. We now separately consider the artist Santiago Sierra and his work, *SUBMISSION* (2006), which took place in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, on the border with the USA, in which the words *SUMISION* (Spanish) were carved fifteen metres high in the desert, then to be set on fire.⁴⁵ The work was located within a squatted area of twenty hectares, where the poor and homeless, malnourished and ill, found themselves. Sierra's work is visually powerful as a motif, especially as seen from a helicopter. It comments successfully – and without any cooperative social engagement (as far as I am aware) - on social oppression, exploitation, and capitalism. As are many of Sierra's other works, it is startling and compelling. Wodiczko's work in Tijuana, mentioned earlier, is visually simple and powerful. Both artists are interested in giving a voice to an under-class. What separates them can be identified as the level of social collaboration. In Wodiczko's work, meaning, content, and context derive from the participants, who are placed centre stage, such as the veteran city-centre performers.

45. Santiago Sierra, *Submission*, 2007, land installation, http://www.santiago-sierra.com/200704_1024.php.

Sierra's immediate public are not identified however his approach is still powerful as is Wodiczko's. The social engagement produces by Wodiczko is, I contend, more effective. In his homeless work, he sought both to create a scandal and to work equitably (it is hoped) with homeless 'consultants' to design a vehicle and shelter. He makes a point that his first design was felt misdirected by the homeless and in need of remediation, which he undertook with their supervision, resulting in a nuanced and validated work. The collective element of the work not only drove the creative act; it added layers of meaning beyond the initial thoughts of the artist. Additionally, it helped to create a meaningful and engaged audience. While I very much appreciate Sierra's exposure of capitalism, the class structure and war, I believe social engagement and working with communities, could also have a significant impact on his work. I acknowledge, however, that engagement takes time and that such an approach may not be appropriate for many reasons, including finance and of course, personal choice.

Both Wodiczko and Sierra are reactive; both reveal the need for change. Perhaps they even create catalysts for change in their seeking a reaction against poverty, for instance. Sierra comments that his artworks which utilise paid workers 'shed much more light on how the labor system actually works'.⁴⁶ In my socially-engaged practice, I am seeking not to react, but to create new bodies of work and narratives that place disability at the heart of a city and its institutions, as a respected creative force and not as a reactionary tool. *Cork Ignite* was a celebration of disability creativity. This nuanced, exciting project was executed with such aplomb that apologists for disability could not reject it simply as an amateur and basic disabled art class.

By projecting in public spaces I am seeking more inclusive civil arenas in which new communities are assembled, 'communities that would not likely have assembled were it not for the event itself.'⁴⁷ These agents empower the project as will be discussed in the next chapter on *Motion Disabled*, where the participants co-directed their own contribution and became its micro-audience.

46. "Santiago Sierra by Teresa Margolles", *Bomb*, accessed January 26, 2019, <https://bombmagazine.org/articles/santiago-sierra/>.

47. Jill Dolan, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative'", *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001): 457, accessed May 15, 2018, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25068953?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents.

Picture Credits

Figure 1

St Helens Buzz Hub collaborators with Simon McKeown outside St Helens Town Hall, St Helens, UK. Credit © McKeown with photograph by Heart of Glass (2018).

Figure 2

Project Row Houses – Houston, USA. Credit By Hourick - Own work, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21405837>

Figure 3

Abraham Lincoln War Veteran Projection Union Square NYC, USA. Credit © Wodiczko, <https://is.gd/C4CCus> (2012).

Figure 4

Diarmuid O'Leary talking with Simon McKeown at Triskel Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 5

Cork Ignite Workshop, Floor canvas at Triskel Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 6

Prometheus Awakes, Greenwich, London, UK. Credit © McKeown with photograph by Spencer Hudson (2012).

Chapter 4

Project - Motion Disabled

Links

www.motiondisabled.com

www.motiondisabledunlimited.com

<https://vimeo.com/15126593> - Motion Disabled

<https://vimeo.com/15165735> - Motion Disabled: Leeds

<https://vimeo.com/2969741> - Commentary

<https://vimeo.com/32032883> - Motion Disabled: Unlimited



Figure 1 – Motion Disabled (2010)

During my work in the commercial computer games sector I gained significant professional experience in the computer graphic and three-dimensional (3D) animation sector, including motion capture, a process that captures in 3D the full range of movement of an actor over time. In 2008 I designed *Motion Disabled*, which extrapolated these skills into my own fine art practice (Figure 1). *Motion Disabled* digitally maps in 3D the motion of a number of disabled people. In the work, simple white and grey avatars represent differently disabled people who

appear as if placed in a white minimalist space. They cast soft shadows on the floor as they walk and move around, interacting with simplistic props. They are in a bright, clean environment; an almost empty virtual world devoid of textural data. Motion capture, extracted from the human actors upon whom the virtual characters are based, powers the avatars. When combined with life-like audio such as footsteps, breathing, and running, this creates a virtual performance rooted in reality, despite its computer graphic feel. Presented as a performatively accurate work, this is not a cartoon; rather, it is pure human motion writ large (Figure 2).



Figure 2 – Motion Disabled: *running with a prosthetic leg* (2009)

A successful application to the prestigious Wellcome Trust led to the project's being supported by a People's Awards for £30,000, with in-kind support provided by Teesside University.¹ In 2009, Wolverhampton Art Gallery provided the first exhibition of the work. The project was later extended in 2012 to be a part of the Olympic Festival and in particular the London 2012 Olympic Games. *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* captured the movement of Paralympians. This extension was significantly funded by the Arts Council of England's Unlimited programme for £50,000, with exhibitions at South Bank Centre in London in September 2012. *Motion Disabled* (and from here on including *Motion Disabled: Unlimited*) was made

1. "People Awards and Society Awards", Wellcome Trust, accessed March 12, 2016, http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/Funding-schemes/People-Awards-and-Society-Awards/?gclid=CL69_eDSu8sCFY4y0wodsAAIPQ.

using state-of-the-art motion picture and computer gaming technology, tools, and techniques. Readers may be familiar with the *Lord of the Rings* film series, which featured the actor Andy Serkis as the motion actor for the digitally constructed character *Gollum*. Serkis acted his part in motion capture studios, where his 3D movement was captured and later refined. This movement was then applied to the *Gollum* 3D digital character before being digitally integrated seamlessly into the film. *Motion Disabled* made use of the same digital acting process as well as similar motion capture studios, technology and personnel (Figure 3).

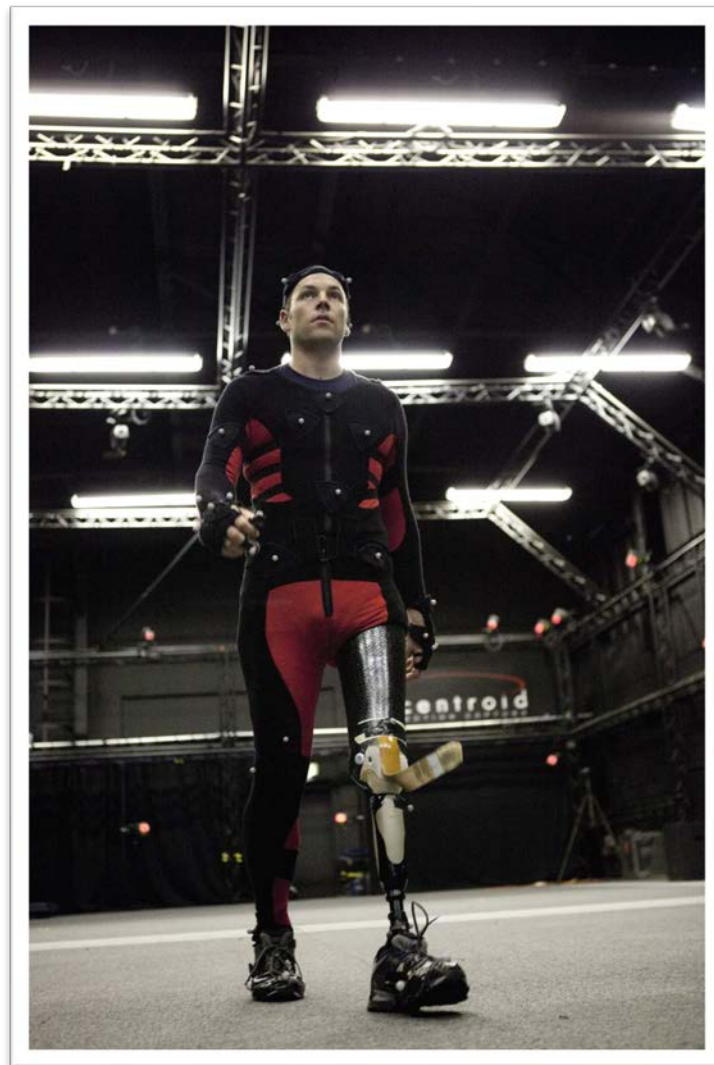


Figure 3 – Paralympian Anton Raimondos at Pinewood Studios (2012)

The project employed some of the most experienced motion capture technicians and 3D animators in the UK, whose resumés include production credits on the *Harry Potter*, *James Bond*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean* film series, along with

some of the world's highest-profile games including *Assassins Creed*, *Destiny* and *Tomb Raider*.² It features twelve disabled actors, all of whom were motion captured at Teesside University between 2008 and 2012. The different actors provide different body types, each with a different physical gait, energy, and motion signature. Furthermore, in 2012, eight Paralympic athletes, including Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, were motion captured at Pinewood Studios in London and in Teesside University as part of the London 2012 festival; they feature in *Motion Disabled: Unlimited*.

The work then is an animated video artwork with sound, usually lasting between 5 and 30 minutes in length. Deliberately not provided with a linear narrative, it is flexible and is configured for each client, host exhibition or festival as required. *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* was similarly designed to be flexible and of similar duration. An accompanying ten-metre tall inflatable sculpture of a thalidomide-affected athlete toured with the exhibition in 2012, supported by a *Motion Disabled* augmented reality app. Both projects were supported by their own separate websites and a short documentary that features many of the disabled actors.



Figure 4 – Light Night Leeds (2010)

2. "Games, Films, Television, We Do That...", Centroid Motion Capture, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.centroid3d.com/portfolio#film>.

In the production of *Motion Disabled* several digital artists using 3D software sculpted humanoid shapes, based on my disabled actors, in a process analogous to basic arts and craft papier maché production. Using virtual chicken wire, shapes were created; to these solid surfaces were attached by a method similar to that of wrapping a wire balloon in paper. A digital skeleton, comparable to a sculptural armature, was then inserted inside the digital human structures. At this point in the process the character is modelled but motionless. Whilst it can be viewed from different angles, it is lifeless and in essence a statue. Movement, earlier taken from the disabled actors whose static form had been constructed, is added by the motion capture studio. The disabled actor is fitted into a tight lycra suit, which has spherical reflective markers attached at the major joints such as the elbow. High-speed cameras then record each actor's movement from slightly different and offset angles. Their combined output is then correlated from the multiple 2D video images into a 3D skeletal structure by using a mathematical process based on Photogrammetry. The work references and builds on the physical motion studies of Eadweard Muybridge³ and Étienne-Jules Marey, both of whom innovatively captured movement photographically in the late 1800s with Marey developing the first motion capture suit.⁴

Motion capture is highly effective at capturing, with great fidelity, kinetic data. Initially represented as a collection of moving dots, we can instantly recognise the physical motion of person and not see just a jumble of unconnected spatial markers. These data are absorbed into the animation software to be used to 'drive' the digital skeleton. It is in this manner that all digital characters, including *Gollum*, are brought to life. Once the digital character is moving, virtual props are added into the work, when single images are produced, twenty-five for each second, with 15,000 images making up ten minutes of video. Hundreds of thousands of images were produced in the process of making *Motion Disabled*. Finally, to bring the work even more to life, audio reflecting the ordinary activity of the disabled actor was added to the video in a Foley Studio, including footsteps, traffic noise, water running, wheelchair movement and dance.

3. "Eadweard Muybridge: Defining Modernities", Eadweard Muybridge, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.eadweardmuybridge.co.uk/>.

4. "Mouvements de l'air Etienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904) photographe des fluides", Musee d'Orsay, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ulhg1m>.



Figure 5 – Simon McKeown at the Deutsches Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany (2013)

In 2013 the Deutsches Hygiene Museum, Dresden (Figure 5), a major German exhibition venue, featured *Motion Disabled* in their large-scale dance exhibition entitled *Dance! moves that move us!* (Figure 6), which received nearly 100,000 visitors between October 2013 and June 2014.⁵ *Motion Disabled* was selected because of its relationship to dance, as will be demonstrated, and was exhibited alongside the work of one of the world’s most famous choreographers, Merce Cunningham. Credited with creating a revolution in dance, Cunningham was collaborative and worked with visual artists, to some of whom I have referred earlier,

5. Colleen M. Schmitz, "Dance! Moves that move us," e-mail message to author, August 8, 2014.

"Dear Simon, Our exhibition, "Dance! Moves that move us," ended on 20 July 2014. We are pleased to inform you that in the nine months of the exhibition’s run, around 100,000 visitors came to see and experience the show. This makes it one of our Top 10 exhibitions of the past decade! Together with the strong interest shown by the media, the attendance numbers of the special events and education programs, as well as the popularity of the companion book, "dance!" can be considered, all in all, a major success.

The participating artists were of course key to this success. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for lending "Motion Disabled" to the exhibition. It has been a pleasure working with you." Colleen M. Schmitz, Curator, Head of the Exhibition Office.

such as Nam June Paik and Bruce Nauman.⁶ Cunningham was technically astute. He used computer technology, in particular a primitive 3D animation system entitled *Dance Forms*, to block out basic dance movements on a computer in advance of working with performers.⁷ In 1999 he also utilised basic bipedal dance motion capture in his work *Biped* to produce 2D projected movement onto a transparent stage backdrop. His dances have been described as ‘a casual or modified version of ballet’ and are ultimately contrived and constructed.⁸



Figure 6 – Dance! Moves that move us (2013)

6. Sally Banes and Noël Carroll, "Cunningham, Balanchine, and Postmodern Dance," *Dance Chronicle* 29, no. 1 (2006): 49, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.tees.ac.uk/stable/25598044>.

7. Dance Forms (and its prior release Life Forms) was a rudimentary animation system that allowed choreographers block out dances in advance using very basic bipedal characters. In investigating the software, (which is no longer updated) there is no evidence that non bipedal or disabled avatars were available. Nor am I aware of any disability motion capture libraries from this time. I mention this software because it was used by Cunningham. It was not however of an appropriate professional standing to be used in the computer game and special effects industry.

8. Banes and Carroll, "Cunningham, Balanchine," 57.

Dance historian Sally Banes and philosopher Noël Carroll, in reviewing Cunningham's contribution to dance in *Cunningham, Balanchine, and Postmodern Dance* state that 'it is obvious that ordinary movement is one of the most notable, consistently recurring features in their (postmodern) choreography' and that 'there is no visually discernable boundary between so-called dance movement and any other kind of movement, including the movement of everyday life' (Figure 7).⁹ They refer to a Judson Dance Theatre choreography list: this details four categories of dance, the first of which is 'Dances that are comprised entirely of ordinary movements and/or activities, including tasks.'¹⁰ This important description resembled my instruction to my disabled motion-capture actors; it asked that any movement must emanate from the actors' own authentic and ordinary motion repertoire.



Figure 7 – Frank Letch brushing his teeth
 Motion Disabled *motion capture at Teesside University (2008)*

Each actor was asked to write down and describe in advance, then to recreate on the day of the shoot, activities from their own daily life. Each actor thus suggested motions such as taking a simple walk, walking to sit, running, carrying items, driving, sleeping, shopping dancing, drinking, and talking. Without artifice, each movement

9. *Ibid.*, 60.

10. *Ibid.*

was that person's vernacular and was adopted as one complete series. Working this way is quite different to the origins of Cunningham's oeuvre. Cunningham never, as far as I am aware, featured disabled dancers, nor did his work explore the quotidian motif. However, he collaborated extensively with the musician John Cage, whose work did. Cage in his work attempted to dissolve the boundary between art and life. Famously, his *4'33* (1952) features a pianist sitting silently and inactively in an auditorium while literally nothing happens for the duration of the piece. The accidental and the inherent sound of auditorium takes over – and these found sounds become as important as the constructed sounds through which art and life meld. I argue that 'similarly the Dadaists attempted to dissolve the boundary between art and life by bringing life – in the shape of mass-produced urinals, combs... into the art world' and that 'For the post-moderns, ordinary movement functions as the readymade did for Duchamp and the found sound did for Cage'.¹¹

In my work, I recorded very long motion-capture durations, giving over time to 'find' movement in a process in which 'chance' was vital. As Cage found sound, I similarly found movements, unexpected and within the 'ordinary' repertoire of my actors. The resulting composition consists of virtual movements based on the respective pathological realities of my disabled actors. The composition shares an intimate connection with post-modern dance, offering 'samples of' movement exemplifying everyday life.¹² The design ethos I deployed contended that the ordinary movement of disabled people was of itself enough, something to behold and of value.

I was also influenced by the theories of Ed Hooks both through his writing in his influential book *Acting for Animators* and through workshops with Hooks at Teesside University. Hooks identifies several critical principles that both a performer, i.e. a motion capture actor, as well as an animator should consider in their work. Hooks describes how a stage actor 'strives to find intention and motivation'.¹³ Intention, he argues, leads to better and more believable acting and movement, differences that are vividly noticeable at a production level by animators using the motion capture data. 'Everything' he says 'begins with the brain' further

11. *Ibid.*, 62.

12. *Ibid.*, 66.

13. Ed Hooks, *Acting For Animators* (n.p.: Taylor & Francis, 2017), xiii.

quoting Walt Disney's comment that 'the mind is the pilot'.¹⁴ The notion of intention underpinning authentic movement, therefore, is a fundamental principle of my motion capture work in *Motion Disabled*. A motion-capture shoot is deliberately not accompanied by props, precisely because these obscure and occlude the studio motion cameras thus cause motion loss. Actors work in empty studio spaces and therefore have to place greater emphasis on their imagination and extrapolate from personal knowledge and experiences. They are asked to mentally picture the location of their acting task and its environment and objects within. In my work I wanted to offer the actors a clear rationale; foregrounding quotidian concerns provided clear direction – that is - do what you normally do.



Figure 8 – Artisphere , Arlington, Virginia, USA (2010)

When I constructed *Motion Disabled* I made the deliberate choice to denude the work of unnecessary character or locational data. This intentional reductive effect confronts the viewer with pure motion. Similarly, Banes and Carrol comment that 'By rendering the stage bare ... Balanchine enables us to see with uncluttered perspicuity the basic ingredients and concerns of this form of dance (ballet)'. Without a story, the dance is constructed so that 'it reveals or discloses its very own nature'.¹⁵ My working with a cohort of disabled people meant that I was able to use

14. Hooks, *Acting For Animators*, 1.

15. *Ibid.*, 55.

and refer to their lived 'engineering' experience and learnt movements of alterity. Gary Robson, Artistic Director of DaDaFest, positively responded to the work, highlighting its exclusive focus on movement:

So, of course I fell straight in love with Simon's *Motion Disabled* exhibition when I first saw it many moons ago at Wolverhampton Art Gallery. Here were the movements of disabled people stripped away of all social and cultural baggage and played out as just pure shape and balance. As if to say – hey, what are you all so scared of, it's just movement after all! ¹⁶

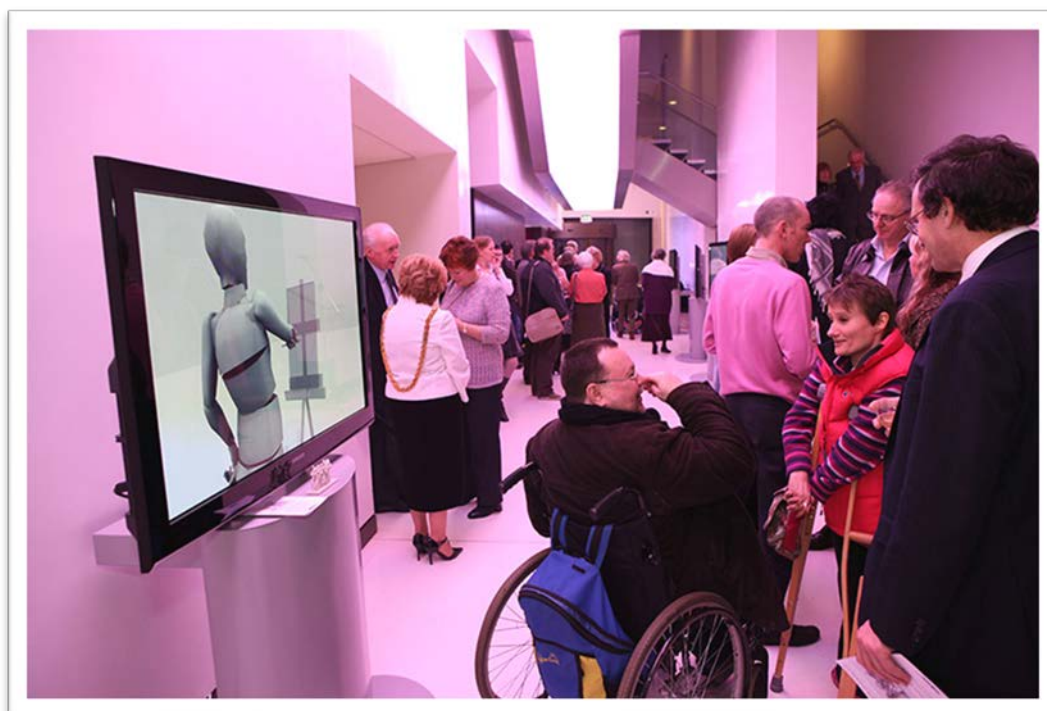


Figure 9 – *Motion Disabled* at Wolverhampton Art Gallery (2009)

Motion Disabled showcased motion for its own sake. My aim, and possibly for the first time in digital history, was to invite us 'to nurture a fascination for the kind of movement that surrounds us every day', that is, the vernacular movement of disabled people.¹⁷ Through *Motion Disabled* I contended that the selected actors

16. Garry Robson Artistic Director, Dada-Fest International, "Simon McKeown's films 'Motion Disabled' and 'All for Claire'", review of *Motion Disabled and All for Claire*, 2009, Disability Arts Online, last modified June 28, 2011, accessed July 2, 2017, <https://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/Simon-McKeown-Motion-Disabled-and-All-for-Claire>.

17. Banes and Carroll, "Cunningham, Balanchine," 62.

offered unique and valid movement, and almost no choreographic direction or invention or 'design' of movement was needed to reveal its quiddity, its essence-of-person. Such movements needed only validation, as far as I was concerned. Although at times their movements were virtuosic, this reflected the corporeality of the actor rather than any artifice - the enemy of authenticity. To my knowledge, *Motion Disabled* was the first, and perhaps the sole digital art project to feature the motion of the disabled in an unaffected form. It was my consideration that this motion, that of the disabled, was of itself enough. It needed no additional layers of expression. Colin Hambrook, editor of Disability Arts Online, reported how:

A defining factor for these animated figures is in how they do things ... the work becomes an appreciation of the ordinary beauty attached to the way these individuals adapt to their environment. The viewer becomes engaged with their uniqueness. And it is in those moments that you find yourself face-to-face with an extraordinary depiction of the human soul.¹⁸

Animators such as I empower inanimate objects. To do so, we have to have a precise understanding of locomotion and the effects of weight, timing, and gravity in our work. We are digital choreographers studying the 'microphysics of movement'.¹⁹ A motion capture animator relies on the laws of physics and reality rather than aiming at the suspension of disbelief in the motion or nature of a cartoon character. Although *Motion Disabled* is not a technical exercise in 2009 professional motion capture systems were not easily able to encompass difference. Such systems struggled to capture non-bipedal humans, instead preferring bipedal 'normality', a feature I discussed in a TEDX talk in 2010.²⁰ My first motion capture participant was a wheelchair user. I deliberately introduced Dr. Paul Darke's corporeality into the technical and creative process and his movement broke the motion capture pipeline, an issue we worked to resolve.

18. Colin Hambrook, "Simon McKeown: Motion Disabled", Disability Arts Online (Archive Site), last modified February 11, 2009, accessed July 13, 2017, http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/Motion_Disabled.

19. Banes and Carroll, "Cunningham, Balanchine," 63.

20. "TEDxTeesside - Simon McKeown", video file, 24:04, YouTube, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i30bsYFdJw4>.

It is also not a scientific study. Although it shares an interest in the study of motion, human gait analysis relates to a specialist interest in muscular and skeletal issues, physical rehabilitation, physiotherapy, and sport.²¹ The objectives of gait analysis include the correction of motion, following scientific analysis, of joint and muscle function. I was studied as a child and in retrospect I believe in part led to my interest in motion and indeed, in 'non-standard' motion. The project was showcased at the Manchester Science Festival 2011, yet it was as part of a dance-related programme and outdoor projection. *Motion Disabled* has investigated disability, embodiment and technology: the intersectionality of identity in a technologically divided society. The work as I have described uses state of the art creative technology combined with astute insights in its use and application.



Figure 10 and 11 – Time is frozen in the computer on the left, then repeated into a 3D print on the right showcasing Mat Fraser kickboxing over 3 seconds (2009)

Motion Disabled is, as far as I am aware, the first non-medical pathological motion capture study of movement in the human body. It is movement for movement's sake. It was one of the first disability-led and -conceived projects to make full use of the highly professional techniques, practices, and concepts I have discussed. The public, as well as my co-professionals in industry, have clearly shown an increasing appetite for work that exemplifies demonstrably creative work and best practice involving disability. *Motion Disabled* is an art project that set out to investigate how we move and to validate the unusual movements that had enveloped me since I was a child. I had always understood that there was great interest and beauty in the

21. "Motor Learning Laboratory", Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Trust, accessed June 14, 2016, <https://www.rnoh.nhs.uk/clinical-services/rehabilitation-and-therapy/motor-learning-laboratory>.

movement of my disabled relatives and friends. I also understood that there was also ingenuity displayed in confounding corporeal restrictions.

Impact, Sharing and Dissemination of the Work



Figure 12 – T4 on the Beach, Weston-super-Mare (2012)

It has multiple methods of presentation and has been showcased on one, three or five large monitors with sound in gallery settings. At its launch at Wolverhampton Art Gallery in 2009 it utilised five screens. Furthermore, it has been presented as a large-scale projection, using equipment suitable for outdoor events such as on a tower block as part of Light Night Leeds (2009) (Figure 4), and as part of video wall such as at the Frankston Arts Centre, Australia (2011). *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* differed in that this work toured nationally throughout the UK (and to Prague, Czech Republic, 2013) with the inflatable and exhibition combined. It was also showcased on the BBC Big Screen in Festival Square in Edinburgh (2012) and on the Wellcome Trust screens at the Olympic Park in London (2012).

Deborah Caulfield, in reviewing my work at the London 2012 Oxford Olympic launch, wrote on Disability Arts Online that:

Now disabled people can be found interesting and considered absolutely marvellous or staggeringly beautiful, for all the right reasons. Amazing.

Indeed, McKeown's work turns dysfunction on its head. Instead of abnormality (medical model) he shows us people moving in unusual and interesting ways. Thus, normality is no longer a narrow set of rules for the perfectly formed; it has stretched to include everyone in all their glorious versions and variations.²²

Mainstream press covered the project with Ken Russell, the late renowned Oscar winning British film director, writing in the *The Times*' arts section that

For an even more direct and immediate examination of the value of the extraordinary, I urge you to the Wolverhampton Art Gallery to see the artist Simon McKeown's elaborate state-of-the-art digital installation called *Motion Disabled*.²³



Figure 13 – Oxford Olympic Torch Parade (2012)

22. Deborah Caulfield, "Motion Disabled: Unlimited", review of *Motion Disabled: Unlimited*, Disability Arts Online, last modified July 14, 2012, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.disabilityartsonline.org.uk/unlimited-motion-disabled>.

23. Ken Russell, "A 3-D view of disability leaves me in awe of these everyday superheroes", *The Times* (London), January 27, 2009, Arts, accessed May 5, 2019, <http://www.motiondisabled.com/press-section/>.

Further *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* was referred to during 2012 in the Guardian in a commentary on London 2012 reflecting that

Disability arts organisations and artists are hoping that London 2012 will increase the profile of their work and bring about lasting change to people's attitudes and preconceptions. These hopes are certainly not unfounded, with large-scale London 2012 showcases such as Graeae's *Prometheus Awakes* and *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* by Simon McKeown two good reasons to be cheerful.²⁴

The above author highlights two projects to which I was also committed. I was also a creative director for large-scale *Prometheus Awakes* working alongside Bradley Hemmings, MBE and Director of the Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Hemmings is also Artistic Director of The Greenwich+Docklands International Festival and was familiar with *Motion Disabled*. He invited me to join the *Prometheus Awakes* creative team and to direct the projected video elements of this major event because of my creative work.

24. Russell Parton to Guardian News and Media Ltd newsgroup, "London 2012 and disability arts: 'we'll be famous for 15 minutes'", August 28, 2012, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2t0jbBh>.



Figure 14 – Review of Motion Disabled in the animation magazine Imagine (2011)

In 2011 *Imagine* (Figure 14), the magazine for animation professionals, carried a double page spread on *Motion Disabled*. The magazine reviewed the work and in doing so validated a new area of inclusivity including the computer game, film and animation sector. Computer games are now including disabled characters in their outputs.

Politically *Motion Disabled* was invited to form part of the *Forty Years of Disability Rights* exhibition, which celebrated the passing of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act of 1970. The event was opened by the introducer of the legislation, Lord (Alf) Morris of Manchester (Figure 15). The exhibition was organised by The Office for Disability Issues, which exists to highlight issues of ability and disability in British society and held in the UK Parliament during March 2010.²⁵ In 2009 *Motion Disabled* was exhibited at the large-scale *The World Disabled People's Culture and Art Festival* in Seoul, South Korea, in a festival supported politically by the Korean prime minister and his wife.

25. HM Government Office for Disability Issues, *40 Years of Disability Rights: Towards Equality Exhibition*, ed. The Right Honourable Lord Morris of Manchester and Johnathan Shaw, MP (London, UK: Office for Disability Issues, 2010).

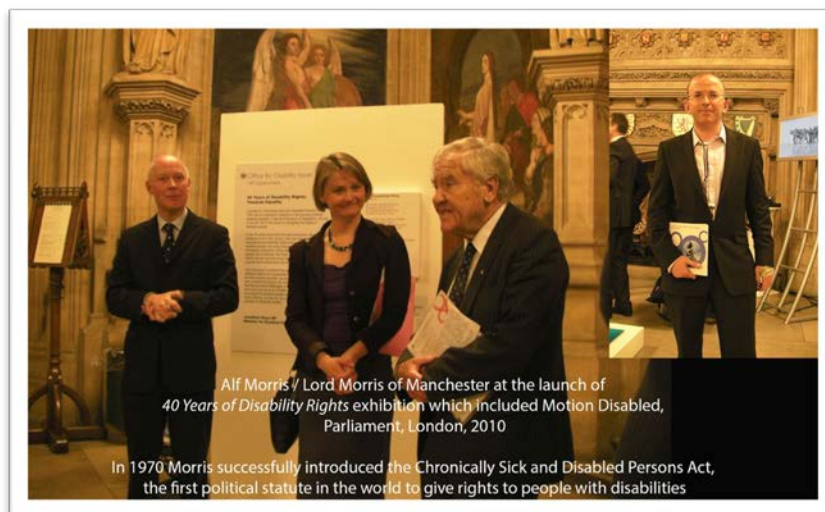


Figure 15 - Forty Years of Disability Rights, Parliament, London (2010)

Motion Disabled was exhibited in 2010 as part of the *Revealing Culture* exposition (corroborated viewing figures 578,114) presented by VSA, The International Organization on Art and Disability, in Washington D.C., USA, with the support of Jean Kennedy Smith, brother of President Kennedy (Figure 16). In the same year, it became a major centre piece for the *United Nations International Day of Persons with a Disability*²⁶ was celebrated on 3 December 2010. As part of a major project led by VSA Arts and McKeown, *Motion Disabled* was screened globally in seventeen countries on this day in support of the day.²⁷ Events took place at the Wellcome Trust in London; in Norway; in Kosovo; in several cities in the US and South America; at the United Nations in New York; in Washington DC, and in South America, as well as in Liverpool and Glasgow. I was named by DaDaFest, the UK's largest and most successful disability-related festival, *International Artist of the Year* in 2010 in recognition of *Motion Disabled*.²⁸

26. "Wellcome Trust", Wellcome Trust, December 3, 2010, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/News/2010/News/WTX063691.htm>.

27. Teesside University, "Global screening of Teesside lecturer's exhibition", Teesside University, last modified December 1, 2010, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2tJY82W>.

28. BBC, "The Radio 2 Arts Show with Claudia Winkleman", BBC.co.uk, last modified November 2013, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/shows/claudia-winkleman/photos/claudia-DaDa-2010-gallery/index.shtml>.

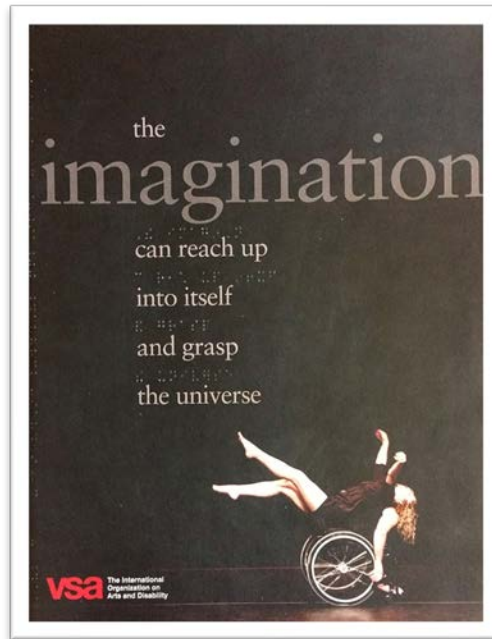


Figure 16 – VSA Revealing Cultures exhibition publication (2010)

Motion Disabled has received responses and interest from various fields of study. It has as a result been shown in multiple contextual settings, including that of disability art, sport, science, outdoor, and mainstream art. It was exhibited within a disability art context, for instance, with DaDaFest International at the Bluecoat in Liverpool (2010), outdoor projected onto the Mersey Tunnel (2010), and displayed as part of Culture Night Dublin (2011) by Arts and Disability Ireland on a portable lorry screen, in Temple Bar Square (2011). It has had unusual presentations at the Verizon Centre, Washington D.C. (2010) during a basketball game in front of thousands of viewers and contributed to a disability street party in Buenos Aires, Argentina (2010). It has been exhibited within the mainstream art sector, including at the Concoron Gallery in Washington DC (2010), The Kosovo Art Gallery, Prishtina, Kosovo,(2010), and of course its first exhibition in Wolverhampton Art Gallery (2009), as well as other times out of context such as at *T4 On the Beach*, Weston-super-Mare (2012) in front of an audience of 45,000 (Figure 12).²⁹

In 2011, *Motion Disabled* was invited to be part of a ten-year exhibition, *All About Us*, at the museum At Bristol, supporting a semi-permanent Wellcome Trust sponsored installation. It was twice showcased in Australia at the Frankston Arts Centre, Melbourne, and was featured in Culture Night Dublin, Ireland. During 2012,

29. "T4 on the Beach", Channel Four, <https://www.channel4.com/press/news/t4-beach>.

the work was exhibited as part of the Cultural Olympiad across the UK, and was extended as a London 2012 Festival commission. It toured the UK and was often the main exhibit at Olympic launch events. On a smaller scale in 2013 it exhibited in a disability art gallery in Denver, Colorado, USA.³⁰

Motion Disabled was a significant component of the *Disabled by Normality* exhibition at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic. All elements of the work were displayed including text and the ten metre tall inflatable. This exhibition stands out as the most academically significant and crucial disability-related art exhibition in Europe to date. As a now long-running project it continues to find new audiences and to expand and impact on international cultural life and public discourse around the creative intersections of disability, disability art, art and animation. During 2018 it was selected for inclusion in the Great Exhibition of the North of 2018 (22 June-9 September), by UK HM Government at the Great North Museum in Newcastle, in an exhibition that featured Damien Hirst and David Hockney. As part of this work, I became a mentor for two young student artists as part of the accompanying N18 programme, advising them through to the completion of new artwork for exhibition in Newcastle, as well as presenting, teaching and undertaking support.

Motion Disabled, which used Hollywood motion-capture technology, continues to be exhibited globally and has been a focus for many themed exhibitions that inspire other artists. In Europe a motion-capture dance project entitled *Wholodance*, part of the EU's Horizon 2020, research and innovation programme commenced in 2016.³¹ *Motion Disabled* identifies and investigates definitions of normality that problematise notions of a standard body (the hegemony of normality) challenging such concepts to explore a new acceptance of disabled peoples' impairments and their associated irregularity and asymmetry (abnormality) as integral to a valid notion of life and civilisation within a marginalising society and culture. Featuring differently disabled actors, *Motion Disabled* has been welcomed across the globe. It has been the focus for many themed exhibitions, and has been treated as a significant work with large-scale implications.

30. "Deutsches Hygiene Museum", Simon McKeown, accessed June 21, 2018, <http://www.simon-McKeown.com/motion-disabled-unlimited/duetche-hygiene-museum/>.

31. "Whole-body interaction learning for dance education", WholoDance, accessed May 9, 2019, <http://www.wholodance.eu/>.



Figure 17 – Disabled by Normality, DOX, Prague (2013)

<i>Motion Disabled and Motion Disabled Unlimited Exhibitions</i>	
2018	
Great Exhibition of the North, Great North Museum, Newcastle – Internal video projection	22 June - 9 September
2015	
Adelaide Film Festival – Outdoor projection and video	15 - 25 October
2014	
Duetches Hygiene Museum – Dresden, Germany,	12 October 2013 - 20 July 2014
2013	
Duetches Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany	12 October 2013 - 20 July 2014
DOX - Centre of Contemporary Art, Prague, Czech Republic	23 May - 16 September
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (Mayor of London's Liberty Festival	7 September
2012 London 2012 Festival	
Oxford Olympic Torch Celebration (20,000 visitors) - Large inflatable sculptural installation	9 July
20-21 Visual Arts Centre – North Lincs - Large inflatable sculptural installation including video and still images	13 March - 18 August
Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art (MIMA) - Video Installation	20 July - 19 September
South Bank Centre, London – Unlimited Festival Large inflatable sculptural installation including video	31 August - 9 September

South Bank Centre - South Bank, London - Large inflatable sculptural installation	3 rd and 4 th of September
Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, London - Large inflatable sculptural installation	29 August - 2 September
Loughborough - Town Centre - Large inflatable sculptural installation	9 September
West Cheshire College, Ellesmere Port Campus, West Cheshire - Large inflatable sculptural installation and video	5 – 8 September
Orton Square and The Curve, Leicester - Large inflatable sculptural installation and video	26 August
Edinburgh - Festival Square - Large inflatable sculptural installation and video on the BBC outdoor Big Screens	13 - 17 August
T4 On the Beach, Weston super Mare Presentations on the festival video screens	1 July
Wellcome Trust – Olympic Park – Video Wall	27 July - 12 August
2012	
VSA Colorado/Access Gallery - Colorado Denver – Video and still image solo exhibition	6 January - 10 February
Thelma Hulbert Gallery / Animated Exeter Video and still image solo exhibition	21 January - 3 March
2011	
All About Us Exhibition, At Bristol (Museum) with Wellcome Trust	1 March, with a video installation running for 10 years
Frankston Arts Centre Melbourne, Australia	27 June - 19 July
Leicester Sky Ride, Leicester Council	28 August
Dublin Culture Night, Ireland	21 September
Frankston Arts Centre Melbourne, Australia	1 - 9 October
Manchester Science Festival - 3 Day outdoor Projection	21 - 23 October

2010 -International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Simultaneously on December 3rd
2nd DESA Disability Film Festival -	United Nations, New York
Artisphere Gallery	Arlington, USA
Harstad University	Norway
Corcoran Gallery of Art	Washington D.C., USA
Verizon Centre	Washington D.C., USA
Kosovo Art Gallery	Pristina, Kosovo
First Street Gallery Art Center	Claremont, USA
Wellcome Trust - London HQ	London
Liverpool - Mersey Tunnel	Liverpool
Glasgow MET, City Centre	Glasgow, Scotland
Disability Services Commission	West Perth, Australia
Indian Institute of Cerebral Palsy	Kolkata, India
VSA Uruguay (VSA arts de Uruguay)	Montevideo, Uruguay
VSA Masschusettes	Masschusettes, USA
The Help Center (VSA Saudi Arabia)	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
VSA Argentina	Buenos Aires, Argentina
University of Akureyri, Department of Education	Akureyri, Iceland
Arts & Disability Ireland	Dublin, Ireland
Apeirons	Riga, Latvia
CONADIS	Mexico City, Mexico
Perspektiva	Moscow, Russia
Nakku Nattu	Louga, Senegal
ESCO Rehab Sri Lanka	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Echo Park Film Center	Los Angeles, USA
2010	
Chester Divercity Festival – Video installation	22 February - 5 March
Parliamentary Exhibition to Celebrate 40 years of disability legislation - Video installation	1 - 5 March
Taunton Brewhouse - Flux Festival - Outdoor	25 th - 29 May

Projection	
Python Gallery Middlesbrough – Still images	10 May
VSA Washington Revealing Cultures, Smithsonian International Gallery, Washington D.C. USA - Video installation	8 June - 19 August
Alt Shift Technology Conference, York - Video projection	5 - 6 July
Other Film Festival, Melbourne, Australia - Video installation	25 - 29 August
Leicester Sky Ride, Leicester Council - Video installation	28 August
Liverpool - DaDaFest International 2010 - Video installation and projection	18 November - 3 December
Glasgow Trongate 103 Gallery Installation Exhibition - Video installation	4 - 28 November
Glasgow City Centre - Outdoor Projection	3 December
Wellcome Trust - Outdoor Projection	3 December
2009	
Wolverhampton Art Gallery – Video installation	24 January – 25 April
Wolverhampton Disability Film Festival – Video installation	23 - 25 April
Shape Arts Science and Arts Exhibition, London – Video installation	1 April - 29 June
LCB Depot, Leicester – Video installation	1 - 25 July
Stockton International Riverside Festival – Outdoor projection	2 August
Science Communication Conference, Wellcome Trust – Wellcome installation	9 May
Holton Lee Gallery - Dorset - Exhibition	4 August - 16 September
Diversity Festival - Exhibition	24 August - 6 September
Light Night Leeds – Large scale outdoor city centre projection	9 October
BBC Screen - Leeds City Centre – Video screen	9 October

La Mer Gallery, Seoul, South Korea – Video installation	14 - 19 October
Bonington Gallery, Nottingham – Solo multi-screen video installation	30 November - 11 December

Picture Credits

Figure 1

Motion Disabled VSA advertising media, 2010. Credit © McKeown (2010).

Figure 2

Motion Disabled computer graphic of Richard Hardesty running with a prosthetic leg. Credit © McKeown (2009).

Figure 3

Paralympian Anton Raimondos at Pinewood Studios, London, UK. Credit © McKeown, with photography by Iain Jaques (2012).

Figure 4

Motion Disabled at Light Night, Leeds, UK. Credit © McKeown with photography by Spencer Hudson (2010).

Figure 5

Simon McKeown at the Deutsches Hygiene Museum, Dresden, Germany. Credit McKeown © with photography by Ian Jacques/Andy Salkeld (2013).

Figure 6

Dance!: Moves that move us, Credit © Deutsches Hygiene Museum media, Dresden, Germany (2013).

Figure 7

Frank Letch motion capture at Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK. Credit McKeown © with photography by Judy Hume, Teesside University (2008).

Figure 8

Artisphere Arts Centre, Arlington, Virginia, USA. Photograph arranged by Artisphere (2010).

Figure 9

Motion Disabled exhibition, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, UK. Credit © McKeown with

photography by Spencer Hudson (2009).

Figures 10 and 11

Motion Disabled digital and real sculpture. Time is frozen in the computer on the left, then repeated into a 3D print on the right showcasing thalidomide affected disabled actor Mat Fraser kickboxing over three seconds. Credit © McKeown (2009).

Figure 12

Motion Disabled at BBC T4 on the Beach, Weston-super-Mare, UK. Credit © photograph arranged by event company Done and Dusted (doneanddusted.com) (2012).

Figure 13

Oxford Olympic Torch Parade, Oxford, UK. Credit © McKeown (2012).

Figure 14

Review of *Motion Disabled* in the animation magazine *Imagine*. Credit © *Imagine* (2011).

Figure 15

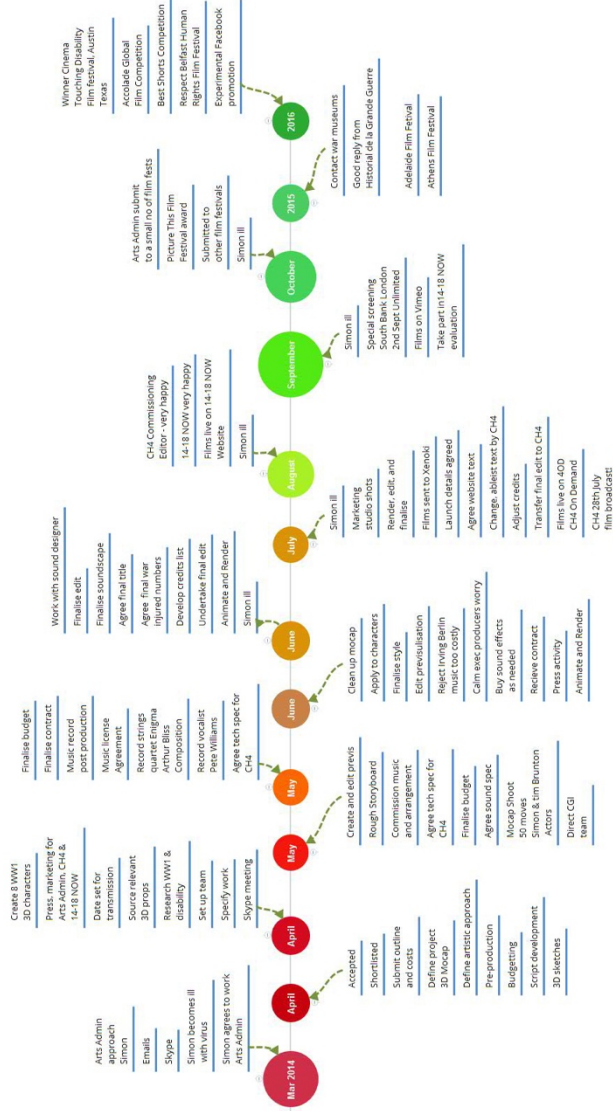
Forty Years of Disability Rights, Parliament, London, UK 2010. Credit © McKeown (2010).

Figure 16

VSA *Revealing Cultures* exhibition publication. Credit © VSA media (2010).

Figure 17

Disabled by Normality, DOX, Prague, CZ. Credit © photograph by Brookes (2013).



Ghosts

Chapter 5

Project – Ghosts

Links

www.simon-McKeown.com/ghosts

www.1418now.org.uk/commissions/does-it-matter/

www.channel4.com/programmes/does-it-matter-world-war-i-shorts/articles/all/simon-McKeown/2782

<https://vimeo.com/101714602>



Figure 1 – Ghosts: still image (2014)

Ghosts is a digital motion capture-based animation created in commemoration of the First World War.¹ Similarly to *Motion Disabled* it maps in three dimensions (3D) the motion of two actors undertaking the role of disabled servicemen and medical staff. This virtual world is inhabited by easily identifiable disabled soldiers in the battle dresses of the British, French, and German armies of World War I as well as a female nurse. Stylised characters, reminiscent of computer game soldiers, occupy a sepia-tinted environment, populated by period war *matériel*. Tanks, guns, trenches, and tents are the locations for various activities. The physical movement

1. Simon McKeown, "Ghosts & WW1", Simon McKeown, last modified July 28, 2015, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.simon-McKeown.com/ghosts>.

of the soldiers is supported by a realistic soundscape, including footsteps and other relevant noises, accompanied by a contemporaneous classical music track. There is no dialogue. At the conclusion of the work, end-title wording offers vital information about the nature of war, and in so doing provides the overall motif of the work, which is that the disabled are our ancestors and disability, because of injuries incurred in war, was familiar.

During early 2014 I was contacted by Judith Knight of Artsadmin, one of the UK's most successful arts management agencies. Knight requested that I respond to Artsadmin's call for artists to make a new work for a programme entitled 14-18 NOW. The invitation was a direct result of the growing status and innovation, and appeal, of my use of technology in the field of disability art from which it had been almost totally absent, especially in relation to high-end technology and its use.

14-18 NOW was a major cultural programme that took place across the UK during 2014 to 2018, to mark the centenary and conclusion of World War One.² Altogether, thirty-five million people engaged with it. Supported by the Imperial War Museum, Department for Media Culture and Sport, Heritage Lottery Fund, and Arts Council England, contemporary artists were invited to reflect on the First World War. Outcomes from the project included Sir Peter Blake's *Dazzle Ships*³; *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* by Peter Cummins and Tom Piper, an installation of ceramic poppies at the Tower of London.⁴

I responded to Artsadmin with a proposition to make a broadcast-ready motion-capture-based video artwork, with sound effects and music lasting three minutes: *Ghosts* resulted. With a simulated sepia film feel and loose narrative it is the most conventional of my works discussed within this commentary. It is filmic mini-short and ultimately commissioned by and broadcast on Channel 4. This project was supported by *14-18 NOW* with a small budget of *circa* £4,000 and had a very short production deadline of around six weeks. *Ghosts* was recorded at Teesside

2. 14-18 NOW, "Extraordinary Arts Experiences Connecting People With The First World War", *14-18 NOW*, accessed July 10, 2017, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/>.

3. 14-18 NOW, "Dazzle Ships", *14-18 NOW*, accessed July 10, 2017, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/dazzle/>.

4. Historic Royal Palaces, "Tower of London Remembers" Tower of London, accessed July 10, 2017, <https://www.hrp.org.uk/tower-of-london/history-and-stories/tower-of-london-remembers/#gs.tAfoc6A>.

University in May 2014. I was one of the actors and animation senior lecturer Tim Brunton the other. Dressed in Lycra motion-capture suits, we recorded a collection of events and scenes, acting the roles of various body types thus simulating the corporeality of battle-acquired injury and disability. Example movements recorded included shoeing a horse, playing cricket, cooking, sharing a cigarette and waltzing badly. Each movement was assigned a typical war disability, including limb loss and sight damage; these were re-enacted in the motion-capture acting. Differently than *Motion Disabled*, the movements and poses recorded were devised from research and tightly scripted.

The conceit behind the work was developed from statistical disability-related war figures. Background material informed the project that:

Nearly two million British men returned [to the UK] from the First World War with a permanent disability. Disabled veterans were among the most visible legacy of the war, and their unprecedented numbers changed the way that the general public, and the State, understood disabilities.⁵

Up to twenty-one million people were disabled globally by the First World War.⁶ In its aftermath towns and cities witnessed enormous numbers of their young returning, alive but permanently disabled both physically and mentally. The population of Great Britain and Northern Ireland at the time of WWI was approximately forty-six million. The two million injured mentioned therefore represented approximately four per cent of the population.⁷ In a post-WWI world a dramatic number of young war disabled veterans would have been common and visible across the UK.

Each family group in many parts of the world could have had an injured relative; these soldiers must have become part of much wider societal ancestral tree.

5. 14-18 NOW, "WORLD WAR I SHORTS DOES IT MATTER?", 14-18 NOW, last modified July 28, 2014, accessed July 10, 2017, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/commissions/does-it-matter/>.

6. Boyd Tonkin for *Independent* newsgroup, "A History of the First World War in 100 moments: Sarajevo, 28 June 1914 and the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that started it all", April 3, 2014, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://ind.pn/2tFYLYKY>.

7. Research and Publishing Group of the New Zealand Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "British Empire - 1914 Facts", New Zealand History, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/united-Kingdom-Facts>.

Disability, then, is no longer remote and something that happens only to other people. So many of us are descendants of those men and women; the disability of WW1 is familiar in more than one sense. These statistics and rationale became the motif and driving ambition behind the animation.

Two stages of video production were undertaken. To enable the scripting and directing process, a rough intermediate video, called a 'previs' (short for 'pre-visualisation'), was designed using First World War photography and basic sound. Such sketch-like information videos are commonly produced and important in both feature film and computer game production. Not only do they save expenditure, they are creatively very effective. From my previs I was able to set mood and timing, and to test emotional responses, as well as ordering the narrative and detailing the assets and processes needed to complete the final work. Audio for the work was also produced in two stages, with Stage One being experimental and indicative. Different musical styles were tested against the previs until a final selection was made. Additionally, whilst still in the preproduction phase, experiments with sound effects took place. In Stage Two, a classical work from the period was selected and the composition was performed and recorded by the Enigma String Quartet. The music was deliberately left untreated, allowing it to sound more spontaneous and unprocessed, thus more in keeping with the 1910s. In this way the final work was composed and prepared to a broadcast standard, the pre-production phase providing a clear iterative transitional workflow to the final finished work.

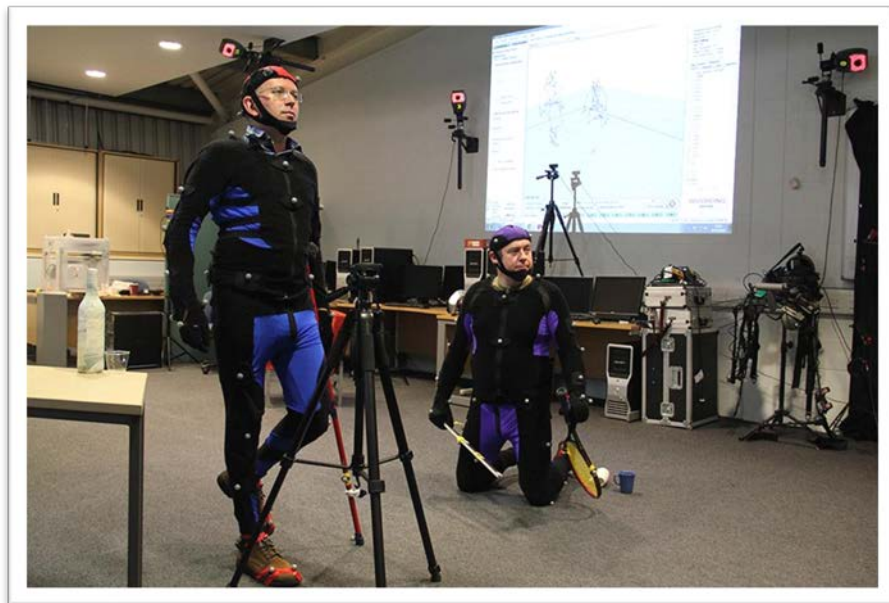


Figure 2 – Ghosts: motion capture at Teesside University (2014)

As with *Motion Disabled*, I set up and directed a small and very experienced motion-capture team, 3D animators, and audio post-production engineers to complete the final work. At the start of the *Ghosts* project I was asked to consider the aim of the *14-18 NOW* programme; this included creating intelligent responses to WW1 whilst reflecting on the artists involved in that war a century ago, those whose outputs are critical to our current understanding of the events of that time. *14-18 NOW* stated on their website in 2017 that:

Perceptions of the war have been shaped to a great extent by the artists of the time ... many of whom served, and who reflected on the war and its effects. Their work had a profound and lasting impact.⁸

I was concerned to develop a work could not easily be seen as nationalistic or a glorification of war. Before I was commissioned, the installation of *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* by Paul Cummins and Tom Piper, in which over 800,000 red poppies were installed at the Tower of London, launched. I was working in Cork, Ireland, at the time and it was fruitful to discuss the work in an international context. Many people considered it to be nationalistically British. Jonathan Jones, writing in *The Guardian*, described it as a 'UKIP-style memorial'.⁹ These discussions occurred prior to the release of *Ghosts* and acted as warning signals for me, given that I was busy with the development of a project that I wanted to be firmly anti-nationalistic and utterly lacking the 'glory' of war. Jenny Kidd of Cardiff University and Joanne Sayner of Newcastle University, considering Cummins' and Piper's work, relate how the Government, involved as it was in the process of developing *14-18 Now*, were asked to reconsider how 'gender, conscientious objectors and the role of Commonwealth soldiers' could be best marked.¹⁰ It is interesting that it transpired that the element of disability was not at first considered. Body counts, land and

8. 14-18 NOW, "Who We Are", 14-18 NOW, accessed July 10, 2017, <https://www.1418now.org.uk/about>

9. "The Tower of London poppies are fake, trite and inward-looking – a Ukip-style memorial", *Guardian*, October 28, 2014, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/jonathanjonesblog/2014/oct/28/tower-of-london-poppies-ukip-remembrance-day>

10. Jenny Kidd and Joanne Sayner, "Unthinking remembrance? Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red and the significance of centenaries", *Cultural Trends* 27, no. 2 (April 2, 2018): 68-82, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09548963.2018.1453448>.

countries lost and won, and similar such cold statistics become the main headline features of a conflict.

Siegfried Sassoon refers to the returned disabled soldier in his eponymous poem, *Does it Matter?* His composition considers the on-going physical and psychological impacts of war on veterans, and it challenges the so-called glory of war and the propaganda surrounding the veteran survivor.¹¹ It wonders at the heroic status credited to those who have fought, often in complete contrast to their actual day-to-day lives as disabled survivors.

Does it matter? – losing your legs?...
 For people will always be kind,
 And you need not show that you mind
 When others come in after hunting
 To gobble their muffins and eggs.
 Does it matter? – losing your sight?...
 There's such splendid work for the blind;
 And people will always be kind,
 As you sit on the terrace remembering
 And turning your face to the light.
 Do they matter? – those dreams from the pit?...
 You can drink and forget and be glad,
 And people won't say that you're mad;
 For they know that you've fought for your country
And no one will worry a bit.

I was asked to reflect on Sassoon's poem. While *Ghosts* is indeed a fictional digital work I wanted to be as authentic as possible in my approach. However, I was constricted by a small budget and time frame; these factors in particular necessitated a reduction in the diversity of the soldiers, medical staff, and their movements represented in the work. WW1 lies outside my immediate knowledge and experience so a period of research in both museums and specific WW1

11. University of Oxford, "Siegfried Sassoon: Does it Matter?", The First World War Poetry Archive, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/ww1lit/education/tutorials/intro/sassoon/does/does>

photographic libraries was undertaken.¹² I was not particularly familiar with battledress, locations, transportation and the communication methods used at the time. Critically, this research also informed the narrative and specific action as well the nature of digital props and scene locations that improved the authenticity of the final work. I chose to locate my caste in a peaceful space – nevertheless, with the *matériel* and vehicles of war all around them.



Figure 3 – Ghosts: Pigeon Loft scene (2014)

Key animation points such as the *Pigeon Loft* (Figure 3) and the *Cigarette Exchange* (Figure 4) scenes were developed from this research. I was aware that pigeons were a vital communication method in the War (in fact, also in WWII), but I was previously unaware that saloon-style cars were adapted to become portable pigeon lofts, or that pigeons were carried around in boxes on the backs of soldiers. This research led to deeper engagement, intelligent and relevant scripts, and improved motion-capture direction. When I developed the project, I specified that the music be contemporaneous with the War and that the composer must also have been involved in the War. I contracted strings specialist Ellen Brookes as my musical director; she went on to suggest Arthur Bliss's¹³ composition *String Quartet*

12. "Vintage Photographs", Firstworldwar.com - a multimedia history of World War I, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/photos/>.

13. Robert Weedon, "War Composers - Arthur Bliss", The Music of World War I, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.warcomposers.co.uk/bliss.html>.

in *A Major* for use in the work. Bliss was injured in the War in 1916; his composition was contemporaneous and matched the timing and mood suggested by the pre-vis.



Figure 4 – *Ghosts: Cigarette Exchange* (2014)

I desired that *Ghosts* from the outset be both stylistically attractive and believable. Believability is a key aim in realistic motion capture. If motion is seen to be believable, as opposed to ‘cartoony’ or ‘clunky’, it supports the perception of credibility in the final work. As discussed earlier the provision of a motive is critical in motion-capture acting. Intention directs the actor and the animator. Brad Bird (writing in Ed Hooks *Acting for Animators*) explains that on watching animation, if you feel ‘fear, anger, empathy or a million other emotions’ it is through the performance ‘the animator is giving you’.¹⁴ As a motion-capture director, he and I share the same concerns because we are also animators and motion-capture is an integral part of the animator’s toolbox. I wanted, in presenting *Ghosts* to a national audience, to destabilise and diversify the familiar tropes of war commemoration. *Ghosts’* message of war-derived disability was subversive; I wanted to present this with a visual perspicuity. Any distraction through poor motion or lack of realism overall could have collapsed the overall illusion of the work.

Secondly, because disability is absent from many ‘war’ museums, I wanted the virtual work I was making to appeal to a range of international institutions.

14. Ed Hooks, *Acting For Animators* (N.p.: Taylor & Francis, 2017), VI.

Authenticity, I believe, added to the work gravitas, which I hoped would make it more appealing to institutional curators and directors.

In *Ghosts* I endeavoured to make the positive case for disability to be considered culturally and physically within the context of a war museum. Ana Carden-Coyne is co-Director of the Centre for the Cultural History of War at the University of Manchester, UK. Her writing in *Re-Presenting Disability – Activism and Agency in the Museum* questions the lack of disability representation in collections concerned with war, asking: 'If war museums are conduits of memory, why do many museums forget the reality that one of war's major outcomes is not just death, but maiming.'¹⁵ *Ghosts* affirmed war disability in a national broadcast to a large audience as well as separately and again to a large and targeted international Facebook audience.¹⁶ Despite these positive audiences, positioning *Ghosts*, post-the Channel 4 broadcast, within a museum context has been problematic. I contacted more than thirty war-related museums internationally, in an experiment to assess their interest in using *Ghosts*. I was – unusually, I believe, in my practice – unsuccessful in securing a war museum-related exhibition. I also accept that I am broadly unfamiliar with the war-museum context and that my study was unscientific.

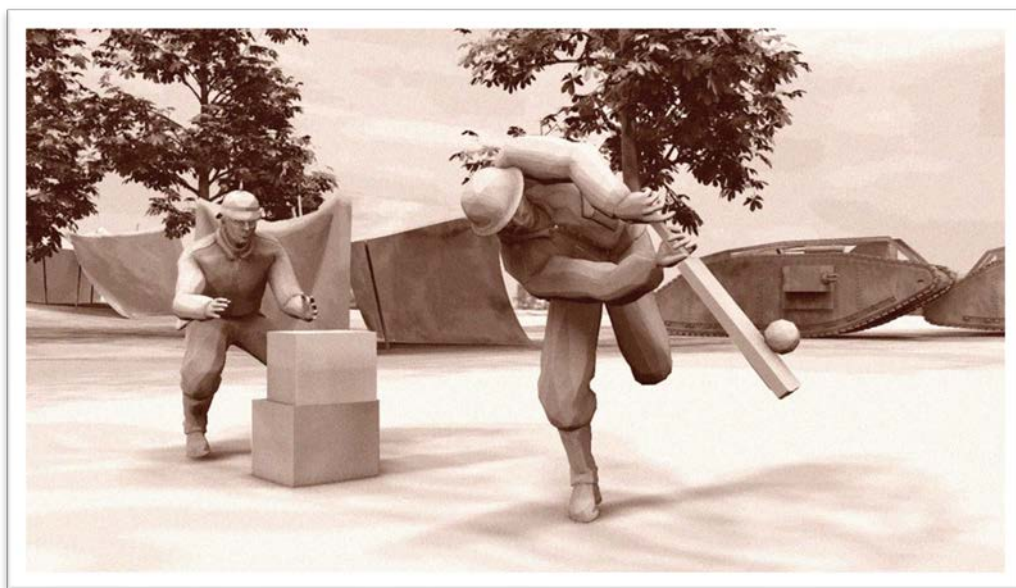


Figure 5 – *Ghosts: Cricket scene (2014)*

15. Ana Carden-Coyne, "Ghosts in the War Museum", in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group., 2010), 68.

16. 18,724 people reached with 10,074 views of the work over the advertising period.

I believe *Ghosts* is an authentic and fitting commemoration of World War I. It reflects upon Sassoon's poem in detail and forms an intelligent twenty-first-century response to the War. The work was premiered on Channel 4 and positioned prominently on related websites, achieving mainstream viewing figures. John Hay, Commissioning Editor for Arts at Channel 4, said:

This feels like an appropriate day to thank you for the wonderful shorts that are now gracing the Channel 4 website. I had high hopes when we commissioned them, but I've been knocked out by the work you've come back with – the films are beautiful, subtle, clever and moving and as a whole, it feels like they're addressing a too-often neglected part of the WWI story in a really creative and (rightly) challenging way. I'm very proud we can show them...¹⁷

Ghosts is my personal memorial; it borrows from the production concepts and practice of computer game trailers and silent film. That it was selected for use and distributed by both 14-18NOW and Channel 4 was a significant achievement.. As dramatic entertainment it achieved public recognition and challenged in a very public manner the standard remembering of war, which ignores, as Carden-Coyne suggests, the war disabled:

In the global war commemoration culture, there are few memorials dedicated to men and women disabled in conflicts, whether combatants or civilians.¹⁸

Impact, Sharing and Dissemination of the Work

It was first showcased on Channel 4 in July 2014 (my viewing figures estimated at 0.25 million) and was made available on Channel 4's internet catch-up portal 4OD thereafter. It was linked through to other sites including the main *14-18 NOW*

17. John Hay, "FW: Thank you", e-mail message to Judith Knight, August 4, 2014.

18. Carden-Coyne, "Ghosts in the War Museum", 66.

website, where it was regularly positioned on the front page throughout 2014 and 2015, and is still available in 2019.¹⁹

Achieving a worldwide audience in this manner carries significance. Following the Channel 4 broadcast, the film went on to be exhibited in more intimate settings and in particular at film festivals, some of which are detailed below. *Ghosts* and the other works in the commissioned series won an award for Performance under Ten Minutes at the *Picture This* film festival, Calgary, Canada in March 2015. The jury commented on the series, saying that it was:

An eclectic series exploring war from a point of view seldom seen in mainstream media ... informing and entertaining ... very powerful and engaging ... sound was amazing and visuals were powerful ... the spoken word component is moving and the images are striking.²⁰

Ghosts was showcased at the opening event of the *Unlimited Impact* Festival, September 2014, at the South Bank Centre in London. Furthermore, it has been shown at various film festivals, including at the Athens Film Festival 2015, featured as part of the *War Stories* collection on Sunday, 5 April 2015. It was exhibited in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival during August 2015 at the Summerhall Gallery,²¹ programmed by arts producer Jo Verrent. In an email Verrent commented on her selection of the work thus:

Ghosts was timely, poignant - and as one would expect from a work by Simon McKeown - both technically and aesthetically beautiful. By focusing on the impact of war and the unsensational realities of the levels of impairment it creates, *Ghosts* presents us with a very different reading making obvious the human cost of our actions. It's a great short and has impacted emotionally with audiences, getting them to think again about both

19. Channel 4, "Does It Matter? World War I Shorts", Channel 4, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/Does-It-Matter-World-War-I-Shorts/articles/all/background>.

20. *Picture this film festival* (Calgary: Picture This film festival, 2015), accessed July 10, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2sVYOFi>.

21. Summerhall, "Unlimited - 5th August – 5th October 2015". Summerhall Festival 2015, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://festival15.summerhall.co.uk/exhibition/unlimited/>.

disability and war, and the obvious links between the two that for the most part are consistently overlooked.²²

The work featured in the Respect Human Rights Film Festival (2017), Belfast, where it received an award. It was also awarded First Place in the Non-Documentary Division of the film festival, *Cinema Touching Disability* (2016), Texas, USA. Experimental promotion *via* Facebook proved very positive with many viewers leaving moving comments. Approximately 18,000 people viewed the work over a two-week trial.

Was born during Second World War and saw many disabled service men on the streets as I got older. Did not realise then what they endured. Very moving video.²³

Following the launch of *Ghosts*, I worked with City of Wolverhampton's prime disability organisation Outside Centre to mentoring them in the history of the WW1 disabled legacy through arts and technology; supporting them in acquiring HLF funding and in exploring other areas of interpretation and expression of the experience. My focus on the fifteen or more million people (our ancestors) disabled by WW1 exposed and countered the prevailing WW1 'industry' narrative that only considers the victorious and heroic dead. Initially shown on Channel 4, *Ghosts* is, I believe, a captivating, provocative and ultimately moving film which has won several international awards and is an insightful and challenging comment on disability and war.

22. Jo Verrent, "Ghosts", e-mail message to author, July 8, 2017.

23. Gerald Willis, Facebook update, July 4, 2016, 19:16, <https://www.facebook.com/SimonMcKeownArtist/?ref=bookmarks>.

Picture Credits

Figure 1

Ghosts: Waving from a tank, 3D animation motion capture. Credit © McKeown (2014).

Figure 2

Photograph of motion capture actors Simon McKeown and Tim Brunton, at Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK. Credit © McKeown with photograph by David Cockburn (2014).

Figure 3

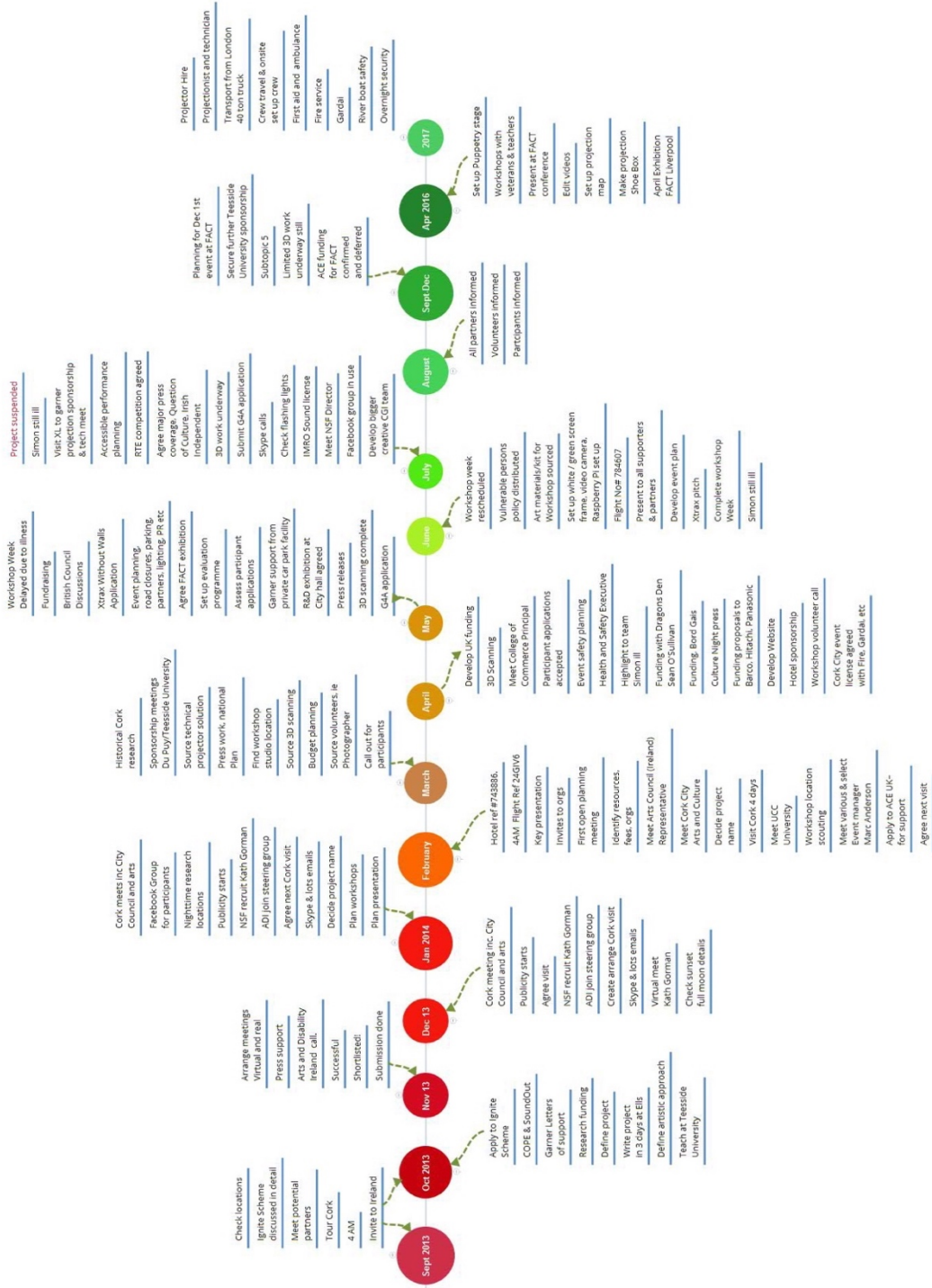
Ghosts: Pigeon Loft, 3D animation motion capture. Credit © McKeown (2014).

Figure 4

Ghosts: Cigarette exchange, 3D animation motion capture. Credit © McKeown (2014).

Figure 5

Ghosts: Cricket, 3D animation motion capture. Credit © McKeown (2014).



Chapter 6

Project - Cork Ignite

Links

www.corkignite.com/videos

<http://adiarts.ie/artists/commissioning/ignite/cork-ignite/>

<https://vimeo.com/233303119> - Password Ignite



Figure 1 – Cork Ignite, 3D Press Image (2015)

Cork Ignite was a major, free, public art outdoor event held on Friday, 18 September 2015 in the city centre of Cork, Ireland.¹ Closed to traffic, the white art-deco style College of Commerce became the epicentre of a thirty-minute event that playfully entertained the large audience on a beautiful evening, after dark. Colourful moving images projected in high intensity lit up the building, transforming the architectural space. Virtual flowers and vines climbed the building walls – only later for the entire building virtually to collapse. A badly behaved cartoon cuckoo took ownership of the façade, which later featured an exploration of a seventeenth-century map and human shadow-puppetry performance. Crashes and bangs accompanied collapses as windows opened and turned and dancers appeared and dissolved, courtesy of digital special effects. The River Lee, just metres in front of

1. Simon McKeown, "Cork Ignite", last modified June 1, 2015, accessed July 3, 2017, <http://www.corkignite.com>.

the building, virtually flooded whilst disabled actors floated by inside air bubbles. *We Are Still Here* appeared in Braille and text across the building canvas. The many and variously coloured buildings of Cork made speedy appearances, along with a 1970s disability car. Conceived as a public artwork, the work was tailored to suit a large and diverse 10,000-strong audience attending what was the culmination of Cork's involvement in the all-island *Culture Night Ireland* celebration of culture.²

In 2013 I designed *Cork Ignite* as a video projection event. It went on to be presented in almost complete darkness onto the whole frontage, 60 metres wide by 18 metres tall, of Cork College of Commerce. The work was not constructed as a singular narrative; rather, approximately fifteen short video 'vignettes' were combined to form the totality. *Cork Ignite* was a significant advance to my outdoor projection experience, with particular reference to *Motion Disabled* at Leeds Light Night, Leeds (2009), *Motion Disabled* at DaDaFest, Liverpool (2010), *Prometheus Awakes*, London and Stockton (2012) and *M21*, Much Wenlock (2012). The project was supported by Patrick Fox, then Executive Director of Create Ireland (Create), Dublin,³ and Mary McCarthy, Director of the National Sculpture Factory (NSF).⁴ Fox had previously worked at the Foundation for Creative Arts and Technology (FACT) in Liverpool and was aware of my work, thus held an ambition to commission me.⁵ Pádraig Naughton, Executive Director of *Arts and Disability Ireland* (ADI), provided a platform through the *Ignite*⁶ scheme with support from The Arts Council (Ireland).⁷ Naughton said of *Ignite* that:

Ignite represents the single largest investment in the arts and disability sector ever. It is an opportunity to dream big and make real, new and

2. Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, "Culture Night", Culture Night, accessed July 3, 2017, <https://www.culturenight.ie>.

3. Arts and Disability Ireland, "arts and disability commissions", Ireland Ignite, accessed July 10, 2017, http://irelandignite.ie/?page_id=35.

4. The National Sculpture Factory (NSF), "The National Sculpture Factory", Home Page, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://nationalsculpturefactory.com/>.

5. FACT, "Foundation for Art and Creative Technology", FACT, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.fact.co.uk/>.

6. ADI, "Commissions - Ignite", Arts and Disability Ireland, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.adiarts.ie/news/ignite>.

7. "The Arts Council (Ireland)", The Arts Council, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.artscouncil.ie/home/>.

innovative work by artists with disabilities, on a scale previously never before seen in Ireland.⁸



Figure 2 – Countdown showing 39:55:23 mins/secs to go (2015)

Cork Ignite was presented using an array of six of the largest professional outdoor video projectors in Europe (Figure 2). Lights on an industrial scale of 240,000 Lumens were projected onto the Cork College of Commerce facade. This unique event was a one-off happening, bespoke for the location, and therefore could not be repeated elsewhere. In September 2013 I was invited to Cork and met with NSF, Cork City Council, and The Arts Council (Ireland) which led to me devising the work which took . A successful application to the *Ignite* scheme followed, which led to the seed funding of €60,000 euros being awarded. Working with McCarthy and Fox, this seed funding developed into the final project.

In January 2014, I was informed that the application for the *Ignite* scheme had been successful. The National Sculpture Factory (NSF) was to act as the local host and *Create*, the national host. Pádraig Naughton of ADI had stated throughout the *Ignite* scheme the wish that the commissioned work should be innovative and that the artists should 'dream big'. Committed to achieving this, I set about creating a project which took Naughton's comment to heart and that had collaboration with disabled artists at its core. I wanted to reclaim a space (physically and conceptually) within

8. ADI, "Commissions - Ignite", Arts and Disability Ireland.

culture for the practical development and delivery of a socially-engaged outdoor work led by disabled people, matching all comparative mainstream protocols throughout the project timeline. As an educationalist, I sought to offer an exciting and complex learning opportunity to a disadvantaged group. I wanted to create a new project template that could define best practice within the unique outdoor setting I was addressing. Finkelpearl comments succinctly in his writing that:

Pragmatist philosophers and cooperative artists share an abiding anti-elitism, a belief that philosophy, art, and pedagogy can and should be created for and with all strata of society.⁹

Cork Ignite was directed by me and it featured a participant group of disabled artists from the Cork and the wider Munster region. Fifteen disabled people, some from the disability organisation COPE Foundation, contributed to the visual element of the project. Further, another ten disabled sound artists from Cork-based disability music organisation Sound Out and Suisha Inclusive Arts, a community based Cope Foundation arts initiative, created two audio tracks used in the final production. Ten volunteers supported the project and the workshops, busy as photographers, art assistants, and personal assistants. A further thirty volunteers assisted in the event itself in the necessary tasks of volunteer security, videographers, and photographers.

As a veteran of the computer graphics industry, I was not interested in undertaking a demanding computer-based project nor technical exercises for their own sakes. Socially-engaged disability art was my interest. My aim therefore was to create the largest disability-led and infused public artwork featuring a consortium of disabled people that I was able to. I sought from the outset deliberately to 'position' the overall work and the disabled creative team within the full strata of a project akin, in terms of social capital, to a major mainstream event. I was motivated by an experimental model of engagement, which Finkelpearl describes thus:

9. Tom Finkelpearl, *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 361.

If expanded democracy is modelled on social cooperation, why not explicitly use this flow to generate art that is itself a process of discursive meaning creation through cooperative action?¹⁰

In *Cork Ignite* that meant, firstly, that any participant could potentially contribute to the work at any appropriate level. Secondly, it was assumed that every aspect of the project would be completed with integrity and at the highest standard possible. Simply ticking a disability box was never an option. Thirdly, the team, the project story and the background would all be 'positioned' to take over Cork with a spectacular work. We, the creators and support team and structure, required that our unified programme be treated with respect; the sheer professionalism, scale, and extravagance of the event demanded this. In so doing we expanded the breadth and depth of communication around disability: the project was not one of vanity – rather, it was an arts intervention that also happened to be a disability arts intervention. As a result the media, the press, and public bodies such as Cork City Council reacted seriously to the work. I stressed throughout the programme the need for equity, within both the creative teams themselves and the supporting infrastructure. Quite often, disability art, theatre and television are poorly resourced. In working according to the above principles, I sought to create a more level playing field because I believe in equality across differences, thus any difference, such as disability, demands its own full systematic and nuanced support.

The *Cork Ignite* production team (Figure 3), which I describe later, identified 19 September 2014, the day of the prestigious all-island *Culture Night Ireland* cultural celebration, as the event date.¹¹ The project quickly became the major signature and culminating event of the Cork and Munster region. One significant aim was therefore already established, as the project was positioned within a mainstream culture setting as the primary leading event. At this point this was both exciting and worrying, because at the onset of the project, the seed budget was not sufficient to complete the project. As a project team, we quickly held one of our most important public meetings at the NSF in Cork. As a core management team, we invited all of the potential key stake-holders (approximately 15 organisations) to an event that not only summarised my aims and ambitions, but, crucially, laid out the broad project

10. Finkelpearl, *What We Made*, 360.

11. Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs, "Culture Night"..

plan including intended participants and beneficiaries. Cork City Council Arts Department, Cork City Fire Brigade and local disabled organisations such as Sound Out and COPE all attended. We, as a project management team, reached out to them and received broad support, enabling the plan to move forward. Further similar meetings took place, with attendees including Cork College of Commerce and KBC Bank. Separately in the UK I presented to XL Video and secured their technical skills and support – at a substantial discount, which significantly help green light the project.



Figure 3 – The Cork Ignite Production Team (2015)

In this way we built partnerships with Union Quay Car Park Management Ltd, 3D scanning company Focus Surveys, Triskel Arts Centre, River Lee Hotel, CIT School of Music, Crawford Art Gallery, Cork Education and Training Board, and others. Each organisation was represented by a person or team and they became our allies and part of, as artist Wodiczko would describe our inner audience. All these supporting partners were vital to the overall enterprise in different and equally vital ways, and ensured that the project went ahead. During my regular visits to Cork, and *via* the team at many other times, we built a critical mass of support. Our internal connections were constantly building. At every step our engagement led to further development and further engagement. As a team we were conscious of the community with which we were interacting and also building. As the artist behind the project I was aware that I had staked my creative, technical, and disability art reputation on the project and that I needed to provide strong and clear guidance. Pablo Helguera comments that:

This is a difficult task, and it tends to generate anxiety for the artist, who is under pressure to provide a strong framework for interaction while making a work that is conceptually original, provocative, and distinctive. Both goals are hard to accomplish by themselves, and the complication escalates once we bring more people into the picture, with their own ideas and interests.¹²

I quickly established a relaxed framework, yet one within which I led and directed. I was clear that this was my project and as the director I had devised the original idea. Critically, I was the only person in the whole project who could validate the continuum of the creative technical process; in this approach I was fully supported by the core production team.

My concept of *Cork Ignite* required numerous permits and the contributions of many partner organisations. Because considerable effort needed to be invested in recruiting participants and volunteers, this effort became an essential element of the 'work'. This meant that I was simultaneously a co-organiser of *Cork Ignite*, the initiator, artist/director, and creative technologist responsible for the end result. This ambassadorial role was essential in raising further support and finance. Technically and creatively I understood how and when it was appropriate to take input from the creative groups engaged to work with us, and how to interpret that work through the complex production chain outlined earlier. In this sense, the project was not absolutist in its socially-engaged approach, nor did it need to be. Finkelpearl contends that cooperation is not a qualifier of excellence:

If I'm proposing social cooperation as the name for this sort of art, does it follow that more cooperation makes the project better? I think not. The term is meant to be descriptive, not prescriptive.

A national project may, he says, be less cooperative, 'but that does not make it less important' he comments.¹³ As Helguera suggests, the 'collaborative process with a community requires a reflection on the terms under which the artist and the group

12. Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto Books, 2011), 55.

13. Finkelpearl, *What We Made*, 357.

will interact'.¹⁴ He also demonstrates that there must be a balance between 'creating critical dialogue and becoming simply a 'professional technician' for the community'.¹⁵ *Cork Ignite* strove to define an equilibrium from the outset. In the summer of 2014 I ran an open workshop. The creative team contributed ideas, made artwork, created narratives, and performed. The risks inherent in a week's work such as this are many, however. Too much or little structure can cause participants to become disengaged. Lack of training or skills and poor access can cause serious problems. There are ethical issues raised as well in collaborative practice which for instance include lack of buy in from the agencies involved, which can result in a cursory, tick the box approach to support.

To address these and other issues I asked that a professionalised approach be respected by all of the volunteer disciplines connected to the project. We advertised volunteer project roles across Cork, seeking disabled artists, art assistants, and documentary photographers. All applicants were asked to fill in either a form or the video application – a method tailored to (and supported if needed) for each person, including those learning-disabled – which also contained background information on the project. Applicants had to be invested in the project, and involved in the project not because of their disability, 'but because they were interested'.¹⁶ No one was assigned to the project by default. Through selecting this method, we recruited a diverse team and sought to ensure that each collaborator had a strong and vested interest in the project – of course, with appropriate support as needed. Indeed, all of the volunteers actually volunteered. They put themselves forward, based on an assessment of their support teams around, while retaining their own agency. We adopted a vulnerable persons' policy equivalent to UK standards. All participants were over the age of 18 and able to make informed choices, in some cases with support or interpretation, as required. In my workshop approach I was happy to give enough time for each single concept to emerge indeed time and conceptual space became a feature of the workshop and project. There was no pressure to perform, paint, draw, or to be qualitatively judged. Participants were asked to develop ideas.

14. Helguera, *Education for Socially*, 55.

15. *Ibid.*, 59.

16. Quoting Mary McCarthy, Director of NSF, in DCTV's, "Ignite Documentary Series", Dublin Community TV, accessed July 13, 2017, <http://www.dctv.ie/ignite-documentary-series-2/>. Please also see <https://vimeo.com/233303119> (password Ignite) for the full 30 minute documentary



Figure 4 – Cork Ignite participants during the workshop period (2014)

I specified in the initial funding application that I would develop the overall schema with such a creative group in workshops, and that this collaboration would inform elements of the final projected work. Workshops were designed in order to avoid using computers, which are physically and creatively exclusive. I wanted to create a physical space that anyone could use. Using new learning and research I was able to situate the floor as a canvas, I was able to teach stop-frame animation, shadow puppetry, and much more. Featuring a basic diagram of the building facade to scale, people moved across the white canvas in a manner of their choosing. In the ceiling above the floor, I placed a bespoke stop-frame animation camera solution, constructed for the project, to record their work. Access was therefore as equitable as possible.



Figure 5 – Workshop participants working on the floor canvas (2014)

Additionally, in the workshop studio in Cork, I set up green screen and white screen facilities. Both approaches can be used to create special effects and also to isolate characters from their background. As the workshop developed we agreed to arrive in fancy dress in support of various narrative propositions. I also agreed with the team to use their physical performances in the work, which meant that recording in this manner offered the greatest flexibility. Shadow puppetry and other materials of professional television production standards were also recorded.



Figure 6 - Diarmuid O'Leary preparing to be an angel (2014)

The workshop period lasted a week and included guided talks at the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork. I worked directly with each participant over this stage to ascertain the interests of every individual. For example, Diarmuid O'Leary, a learning-disabled adult, was very interested in the 'Fall of the Rebel Angels', a painting by Samuel Ford.¹⁷ He understood the narrative of the painting very well; Diarmuid appeared in *Cork Ignite* as a shadowy angel, using props he himself devised. Aoife O'Sullivan revelled in dance and she appeared in the final work in a costume of her own making. Wheelchair-user Pat Mansell decided to explore the watery element of the location and arrived dressed in a full sub-aqua outfit. He appeared just so in the final work. I realised that Deaf artist Johnny Wallace, who was 75 years old at the

17. Crawford Art Gallery, "Home Page", Cork, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.crawfordartgallery.ie/index.html>.

time, was a shadow puppeteer. He came to the workshop with his own detailed props and costumes, creating work including playing his own music on an accordion.



Figure 7 - Johnny Wallace plays accordion casting a shadow (2014)

Cork Ignite was produced using state-of-the-art animation processes, as was described in the *Ghosts* and *Motion Disabled* sections. Motion capture was absent from *Cork Ignite*, thus there was greater emphasis on two-dimensional animation methodology; this I used to provide flat and semi- three dimensional work known as 2.5D. Hundreds of thousands of images were generated in a creative process that lasted around six months. These images were then combined into videos.



Figure 8 – Music workshop participants (2015)

Sound was a vital part of the production. Rough sound effects were added to rough-test videos then incrementally improved in a sound production studio. Separately, musician Cian Walsh led workshops, for which I had prepared a brief, to produce two tracks: one to accompany a 'vignette' video, and another to be created (without visual direction) of the group's own choice. The workshop took place with the support of Sound Out, a music organisation in Cork, and Suisha Inclusive Arts, utilising specialist accessible sound-wave technology. Through this, users with limited mobility are able to control audio devices; ten disabled participants could create the tracks that were later used and responded to in the final work. The music of blind Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan was also recorded for the project by the professional string quartet, Enigma Strings Quartet further embedding disability conceits, in this case historically interesting, into the project.

A whole collection of ideas, materials, and performances emerged from the visual workshop in which the diverse natures of the people attending were addressed. Ranging in age from 18 to 75, people were bipedal, wheelchair-based or with limited mobility, or with a learning disability. The final work was called *We Are Still Here* and consisted of three distinct elements interwoven throughout. One of the challenges of the work lay in its very nature: that of a large-scale public art event. In dramaturgical terms, I was clear that I needed to amuse, surprise, and perturb my audience, family-based as it was and with a very broad demographic, whilst maintaining my disability focus. I first provided architectural manipulation that allowed the spectator to engage with a playful virtual re-contextualisations of space and form. This became the first known component of the work. Secondly, I analysed the history of Cork and Ireland. Lastly, I referenced disability, either directly or tangentially, intertwining all three elements into a poetic visual work. The work, as earlier mentioned, was formed around a core of ideas, many derived or performed by workshop artists; they developed into a collection of around fifteen short videos with sound. Each short vignette had its own motif, contributing to an overall performative flow that was mapped and orchestrated, its pace, action, and emotion all carefully considered.

Once the video and audio processes were complete, highly specialised and expensive projection technologies and engineering techniques were deployed to realise the final work *in situ*. Readers may be familiar with large-scale outdoor

projection events such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Concert, which featured the musicians *Madness* and a very accurately mapped (or placed) large-scale projection onto Buckingham Palace.¹⁸ To achieve such precision in accuracy, the facade of the Palace was scanned with lasers. Lasers allow very fine measurements to be taken; from these calculations, the building was re-created in 3D in a computer. This model was used as the template from which to project video images back onto the Palace using a methodology called Projection Mapping. Also, a team of computer graphics artists worked to produce the projected animated and live-action video materials whilst a team of engineers controlled a complex array of many very large video projectors and their associated technical structure.



Figure 9 – Hand spells out '1 in 5' on the College of Commerce (2015)

The building's architecture was temporarily transformed during the performance, with windows, blocks, and bricks virtually manipulated. The process of overlaying the virtual image exactly over the real creates a situation in which spatial effects can be made to perturb the senses. Suspension of disbelief is central to this effect - itself determined by the accuracy and realistic shadowing of objects. Projection mapping allows a virtual 3D depth of image to be presented. Undertaken well, it is far more convincing and enjoyable than 3D cinema, from which the production processes are entirely different. Projection mapping, supported by audio and sound

18. "Animating the palace", BBC News, accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-18356814>.

effects, is very convincing to a live audience. *Cork Ignite* made full use of this phenomenon.

I have offered this state-of-the-art example as a method of comparing it directly with the production of *Cork Ignite*, which utilised the same state-of-the-art equipment, processes, and standards, albeit in a slightly smaller form.



Figure 10 – First alignment image on the College of Commerce (2015)

Socially engaged art has received criticism from Bishop regarding its artistic merit. Disability art has also been accused of operating in a ‘cultural ghetto’ by Koppers, who comments that ‘if the artistic activities of the minority identity group are either ignored or sidelined by the majority, then it is possible to refer to the existence of a cultural ghetto’.¹⁹ Such comments indicate that both the socially engaged art and disability art are potentially considered to be creative cultural silos. Such hazardous territory is one that I have experienced, which I why I place so much emphasis on process, standards, and commitment. I deliberately set out to ensure that *Cork Ignite* was not ‘isolated and unknown to the indifferent mainstream’ by deliberately

19. Petra Koppers, *Studying Disability Arts and Culture: An Introduction* (Houndmills, Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 35.

'seeking involvement or critical attention'.²⁰ Part of its impact is in breaking into the mainstream and out the ghetto that Koppers refers to, through an innovative the delivery of an innovative socially engaged process that delivered a massive public art spectacle.



Figure 11 – Crowd gathering for Cork Ignite (2015)

Cork Ignite set out to claim a public presence for a social engaged disability art project. It did so in the media; public reaction to the work was overwhelmingly positive. Press images and articles featured in all of the main Irish newspapers, both locally and nationally, and news articles appeared on Irish TV and Irish Radio. Social media were also alive with references both beforehand and afterwards. The project also set out to stake the claim for a symbolic physical presence for those involved. All of the participants in both the visual and audio workshops also attended in their own 'crew' t-shirts. They, as a unit, simply ignited the event, as assessor Broderick described:

Another instance of this provisional inclusive space was evident when prior to the projection participants from COPE Foundation dispersed into the crowd to form a cohesive circle of break-dancers throwing their best shapes at each other to pounding rhythms. This infectious enthusiasm set an

20. Koppers, *Studying Disability*, 35.

affective atmosphere for the reception of the work that evening and afterwards.²¹

We undertook an event night access audit in Cork; this identified a number of potentially problematic issues and we devised their solutions. We wanted to ensure safe and intelligent diverse access. As a result we provided for anyone with a form of mobility impairment – plus companion – a safe and appropriate viewing position, along with a written description of the event's sound for Deaf people and live audio description *via* the University College Cork's radio station of the event for those with visual impairments. Cork City Council provided a world-wide live video streaming. Safety was paramount: ambulances, police, fire, and event river safety boat were on standby. I consider the meticulous and accessible presentation of the final work to be a significant exemplar and powerful benchmark to which other cultural productions may aspire. Sandahl argues that 'Democracy at its best requires the participation of all its diverse citizens' and the assembling of both performers and audience 'requires acute attention and commitment to detail'.²² To give an indication of what that meant in Cork, I have further detailed those necessarily involved.

Disability projects need respect and levels of funding, as they are often under-resourced in all of the stages of the realisation of a project. From the onset I specified that *Cork Ignite* and all of its elements should be resourced and supported with a clear equality of resource, process, and promotional stature as are awarded to a mainstream project. Closing down part of a city centre to allow it to be filled by a huge live audience is a major undertaking. One of the most important people in any team working on events governed by considerations of public safety is the production manager. We recruited Marc Anderson, who had a significant track record in organising live events both within Europe and further afield, including *River Dance* for Michael Flatley.²³ *Cork Ignite* was produced by a small production team including me; the arts producer and project manager Kath Gorman, currently

21. Sheelagh Broderick, "Sheelagh Broderick on Cork Ignite", review of *Cork Ignite*, College of Commerce, Cork, *Create News Special*, January 2016, accessed January 2016, <http://www.create-ireland.ie/images/pdfs/create-news/Create-News-Special-Sheelagh-Broderick-Cork-Ignite.pdf>.

22. Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander, *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 585.

23. Michael Flatley, accessed January 31, 2017, <https://www.michaelflatley.com/>.

Director of Cork Midsummer Festival; Mary McCarthy, then Director of the National Sculpture Factory and her staff, along with Patrick Fox, then Director of Create.

As a team working together to deliver the project, we had a significant experience, connections, reputations, and thus influence. Creatively and technically I was supported by freelancer and lead computer artist Craig McMullen, along with David Archbold, Phillip Wray and Kameliya Minkova. Teesside University sound designer and engineer Nigel Crooks assisted me in the completion of the soundscape. I had worked extensively with Crooks on previous projects including *Ghosts*. XL Video, a leading international events service provider, provided support, engineering, and projection through their senior producer Paul Wood and video engineer James Cooksey. Amongst their many other clients *XL Video* have provided support to U2, Bon Jovi and Madonna. Finally, *Cork Ignite* worked directly with Cork City Council, The Arts Council of Ireland, Arts and Disability Ireland, and the Cork Police, Ambulance, Fire and River security services to ensure the timely, safe, and accessible delivery of the event.

I positioned *Cork Ignite*, with the team, professionally. By way of example: the location of the College of Commerce was mocked up in advance as a 3D computer image. It then became the main image for *Culture Night* in Cork, going on to be used nationally. To provide the audience with further project information, The Atrium Space at Cork City Hall held an additional exhibition on the background to the project in the week leading up to *Culture Night* and afterwards. During the installation and rehearsal period, we held a press reception. Photographs from this event were syndicated nationally and made use of by the national PR company employed to promote the event, further ensuring national coverage along with the media.

In conferences in the USA, South Korea, and the UK, I have listened to or been involved in discussions on the quality of disability artwork/artists in which I have had to contest the basic premises on which these were based. I have countered by proposing that assumptions of quality must be calculated against the multiple circumstances that create and constitute a level playing field. Disabled artists are diverse in their practice and abilities. The application of normative assumptions of quality, extrapolated from those with different circumstance, is detrimental and effectively occludes other voices, methods, and approaches. *Cork Ignite* set no such preconditions; as a result, all creative avenues were open and proven. (A

qualitative assessment of the final work was, however, requested by funders and was undertaken by independent consultant Dr Sheelagh Broderick which is referred to in this *Cork Ignite* and concluding chapter.) Quality issues still percolated through commissioning discussions, almost defensively. Remembering these conversations from meetings and conferences, I decided to turn this around. I wondered whether I could offer a creative journey of the highest order, using some of the most exclusionary and elitist (i.e. because of expense and technical skill) equipment and personnel at my disposal, to some of the most marginalised people in society, disabled people.

Production of work over the long term is always difficult. Real life often interferes, raising obstacles in some shape or form. In July 2014 I had to advise my team that I was very unwell, having contracted a virus. McCarthy and Fox had, as senior commissioners, experienced major delays in prior projects. The professional risks involved were investigated and collectively we decided to delay the project. When I recovered in January 2015, we, the management team, made the decision to proceed with *Cork Ignite on Culture Night* in September 2015, a delay of a full year. A series of meetings and presentations took place in Cork as soon as we were able to arrange them: we found that the level of enthusiasm had actually increased and not, as feared, diminished. The initial disappointment and the extended time-scale had allowed the situation to develop and mature. There was expanded engagement, for instance, in the musical element when a new group of disabled musicians were recruited to the project supported by *COPE*, *Sound Out* and *Suisha Inclusive Arts*. Social engagement was key to this support. The project supporters felt their 'ownership' and were affected by the work. The creative teams, both sound and vision, created their own 'Crew' identity and literally, physically, powered people to the event.

Critically, one-off performance-based projects are defended by their documentation, and this raises complex issues. An individual's physical presence throughout a project cannot be reduced to a video. In the case of *Cork Ignite*, the spectacle produced is environmental. I engage with buildings and visually, through the intensive manipulation of pixels, disturb their surfaces, twisting and changing their shapes. Despite a six-camera video recording of the event, reduction of it to the two-dimensional 'screen' destroys the tension established on site in a live situation. Although the work may look exciting, on film it now lacks the true dimensional depth and audience reaction. It is less adequate because it is not the experience itself.

Without this video, though, Bishop would ask what proof I have that the work existed and without documentation Bruce Nauman's *Wall Floor Positions* (1968) would be unknown to me. Audience reaction to a socially-engaged project as demonstrated in the form of social media can be vital in capturing the moment.

Cork Ignite was a safely presented, large-scale, interventionist disability art project that took over the skyline and radio airwaves of Cork. Heavily anticipated, it placed a disabled ensemble and their work centre stage in Ireland's second-largest city whilst creating an inclusive public space and entertainment. At the height of austerity Ireland, a team of four managed to engage with a community and secure support of over €100,000 to enable what I believe was largest disability arts event in Ireland to date. That we did so, securing personal and political support, speaks volumes of the importance of the project to Cork. During the closing event I was asked to speak, and I reiterated the importance of art and culture, 'something that we tear apart at our peril'.

The project timeline demonstrates a large number of meetings, and in particular interactions that occurred. Social relations developed and more supporters came on board, which led to a significant extra musical dimension, for instance, made evident in the Dublin documentary. New supporters and volunteers joined the project leading to an inner audience that supported the project, even while I was ill. The project became the artwork. *Cork Ignite* was an artwork that lasted two years and impacted on many people and agendas.

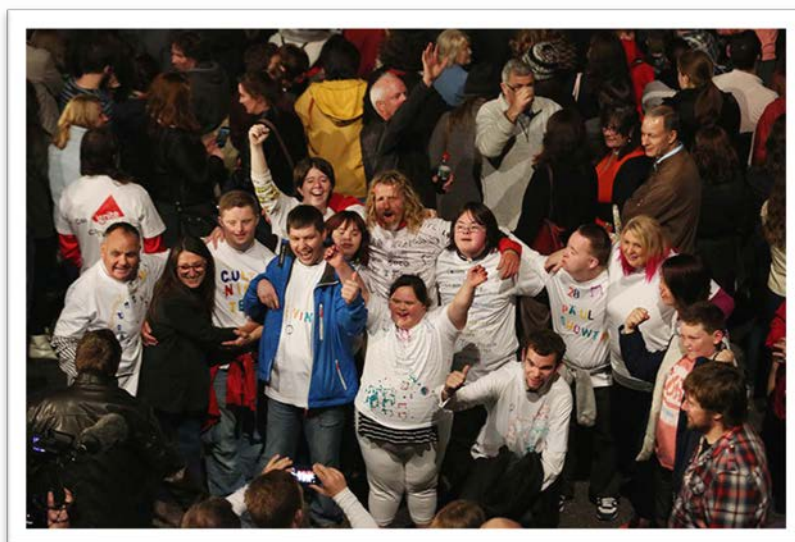


Figure 12 – Cork Ignite participating artists enliven the event

Impact, Sharing and Dissemination of the Work

During the production of *Cork Ignite* Susan Jackson, directed a television series entitled *Ignite* (see Vimeo link at the start of this chapter). In the work, she interviewed many of the people connected with the *Cork Ignite*. In interview, Mary McCarthy, the Director of the NSF, discussed how important the project had been. The work was 'memory making' and 'nobody is going to pass that building and see it in the same way'. She commented how the participants became 'invested' in the complex and collaborative work, not because of their disability, but critically because 'they were interested' and that the process of making the work was as important for NSF as the end product. Not only, she argued, had an incredible bond formed between the participants, but also a much closer relationship with City itself, including Cork City Council, Health Service Authority, Education Training Board, COPE and Sound Out. Concerning the work produced, McCarthy argues that it raised 'the bar in terms of languaging, producing, making sure that people understand that this work is up there, with the calibre with any other artists work we would produce'. McCarthy concludes stating that she wanted to see the *Cork Ignite* model of working as 'normal', and that 'it's about creating level platforms for everybody'.²⁴ Liz Meaney, of Arts Council (Ireland), said in a radio interview after the event that she 'thought it was a wonderful moment for culture and City ... it was just so exciting to see so many people come together in a public space and enjoy work of this quality'. Ailbhe Murphy, Director of Create (Dublin) said later in the same radio broadcast, that

I'm not sure that I have words to describe the extent of my kind of pleasure of what I've witnessed here this evening. I think the work is compelling, it was extraordinary, it opened up a whole vista for people in terms of a compelling, unique public artwork, that spoke of inclusivity, spoke of ambition, it spoke of making our public spaces in the city alive...and that can only add to a sense of value of people's experiences across all sorts of dimensions and all ranges of issues and life experiences and opens out for all of us the notion of inclusivity and makes for a richer Society.²⁵

24. Interview summarised and quoted from DCTV, "Ignite Documentary Series", Dublin Community TV, accessed July 13, 2017, <http://www.dctv.ie/ignite-documentary-series-2/>. - <https://vimeo.com/233303119> password Ignite

25. "UCC Radio - Cork Ignite Broadcast", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/ON8sQ5wBTgl>.

I particularly valued feedback from my participants who were interviewed by McCarthy separately after the workshop in 2014. (Please note I have tried to retain the use language as spoken with regard to all video transcription). Learning disabled artist Aoife O'Sullivan stated that she had enjoyed 'making faces of art' (referring to white/green screen video work) and that she 'really enjoyed the experience' and that 'my highlight of the year is working with Simon'.²⁶ Similarly, Nicky Byrne said 'I had a good week, the art is very good, I did funny pictures, diamonds and stuff (referring to working on the College template) and enjoyed 'the faces, making funny faces', a further reference to the white/green screen work.²⁷ Diarmuid O'Leary who acted as an angel in the final work said 'but I love everything, because I love the arts, the performing there make me amazing person, and ... I thought it was amazing, a great opportunity because this experience it brings it, we love, enjoy love and I will enjoy it those times'.²⁸ Konrad Fischer valued my creative approach, which was 'not get too structured and not to get too organized'.²⁹ The feedback to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive and spoke of how the group had bonded, which is evident I believe in the photographic documentation of the event. Fischer's dance prowess and open personality really helped to break the ice, as he put it, and to develop the group quickly. Individuals were personally affected in multiple ways. During the workshop week, I spent much time with participant Matthew Murphy discussing his educational options, and he went on to study and pass examinations in television production in Cork. Eve Soderland went on to pursue her manga and animation ambition. Similarly, I had complex discussions with volunteer videographer Sami Eltaib, whose family were recent refugees from Sudan. Following *Cork Ignite* Sami went on to work with Apple and is currently the Arabic QA Language Lead for the games company Activision in Dublin. Overall, I believe the workshop event was very important to the whole group.

26. "Aoife O'Sullivan in interview post Cork Ignite workshop", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, https://youtu.be/q6z_Ni3eeY0.

27. "Nicky Byrne post Cork Ignite workshop interview", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/XfkYXsf2nrE>.

28. "Diarmuid O'Leary in interview post Cork Ignite workshop", video file, YouTube, accessed May 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/wCKNif7UTnA>.

29. "Konrad Fischer post Cork Ignite workshop interview", video file, Youtube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/qw7qfnQkz0k>.

As I left Cork, I asked Valerie O'Sullivan, Director of Service with responsibility for Cultural Services, what *Cork Ignite* meant to the City of Cork. Given her very senior role in the whole process I have quoted her reply in full:

I felt honoured that this artist chose Cork City, and the story of how the work would be produced, incorporating the disability sector of the city, was almost too good to be true. But it was true, and a remarkable journey commenced, with a group of talented disabled artists, and a very small core team. The show they produced was incredible, and played to a sea of smiling, awestruck faces on Culture Night 2015. Afterwards, I was struck by the pride the artists rightly took in their work, and the good humour with which such a complex undertaking was produced. Fans of digital technology and design are still talking about the detailed, painstaking work that it took to produce *Ignite*. Those who know nothing of that still talk about the entertainment value of the show. And the people with disabilities who were involved will always be proud, not only of their work, but of the fact that their abilities were recognised in such a public way in their city. Cork businesses took the project to their hearts, and used its impressive images to promote the city and their own place within it. The involvement of Cork City Council could be seen by some as risky. For me it never was. It was a no-brainer – it will inform policy direction into the future; not only for the city's arts and culture programme, but for tourism development, social inclusion, economic development, marketing, and as a tech/digital hub.³⁰

In the audience for *Cork Ignite* was Irish politician Jerry Buttimer, Leader of Fine Gael in the Seanad, who commented on Twitter that:

Simon McKeown's animation light show for @CultureNight was just amazing @CorkCollege powerful stuff.³¹

Cork Ignite was a dramatic escalation of my, creative, technical and participatory practice. Following the event, TV news reports, a TV documentary, press articles, radio interviews and academic reviews of *Cork Ignite* were undertaken. *Cork Ignite*

30. "Cork Ignite", Email - June 7, 2016.

31. Jerry Buttimer, Twitter post, September 18, 2015, <http://www.corkignite.com/press/>.

was the culminating event of Culture Night Ireland in Cork and was perceived and delivered as a major, crucial, cultural watershed moment in the cultural history of Cork: the first of its kind in Ireland and one of the biggest public art events held in Cork to date in order to deliver for Cork a new status as a centre of cultural creativity in Ireland and Europe. I was very happy to have this work was referenced next to some of the world's most exciting outdoor street artists, Royal Deluxe, on the Outdoor Arts UK / Independent Street Arts Network (ISAN) website: the sector's website in the UK.³²

People with a learning disability developed content and were fully included in the creative process through artist-led workshops and introduction to the technology by directly. In addition, the learning – legacy and impact - from *Cork Ignite* was subsequently carried forward into a new concept exhibition entitled *Trace Elements* at the Foundation for Art and Creative Technology (FACT) in Liverpool (2016) that also included a further solo exhibition and conference directly to disseminate and reflect on the *Cork Ignite* work attended by international scholars and artists, including members of core group of disabled artists from Ireland. Additionally, I was invited to present at the international disability art conference, *Creative Connections: Arts and Disability, Conversation and Showcase* in Galway, Ireland, 2016, hosted by Arts and Disability Ireland, and at the international collaborative practice conference *With For About: Art, Activism & Community* hosted by the NPO Heart of Glass, St Helens 2017.

As a direct result of *Cork Ignite*, I was further invited to develop another two-year projection project building on my outdoor status and collaboration with disabled artists. I was commissioned to undertake another large-scale public projection, entitled *We Are Still Here*, by multiple partners, including St Helens Council, DaDaFest (Liverpool-based international biennial disability arts festival), led by Heart of Glass. Developing and utilising my Cork experience and research, St Helens (UK) Town Hall became the projection surface in a large-scale event developed exclusively with learning disabled adults. The event was launched by the city Mayor Pat Ireland and Phil Redmond CBE who was the Chair of the UK City of Culture Independent Advisory Panel.

32. "Home Page", Outdoor Arts UK, accessed May 18, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20181109031643/http://outdoorartsuk.org/>.

In a series of video interviews key partners, all of whom were aware of *Cork Ignite*, were asked about the 2018 St Helens work and its impact. I summarise below a selection of important issues raised. Sarah Bullock, Assistant Director of Vision and Change at St Helens Council was a major supporter of this commission specifically because it supported the council's vision of culture working towards regeneration, providing economic benefit, and offering health benefits, in deprived communities, creating pride in place as well as recognising minority groups which are integral to St Helens.³³ David Webster, Partnerships and Opportunities Manager for Buzz Hub St Helen Coalition for Disabled People described their involvement in the St Helens project as an 'unrealistic opportunity' which went on to impact on their aims and ambitions. 'The experience was so fantastic for them (members and participants) that they're forcing us to carry that experience forward'. Buzz Hub are altering their practice and creative and technical base to accommodate the learning and ambition developed through involvement in my St Helens project.³⁴ Ruth Gould, Artistic Director of DaDaFest, argued that there are 'too many messages around the negativity of being disabled' and that my work *We Are Still Here* made a very profound statement that challenged the role assigned to disabled people in society.³⁵ Patrick Fox, Director of Heart of Glass, suggested that the new project trail blazed international best practice and that 'it's a very bold statement, it's a disabled artist and disabled people of St Helen's, taking centre stage in the one-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the town ... in a bombastic way that's hard to ignore, it feels like it's a statement and it's an exciting one as well'.³⁶

33. "Sarah Bullock St Helens Council Interview", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/OSbljs6m0mY>.

34. "Dave Webster Interview Buzz Hub", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/cO9dkihQy0l>.

35. "Ruth Gould DaDaFest Interview", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://youtu.be/AjQl1H0Ppl0>.

36. "Patrick Fox Interview", video file, YouTube, accessed January 27, 2019, https://youtu.be/qr_D_9sRxmM.

Picture Credits

Figure 1

Cork Ignite 3D Press Image. Credit © McKeown with 3D image by David Cockburn, designed by McKeown (2015).

Figure 2

Countdown showing 39:55:23 mins/secs to go, onsite in Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Clare Keogh (2015).

Figure 3

Mary McCarthy, Simon McKeown, Marc Anderson, Kath Gorman, the *Cork Ignite* Production Team at the National Sculpture Factory, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown and photograph by Dobz O'Brien (2015).

Figure 4

Cork Ignite participants during the workshop period, at Triskell Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 5

Workshop participants working on the floor canvas, at Triskell Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 6

Diarmuid O'Leary preparing to be an angel, at Triskell Arts Centre, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 7

Jonny Wallace playing accordion for shadow screen, Cork, at Triskell Arts Centre, Cork. Credit © McKeown with photography by Claudia O'Keeffe (2014).

Figure 8

Music workshop participants, Cork, Ireland. Credit © Sound Out (2015).

Figure 9

3D hand spells out '1 in 5'. Live projected rehearsal image on the College of

Commerce, Cork, Ireland, Credit © McKeown with photograph by Clare Keogh (2015).

Figure 10

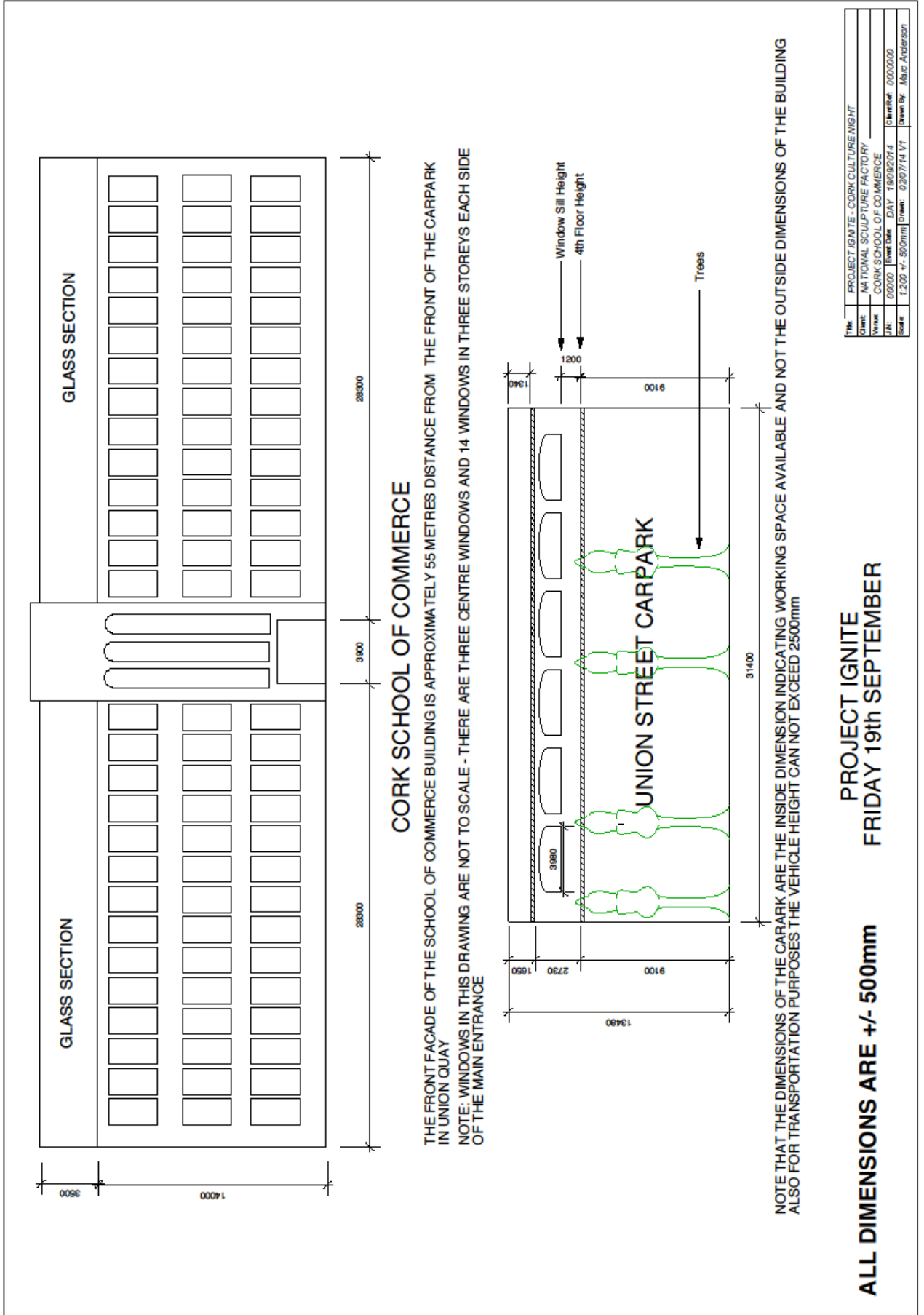
First projection alignment image on the College of Commerce, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photograph by Clare Keogh (2015).

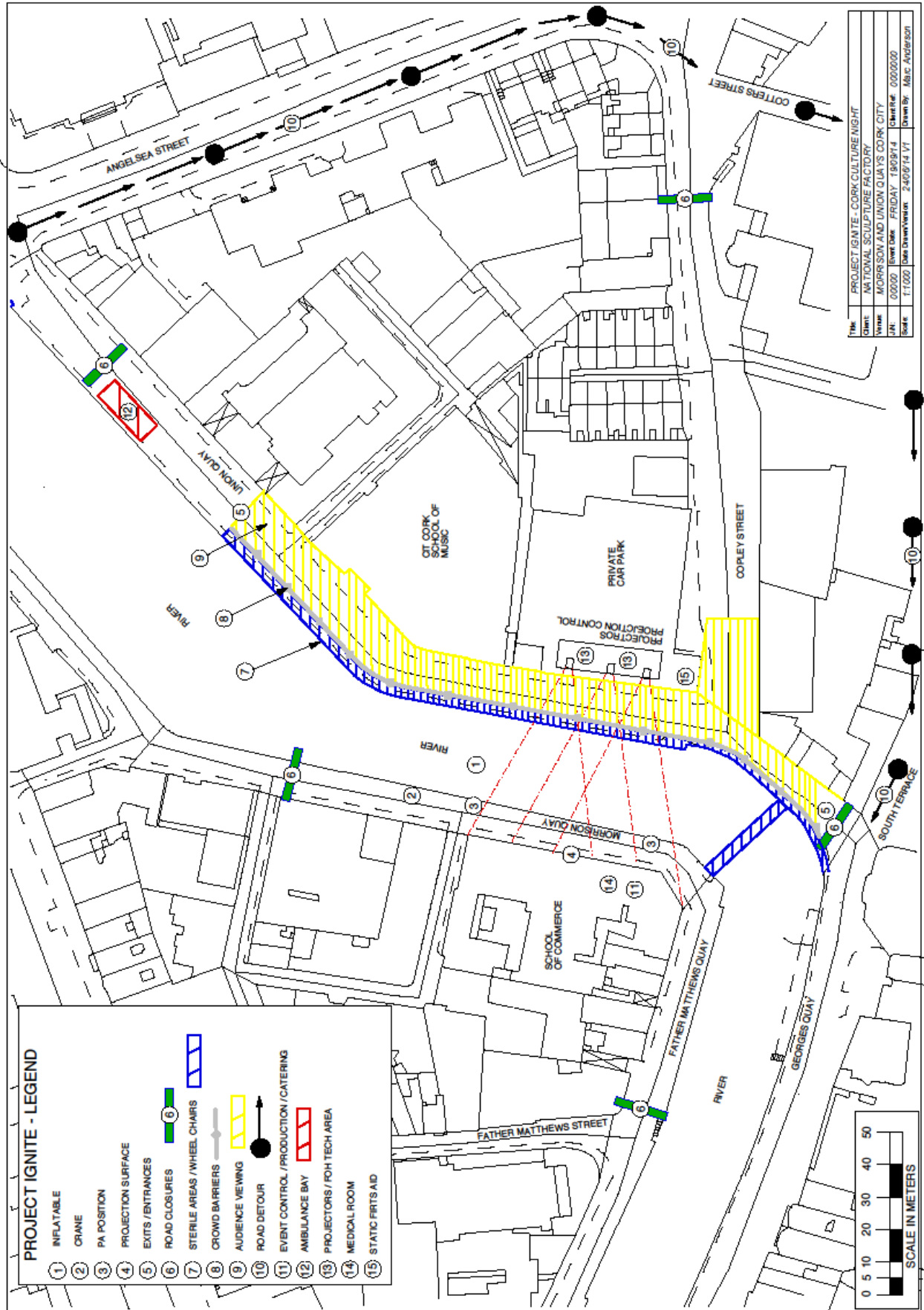
Figure 11

Crowd gathering for *Cork Ignite*, College of Commerce, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photograph by Clare Keogh (2015).

Figure 12

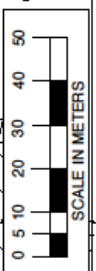
Cork art 'Crew' enliven the event beforehand, College of Commerce, Cork, Ireland. Credit © McKeown with photograph by Clare Keogh (2015).





PROJECT IGNITE - LEGEND

- 1 INFLATABLE
- 2 CRANE
- 3 PA POSITION
- 4 PROJECTION SURFACE
- 5 EXITS / ENTRANCES
- 6 ROAD CLOSURES
- 7 STERILE AREAS / WHEEL CHAIRS
- 8 CROWD BARRIERS
- 9 AUDIENCE VIEWING
- 10 ROAD DETOUR
- 11 EVENT CONTROL / PRODUCTION / CATERING
- 12 AMBULANCE BAY
- 13 PROJECTORS / FOH TECH AREA
- 14 MEDICAL ROOM
- 15 STATIC FIRST AID



Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis charts an exciting trajectory through a selected body of critically linked works. In setting the research agenda that led to their production, I questioned whether I could create mainstream work, utilising the creative practices of digital technology combined with the theories and practices of disability art. I wondered what obstacles and opportunities would present themselves. Further, I wanted to develop modes of social cooperation, especially in the final project considered, *Cork Ignite*. Finally, and in consideration of my commercial practice, I wanted to achieve large-scale audiences for the works and, in so doing, to change the landscape, even momentarily, surrounding the projects.

The focus in this commentary is on my practice-based exploration of the cultural assumptions and societal views of normality and difference through the sum of my research into the use of digital techniques and/or innovative collaboration with disabled people. I have demonstrated how my practice crosses creative and technical boundaries including those of film, animation, projection mapping, still image and sculpture, as well as exploring innovative dialogical, relational collaborations with disabled people and disability organisations. My research outputs form a series of creative and technically high-end, multiplatform, interventionist and ultimately socially engaged art events; these have been widely acknowledged as having directly affected the cultural representation and inclusion of disability in contemporary society.

The three works described here were developed within the context of my own impairments. I have been injured many times since the creation of *Motion Disabled* in 2009. The projects were also subject to the constraints and opportunities that have been presented to me or that I have developed. Through my practice, I have provided new opportunities for (and with) audiences, volunteers and paid experts to experience significant creative disability projects employing state of the art technologies. My projects have influenced public services and cultural bodies,

informing audiences both in Britain and abroad while contributing to creative practice and civil society, affecting popular assumptions about disability and art.

I have demonstrated both in this thesis and in practice how I have continually raised the profile of art and disability, and disability art nationally and internationally. My research outputs are concentrated on the creation of unique, and original, disability art-imbued works and their public display in broadcast media, print, solo exhibitions and large-scale public events. The projects that I have created have significant international presence as evidenced by my international profile; a profile that also includes national and international exhibitions, film festivals, commissions, requests to create work, requests for books and journal contributions, prizes by international juries, invitations to give presentations, and articles about my work in academic, popular and mainstream media.

This commentary has outlined how a background in DIY social action underscored my research. The music and disabled organisations with which I was engaged refused passive acceptance of the *status quo*. They demonstrated that it was possible to construct and describe new alternative ways of being. *Osteogenesis Imperfecta* led me to art practice, which became a professional passion and a location where foundational art teachers, who understood my ability and impairments, guided me. Early exposure to video art, to influential practising artists and state-of-the-art technology led to a successful career in the creative industry, where I became an expert in the making of complex digital works. I went on to build my practice around these experiences and skills, and to use them as a tool to validate my disability art projects, as happened, for instance, in *Cork Ignite*.

The DIY attitudes of the 1980s carried with it feminist thought and liberationist tendencies. The social model of disability developing at this time (and excellently outlined by Garland-Thompson) served to influence my life in general. It appealed for multiple reasons, not least because it stood in direct contrast to the medical model of disability that had dominated my earlier life. It took my development of a disability consciousness to realise that I was fascinated by disability in culture.

The projects discussed herein have demonstrated how art can become 'the active site designed to explore and expand the spectrum of humanity that we will accept among us'. This quote, by the late academic Tobin Siebers, fuels the concept of a

disability aesthetic.¹ I have argued that this aesthetic in my time-based works should be based on multiple points of reference, in particular concerning the authenticity of physical motion and the lived experience of disability. Additionally, I have demonstrated that disability can indeed be the site of creative activity. Notably, in my work, I consider it proactive rather than reactive and nuanced rather than binary.

I disagree with Bishop's contention that the relationship between social activity and art is either 'underpinned by morality or underpinned by freedom'.² I do agree with her further comment that 'the best collaborative practices... address this contradictory pull between autonomy and social intervention'.³ Susanne Bosch, writing in *Learning in Public* (2018) for the European Union Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, makes several important points.⁴ Collaboration, as I have demonstrated, does not have to imply anti-authorial practice; rather, it can be 'shaped by working together', as confirmed by *Cork Ignite* and *Motion Disabled*. She notes that collaboration deals with 'complexity and contradictions' and 'is not just an unstructured process, but rather is goal-orientated and practical'.⁵ *Cork Ignite* demonstrated goals and structure ultimately to deliver a practical event based within a city-centre environment. The collaborative enterprise I have demonstrated led to the development of a nuanced, highly authored, visual work, which was authentically connected to a community and capable of presenting a different, exciting and safe public space to the city with which it was engaged.

In occupying city centres, sizeable single-event audiences cannot be achieved without a myriad of permissions relating to health and safety. Planning applications must be in place to ensure public safety. Outdoor works, however, can still be socially engaged and challenging. While Krzysztof Wodiczko's work demonstrates a

1. Tobin Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor, Mich. USA: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 10.

2. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso Books, 2012), 276.

3. Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn", *Art Forum International*, February 2006, 183.

4. Eleanor Turney and David Caines, eds., *Learning in Public: Trans European collaborations in socially engaged art* (Dublin, Ireland: Collaborative Arts Partnership Programme, 2018), 61.

5. *Ibid.*

level of risk that I would not countenance, yet artists do not have to create projects that are risk-averse and mundane. There are other ethical rather than physical risks to consider. Kupperts identifies the negative prospect of projects' identifying learning disabled artists as 'other'. *Cork Ignite* navigated these issues successfully to produce a challenging, socially engaged work giving a creative voice to disabled artists. In doing so, we developed, by Wodiczko's definition, a substantial inner audience that became vital to the project's success.

The value of time became apparent in the production of *Motion Disabled* and *Cork Ignite*. Time is a negotiated factor. Extending it allowed me to find motions and wait for ideas to arrive in *Cork*. Additionally, in a production sense, I had to be structurally inefficient in my approach. As an experienced professional, I could have created works absent of participants working in an individualistic studio manner; *Cork Ignite* would more simply have been made without engagement. Quoting Glen Loughran and Lindsey Fryer in a chapter entitled *Where Values Emerge*, Bosch comments on socially engaged art that 'this practice takes a lot more investment of time across the whole organisation than the traditional exhibition format'. 'Collaboration fails when time is ignored,' she says.⁶

While Sutherland stressed, in 2005, the self-confidence of disability art, stating that 'the primary audience of disability arts is other disabled people', Kupperts rejected this notion. Similarly for the works detailed in this commentary, I wanted to explore my contention that nuanced, developed visual works by disabled artists could be attractive to both mainstream and disabled audiences. Perhaps there are avenues to be explored between the large computer game audiences and technical adventures I have created in fine art. By utilising and combining three distinct pathways – those of fine art, digital technological excellence, and the knowledge of a lived disability – I have been able to synthesise a unique set of skills and create a highly innovative body of work. Sandhahl contends that 'Disabilities are states of being that are in themselves generative.'⁷ My works are observations into a different reality.

6. *Ibid.*, 71.

7. Carrie Sandahl, "Considering Disability: Disability Phenomenology's Role in Revolutionizing Theatrical Space", *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, Spring 2002, 19.

I have described how *Motion Disabled* revealed its connection to post-modern dance and its claim as the first non-medical study of motion. I claim it operates a Duchampian model with its found use of motion. It nurtures the vernacular and considers the lived bodily intelligence. With a worldwide reception, it holds authenticity central to its core development. It clarified my experimental vision, which suggested that using state-of-the-art creative technology in this manner could function as a validator of body form, thus challenging the disabled gaze. *Motion Disabled* remains a significant 'reframer' of our view of disabled people, and I believe is the first digital artwork to celebrate disabled motion. This has been documented in the computer animation press and it has thus influenced my teaching on one of the UK's leading computer games courses at Teesside University, thus encouraging practitioners to consider alterity.

As an artist, animator, and disabled person, I am fascinated by the intricacies I see in the work, expressed in professional terms such as overlapping action. The gentle effort of painting by artist Tanya Raabe and the wheelie prowess of Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson fascinate. *Motion Disabled* reinterpreted and proposed an alternative methodological approach to movement. I have pursued this work both professionally and academically and it has pedagogically impacted upon my teaching and my students' view of the digital and real worlds.⁸

The pioneering film director Ken Russell, reviewing the work in the *Times* newspaper, said of *Motion Disabled* that:

The wave of the future arrives, and the differently abled are able to ride it, thanks to McKeown.⁹

Throughout the development of the works, especially in dealing with inherently bipedal software, we created pipelines to allow the work to be produced. We undertook experimental practice creating what I believe is the first motion capture-based 3D sculpture, interpreting set periods of time into a physical model, which was then printed in 3D, solidifying motion.

⁸ "Tees cartoons: How Middlesbrough is animating the future", BBC, accessed May 24, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/entertainment-arts-48383012/tees-cartoons-how-middlesbrough-is-animating-the-future>.

⁹ Ken Russell, "A 3-D view of disability leaves me in awe of these everyday superheroes", *The Times* (London), January 27, 2009, Arts.

Ghosts contended that disability as a result of war was both global and familiar issue. It intended to build on the artistic legacy of the First World War, much of what we understand through the voice of poets such as Sassoon. *Ghosts* intentionally refuted nationalistic interpretations to challenge instead established tropes of war, in particular that of the dead-or-alive hero. The work is one of the first visual works internationally to object to the war museum industry, which almost entirely neglects the history of disability in war. 'In the global war commemoration culture, there are few memorials dedicated to men and women disabled in conflicts, whether combatants or civilians.'¹⁰ It is work produced in an under-researched and under-theorised area although is one of the first modern visual commemorations of the World War I's disabled. It seeks to reclaim a lost history and argue against a prevailing social and cultural amnesia.

Cork Ignite demonstrated a significant increase in the complexity of my productions with regard to collaboration. My work seeks symbolically and practically, through (where possible) collaboration and the creative use of high-end technology, to elevate a negated class of people: the disabled. In city environments that consistently proffer extreme barriers to full and equitable citizenship, where disabled people are assumed to have little cultural and social (or even economic) capital, I actively invert disablism by emblematically closing the City. In so doing I create an environment of equitable access (environmental access and a supportive cultural experience: i.e., sign and audio description) whilst placing creative participants (learning disabled, visually impaired, Deaf and physically disabled people) centre stage.

Cork Ignite was the culminating event of Culture Night Ireland in Cork and was perceived and delivered as a major, crucial, cultural watershed moment in the cultural history of Cork: the first of its kind in Ireland, and one of the biggest public art events held in Cork to date, manifested in order to deliver for Cork a new status as a centre of cultural creativity in Ireland and Europe. *Cork Ignite* demonstrates how a project can be developed collaboratively, without ceding authorial control, to deliver what has been described as a spectacular, visual and auditory event. It was the first two-year socially engaged project I had worked on. Staffed as it was by

10. Ana Carden-Coyne, "Ghosts in the War Museum", in *Re-presenting Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum*, by Richard Sandell, Jocelyn Dodd, and Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (London, UK: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2010), 66.

volunteers while I was unaware at the onset the extent to which the project's genesis and development would become the artwork:

Each particular artwork is a proposal to live in a shared world, and the work of every artist is a bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations, and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*.¹¹

I have demonstrated, in this commentary, research outputs that form a series of creative, interventionist, participatory events to have directly affected the cultural representation and inclusion of disability in contemporary society. I make use of multiple platforms so as to achieve new artistic expression combinations and creative intersections. They include large-scale video projection mapping, animation and dynamic audio; all collide with my research areas to deliver innovative, original yet challenging interpretations and interpolations of my own and the collective experience of disablement. In doing so, I am validating impairment / disability as an important visual and artist resource, as if to reinforce artist Yinka Shonibare MBE's comment that disability is indeed the 'last avant-garde'.

11. Nicolas Bourriaud *et al.*, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002), 22.

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APPENDIX 1 Press and support material



take ten INTERVIEW

Simon Mckeown

is an animator, filmmaker and Reader in Animation and Post Production at Teesside University. Here he tells us about some of his disability-themed work, including his new live action short, *The Beaten* – a dark, dystopian vision of institutional care in the future...



How did your interest in animation first develop?

I became interested in art when I was younger. I have brittle bone disease, and didn't usually play football or do a lot of sports when I was at school because of the injury risk; art was something I was good at and could do without getting injured. I went through the standard art education, which was sixth form, then a foundation year in art and design and a degree in fine art.

Of the TV and games industry work you've done over the years, which project or piece are you most proud of?

TV-wise I've enjoyed some of the complex special effects work I've done in television, which tended to be for ITV. The special effects work I did on *Distant Shores* I really enjoyed. I liked the eccentricity of the show and the script, being on set and concluding some of the special effects shots. Another one would be *Wire in the Blood* – killing somebody with a thousand flies, that was quite nice!

In computer games, probably the first *Driver* game. That was a seminal game in that it was one of

the first that allowed you to go anywhere and explore a city. It was very innovative and a huge seller – the biggest selling game of 2000 when it came out.

One of your ongoing projects, *Motion Disabled* is quite large and ambitious – can you tell us more about it?

I conceived the project in 2008. It's an installation, effectively random clips of floating actors based around what they do, showing their everyday physicality and movement via motion capture. I have the view that society in a general sense is very interested in everyone being the same, and there's the prospect, certainly at the genetic level, that things could get even more 'samey' in the future with technology.

I don't like the idea that things should all be the same – I think we should celebrate and enjoy difference, so it's about that. For instance, one of the people in it is [noted writer, actor and performance artist] Mat Fraser – that physicality might not be around in the future, so it's an historical record of different disabilities in a true 3D form. It's

different from a photograph, in that it's actually their physical signatures.

Where did the initial idea for your short commissioned piece *All For Claire* come from?

The work was being shown on the BBC outdoor screens in December, so it had to be bright, cheerful, very colourful and visual and needed to be for a broad age range.

I did dancing lessons at school when I was a child, and the person I usually danced with was called Claire, which is where it all came from. *All For Claire* was just about having fun really, with animation tools and with putting a disabled female in a strong position, in control of a magical world.

What prompted you to switch to live action for *The Beaten*?

Part of my work at the university was setting up a fairly complicated TV studio, so I was very familiar with filming equipment on a technical level, but had never actually directed a live action piece that I'd written

myself. *Motion Disabled* and *All For Claire* I think are very mainstream and 'acceptable' (hopefully!), and I'm quite happy with that, but I also wanted to do something questioning the idea of assisted suicide and putting the boot on the other foot...

The Beaten is very timely in the wake of the recent Winterbourne View expose - where did the idea for the script originally come from?

My grandfather was disabled, I've got brittle bones and deafness, so I grew up in a family - and a wider community - where a disability was not seen as a separate issue, but just part of everyday life. Over time though, as we've seen in the press, disabled people are being seen more as hate figures and being attacked. So it's a reflection on that wider cultural thing - it's 2011, and society still seems to think it's okay to treat disabled people worse than animals in some cases.

As a society we have become very tolerant in terms of multiculturalism and so on, but in other respects there's this enormous gulf with regards to disability and certainly a cultural gulf within our institutions. So the piece reflects a bit of fun, albeit quite dark fun, in getting back at all that.



The *Beaten* stars Liz Carr as the client - or possibly prisoner - of a futuristic 'care home'

How did you come to cast Liz Carr in the central role?

I knew Liz through a good friend - I'd seen her do her stand-up comedy and also seen several plays that she'd produced. She was a great actor in her plays and stand-up, so she was an obvious and great candidate.

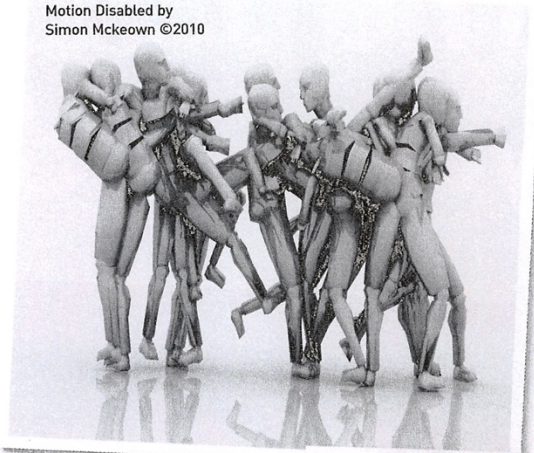
Are you looking to do more live action work in the future?

I would, but I'd want to use some of my animation knowledge and do it with a smaller crew in smaller facilities. Having worked on big film sets with 40 people, it's a harsh environment - I'm full of admiration for these big films because they're really difficult to do. I enjoy making things in a more robust, smaller fashion if that makes sense, using smaller equipment and simpler production methods. I've got some ideas for an art film I'd like to make in 2012, something live action specifically for a gallery in the style of artist like Bill Viola and his live action *Timepiece* work.

Do you have any other projects in the pipeline that you can tell us about?

The next project is called *Faces* at the moment and is all about motion capture of disabled faces and voices. It's part way through and due for completion later this year, probably December/January time. It's going to be an installation with five actors, who will talk to each other while the

Motion Disabled by Simon Mckeown ©2010



"I don't like the idea that things should all be the same - I think we should celebrate and enjoy difference"



heads change shape. It's very colourful and expressive, questioning ideas of identity, what's facially and vocally acceptable and playing with that.

What advice would you give to someone looking to break into animation or direction?

Making a film is hard. Animation is easier in some respects because you can do it more individually, and it's a very accessible medium - if you can use a computer, you can do good animation. There's lots of places to learn; at Teeside University we do fantastic courses; there are lots of other national courses and ones you can do online.

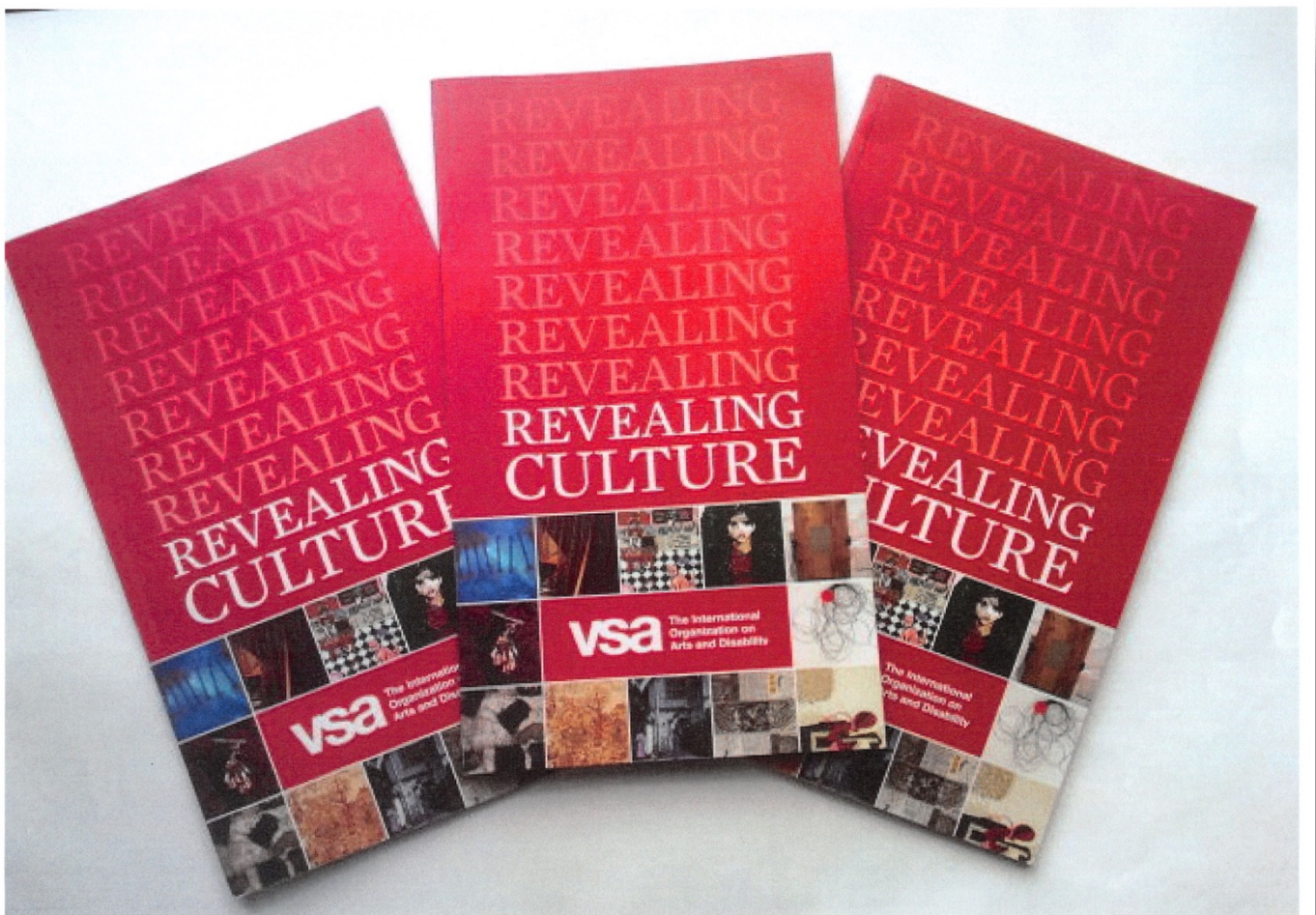
With filmmaking it does become more difficult because even at a smaller level it involves some kind of crew and lots of

moving around. The main thing for me is that people should become as creative as they can, concentrate on the quality of their ideas and then learn how to express them technically.

Further information

All About Claire and *The Beaten* have been submitted to several major film festivals (the former is next being shown at the New York City Film Festival, www.nyciff.com) and will eventually be posted online for viewing by general public.

In the meantime, *Disability* readers can view *The Beaten* in its entirety navigating to www.vimeo.com/18391008 and entering the password 'disabilitymagazine'. NOTE: the piece contains language and some scenes unsuitable for younger viewers. To find out more about Simon and his work, visit www.simon-mckeown.com





September 24, 2010

Hello Simon:

Thank you for your participation in the *Revealing Culture* exhibition that ran from June 8 to August 29, 2010 at the Smithsonian Institution's S. Dillon Ripley Center. I am pleased to let you know that the Smithsonian provided us with the final count of visitors as 578,114. We are thrilled to know that over half a million people visited the show and experienced your work!

The exhibition truly changed perceptions about the contributions of people with disabilities within a contemporary art framework. Curated by Leanne Mella and designed by Michael Graves and Associates, the show included 146 works of art in a broad range of media and incorporated the principles of universal design including optimized wayfinding, verbal description, and tactile experiences. You may now find the exhibition online at www.vsarts.org/revealingculture

As promised, enclosed you will find 2 archival copies of the catalog and a press booklet of articles compiled after the show. Please let us know if you would like additional copies of the catalog. VSA has archived your application materials in the Artists Registry, a directory of artists that is consulted to identify artists for opportunities that arise through our contacts.

We were grateful to have had this opportunity to work with you and wish you much success in your future endeavors. Please keep VSA updated on your progress!

Best,



Stephanie Moore
Director, Visual Arts

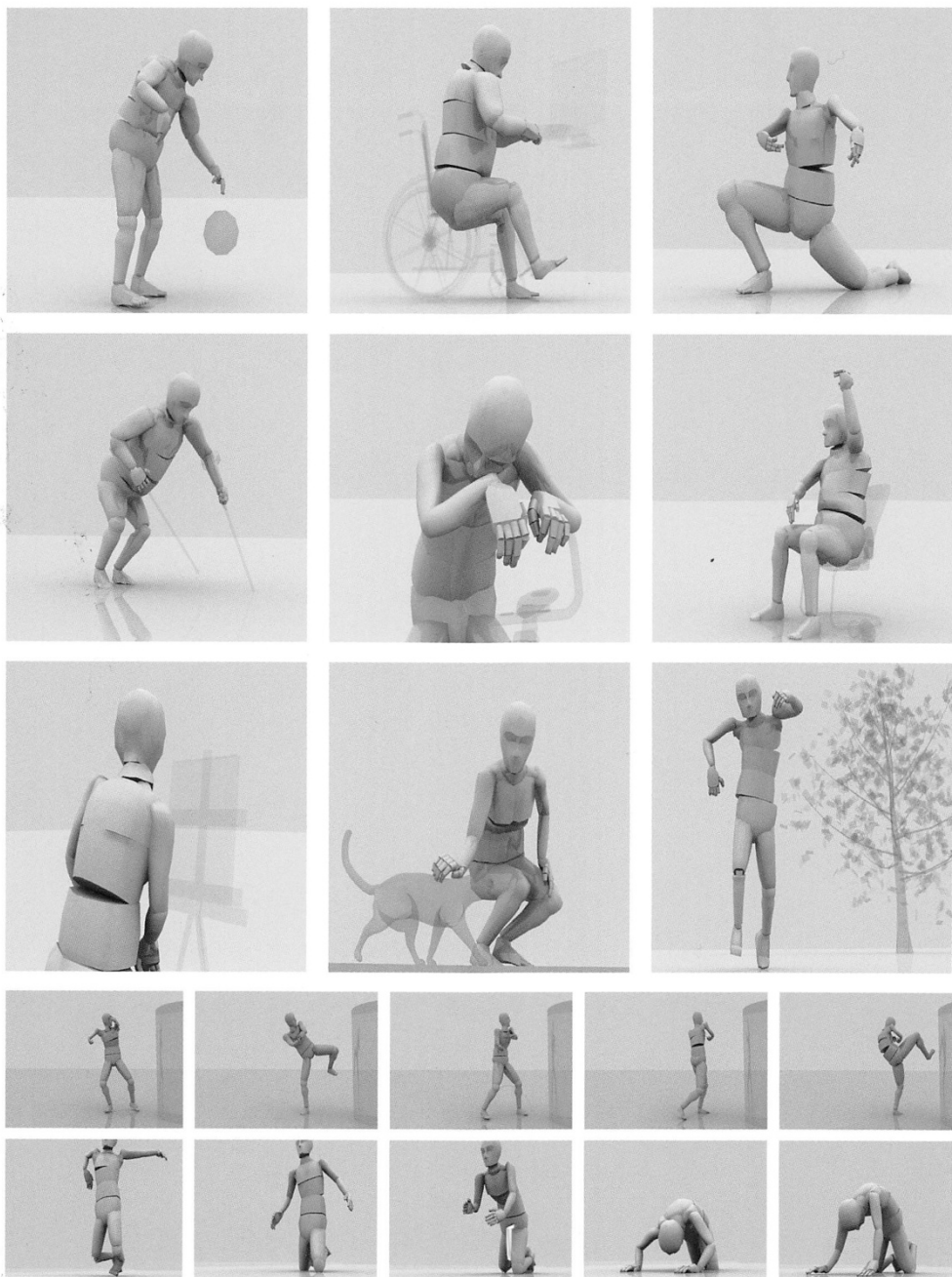


Liza Key
Artist Services Coordinator

An affiliate of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

818 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 600 | Washington, DC 20006 | p: 202.628.2800 | f: 202.429.0868

vsarts.org



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Images from Simon Mckeown's video installation *Motion Disabled*.
 Presented by VSA and partners around the world on
 December 3, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

vsa The International
 Organization on
 Arts and Disability

About the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival

The London 2012 Cultural Olympiad is the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements. Spread over four years, it is designed to give everyone in the UK a chance to be part of London 2012 and inspire creativity across all forms of culture, especially among young people. The culmination of the Cultural Olympiad is the London 2012 Festival, a spectacular 12-week nationwide celebration bringing together leading artists from across the world with the very best from the UK, running from 21 June until 9 September 2012. For more details on the programme visit www.london2012.com/festival

Arts Council England is proud to be a Principal Funder and supporter of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries - from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections.

Legacy Trust UK is delighted to be a Principal Funder of the Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Festival and funds cultural, sporting and educational projects in communities across the UK that are inspired by London 2012. Legacy Trust UK supports a wide range of activities from street art to volunteering, music to animation, school sports to dance and digital art to festivals.

The Olympic Lottery Distributor is proud to be a Principal Funder of the Cultural Olympiad and is supporting a number of the major projects and events which will be part of the Cultural Olympiad and its culmination, the London 2012 Festival.

BP is delighted to be a Premier Partner of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad. Building on its 30 year support of the arts, BP is working with its arts partners, the Royal Opera House, British Museum, National Portrait Gallery and Tate Britain, to help involve millions of people in the Cultural Olympiad and its finale, the London 2012 Festival.

BT is proud to be a Premier Partner of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad and to be enabling millions of people to have a fantastic London 2012 experience through music and art events. BT River of Music welcomes the world to London with a once-in-a-lifetime weekend of free music at landmarks along the River Thames. And the National Portrait Gallery/BT Road to 2012 project celebrates those who are collectively making the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games happen.

Arts Council England
14 Great Peter Street
London SW1P 3NQ

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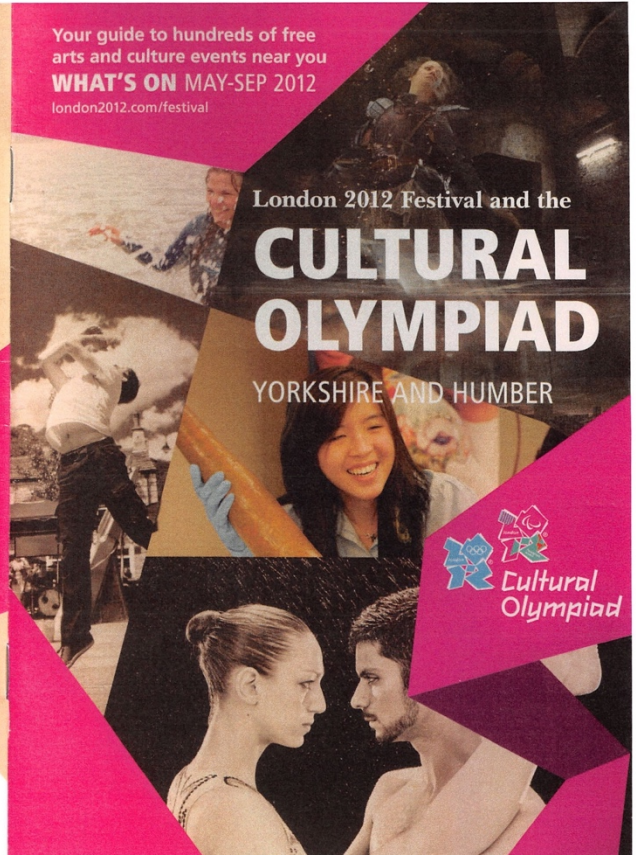


Your guide to hundreds of free arts and culture events near you
WHAT'S ON MAY-SEP 2012
london2012.com/festival

London 2012 Festival and the

CULTURAL OLYMPIAD

YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER



Irresistible - Call of the Sirens

A song cycle by Jez Colborne

Noisy, dramatic and spectacular, *Irresistible* is a unique music event in the rural beauty of The Cow & Calf on Ilkley Moor.

The Call of Sirens is influenced by the mythical story of Odysseus, and how he survived the devastating sirens who used their beautiful hypnotic songs to lure sailors to their death. Join Jez as he takes you on a musical journey of alarms, other non-traditional instruments and songs to create a breath-taking symphony.

Jez Colborne is a multi-talented composer, musician and performer. Driven by a life-long fascination with sirens, Colborne hears music where most of us hear noise. Working in collaboration with Mind the Gap he is creating something truly irresistible...

- ▶ Where: **The Cow & Calf Quarry, Ilkley Moor, FREE transport provided from £529**
- ▶ When: **21 - 23 June Various evening performances**
- ▶ Tickets: **£13.50, £9.50 discounts, Family Ticket: £27.**

Buy online at: mind-the-gap.org.uk/irresistible

An Unlimited commission.

Box of Frogs

Yorkshire-based Stumble Dance Circus present *Box of Frogs*, a circus show with a difference. *Box of Frogs* is an exhilarating blend of high-octane, highly visual performance showcasing a deluge of circus skills including trick-cycling, tumbling, rope work and acrobalance, all engulfed in a reservoir of film and a myriad of colour.

A feast for the eyes, a jaw-dropping night of entertainment, this is Bipolar circus - otherwise known as a manically depressed form of entertainment.

Recommended for ages 8 and over. For more information visit www.stumbledancecircus.com

- ▶ Where: **The Carriageworks, Leeds, LS2 3AD**
- ▶ When: **13 October**
- ▶ Tickets: **Prices TBC**

Buy online at: carriageworkstheatre.org.uk

An Unlimited commission.

Motion Disabled: Unlimited

Imagine taking time to look at the motion of those who move differently. Watch and study the physicality and movement of the modern day disabled athlete, the Paralympian. What is it like to walk and jump without legs, or to sail with one arm?

Motion Disabled: Unlimited by North Yorkshire-based artist Simon McKeown studies the body and movement of some of the UK's most famous Paralympians, including Baroness Grey-Thompson, and takes the work into cities and events across the UK in the form of a large inflatable sculpture and video projection.

www.motiondisabledunlimited.com

An Unlimited commission.

Unlimited is a project at the heart of the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad that celebrates disability, arts, culture and sport on an unprecedented scale.

All Unlimited commissions are part of the London 2012 Festival. Unlimited is principally funded by the Olympic Lottery Distributor and is delivered in partnership between London 2012, Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council, Arts Council of Wales, Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the British Council.

Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

- ▶ Where: **From Summer 2012 across the UK and online**
- ▶ When: **July - October ▶ FREE**
- ▶ Find **Motion Disabled: Unlimited** near you using the iPhone app



Images 1 to 6: Photo © Judy Hume, Image 7 the artist, Simon McKeown



[Complete programme](#)



Exhibitions
[DISABLED BY NORMALITY](#)
23. 5. - 16. 9. 2013



Special programmes
[Inadaptable Stops – Prague 7](#)
20. 6. 2013 from 18:00 to 22:00



Special programmes
[Motion Disabled - Simon Mckeown](#)
20. 6. 2013 from 20:30 to 21:30



Exhibitions
[Kamila Ženatá – The Women's Yard](#)
1. 5. - 26. 8. 2013 Terezín
7. 6. - 26. 8. 2013 DOX



Exhibitions
[Beyond Word](#)
30. 5. - 24. 6. 2013



Exhibitions

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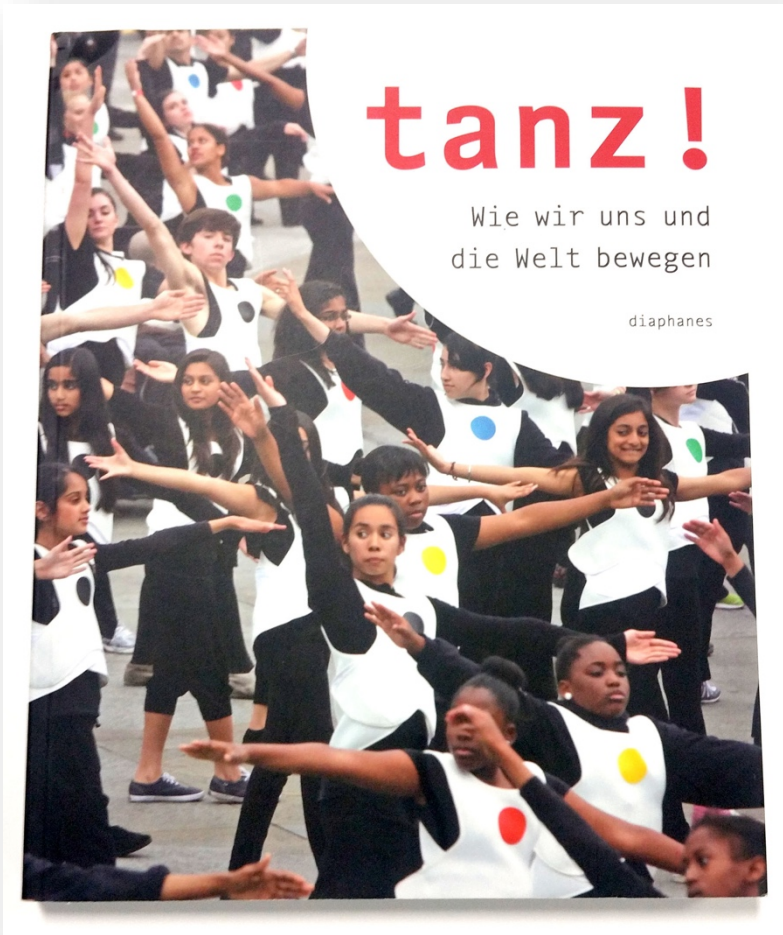
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„Glenlivet Soft“ Ein Tanzunterricht mit dem Ehepaar
Ferns, Cha-Cha-Cha
Ernst und Ingrid Ferns
Mit der zunehmenden Zahl von Fernsehgeräten in Privathäusern kam Mitte der 1980er Jahre auch die Tendenz vor, deutsche Volkstänze in der beliebten Fernsehserie „Glenlivet Soft“ des WDR über das Ehepaar Ferns mit seinem Gürtel für Schall International anzubieten. Modulare wie den „Bongo Winger“ oder den „Cha-Cha-Cha“. Die Ferns trugen in den 1980er und 1990er Jahren zu Popularisierung und Standardisierung der Tänze bei. Die Aufzeichnungen von 1984/85 und weitere Zeichnungen und dokumentarische Fotos, die heute in Ingrid Ferns' Besitz sind, sind den „Lektoren“, „Hilf-Gott“ oder „Stag“, 18.1.1986, Video, 29:28 Min., WDR, Köln

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Motion Disabled: Unlimited-Art Installation
Simon McKeown (*1966)
In „Motion Disabled“ erforscht Simon McKeown mittels digitaler Bewegungserschaffung (Motion Capturing) das Bewegungsspektrum körperlich unterschiedlicher Menschen und setzt sie auf abstrakte Weise in einer künstlerischen Installation um. Das Werk hinterfragt unsere Vorstellungen von Norm und Differenz oder von der Ästhetik menschlicher Bewegung.
2012, Installation, 10 Min.
Courtesy of the artist with support from Teesside University, Middlesbrough; Arts Council England and the Wellcome Trust

Ghosts Press and Support Material

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Simon Mckeown



Ghosts

Simon Mckeown is an artist with a defined interest in the cultural presentation of disability and issues connected with societal views of normality.

Trained as fine artist, he worked in London at the beginning of the digital era in the film and television industry before moving to triple AAA computer games.

He is disabled, having a rare bone condition and has broken approximately 140 bones.

An expert in animation and motion capture, Mckeown is also a Reader in Animation and Post Production at Teesside University, in Middlesbrough.

He works and exhibits his artworks, which cover digital work, prints, painting, large-scale inflatable sculpture and outdoor work nationally and internationally, most recently in Prague, Dresden, and Cork.


Ghosts
A cast of disabled veterans from across the spectrum of World War One awake and prepare for the day ahead. Set in a landscape filled with the artefacts and objects of war, the characters dress in the uniforms of various armies, talk, cook and tend to pigeons.

Produced using motion capture and state of the art animation techniques, with a bespoke music score, Ghosts is a captivating, provocative and ultimately moving film. In the aftermath of the war cities witnessed enormous numbers of their young returning, alive but permanently disabled. Embedded in the life of the times, each family had an injured uncle, father or son walking the streets, in a scary pre NHS world with no state support. Ghosts is a timely comment on the millions disabled by WW1; we are their descendants, they are our ancestors.

Watch on 4oD: Ghosts

www.simon-mckeown.com

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Does It Matter? World War 1 Shorts

With two million British servicemen disabled by World War One, society's attitude to disability had to change. Disabled artists present unorthodox takes on the legacies of war and disability.


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- 8:00pm
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Hollyoaks
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- 9:00pm
Transporter 3
- 10:00pm
Mega Shark vs Crocosaurus

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13th Annual Film Festival
& Short Film Competition

Alamo Drafthouse Austin TX November 4-5 2016

Ghosts

a film by


Simon Mckeown

1st Place
Non-Documentary Division

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CTD Coalition of Texans
with Disabilities


Webpage Screenshot




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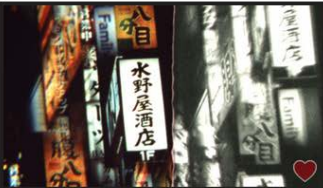
Gaia
SAT 17/10 2:15 PM | FRI 23/10 4:45 PM
FICTION
Gaia tells a universal story relevant to everyone that inhabits the earth
Australia : 15 mins : 2014
DIRECTOR Erin Fowler, Nick Graalman
Documentary Competition, Hear, Wheelchair Accessible, Women In Focus: On Screen & Behind the Camera




Ghosts
THU 15/10 to SAT 17/10 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | TUE 20/10 to SUN 25/10 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM
FICTION
Screens in Mayhem Shorts Program 3
United Kingdom : 3 mins : 2014
DIRECTOR Simon Mckeown
Focus on Disability, Mayhem, Wheelchair Accessible




Gift of My Father Hadiatt Abi
WED 21/10 8:45 PM
FICTION
Screening as part of the World Shorts Program
Iraq, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States of America : 6 mins : 2015
DIRECTOR Salam Salman
Australian Premiere Wheelchair Accessible, Women In Focus: On Screen & Behind the Camera



Ginza Strip
FRI 16/10 8:30 PM
EXPERIMENTAL
Screening as part of the Tactile Visions Program




Girl Asleep
TUE 20/10 7:00 PM
GALA SCREENING
Fifteen is going to turn a corner. It has to.




Glass House
THU 22/10 8:00 PM
EXPERIMENTAL
Screening as part of the 9:16 Film Festival Program

https://adelaidefilmfestival.org/program# Thu Oct 22 2016 17:41:52 GMT+0100 (GMT Daylight Time)


Simon Mckeown Artist

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Simon Mckeown Artist
Published by Simon Mckeown Fri · 4 July 2016 ·



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Henry Simms Absolutely awesome, RESPECT to all bless
Like Reply Message · 17 July 2016 at 16:15

Judy Corble Beautifully done, thanks for sharing Paul.
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Simon Mckeown Artist

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Simon Mckeown Artist

Made By Steel

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Ghosts All Ages

DIRECTOR [Simon Mckeown](#)
 United Kingdom | 3 mins | 2014
 English
 TAGS [Mayhem](#)

Fiction | Short

Screens in [Mayhem Shorts Program 3](#)

Ghosts follows a shadowy cast of disabled characters in WW1 uniform. Using motion capture and animation, the characters dress, eat and fit their prosthetics, attaching hands, legs, and noses to their bodies, as they awake and get ready for the day ahead.

This film is part of *Does it Matter?* A series of 5 short films produced by Artsadmin and Xenoki for 14|18 NOW & Channel 4

DIRECTOR [Simon Mckeown](#) | PRODUCER [Deborah May](#), [Judith Knight](#) | OTHER KEY CREW Music: [Ellen Brookes](#)

Screens with: [Breathe Nothing of Slaughter](#), [The Predators of Transylvania](#), [213 Things About Me](#), [Cocobutter](#), [Eye TV](#), [Our Story](#), [RJD2 - Work It Out](#), [Resistance](#), [Creating the Spectacle](#), [Motion Disabled: Actor's Commentary](#), [So Blue](#)

You may also like: [The Tribe](#), [Trent Parke + Michelle's Story](#), [Mayhem Shorts Program 1](#)

Tickets

Adelaide Central Markets
Thu 15/10 to Sat 17/10
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Mayhem Shorts Program 3 (69 mins)
Public Session

FREE - Tickets not required

City Library - Studio One
Tue 20/10 to Sun 25/10
12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Mayhem Shorts Program 3 (69 mins)
Public Session


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Sheelagh Broderick on
CORK IGNITE



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Saturday, September 19, 2015

Irish Times

Home News 9

Culture Night draws big crowds nationwide

More than 350,000 join in free events organised across the State

Downstairs Dublin in Merrion Square one of the busiest attractions

Cities and towns across Ireland came alive as more than 350,000 people gathered to celebrate Culture Night and peek behind closed doors.

There were attractions for all ages and interests with more than 3,000 free events in 1,200 venues nationally.

Good weather and music attracted crowds to stay on the streets after visiting events in museums, galleries, theatres, churches and artists' studios.

Events ranged from Belfast's Big Gay Wedding and slowest like race, to Cork's transformation of the College of Commerce with 3D projections.

The trend of buses and trains halting the brain leaving Dublin on a Friday evening was reversed as thousands of people flocked to events in the capital, which had more than 250 venues taking part.

Amée van Wylck, Culture Night co-ordinator, said there has been attending looked to be higher than last year with more locations in added to the programme this year.

She said interactive events helped make the night special, including the conversion of Dublin's O'Connell Street into a mini-village, with a giant version of Frank and Lola's and a giant drum.

"There's a real buzz and bustling atmosphere," she said. "And a real sense of exploration. Everybody is out in the streets enjoying great culture."

"Seeing the amount of families around, even now at 10pm, it just brings a special and unusual view of a real positive Ireland."

The evening kicked off in Dublin with a vibrant parade on the River Liffey starting at the Custom House Quay and ending at the Ha'penny Bridge. Sheelagh Broderick and David O'Connell, who originally from the depot but has lived in Dublin for seven years, said she attended



Top & 3D Installation transformed Cork's College of Commerce; above and left people enjoying Culture Night in Dublin; right, pictured at the launch of Rosie Dunne's book *Departments* at the Ha'penny Bridge, Dublin. Photo: David O'Connell and David O'Connell

Syrians and Irish to swap stories

NIALA WOLFE

Ireland and Syria both have strong oral and literary traditions. So a "shared stories night" was an obvious event for Culture Night in Thurles, Co Tipperary. Thurles has been home to 12 Syrian refugee families for the past six months.

"Syrian children attended summer camps here recently in art and drama, but it was felt something interesting could also be done with adults," explained Brendan Maher, artistic director of the Source Theatre, Thurles.

"Within Syria, there is a strong tradition of *al-Hikaya* or storytelling, and it was felt a story night would be a way of taking the focus away from the ongoing refugee crisis and political headlines into a more non-political situation. For all they've been through, people still want to get on with their lives."

Ten men and women from Syria and Ireland were eager to participate in contemporary and historical storytelling at the Source, with various themes from faith to emigration and migration.

With the use of a Teletexter, translations from English to Arabic were possible.

The families moved to the midwest as part of a resettlement project under Ireland's commitment to the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Migrant Integration

The project is supported by the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration, which operates under the Department of Justice and Equality. Sinead Daly, who works with the North Tipperary Local Partnership, said the Culture Night event was part of a wider project to help Syrian families integrate into Irish society. "It's a very strong body of Syrian women and a lot of exciting female Syrian writers, but we are trying to connect in other ways too. Six months is a very short time, but in that time we have established a women's art

Irish Examiner

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Simon McKeown's huge animation project will be one of the highlights of Culture Night in Cork, writes **Ellie O'Byrne**

ARTIST and animator Simon McKeown broke six bones in the course of the two years that he has worked on Ignite, Cork's flagship project for Culture Night. "Four ribs and a couple of fingers; the ribs were really painful," he says, almost casually.

McKeown is a pioneer in the use of motion capture and 3D visual mapping, where a building gets "mapped" into a computer and animated projections onto the building bring it to flamboyant life. He suffers from osteogenesis imperfecta, a rare genetic condition that causes bones to break easily.

The resulting periods of hospitalisation, recuperation and restricted mobility inform his work but don't define it, making him a natural choice for Cork's contribution to Ignite, an Arts and Disability Ireland collaborative project, which will illuminate the outside of Cork's College of Commerce on Friday.

Three Ignite commissions for Galway, Mayo and Cork represent the single biggest investment in Arts Disability Ireland to date, and McKeown says the College of Commerce was a natural choice for the spectacular animated project.

"It's in a sheltered, accessible location, and it's a lovely 1930s building. Its symmetry makes it very easy to work with," he says. *McKeown, who teaches animation in Teesside University, Middlesbrough, is a fine-art graduate renowned for his large-scale, highly conceptual animated artworks which often explore aspects of disability and mobility in broader societal or historical contexts.*

Being labelled a disabled artist doesn't bother him in the slightest. "I'm quite happy with it," he says. "I have creative discussions and also academic discussions around disability. I have an exhibition coming up in Prague on digital futures, so my work is not limited to themes of disability, but it's an important aspect of my work."

Motion Disabled, a vast project seen by over 500,000 people in 17 countries in 2010, saw McKeown motion capture the bodies and movements of Paralympians and create



Simon McKeown's sound and animation show will run on Friday at the College of Commerce in Cork.

Trip the light Fantastic

trademark pared-back computer animations that both allowed and challenged the viewer to explore how people with different disabilities move and interact with their environments.

Projected onto buildings and screens everywhere from Saudi Arabia to Argentina, it earned McKeown the DaDaFest International Artist of the Year award for 2010.

Ghosts was a three-minute animation commemorating World War I that he produced for Channel Four, inspired by a Siegfried Sassoon poem and drawing attention to the effect the return of two million newly disabled British ex-servicemen had on society's attitudes to disability in the aftermath of the Great War.

McKeown's works on disability never examine the theme in isolation, but always in juxtaposition with other large cultural themes —

design, historical forces, our interactions with technology. He considers the dialogue about visibility, accessibility and integration for disabled people to be far from over.

"In Ireland, between one fifth and one sixth of people identify as having a long-term disability, and yet culturally the impact makes it seem like a lot less," he says.

Like an intricate Tibetan sand Mandala, Dream Big will be transient, designed to be viewed intact just once, an aspect of the project that appeals to McKeown. Some of the components may emerge in other works, but many are site-specific to the College of Commerce.

"Just thinking of the effort that it takes and the team of people behind it, the fact that it happens once is kind of special," he says.

"A eureka moment," is how McKeown describes the experience



of actually projecting the work live for an audience of thousands. "Six of the largest projectors in Europe are being brought in for this, and the effect is amazing," McKeown says.

Audiences respond with wonder to the magical visual effects McKeown creates in his work — bits of the facade of the building seeming to flip, revealing interiors, or climbing

plants sprouting energetically from the brickwork, jungle-like, budding and flowering.

But it's by no means all McKeown's work that will be on display. Members of Suisa Inclusive Arts (part of COPE Foundation) and SoundOUT, a music technology project, collaborated with McKeown to produce the different elements of the

Making

In an exploration of the building's history, the project will feature local attractions.

Focus on engineering the building's structure. A couple of months from the local area will be set up.

Software from the project means we've got back an animation.

A team of Middlesex model of the scan, the further the features for animations.

McKeown to bring the building to life. Editing software collaborated some filmed onto the building segments, were synchronised.

■ Cork Ignite (access from Street) on St 5, 15pm start. To live stream culture night. For the video audio description UCC0983F.

piece. "We had a process." "People apply project by submitting work."

The group is part of the Centre for Arts Centre to film portions of the projections.

Renowned Cork artist is leading the project. With its roots in heritage, McKeown

integrate a piece of that evolved during TDC with Cork's history.

The National Science and Create were the specially commissioned score, overseen by

term collaborator olnist Ellen Broc around an air by composer Turin was blind.

For McKeown hair-raising pre-facial denuzum came at the rehab

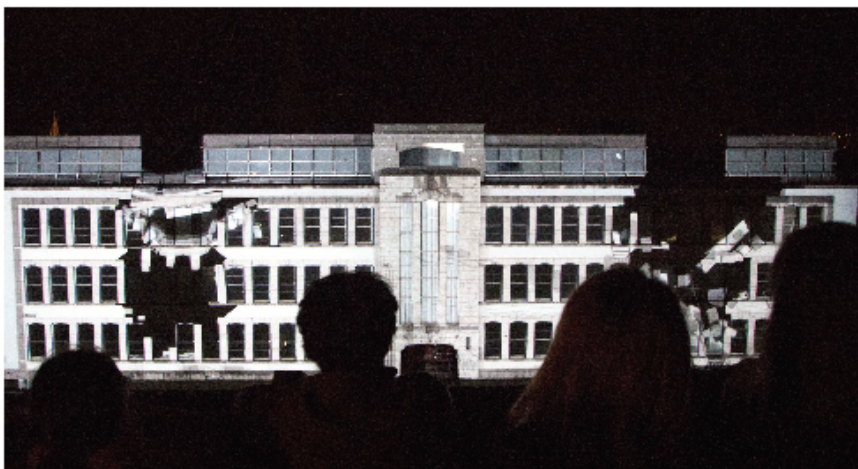
"Until we switch we really don't know. Then we have couple of technic sleeve — to tweak not be working pous about it?" Ex-

... and recording through walls

The

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PROFILE



Exterior image of Simon McKeown's work for Cork Ignite

The Wow Factor

SHEELAGH BRODERICK INTRODUCES THE CORK IGNITE PROJECT, WHICH CULMINATED IN A LARGE-SCALE PROJECTION BY ARTIST SIMON MCKEOWN FOR CORK CULTURE NIGHT 2015.

CORK Ignite, which formed the centrepiece of the city's Culture Night 2015 events, was the final commission of the Ignite initiative, a platform developed to showcase high-quality work by people with disabilities across Ireland. British artist Simon McKeown was commissioned to deliver an outdoor digital projection with manifestly ambitious artistic and technical objectives, comprising soundscape and animation that was projected onto the entire façade of Cork College of Commerce (measuring 60 metres in length and 18 metres in height).

McKeown is an award-winning, internationally exhibiting artist renowned for his interest in the cultural presentation of disability. His recent work includes *Ghosts* (2014) commissioned for the WW1 Cultural Programme (14 – 18 November), *Motion Disabled: Unlimited* (2012) and *Prometheus Awakes* (2010), which were both London 2012 Festival events. He foregrounds disability issues through a practice that not only engages with disabled people but also with representations of disability through technologically mediated imagery. With over 25 years experience, McKeown is an expert in animation and motion capture, and a Reader in Animation and Post Production at Teesside University, where he is completing a PhD.

McKeown's project was one of the highlights of Cork Culture Night. The realisation of this spectacle was the result of over two years of planning in complex partnerships formed to commission and produce the work. Ignite was established at the end of 2012 by the Arts Council of Ireland following the roll out of the capacity building model Arts and Disability Networking (ADN) with Arts and Disability Ireland and local authorities in Mayo, Galway and Cork. The objectives of Ignite are to support "national and international collaboration between artists with disabilities; the making of new ambitious work by artists with disabilities; the presentation and marketing of commissioned work at local venues and festivals; and access to a more diverse range of work for more diverse local audiences".

Three commissions were created with a brief to celebrate arts and disability led by internationally-recognised artists with disabilities. Orlaith McBride, Director of the Arts Council, described how the commissions, each representing an investment of up to €60,000, were made with the expectation that they would "raise the bar on work being produced and presented by local venues and festivals, and provide the opportunity for both new and existing audiences to experience some of the best arts and disability work being created internationally today".

Cork Ignite was commissioned by Cork City Council with partners, the Arts Council and Arts and Disability Ireland, led by the National Sculpture Factory and Create in association with SoundOUT



Exterior image of Simon McKeown's work for Cork Ignite

and Suisha Inclusive Arts at COPE Foundation. Evidently this was going to be a complex project to manage and independent arts producer Kath Gorman was charged with this task.

During the spring of 2014 McKeown spent a week with a group of participants from COPE Foundation and other disability organisations to create a collaborative work based around stop-frame animation, shadow puppetry, art work and video. These visual art workshops took place in the Theatre Development Centre at Triskel Arts Centre with participants whose ages ranged from 18 to over 80 years old and whose disabilities were diverse. Then, unexpectedly, McKeown had to take time out from the project himself due to health difficulties associated with his own disability. Reluctantly the decision was made by the project team to defer the project originally scheduled for Culture Night 2014.

However, some good news was extracted from this very bad news. Due to the extended timeframe an opportunity arose to develop locally-originated musical themes. A successful funding award from Cork City Council enabled local partners SoundOUT and Suisha Inclusive Arts at COPE Foundation to deliver music workshops using assistive technologies during the extended project lead-in time. Guest musician Cian Walsh led these, with facilitation support from Grainne McHale, Graham McCarthy of SoundOUT and Eoin Nash of Suisha Inclusive Arts at COPE Foundation. Needless to say the project deferral also brought additional project costs and further support was awarded from the Ignite partners of the Arts Council, Arts and Disability Ireland and Cork City Council. Teesside University also provided additional support in the second year.

By the time the project was back on track, the two other Ignite projects in Mayo and Galway had been completed and the Ignite Touring Award made to visual artist Aileen Barry for *Silent Movie*. All eyes now turned to Cork Ignite and expectations were running high

for this last element. During Spring and Summer of 2015 McKeown worked extensively with his creative team, in particular Craig McMullen, sound specialist Nigel Crooks and concept artist Kameliya Minkova, to create the final projected work. McKeown also includes Phillip Wray and David Archibald as part of his team. In order to realise the ambition required to deliver a commission of this scale and the complex organisational matrix, the partnership now extended to: Teesside University; School of Computing; Cork Arts and Health Programme, HSE South; Cork Education and Training Board; XL Video, London; the River Lee Hotel: the official accommodation and hospitality sponsor for Cork Ignite; 3FM: University College Cork's official student radio station; CIT Cork School of Music; the Theatre Development Centre, Cork: towards residency support; and Focus Surveys for production support.

It was an extraordinary spectacle on a night when all the elements combined to provide perfect conditions. Calm weather and a cloudy night enhanced both the brightness of the projection on the façade of Cork College of Commerce and its reflections on a ripple-less river and the glass walls of the School of Music opposite. A warm evening and extensive media and social media coverage brought an audience of almost 10,000 to the event.

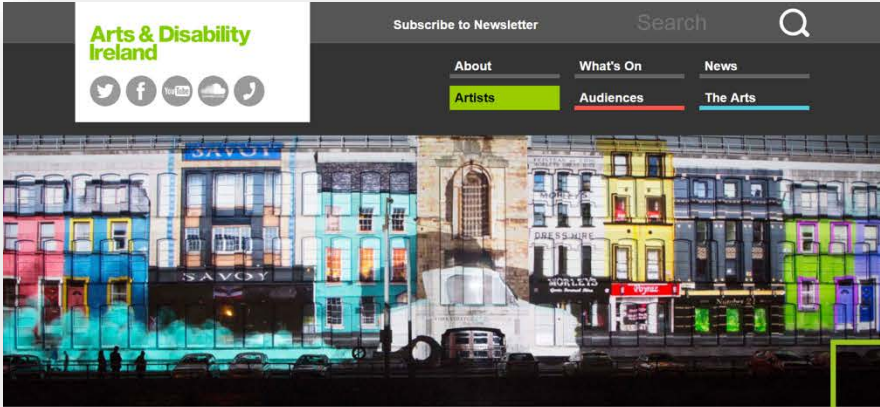
For those who converged on Union Quay, Cork Ignite was a spectacular visual feast, which focused in part on the history and landscape of Cork, intertwined with imagery, to evoke perceptions of disability. The outdoor spectacle was a hugely detailed and complex visual manipulation of the College of Commerce façade that had been 3D scanned for use as a projection screen. As the soundtrack played, the audience watched as the building was variously rotated and collapsed in smoke, decked in flowers and ivy and then collapsed again.

The process of making this work involved the use of cutting edge technology. Each second is made of 25 frames, 1500 frames in a minute or 45,000 individual images over the duration of the 30-minute projection. Imagery was projected with such precision that the contours of the façade were animated with fidelity. Virtual window blinds could be individually opened and closed in window frames to reveal figures apparently occupying the space within. Computer games such as *Ang* were played across the surface of the façade and many of the fabulously coloured buildings of Cork made appearances linked to McKeown's favourite 1970s disability vehicle. The building became a recalcitrant cuckoo clock before morphing into a virtual map of Cork city from 1660 accompanied by a score from the blind Irish composer Turlough O'Carolan.

Workshop participants were pleased when they recognised the particular sequences of imagery and sound to which they had contributed. Disability themes were apparent throughout from the iconography of the opening sequence to intermittent and sometimes-subliminal references interspersed through episodic animated tableaux using Braille, text and imagery. It was always playful, sometimes confounding and succeeded in captivating the diverse audience of families, students and tourists, as well as the ever-present culture vultures. The intense attention over 30 minutes directed towards the projections as they appeared on the façade of the College of Commerce or in reflections on the river and on the School of Music demonstrated the success of this work. McKeown had been looking for what he called the 'wow factor' and indeed it was so well received that commentators subsequently conjectured on whether it would have been possible to repeat the work again later that night for a different audience.

While it will never be possible to repeat the work as it was first seen, there are plans afoot to tour the work. An exhibition is already planned for FACT Liverpool early next year that will involve a whole new layer of partnerships. For McKeown this project has extended his practice as an artist. He described it as "by far the most ambitious piece of work" he has ever created, "technically demanding and creatively difficult." The work, he added, "puts art which has a connection with disability on the map out there on a huge scale". The legacy of this work for Irish commissioners, festivals and artists with disabilities will be to continue to "dream big" as Pádraig Naughton, Executive Director of Arts and Disability Ireland, put it. Such ambition will be as much dependent on the supporting infrastructure as on the artists' talents.

Sheelagh Broderick is an artist, researcher and writer.
sheelagbroderick.com



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Cork Ignite



A dazzling mix of technologies; riverside buildings brought to life through wild projections and an accompanying music score

Cork Ignite, Union Quay, Cork
Friday 18th September 2015

Simon Mckeown, renowned international artist, presented a free live art event during Cork's Culture Night 2015, as one of three "Ignite" commissions, which represent the largest ever investment in Ireland's arts and disability sector.

[Read more](#)



A still from Cork Ignite by renowned international artist, Simon Mckeown



Watch: Cork Ignite for Culture Night 2015
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A still from Cork Ignite at Cork Culture Night 2014
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PRG XL VIDEO CREATES PROJECTION FOR CORK IGNITE

October 23, 2015 Emma Hinton Latest News, Supplier, Technology event technology, prg xl video, projection mapping

PRG XL Video has provided a projection and mapping system at the College of Commerce in Cork, Ireland as part of special arts event Cork Ignite.

The team worked with visual artist Simon Mckeown to create the projection, creating a map of the building using a combination of build drawings and photographs for the content renderings.

Mckeown also worked with participants from disability organisations - including COPE Foundation - to create a projection that drew from stop-frame animation, shadow puppetry, artwork and video.

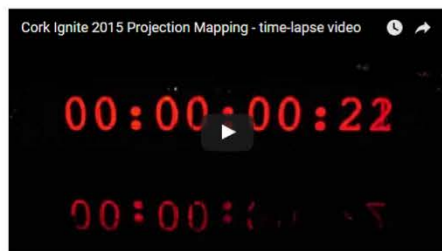
PRG XL Video's team included senior account manager Paul Wood, mapping expert James Cooksey and projectionist Peter Tilling.

To cover the entire front of the College of Commerce, six Barco HDQ-2K40 projectors were used in two stacks of three, outputting a total of 240,000 Lumens. Two nights before the main event, projector alignment was carried out, and a content run-through took place the night before.

"This was a big outdoor project which carried a lot of risk and uncertainty and expectation," Mckeown said. "The project formed the ambitious centre point to Culture Night Ireland in Cork. It had prestigious support from organisations in Ireland and the UK and was hoped to have a very large audience. Expectations were high and combining this stress with my own exacting standards meant that I could only consider working with PRG XL and Paul and his team.


"Over several months I worked with Paul to specify the projection and with James to map the work to a fantastically accurate level across multiple planar depths. As nearly a quarter of a million lumens hit the College of Commerce I was, and still remain, absolutely certain I made the correct decision."

Cork Ignite 2015 Projection Mapping - time-lapse video



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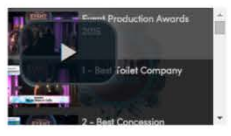


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Trace Elements

An exploration of Cork Ignite
By artist Simon Mckeown



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Explore the mind blowing world of 3D projection mapping at FACT! Last year, artist and technology expert Simon McKeown created a new commission for Cork Ignite, a large-scale live event which used six of Europe's largest outdoors projectors to present a huge artwork. We will be showing documentation of the project and inviting you to learn more about the process behind projection mapping and try the technology for yourself.



Details


Artist Simon McKeown's recent project for Cork Ignite explored the perception and production of art which considers disability. Using the College of Commerce as his canvas, McKeown worked collaboratively with members of the community, containing traditional techniques (shadow puppetry) and contemporary methods of projection mapping to create a large scale projection work.

At FACT, by presenting documentation of his creative process, McKeown invites you to try out some of the techniques for yourself. During the exhibition McKeown will hold a two-part projection mapping workshop where participants will have the opportunity to project their own final artwork onto Ropewalks Square outside FACT.


Trace Elements is supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England. Presented in association with FACT, DaDaFest, National Sculpture Factory, Create and the School of Arts and Media, Teesside University.

Cork Ignite was originally produced by the National Sculpture Factory and Create Ireland in association with SoundOUT and Suissha Inclusive Arts at CGPE Foundation. Cork Ignite was commissioned by Cork City Council as part of Ignite. Ignite is managed by a unique partnership involving the Arts Council, Arts & Disability Ireland (ADI), Cork City Council, Galway City and County Councils, and Mayo County Council. Ignite represented the largest ever investment in Ireland's arts and disability sector.


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Cork Ignite to excite for Culture Night

Valerie O'Sullivan, director of services, Cork City Council, explains how renowned artist Simon McKeown is dreaming big for Culture Night



I first met Simon McKeown, artist and creative director of **Cork Ignite**, about 18 months ago when the National Sculpture Factory proposed him as the artist for a new national arts programme.

Having met him, the NSF didn't need to do much persuading. I was immediately struck by Simon as a person, by his talent, his ability to visually represent complex ideas and of course his technical abilities.

Ignite is a new platform designed to generate Ireland's most ambitious showcasing of talent from people with disabilities and **Cork Ignite** is a strategic partnership between Cork City Council, the Arts Council and Arts Disability Ireland. These strategic projects are vital to ensure that new and complex works are realised.

Disability is such a complex term, used in a variety of ways, often with negative connotations. To me it really means to be differently abled. That is what I've learned having observed the process involved in this project. Being around Simon McKeown has shown me someone with a disability who refuses, to brilliant effect, to be defined by it.

Imagine growing up with a debilitating ill-

ness like brittle bone disease, breaking more than 300 bones to date and daring to create work that can make such an impact. Imagine for that matter, being able to create that work, disability aside? I wonder whether Simon's achievements are so special because of his "disability" or in spite of it, and suspect it's a bit of both. It is definitely because of the kind of person he is — quietly determined to translate the brilliant workings of his mind into reality.

But whatever the case, Simon is an impressive advocate for a culture of normality around disability. He is a keen sportsman and has completed challenging cycling races, is active and fit. As he says himself, he grew up with disability as a part of his life, but it is something which, given longer life expectancy, we will all face, either for ourselves or in our families.

When the National Sculpture Factory invited Simon to Cork, he was struck by the concentration of disability services here, and wanted to engage in a very real way. He enables people and dares us all to see things differently.

Music plays a leading role in his work. He has collaborated with many musicians of international standing. You'll hear why at the Ignite project on Culture Night to great effect.

Simon has an extraordinary background in animation and has worked on visuals for BBC and Channel 4 over a 20-year period. He has worked on numerous television projects, like *Coronation Street*, *A Touch of Frost*, *Wire in the Blood* and *At Home with the Braithwaites*.

So I was more than a little awestruck when I met Simon, and he is disarmingly charming. And he is humble, soft spoken, brilliant and funny to boot. He is an inspiring individual, one that does not let his own illness deter him from thinking big, from dreaming big, and producing great work.

I have taken inspiration from that, as all of us encounter challenges at work and in life. Through Simon, you remember the importance of working collaboratively and with integrity, and to do so despite the obstacles. He teaches you that it's not the challenges, but how you deal with them that matters.

To date, I know the participants have had valuable and real engagement with Simon on

the work-shopping phase. These opportunities can be life changing for the people involved. Simon's commitment and generosity to others is a real testament to his character.

Participant Mathew Murphy had this to say: "I learnt so much from being involved in the project. Simon let us express ourselves in a really creative way, as well as working with

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the rest of the team we learnt different things from art to camera work and writing. It will be a great honour to be part of such a unique and special night — to say I was part of this.”

Nicky Byrne added: “I was thrilled to be part of the Ignite Project where I got to meet a whole group of people with the same interest in art as myself. I loved the whole process of performing for the camera, making the collage and watching the piece come together.”

Cork City Council is extremely proud to deliver this work.

Works like **Cork Ignite** will excite and inspire and will stimulate others to extend further and take on new challenges. I know from the visual samples I have seen, we can expect a spectacular piece on **Culture Night** next Friday.

Simon McKeown has made me think about how we tend to dismiss or disenfranchise those who are differently abled than us. I'm grateful for that and for many other lessons I learned because I have been lucky enough to meet him. I am forever grateful to the National Sculpture Factory, and to Mary McCarthy in particular for believing in this project, and allowing us to collaborate. You'll see why when you see something unique as a result in the heart of **Cork** City on Friday.

Gather on Union quay by 9pm latest. Build it into your **Culture Night** Itinerary. I can't wait! **Cork Ignite**, Union Quay, Cork (access from Parnell Place/Anglesea Street) on Friday, gather from 8.45pm for a 9.15pm start.



Matthew Murphy, one of the workshop participants at **Cork Ignite**.

